



Nova Scotia  
Environmental Network  
Connecting for a Sustainable Future

# 2021 NSEN Annual General Meeting

Thursday, June 17, 2021 @ 7:00 pm, online via Zoom

## ATTENDANCE

### **NSEN Board Members (7 out of 8):**

- Chris White (Chair)
- Emily Dodge (Secretary)
- Jayne Hawkins (Treasurer)
- Victoria Byrne
- Naomi Boon
- Sheila Richardson (outgoing)
- James Maguire (outgoing)

### **NSEN Volunteers & Staff (7)**

- Sheila Cole (Senior Policy Advisor with NSEN)
- Autumn Hebb
- Dylan Yates
- Sophia Lindfield
- Mairi Musgrave
- Eleanor Wilner-Fraser
- Nick Blacklock

### **Organization Members (7 out of 28):**

- Tina Northrup (East Coast Environmental Law)
- Becky Parker (Young Naturalists Club AND Nature Nova Scotia)
- Ivan Drouin (Green Party of Nova Scotia)
- Marion Moore (South Shore Council of Canadians and Offshore Protection of NS)
- Emily Dodge (Sierra Club Atlantic)
- Victoria Byrne (Diocesan Environmental Network)

### **Individual Members (6 out of 45):**

- Doug Rigby
- Phillip Gee
- Tatum Freigang
- Rachel Kendall (Fishing Gear Coalition of Atlantic Canada)
- Charlene Morton (Campaign to Protect Offshore NS)
- Christie Chaplin-Saunders

### **Other Guests (2):**

- Sam Williams (New Brunswick Environmental Network)
- Nancy Blair (Diocesan Environmental Network)

## **FORMAL PROCEEDINGS**

### **Call to Order and Land Acknowledgement:**

Chair Chris White calls the meeting to order and welcomes all attendees. Chris acknowledges the unceded status of Mi'kmaq territory and the importance of the Peace and Friendship Treaties. Chris draws attention to the impacts of settler colonialism and how this is especially evident in the recent investigations of former residential school sites. Chris points out the connections between settler colonialism and environmental crises and encourages environmental groups to highlight and support Indigenous stories, initiatives, and causes. A silent moment to reflect. Attendees introduce themselves.

### **Acceptance of Agenda:**

Chris White goes over the agenda for the AGM. Call out for participants to add to the agenda. No one has anything to add. Agenda is accepted as is.

### **Approval of 2020 AGM Minutes:**

Tina Northrup moves to approve minutes. Becky Parker seconds. 2020 AGM minutes are approved.

### **Directors' Report:**

Chris White delivers the 2021 Directors' Report presentation (see [document](#) for full details).

- Summer 2020:
  - Established a Community Engagement Team
    - 7 new volunteers
    - Social media, blogs, webinars
  - Awarded two Canada Summer Jobs
    - First full-time staff in years
    - 8 weeks each (\$7,300 value)
  - Awarded HRM District Capital Request
    - \$5,000 from Councillor Richard Zurawski
  - Canada Summer Job #1 (July/August)
    - Hired Sabrina Guzman-Skotnitsky
    - "Member Mondays"
    - Two webinars on carbon pricing, citizen science
- Fall 2020
  - Purchased membership management software
    - Chose Neon CRM after a rigorous selection process
  - SMU Service Learning Program
    - 5 undergraduate student volunteers
    - 30 hours each over a semester
  - Canada Summer Job #2 (October/November)
    - Hired Dylan Yates
    - Cape Breton connections, volunteer management
    - Two webinars on Two-Eyed Seeing, environmental racism
- Winter 2020/21
  - Meeting with NS Environment
    - Update on Environmental Trust Fund (details later)

- Volunteer team stepped up without full-time staff
  - Newsletter, communications, social media
  - Webinar on Sandy Lake – Sackville River Regional Park
- Board focused on full-time staff funding applications
  - Canada Summer Jobs (awarded four 8-week positions, \$16,500 value)
  - NS Start program (required too much money from NSEN)
  - NS Job Creation Partnership (awarded 6-month position, \$12,000 value)
- Spring 2021
  - Job Creation Partnership (April – October)
    - Re-hired Dylan Yates
  - Canada Summer Job #1 (May/June)
    - Hired Sophia Lindfield
  - Membership management software
    - Setup completed in May
    - Manages membership information, dues, and renewals
    - Manages events, volunteers, communications
    - Provides login account for members
- Future Outlook
  - Focusing on growing the network / membership
  - Efforts to secure funding to keep Dylan on staff for 1+ years
  - Want to organize annual in-person networking conferences
  - Hope to build a business case for provincial funding
  - Need funding for a part-time or full-time executive director
- Summary:
  - Leveraging lots of funding programs
  - Full-time staff making a huge difference
  - Powerful software tools saving time and energy
  - NSEN is fully on its feet again
  - The future looks bright!

Motion to approve Directors' Report: Victoria Byrne moves to approve. Tina Northrup seconds. Report is approved.

**Update on Environmental Trust Fund:**

Chris White provides background and new developments regarding the Environmental Trust Fund.

- Established under the *Nova Scotia Environmental Trust Regulations* in 1995
  - Accumulated about \$400,000 but no funds were ever disbursed
- The *Nova Scotia Environmental Trust Regulations* were repealed on January 19, 2021
  - The wording in the Regulations did not provide a clear mechanism to disburse the funds
  - The repeal will allow the Minister of Environment to disburse the funds
- The government intends to use the freed-up funds for environmental purposes

Discussion: Ivan Drouin moves that NSEN should commit to following up with the Nova Scotia government regarding the disbursement of the funds from the Environmental Trust Fund. Victoria Byrne seconds. Motion Passes.

### **Financial Report:**

Chris White delivers the 2021 Financial Report presentation (see [document](#) for full details).

- Fiscal year from April 1, 2020 - March 31, 2021
  - Revenues: \$14,703
    - Memberships, donations, government grants
    - Significant increase in membership sign up and renewal from previous year
    - Gained \$5,000 in spending capacity thanks to HRM grant
  - Expenditures: \$9,111
    - Recurring fees and software subscriptions, webinar honorariums, CSJ payroll
    - Cut bookkeeping expenses from previous year
  - Net surplus: +\$5,592
    - Invested surplus in new membership management software
  - Equity at end of fiscal year: +\$5,354
    - Assets: \$5,354
    - Liabilities: \$0
    - NSEN books are balanced
- Financial Outlook
  - NSEN's current annual reliable income can sustain its current required expenditures
    - Memberships and donations cover recurring fees and software subscriptions
  - NSEN would like to increase its spending
    - Liability insurance for directors and officers, Zoom, webinars/conferences
  - NSEN therefore needs to increase its revenue in the coming years
    - Increase membership signup/renewal, fundraising events/drives
- Conclusions
  - NSEN is in good shape financially
  - Any extra spending must eventually be balanced with extra revenue
    - Ideal annual core revenue would be \$4000 - \$5000 (double the current amount)
  - \$5000 surplus gives NSEN a financial cushion in the meantime
  - Growing the network is NSEN's goal regardless of the associated revenue

Open for comments / questions: Tina Northrup asks for clarification on the funds used to purchase the new membership management software. Chris White clarifies that the \$5000 HRM grant can cover the annual software fee for three years. There was no initial setup fee because the NSEN team did that work in-house. Tina is satisfied with Chris' response. No further comments or questions.

Motion to approve Financial Report: Tina Northrup moves to approve the financial report. Victoria Byrne seconds. Report is approved.

### **Appointment of 2021/2022 Board Members:**

Chris White recognizes outgoing board members and introduces current board nominees.

- Recognition of outgoing board members:
  - Sheila Richardson (Green Party of Nova Scotia), Megan MacLeod (Co-Chair), James Maguire, Samantha Burns, Thomas Gregoire, Natalie Palmer, Ummar Allatar
  - Special mention for the significant time, energy, and leadership of Megan MacLeod

- Sophia Lindfield and Dylan Yates recognize the significant contributions of Chair Chris White
- Appointment of organizational board members
  - Emily Dodge is appointed to represent Sierra Club Canada
  - Shaun Trainor is appointed to represent Living Earth Council
  - Victoria Byrne is appointed to represent Diocesan Environmental Network
  - Note that Green Party of Nova Scotia is considering appointing Ivan Drouin
  - No further organizational appointments
- Nomination of individual board members
  - Chris White
  - Jayne Hawkins
  - Naomi Boon
  - Note that Sophia Lindfield plans to apply later in June after her staff position ends
  - No further individual nominations

Motion to approve individual board members: Tina Northrup moves to approve the board. Becky Parker seconds. Emily Dodge, Ivan Drouin, and Victoria Byrne vote yes. Board members are approved.

**Launch of NSEN's New Membership Management System:**

Dylan Yates discusses his staff role with NSEN and delivers a tutorial of the new membership system

- Dylan is working full time from April to October and will be focused on:
  - Organizing an environmental networking conference in September
  - Establishing more volunteer-run environmental caucuses under NSEN
  - Documenting NSEN's history through interviews with its past leaders and members
  - Building relationships with Mi'kmaw environmental organizations
  - Strengthening the network through direct outreach with NSEN's member organizations
  - Writing environmental blogs
  - Managing NSEN's volunteer communications team
- Dylan welcomes input from members on any of the above
- Neon CRM demonstration:
  - How to [sign up as a new NSEN member](#)
  - How to [create and access your NSEN account](#)
  - How to update your NSEN member profile
  - How to renew your NSEN membership
    - Pay by credit card with auto-renew feature
    - Pay by cheque or PayPal
  - How to register for NSEN events as a member
- Dylan has received positive feedback from members so far

**Group Discussion: What's next for NSEN?**

James Maguire presents NSEN's future strategy.

- NSEN's role in society has three pillars:
  - A network of environmentally active organizations throughout Nova Scotia
  - A knowledge base of a multitude of different environmental topics
  - A communication hub for external stakeholders
- NSEN's future activity should be built around these three pillars

- Practical steps could include:
  - Bi-monthly emails to membership to collect information/knowledge from the network
  - Storing and processing the collected information/knowledge
  - Communicating the processed information/knowledge to environmental community
  - Growing this system on an ongoing basis to expand NSEN's reach and impact
  - In the long term, building a competency around environmental issues
    - Provide value to various stakeholders

Sophia Lindfield leads a discussion on how NSEN can enact its future strategy.

- Potential near-term actions proposed by the NSEN team:
  - Quarterly check-in and networking meetings with organizations in similar fields
  - Short surveys every few months so NSEN can stay on top of member activities
  - NSEN staff and board members attending members' AGMs and meetings
  - Any member organization is welcome to appoint a representative for the NSEN board
- "Jamboard" session to collect ideas and suggestions from AGM attendees:
  - More events
  - Christmas Networking Party
  - More caucuses
  - Organizing a group consultation on the SDGA
  - NSEN podcast
  - In-person conference/meeting when pandemic rules allow for it
- Sheila Cole suggests that "NSEN Gathering" could be more appropriate than "NSEN Conference"
- Sheila Cole provides advice on forming new NSEN caucuses based on past experience
  - Potential caucuses could include forests, food, health
    - NSEN could try to form specific caucuses
  - Caucuses typically form from the ground up based on common topics of interest
    - NSEN could say "tell us what caucuses would you be interested in"
  - NSEN staff could provide support to caucuses but they should be self-sufficient
  - NSEN could provide its Zoom account to the caucuses

**Closing Remarks and Adjournment:**

Chris White thanks attendees for coming to the AGM and encourages anyone interested to remain on the call for further discussion after the formal proceedings close.

Motion to adjourn meeting: Ivan Drouin motions to adjourn the meeting.

**Meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.**