

Jervis Bay-Ross Memorial Park Greening Up

By Jane Barry, The Greater Saint John Community Foundation

As the only public green space in Saint John East, Jervis Bay-Ross Memorial Park is an oasis and tribute to our veterans and those who perished in the sinking of the British ship Jervis Bay during the Second World War. The public is invited to a meeting tomorrow evening at Bayside Middle School to galvanize and renew support for the Park.



Photo: Jervis Bay-Ross Memorial Park is an oasis and tribute to our veterans and those who perished in the sinking of the British ship Jervis Bay during the Second World War. The public is invited to a meeting tomorrow evening at Bayside Middle School to galvanize and renew support for the Park. Photo: Jane Barry/For the Telegraph-Journal

Rev. James Ross created a \$50,000 trust with the City of Saint John in 1942 to establish a park on Loch Lomond Road and Jean St. The 4.6 acres parcel has been leased for 99 years to the Jervis Bay Branch #53 of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch, from the City of Saint John, expiring in 2052, at which time they will again have responsibility for the land. The funds were subsequently transferred from the City to the Jervis Bay Legion Branch 53 to establish a park.

The Jervis Bay-Ross Memorial Park became a reality in 1990 thanks to the efforts of a committee of the Jervis Bay Memorial Branch #53 Royal Canadian Legion and the \$50,000 Ross fund. A small group of Legion members, Matthew Flecknell, Ron Harding, Dorothy Breen, William A. Cawley, Frederic J. Gamblin, Leon Sautiere and J.C. Thomas were the driving force behind this group. A great deal of their personal time and resources were devoted to the park, even

on a daily basis. Much of the day to day labour has been volunteered by Bob Slovitt. Legion members appreciate and acknowledged their contributions when Cawley, Flecknell, Gamblin, Sautiere and Harding passed away.

The Park has lawns, gardens, and several walkways. It also has a number of veterans' memorials and artifacts relating to the heroic sinking of the Jervis Bay in the North Atlantic during World War Two with great loss of life to save the accompanying convoy of ships. Memorial services held each year at the park always attract a loyal following especially on special anniversaries.

Over time, the volunteer committee estimated \$300,000 has been spent on developing and maintaining the park. It has enhanced the quality of life for area residents, particularly the handicapped and residents from Loch Lomond Villa. It is the only park in East Saint John. Seniors' groups, air cadets, the Kiwanis Club of Saint John and school children also assisted in the planting and maintenance projects over the years.

The Jervis Bay - Ross Memorial Park Committee, Royal Canadian Legion Branch # 53 and the Board of Directors of The Greater Saint John Community Foundation (GSJCF) announced a new \$50,000 community foundation fund in June, 2002. The \$50,000 Fund was matched by the T.R. Meighen Foundation with a gift of \$25,000 which went to the GSJCF's Common Fund for general charitable purposes. The Fund continues to generate annual earnings, directed to the park.

Funding of more than \$28,000 from the GSJCF representing the earnings on their fund and grants have helped maintain the park since 2001. At the request of the City of Saint John Leisure Services Dept. in 2002, a design was prepared to move the park toward a lower maintenance approach. Some of this has been implemented with annual GSJCF grants. A wooden gazebo was also constructed. The City of Saint John have committed to continue enhancing the area in keeping with the low-maintenance site plan.

The Legion/Park Committee sought help from the Community Foundation as human resources and health became a challenge. Annual maintenance, planting and supervision had been provided by the Legion Committee for many years but in 2008 the City of Saint John generously assumed responsibility for grass cutting and some modest maintenance. The Foundation is grateful for the City's response and working with them now to help identify community partners to carry on the Park's traditions.

The RC Legion Branch 53 itself is interested in growing its membership and has recently re-located to rented quarters on Black River Road after selling their property on Bayside Drive. With the winding down of the Legion/Park Committee, the Jervis Bay Branch of the RC Legion has approached the Foundation through their President Terry Murphy, to create an enlarged green space by removing the pond and fencing since they have become a safety issue and somewhat unsightly. A public meeting at Bayside Middle School's cafeteria on Tuesday, April 26, 7pm, is being organized cooperatively between the City of Saint John, the GSJCF and the RCL to inform the community of planned changes and seek community support for the park. With its pleasing outlook over the city, it is a peaceful place to remember our veterans and enjoy nature. It is hoped that a newly re-vitalized citizens group will emerge to re-invigorate the green area.



Community Profile is a weekly column highlighting community causes and work done by non-profit organizations in the Greater Saint John area. It is contributed by Jane Barry, executive director of The Greater Saint John Community Foundation. Contact the foundation at 506-672-8880 sjfoundation@nb.aibn.com To view other Community Profiles go to www.saint-john-foundation.nb.ca