

Educational campaign about shoreline protection is underway



By Chris Drost

An organization that calls itself BeShore Haliburton has emerged in Haliburton out of a bylaw aimed at protecting shorelines that has been under review for the past three years. This group has embarked on an educational campaign to get the word out, with what they call 'an unbiased format' to increase awareness of the importance protecting shorelines has on preserving the health of our lakes.

The Bancroft Times caught up with Mike Thomas, president of the Paudash Lake Conservation Association, to learn more about this effort. Paudash Lake falls both in Highlands East and Faraday Township. Thomas expects the BeShore group to expand beyond Haliburton as it tries to get the message out. A professionally developed campaign will include messages on radio and through print media, including in the Bancroft and area.

'The education is all about shorelines and about municipalities implementing bylaws to protect them,' says Thomas. There has been an increase in algae blooms as a result of too many nutrients entering the lakes, faulty septic systems and run-off along roads where winter salt has been used. Having a natural buffer along the shoreline is key to reducing the negative impact of these things entering the lake.

Thomas explained that during the past few years there was a lot of pushback from landscape companies and builders in Muskoka where a bylaw to protect shorelines had been introduced. According to Thomas, there was lots of back and forth but now they have largely come around, understanding that they can still do their landscaping. 'If we can stop the type of 'hard shorelines' we see in Muskoka from coming here, that would be good,' says Thomas.

In a recent letter sent to other local organizations, Thomas says, 'With ever increasing human activity on our lakes and rivers, keeping our waters healthy and safe requires human intervention. Many municipalities have already, or are considering expanding shoreline preservation bylaws so that the land from the water to the dwelling can be kept as natural.' He in turn asks for supporters to add their name to the list in an effort to show that a lot of people do care.

According to the BeShore website, protecting our shorelines will protect the future health of our lakes and our economy. It explains that natural shorelines are perfectly designed to filter the waters that flow through them before they reach the lakes. Additionally, they are the perfect habitat for the wildlife that lives among them while at the same time, they somehow manage to be a stunning natural backdrop for our own lives at the lake. It goes on to suggest that a natural shoreline, rich in native vegetation that requires minimal maintenance, offers the best defence against damaging nutrient run-off and lakeside erosion and keeps the whole local

ecosystem healthy and working as nature intended.

The BeShore website <https://www.beshore.ca> offers a five-step guide to planting and maintaining a natural shoreline. It also includes suggestions for choosing native plants and through a partnership between The Coalition of Haliburton Property Owners Association and The Haliburton Master Gardeners Group, provides a link to a Shoreline Plant Finder.