

Mayor's Message – November 2025

Cape LaHave Island—Ours to Cherish, Forever

By Elspeth McLean-Wile

One of the highlights for me this fall was the agreement signed with the Nova Scotia Nature Trust to protect Cape LaHave Island. The District of Lunenburg (MODL) signed a conservation easement agreement guaranteeing that this island will remain wild, natural, and open for community use for generations to come.

Cape LaHave Island is one of the true gems of our coastline. It spans more than 2,600 acres and boasts roughly 50 kilometres of shoreline. It's home to an incredible range of wildlife—from Piping Plovers, a threatened shorebird that nests along its beaches, to Monarch butterflies and Yellow-banded Bumblebees, which help pollinate the island's plants. Migratory birds rely on the island as a stopover during their long seasonal journeys. The rocky ridges are covered with Broom Crowberry, a globally rare plant, and the forest provides habitat for uncommon lichens and other sensitive species.

Beyond its ecological importance, Cape LaHave Island is woven into the history of our community. The Mi'kmaq people used the island thousands of years ago as a summer fishing ground. Later, in 1604, Samuel de Champlain and French settlers explored and charted the area. By 1785, the land had been granted to trustees on behalf of the residents of New Dublin Township and became known as "common land"—land meant for the shared benefit of local people. In 1897, the property officially came under municipal ownership through the Lunenburg Common Lands Act.

For generations, residents have loved and used Cape LaHave Island for simple, timeless pleasures—fishing, camping, berry picking, kayaking, beachcombing, and hunting. Families have made memories here, and many residents expressed concern that one day the land could be developed, or access might be restricted. The new conservation agreement puts those worries to rest.

A conservation easement is a legal promise that permanently protects the land's natural and cultural values. It is attached to the property's title and cannot be undone. Should the property change ownership the easement continues as it is attached to the title of the property. The agreement outlines what activities are allowed and what are not, ensuring that the island's ecosystems and community traditions are both respected. These rules were shaped through community meetings with residents who know and love the island best.

The partnership with Nova Scotia Nature Trust reflects the community's deep connection to the land. It has always been a place where people and nature exist together, and this agreement means it will stay that way forever.

Local residents can volunteer as “property guardians” and monitor the activities on the island and observe any changes that take place. Details on this program may be found on the Nova Scotia Nature Trust website at <https://nsnt.ca/>.

With the help of the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, the Municipality has taken an important step to ensure Cape LaHave Island remains as it has always been. Cape LaHave Island will remain a place of beauty, and coastal adventure—a lasting gift to those who live here and those yet to discover it.