

Pleasant River Wilderness Area

Pleasant River Wilderness Area will protect up to about 2,900 hectares (ha) of woodland, river, stream, wetland and lakeshore habitat which is home to Blandings turtle, eastern ribbon snake and rare plants.

The wilderness area will consist of three separate parts within the Pleasant River watershed, near the community of Pleasant River, in both Lunenburg and Queens counties, with:

1. About 1,723 ha at Shingle Lake;
2. About 519 ha at Pleasant River Lake; and
3. About 663 ha along the lower Pleasant River, south of the community of Pleasant River.

Most of these provincial lands were previously consulted on and proposed for protection in the 2013 Parks and Protected Areas Plan as: (1) Shingle Lake Nature Reserve (first part), and (2) Pleasant River Nature Reserve (second and third parts). All three parts will now be designated as Pleasant River Wilderness Area.

The lower Pleasant River part includes two properties which have not previously been consulted on:

- About 19 ha at Bull Moose Brook acquired by the Nova Scotia Nature Trust (NSNT) and transferred to the Province in 2014; and
- About 29 ha of wetlands next to Pleasant River acquired by the Province in partnership with Ducks Unlimited.

Several adjustments are also being made to boundaries to reflect updated survey information on the extent of provincial lands in the area.

Most of the woodlands consist of a mix of mature softwood and mixedwood forest, with some hardwood. Soils are generally thin, with relatively low productivity. Aquatic habitats include slow moving river and streams (stillwaters), wetlands, shallow lakes and lakeshores. These are important to the species-at-risk found here.

Blandings turtle is considered nationally and provincially endangered and eastern ribbon snake is nationally and provincially threatened. Golden crest, found on the shores of Shingle Lake, is a rare coastal plain flora (plant) species which is also nationally and provincially threatened. At least three other rare coastal plain or arctic-alpine plant species occur here.

Protection of these lands helps improve representation of the LaHave Drumlins Natural Landscape in Nova Scotia's protected areas system. It also complements efforts of the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, which has protected a number of private properties in the Pleasant River watershed.

The area is used for fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing, camping and other activities.

The road to the beach at the north side of Pleasant River Lake will continue to be open to vehicle access, as will Medlee Lane, which provides access to the northeast end of Shingle Lake. Another road corridor to a private parcel on Pleasant River Lake will be left outside the wilderness area.

Designation as a wilderness area instead of as nature reserve will allow hunting and angling and provides the Minister of Environment authority to allow vehicle access to adjacent properties.

Three existing campsite leases will be honoured under the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act*.

Existing mineral rights overlap with 208 ha of the Shingle Lake part and 26 ha of the lower Pleasant River part. Legal designation of these lands will only come into effect if the mineral rights expire and are not renewed.

Consideration will be given to designating this wilderness area as Pu'tlaqnn Wilderness Area (pronounced BOO-dah-law-en), after a local Mi'kmaw elder's vision of a lake named "Shaving Lake" or "Shingle Lake". More information on this vision is available below.

The main purpose of this consultation is to seek comment on:

- the roughly 56 ha of provincial lands added to the proposed boundary since release of the Parks and Protected Areas Plan in 2013 (all within the lower Pleasant River part)
- the change in designation type from nature reserve to wilderness area, and
- a possible change of name to Pu'tlaqnn Wilderness Area.

Aerial view of Shingle Lake, looking southeast





"Nukumi's journey" by Melissa Labrador

The Story of Pu'tlaqnn — A Mi'kmaw Elders Vision

Charles W. "Charlie" Labrador, well known Mi'kmaw Elder and First Chief of the Acadia First Nation was well known for his connection to Mother Earth and he shared traditional knowledge with everyone he knew. His upbringing was closely connected to the land, as he lived off of the land.

He often spoke of his visions later in life. One of those visions was from back in the 1990s where he was working in the woods not far from his home in Molega, near the Wildcat Community where he grew up.

Because of his spiritual connection to the land and the spirit of the ancestors, he often spoke of having "visitors" around him in many of the things he did. On one particular day, he was working in the woods and had just taken his lunch break when he shared that the ancestors or "old people" as he called them visited. As he sat on a log eating a sandwich, he shared that there were about four people who watched him while he ate. They did not say anything and smiled, nodding their head in approval, he recalled. Approval perhaps of the road he was on, of his journey here on the Earth.

Another vision he had came when he was driving in his old truck and heading into the forest to work. On the ground he could see a huge shadow and knew it was an eagle flying above him. As he looked up at it, he could clearly see the eagle's eye and was immediately given the sight of the eagle and connected to the eagle above him, as it flew over the land. He also saw an island in his vision while he was looking below through the eagle's sight. This was interpreted as connecting to a burial site.

Often burial sites are found on islands and there is oral knowledge indicating there are burial sites in what is known today as the Shingle Lake area.

In this powerful vision he said he could see a river with a large arrow that pointed to a lake. This lake had a name and it was "Shaving Lake". When he arrived home later, he drew this vision on paper. He then inquired with his son, Todd Labrador who is well known for his birch bark canoe building, if he knew of any lakes named "Shaving Lake". He could not think of any, but did know of "Shingle Lake" which is not far from Molega/Wildcat Community as the "crow flies".

"When one tries to translate the word shaving in the Mi'kmaw language you get the word that refers to wood chips...shingle....shavings, etc. Which basically means the same. So that is what we thought ..this was a lake and area of some kind of importance for our ancestors in Kespukwitk district." Todd Labrador, noted on his Father's vision.

Since Charles' passing in 2002, his son Todd and his family have shared his visions and often talk about them. The "Shaving Lake" vision is especially important, as it is felt that this vision and this lake would be as important to our Mi'kmaq people today as it was to our Ancestors and if this means the protection of this "Lake", that importance also extends to the future generations.

Charlie Labrador passed in 2002, but his knowledge and connection to the land is still shared and felt. Naming the combined Pleasant River/Shingle Lake wilderness area after his vision would not only honour his spirit and time here on the Earth, but also honour the Ancestors in Kespukwitk. The Mi'kmaw word his family would like to see included as part of this new wilderness areas name is "Pu'tlaqnn" (pronounced BOO-dah-law-en).

Story retold by Melissa and Todd Labrador, granddaughter and son of Charlie Labrador

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The Labrador family paddling a traditionally crafted birchbark canoe Photo by Corbin Hart