

Our first Guardians: Anne Campbell and John Lindsay

People arrive at the Nova Scotia Nature Trust via many routes, but the road taken by Anne Campbell and John Lindsay was off the beaten path. John recounts, “We came to the Nature Trust via AIDS in Africa.”

Back in 2008, Stephen Lewis was the Guest Speaker at the Nature Trust’s 11th Annual Dinner and Anne and John came to the event to hear Stephen speak. Before that night they did not even know what the Nature Trust did.

All that changed at the dinner when they were so impressed with the “important good work” the Nature Trust was doing. Anne was “wildly intrigued” and said, “I want to work on this.” She spoke to Bonnie Sutherland, Executive Director, that same evening and volunteered to work with the Trust.

Fast forward to 2018, and Anne and John are now firmly established as visionary, knowledgeable and generous supporters of the Nature Trust. They created the idea behind our Guardians of the Land program and became our first Guardians. Anne was an integral part of our Board for 5 years, and led the Dinner Committee for many of those years. They make a conscious effort to bring new supporters to the Nature Trust by selectively inviting people to the Annual Dinner who might have an affinity to our work.

The journey from total unfamiliarity to ardent supporters was a short one for Anne and John. From that first dinner, they were attracted to the “incredibly imaginative” way the Nature Trust achieves a goal of land conservation with a minimum of resources. John noted, “The use of land donations and easements is an efficient and low cost way to achieve the very capital-intensive objective of saving critical habitat.”

Although the preservation of habitats and species is vital, they strongly feel that it is the preservation of access that is the element of the Nature Trust’s work that appeals to each and every Nova Scotian. “Nature Trust properties are saved to be used and enjoyed by Nova Scotians—it is not about ‘museum-ing’ the land so that it remains untouched, like it is behind glass. Instead it is about preserving it so that everyone will still have access to wild spaces whether or not they have the money to buy land themselves.”

Anne’s personal connection to the Nature Trust relates directly to her childhood at a family cottage built before she was born, on the Northumberland Strait. Lifetime experiences at the cottage, being on the beach, exploring the reef when the tide goes out, hiking in the woods, seeing frogs in the lake and watching the gaspereaux run have all given Anne a sense of having a special place in Nova Scotia. “I think many Nova Scotian’s feel that way, and the Nature Trust is a good vehicle for people to celebrate and keep those special places wild and accessible,” she explains.



Early on, John was hooked by the idea of the science behind the Nature Trust's choices of the right things to preserve. He found it "riveting" to hear about the way scientific data was used, and recounts, "It was not just the quantity of data or acreage that was impressive, it was fascinating to learn about how you were preserving land based on its ecological and conservation significance and using data to drive these decisions. It was very strategic." He also remembers being impressed that the Nature Trust was not only using data but creating it, recalling how Bonnie (Sutherland) spent weeks flying in a helicopter with DNR, before satellite imagery was available, staring down at tracks of land, finding and mapping important undeveloped areas.

Anne was on the Board when the audacious challenge of the 100 Wild Islands campaign was first floated. It was during this campaign that Anne and John came up with the concept behind the Guardians of the Land donor program. Anne remembers, "I knew from my experience on the Board that funds are most easily raised for specific land projects, and that many donations are restricted in this way, so we decided instead to give an unrestricted gift that could be used where it is most needed to sustain the organization. You have to trust that board and staff are going to make the right decisions." As well, they thought it was important to provide a pledge to support the Nature Trust over a period of several years, thus allowing the organization to better plan its spending and acquisitions.

Thanks to their foresight in creating this concept of multi-year, unrestricted funding, our Guardians of the Land donor program was born. Because of their leadership we now have more than 25 Guardians, and counting.

Anne and John have enjoyed watching the Nature Trust grow as an organization, and progress from rented offices in the Roy building, to Maitland Street to now owning our own building, Nature's House, in Dartmouth. "As a donor, it is really great to see the organization becoming more and more solid and secure," says Anne.

Their belief in the Nature Trust led to their decision to include the Nature Trust in John and Anne's wills. As with their Guardians of the Land gift, they felt it was important that their final gift be unrestricted. "Too many people try to rule from the grave," said John, and noted that they both thought that instead it was important to empower the Board of the day to make the right choices. They felt that this was a perfect way to create a legacy—to provide support for something that will last forever. They are creating a lasting natural legacy in Nova Scotia.