November 26, 2019
Our 17th Annual Gala Dinner & Auction Review:

On Friday November 8th, the 17th Annual Mahone Islands Conservation Association Gala Dinner and Auction was held at Oak Island Resort and Conference Centre. It was once again a very successful fund-raising event as more than two hundred and eighty people came out to show their support for the protection of the Mahone Bay Islands and its shores. The evening was full of enthusiasm for this worthy cause.

The event began at 5:30 with the doors opening for the silent auction and reception. As they arrived, supporters were greeted by MICA Chair John Meisner and Vice-Chair Bryan Palfryman.

We began the night confidently with the outstanding support of forty corporate sponsors. In the convention area rooms, the display of silent and live auction items was impressive and indicative of the support and interest the local artist and business communities have for MICA and its projects. The atmosphere was a buzz with social fun as our volunteers sold raffle tickets and our friendly volunteer auctioneer Hubert Ryan introduced himself throughout the crowd. At the membership table, 32 supporters renewed annual memberships, and 14 people became new members, while $510 was also collected in donations.

Our volunteer town crier John McGee called everyone in to dinner at 7 pm. Each table was labelled with an island name and supporters joined friends, family, neighbours, or found new acquaintances at their preassigned tables.

Founding Chair of MICA, Michael Ernst, led us through the action filled evening as the Master of Ceremonies. He gave opening remarks as we formally began the Gala Dinner and Auction (GDA). Town Crier John McGee welcomed all and led us in the singing of the national anthem, *O Canada*. The anthem was followed by a moment of silence in observance of Remembrance Day.

Through rap, Michael delivered a creative thank you to the GDA organizing committee for their dedication and organization of the event. There are many committee members who have committed themselves to this effort for years; Nicole Ernst, Georg Ernst, Sidney Lang, Krista Longard, Jeannie McLean, Patti Robertson, Patti Smith, Lynn Hennigar, and Marla Benton. At the event, the volunteer list extended to include the MICA directors and many local residents who have annually helped make this event a success. In all there were 40 supporters volunteering throughout the night to facilitate a smooth and enjoyable program.

Michael then introduced John Meisner, the current Chair of the Mahone Islands Conservation Association.

John began by noting the significance of the evening's event in its 17th year with a welcome to all MICA supporters, both long time and new faces. John asked for everyone's attentions as he put things in context and went on to explain:

"We always knew our islands and the bay were unique but according to Dr. Ian Spooner of Acadia University, who recently inspected our islands with us, they are unique in the world, in consideration of their geological formation.

Also, since our beginnings in 2002, there has been significantly increased activity on the bay and on our islands. It is great to see this increased use, as the goal of MICA is to preserve Mahone Bay islands for conservation and traditional public use. The above reinforces the need for us all to steward this wonderful resource responsibility for now and for future generations."

John then welcomed and introduced the following attendees:

Retired Sen. Wilfred Moore
MLA (Lunenburg) Suzanne Lohnes Croft
Town of Mahone Bay Mayor David Devenne
Town of Mahone Bay Councillor Joe Feeney Jnr.
Municipality of Chester Warden Allen Webber
MODC Councillors: Sharon Church and Danielle Barkhouse
Town of Lunenburg Mayor Rachel Bailey
Town of Lunenburg Councillor John McGee, our soundman and Town Crier
Dr. Ian Spooner, a distinguished scientist with Acadia University
Alison and Bob Reynolds, recent donors of the northern half of Ernst Island
NS Dept Lands and Forestry, exec director of Lands Services: Leslie Hickman
Cindy Baker whose late husband Michael was so important in the MICA beginnings.
Hubert Ryan, our volunteer Auctioneer
Sherrill Harrison and Barbara Wuertz, both recipients of a special MICA award this evening

John's presentation continued as he highlighted the accomplishments of MICA with the following comments:

"Since our beginnings in 2002, we have raised well over $1.6 million, with an approximate total of $700 000 raised from these Annual Gala Dinner and Auction (GDA) evenings where about $300 000 has come from corporate sponsorship and $400 000 from silent and live auctions, and raffles. Funds from these GDA's represent approximately 44% of our total revenue. The balance has been from general donations and responses to specific fund raising campaigns. Essentially 100% of funds raised go towards property acquisitions for conservation and for traditional public use.

A special thank you to all our artists and donors for sharing such a wonderful array of art and services again this year, their generosity is overwhelming and always appreciated as many are faithful long time donors.
A thank you also to the GDA organizing committee and all the helpers of the event, as well as another sold out event of 282 people in attendance. From ticket sales to solicitation of corporate sponsorship and auction items, to organizing printed material, and audiovisual presentations, there are many details that are carried out behind the scenes.

Our Corporate sponsors are very important to MICA. We have many who are long time donors for which we are very appreciative. They are featured on the screen behind me as well as in your evening program. We have 40 corporate sponsors in total this year and we welcome the following new sponsors this year:
Acadia University
GN Thermoforming Equipment
Mary E Meisner, QC. Barrister, Solicitor & Notary Public
Oak Island Resort & Conference Centre
RPS Composites Limited
Paul Conrod, Portfolio Advisor, RBC Dominion Securities

All of these companies are very prominent businesses with a presence on the south shore and we appreciate their endorsement of our Mission. We believe we offer great value for $1000. I ask all of you in attendance to support these companies who have chosen to support us."

In regards to Acquisition projects:

John explained that "we put a lot of time and energy into an acquisition project earlier this year and last however, when we did our detailed risk analysis with our potential funding partners, we decided not to proceed. There were too many unknowns on the future use of the property in consideration of the neighbours and local community.

As usual we have several potential acquisition projects in the very early stages and we ask you to stay tuned as these projects are always complicated and take time."

"In Summary, we have brought 18 islands or island properties plus three NCC islands off Chester and the Molands point property back into public ownership for conservation and traditional public use. We recognize and say thank you to our primary partner, the Province

of Nova Scotia, and also the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg, the Municipality of the District of Chester, and the Nature Conservancy of Canada."

Under other updates, John went on to note and draw attention to the following:

"We are planning another island erosion study with Dr. Spooner of Acadia University as we believe it is important to at least document the state of our islands relative to erosion, especially in light of the recent wind storms that seem to be coming with more frequency and severity.

Private moorings near the islands are increasing in numbers and we do not believe this is the right direction for our islands. Please refer to our latest newsletter or our website for our reasoning and if you have any comments, please see me or any MICA director.

We have a huge responsibility in the stewardship of our islands. To that, we intend to have specific island champions that will form a revised Stewardship Committee. Stay tuned for further information on this."

In regards to membership: "Our strength is in our numbers, especially when we solicit various levels of government for partnerships on acquisitions. Here this evening among the 282 of you in attendance: we have 32 life time members, 146 people who are or have been members at some time, and 136 who have never been a member. Membership is very simple. Please see Deb Hawkes and Lokman Abdullah at our membership table here this evening. Membership is only $10 per year or $200 for a life time. If you are a member you will get newsletters and updates during the year but we are very conscious of and mindful of email pollution. Memberships can also be purchased on our website or at other MICA events during the year."

In conclusion of John Meisner's report he made two special presentations of gratitude:

Sherrill Harrison was recognized for her dedicated and long-time volunteer work with the GDA committee. Sherrill still continues to connect us with outstanding donors for our auctions.

Barbara Wuertz, our webmaster was also recognized for her many years of service. Both of these outstanding volunteers of have also previously been MICA directors.

In conclusion, our MICA Chair John Meisner, graciously thanked everyone for their overwhelming support and wished all the supporters a great evening.

Then Michael Ernst, MC, led us into the first live auction segment. The live auction was woven into the evening to provide entertainment. A lovely three course meal was served and each one of the three courses was followed with the auctioning off of some live auction items. Our volunteer auctioneer, Hubert Ryan, brought energy to the event as he warmed up the crowd and clearly communicated our purpose in coming together. We would go home with some treasures while purchasing islands and shorelines for conservation.

The crowd applauded and cheered for our successful bidders and their support. The staff of the Oak Island Resort was efficient and friendly and kept everything going smoothly as we enjoyed our meal and the live auction segments.

Meanwhile, silent auction rooms closed on schedule and people occasionally slipped over to up their bids. There were over 120 items open to bids in the silent auction room which included a diverse selection of items and gift certificates from artists, businesses, and supporters.

The winner of our raffle draw was announced and lucky winner Mary Emberlee won $250 cash and two tickets to next year's MICA Gala dinner and Auction.

The committee sold Surprise Bags again this year for $20 each that filled with multiple gift certificates and goodies from local businesses. The Surprise Bag sponsors were

promoted throughout the evening. These surprise bags are a good means for local businesses to promote themselves and encourage multiple customer visits by donating several smaller gift certificates. They were very popular and were all sold out.

There were twenty-four diverse live auction items including original paintings, prints, photography, a folk art carving, golf green fees, a deep sea fishing trip, a whale watching tour, a vehicle detailing package, a brewery tour, a lobster dinner, and a three course gourmet dinner, summer art classes, an annual fitness membership, two sailing excursions, a kayak, 10 yards of mulch, a hockey stick autographed by Gordie Howe, and a beautifully restored cedar strip canoe.

The evening was once again a great financial success with a total of just over $55 000 being raised!

As a reminder, these funds will be used to support island and property acquisitions for conservation and traditional public use.

We hope everyone in attendance enjoyed the meal, friends, and a treasure or two!

Thank you for your support and we hope to see you next year!

Sincerely,
Mahone Islands Conservation Association