

Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve celebrates 10th anniversary

By Vivian Nemish

Jan. 25, 2010

Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve held a celebration January 21st in Hafford to honour its 10th year anniversary. Pat Fennig, coordinator of the Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve, opened the program by welcoming the representatives from varying levels of partnerships and guests to the evening celebration.

Larry Hawrysh, Chair of the Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve, acknowledged the many individuals and organizations that assisted in vision of Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve including Walter Jess who was instrumental as MLA in getting the doors open with the government and Denis Allchurch, current MLA, for keeping the door open. He concluded his presentation by saying that as the Biosphere Reserve continues to support good practices, all of society will benefit.

John Kindrachuk, AEGP advisor, explained that the 10 year old regional sustainability plan will need to be renewed and updated including the investigating the opportunities for wind generated power. There will be community consultation meetings scheduled for end of February and early March.

Andrew Hawrysh acknowledged the many individuals for their dedication and persistence in the Biosphere Reserve project. It was and continues to be an effort that is dependent on team work.

Peter Kingsmill, one of the original promoters and supporters of RLBR, commented that 20 years ago it was difficult to get 20 people in a room to talk about Redberry Lake as a Biosphere Reserve. Today, many people, organizations and departments of government are beginning to recognize Redberry Lake as a special place. Kingsmill provided some background on the development of the area and concluded by reading a letter from Phil Taylor who was the biologist instrumental in assisting the community with its biosphere and bird sanctuary projects.

Denis Allchurch, MLA for Shellbrook Rosthern, acknowledged the committee for its undying efforts. He extended acknowledgement to Walter Jess for his participation in educating the provincial government and generating government assistance.

"A large amount of work is involved to get an organization such as this going," commented Allchurch, "it is a credit to you all for your continued efforts and dedication to this project."

Andrew Hawrysh also acknowledged Estelle Wurtz from Alpes-Grenoble, France who is a student working with the biosphere committee until the end of March.

"The Biosphere Reserve is not well known locally but it is recognized across the world," said Hawrysh explaining that there have been a number of students from France coming to Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve to work and continue their education.

Redberry Lake is located northwest of Saskatoon near the rural community of Hafford. The Redberry Lake watershed was designated as a Biosphere Reserve by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, more commonly known as UNESCO, January 21, 2000.

The biosphere reserve has three main functions: conservation of its landscape and ecosystem, sustainable development, and to facilitate research. A biosphere is made up of three zones: a core, a buffer zone and a transition zone. Local participation is essential to the operation of a biosphere reserve.

Redberry Lake became the only biosphere reserve in Saskatchewan and one of 15 in Canada as of 2007. Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve covers 112,200 hectares of diverse geographical land that consists of rolling prairie, bush and large and small bodies of water. Redberry Lake has been labeled as one of Saskatchewan's Important Bird Areas has been a Federal Bird Sanctuary since 1925 and a provincial Wildlife Reserve since 1970. The lake is known globally for the Pelican breeding area and nationally for the endangered Piping Plover. The lake is also the migration path of the Whooping Crane and the habitat for nine endangered, threatened or rare species of birds as well as home to over 180 other species.

For more information on the Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve and research projects visit www.redberrylake.ca.