

# Algoma Highlands Conservancy 2018 Annual Report





## Mission and Core Values

*Guided by core values of conservation, silent sport recreation, environmental education and promotion of sustainable forestry, the AHC's vision is to "conserve and protect the unique beauty and ecological integrity of key areas within the Algoma Highlands region."*

**SILENT SPORT RECREATION:** to facilitate low impact, non-motorized recreational pursuits such as: cross-country and backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, mountain biking, hiking, trail running, wildlife viewing, nature photography and painting.

**ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH:** to realize the full potential of the Algoma Highlands as a *living classroom* where ecological concepts and conservation biology can be learned and observed first hand by current and future generations.

**PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT:** to balance environmental protection with the economic, recreational, and spiritual benefits humans can derive from forests. The AHC has committed to managing its land holdings primarily for nature conservation, in which natural processes of growth, succession, and species interactions are generally permitted to proceed without interference.

### Board of Directors

Kara Webster, *President*  
Kees van Frankenhuyzen, *Vice-President*  
Bob Beggs, *Treasurer*  
Laurie McBay, *Secretary*  
Brian Anstess  
Dieter Hohnke  
Elisa Muto  
Lisa Venier

### Staff

Shannon Ramsay, Environmental Education Coordinator  
Jennifer Cross, Executive Director



**ALGOMA HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY**

[www.algomahighlandsconservancy.org](http://www.algomahighlandsconservancy.org)

## Message from the President

Dear friends,

2018 proved to be another busy year for the AHC! Former AHC President, Lisa Venier, retired from the Board and we thank her for the many significant contributions she made to the organization. Our Executive Director, Jen Cross, moved to Alaska to start a new career, yet has continued to perform many of her duties while living at a distance.

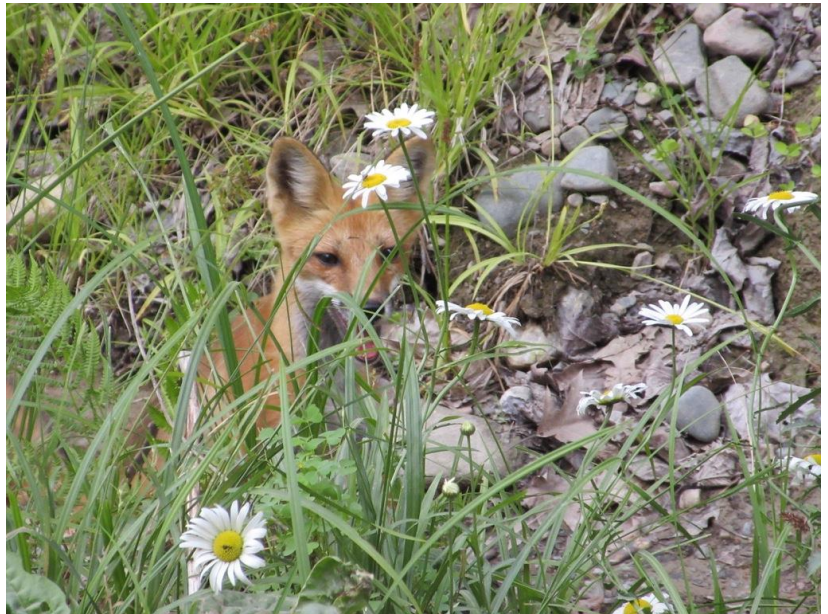
Other activities to highlight this year include the Environmental Education program, under the capable leadership of Shannon Ramsay, who interacted with over 1,600 students from the ADSB in 2018. New this year Shannon spearheaded the Envirothon program, which is a high school environmental education competition, reaching more than 500,000 students across North America annually. The activities within Envirothon are extremely important in developing environmental ethics in our future citizens and inspiring children to pursue studies in Environmental Science. At the post-secondary level, this year saw the first awarding of AHC sponsored scholarships to Sault College (Nathan Earle) and Algoma University students (Jake Kment). Speaking of science, two research papers based on science projects conducted in the Algoma region on wood turtles led by Dean Thompson and Jen Cross with help of other AHC staff and volunteers were published this year. This year also saw the second year of pollinator project led by Elisa Muto.

From the silent sport recreation front, we continue to see use of Norm's cabin now both in winter and summer due to our agreement with Blaq Bear Eco Adventure Routes. Kees van Frankenhuyzen is leading a trail committee to look at use of the Robertson Cliff's trail. This trail has seen an increase in popularity over the last few years and Kees has planned new trail sections and parking to make sure this well-loved trail is sustainable. This past August saw a portion of the AHC property being used by the Crank the Shield mountain bike race. The increase in hiker and biker traffic is leading us to re-evaluate our trail maintenance and development policies to ensure safety and sustainability.

Reaching out to you, our supporters, to keep you informed is important to us and we are making efforts, thanks to our volunteer Derissa Vincentini for re-invigorating our social media posts this year.

Although the mortgage on our land is now paid off, we still have expenses with the activities we do. This year Brian Anstess and his Environmental Technology Group at Sault College hosted the Waterwalker film festival and donated the proceeds to the AHC. We run a very lean organization, but the need is still great to maintain our day to day operations, so please consider us and our worthwhile activities when you are planning your charitable donations this year.

Thank you for your support,  
Kara





## AHC Highlights – Environmental Education

The past year has seen some exciting education activities taking place. The winter season found many school groups exploring the Highlands by snowshoe, setting an animal track trap to see what species reside around the cabin, and engaging in the ever-expanding Animal Survival game. With student input, this year the game was expanded to challenge students to not only identify specific tree species, but also to avoid disease, invasive species and the ever-threatening hunter.

With spring's arrival, school groups came to the AHC and worked to identify invasive plant and animal species, luring earthworms out of the soil with a mustard extraction method and pulling periwinkle to stop it from taking over the nearby native forest. Many groups took on the challenge of hiking up King Mountain, enjoying the reward of lunch and a beautiful view at the top at the King Mountain hut. This spring, the AHC and ADSB partnered to host an Experiential Education day-long workshop at Superior Heights for Junior Level teachers. Shannon Ramsay (Environmental Education Coordinator for



the AHC) and Sarah Constable (Leader of Experiential Learning for ADSB) co-hosted this workshop, leading educators through hands-on environmental activities both indoors and outside to show the value (and fun!) of this kind of authentic and engaging learning.

Students produced a canvas banner by colouring one square to contribute to the final scene, which was not revealed to them until the end of June when it was emailed it to all teachers who brought a class. It was a lot of fun having students guess what it would be, and guesses ranged from parrots to hot air balloons at the beginning to King Mountain hiking and snowshoeing in the Highlands by the end as the scene revealed itself.



This past fall held a few challenges for the Environmental Education program, as there was less funding available to run field trips. However, the Algoma District School Board was able to provide funding for 27 field trips for grade 6 classes, with a focus on biodiversity. Students created quadrats in the forest and were amazed at the number of species they could discover in a one metre by one metre area. Classes participated in biodiversity races, challenging themselves to identify different species through outdoor activities. A fun addition to the program this fall was the decision to go garbage-free. Classes were given the task of bringing litter-free lunches, with any garbage they produced being measured in the disgusting garbage tube, added to a graph and sent back to school with them. A grade 6 class from Greenwood Public School won the garbage-free challenge by producing absolutely no garbage at all!

We encourage anyone who has a child who attended a day of learning with the AHC Environmental Education program to please let your child's teacher, principal or Education office staff know why you value this kind of hands-on, outdoor, authentic learning! Thank you for the support.



## AHC Highlights - Envirothon

In partnership with Sault College, the AHC hosted an Envirothon Winter Activity Day. High school students spent the day being hosted by Sault College students who ran hands-on, informative workshops exploring Wildlife Ecology. Ngaire Roubal spoke on the topic of Climate Change at this event. It was exciting to see four high schools participating this year, with CASS returning to compete after several years off.

The Algoma Regional Envirothon competition was hosted at Stokely Creek Lodge by the AHC in May. Local scientists, foresters and educators kindly gave their time to conduct in-the-field workshops in the four learning areas of Forest, Wildlife, Aquatic and Soil Ecology, giving students a real taste of how experts conduct their work in the outdoors. Students and teachers stayed overnight at the lodge and took part in a competition the following day to determine the regional winning team. A team from Superior Heights won and carried on to take part in the provincial championships at the University of Waterloo.

## Shannon Ramsay – Environmental Educator Coordinator

Love for the natural environment has always shaped Shannon Ramsay's professional and personal choices. Her role as the Environmental Education Coordinator for the Algoma Highlands Conservancy allows Shannon to teach elementary and high school students outside in the snow, water, soil and forest of the AHC to encourage children's curiosity about nature, instill within them a love of fun physical activity and teach the science curriculum along the way.

Shannon gained her teaching experience as a grade 1/2 teacher at an outdoor-focused school in Huntsville and while teaching grades 3-6 for the Algoma District School Board. She continues to share her love of outdoor adventure with young people while coaching cross-country skiing in the Jackrabbits program in the winter and while coaching mountain biking in the wilds of Algoma with the Sprockids program in the warmer months. Shannon also works as a visual artist, and loves to weave the beauty of the natural world into her paintings and drawings.

While off-duty, Shannon can be found snowshoeing, quinzhee building, hiking and swimming with her two wild children Ryan and James, bike-riding husband Scott and energetic border collie, Fernie.





## AHC Highlights – Wood Turtle Research



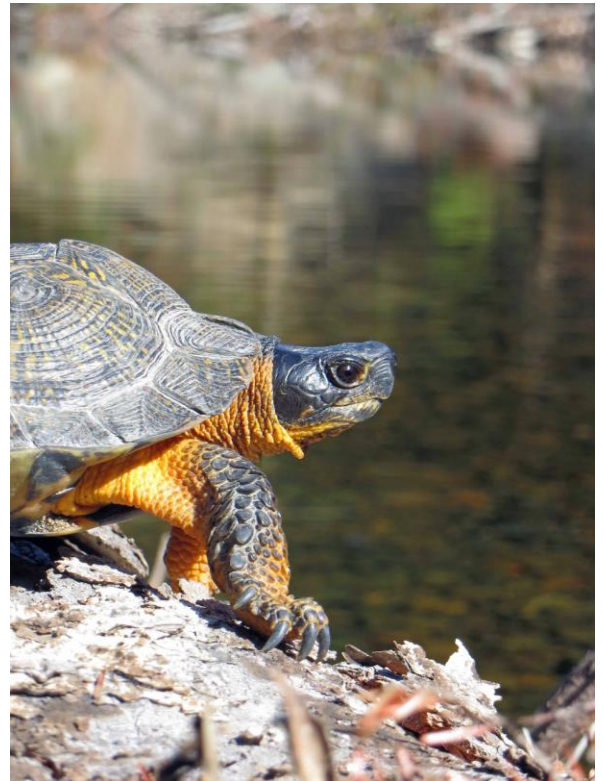
In line with our primary core value of conservation, the AHC strives to protect and enhance wildlife populations and habitat through environmental research initiatives. We are proud to report that our multi-agency collaborative research study on wood turtles came to fruition in 2018 with articles officially published in peer-reviewed scientific journals! Article “Characterizing Wood Turtle (*Glyptemys insculpta*) Populations at the Northwestern Periphery of the Species’ Range in Canada,” is now available in the 2018 Northeastern Naturalist volume 25(4) and article “Fine- and Coarse-scale Movements and Habitat use by Wood Turtles (*Glyptemys insculpta*) based on Probabilistic Modeling of Radio-telemetry and

GPS-telemetry Data,” is available in volume 96 of the 2018 Canadian Journal of Zoology.

Wood turtles are a mid-sized turtle species that prefers river habitat with deep undercut banks for hibernation and sandy-gravel beaches for nesting. Like its name suggests, wooded areas are also essential habitat for wood turtles as they spend more time on land than other native Ontario turtles.

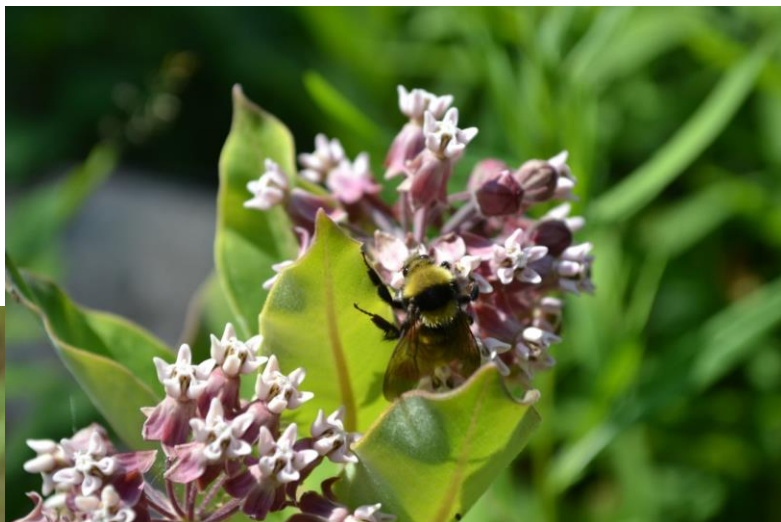
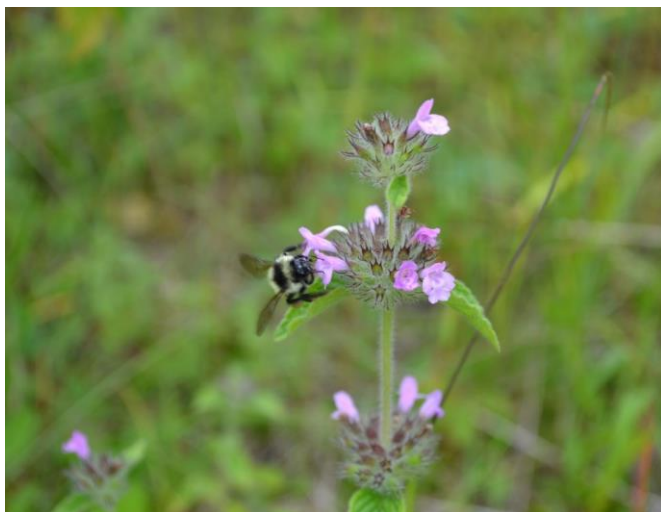
They are listed as threatened at the national level by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada, and as endangered in the province of Ontario. They are at risk due to habitat loss and degradation; road mortality, predation by raccoons, skunks, and foxes; as well as illegal collection by humans for the pet trade. This turtle’s slow growth, late maturity and low reproductive success rate increases its vulnerability to these threats.

Our study focused on monitoring the movement patterns and population status of two discreet northern Ontario turtle populations using radio-transmitters and innovative GPS technology. We are honoured to have lead this multi-agency collaborative project. We thank our funders: Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (OMNRF) Species at Risk Stewardship Fund, Hydro One Networks Inc., and Algoma Power Inc. for making this important work possible. Our research has already been used by the OMNRF for local management decisions and is currently being referenced as part of the species’ re-evaluation process by COSEWIC. After four years of extensive field research, we still have a great deal of data to examine on wood turtle habitat use, so stay tuned for more contributions to the scientific community on this utterly fascinating species!



## AHC Highlights – Pollinator Project

The summer of 2018 marked the end of the pollinator project. This multi-agency, collaborative research project examined pollinator abundance and richness as well as plant-pollinator interactions along managed utility rights-of-way (ROWs) in the Algoma region. Elisa Muto and AHC Conservancy Technician, John Rankin, conducted the final pollinator surveys

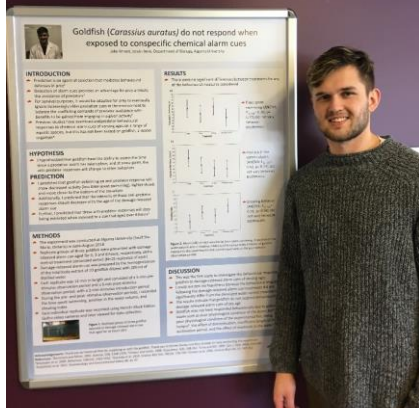


during the 2018 field season. Deirdre Loughnan, AHC Pollinator Project Biologist, worked on the data analysis in the fall of 2018. During this project we documented a number of native pollinators and identified many important flower resources. Next steps may include exploration of potential opportunities to enhance pollinator habitat on AHC lands in the future.

## AHC Highlights - Algoma Highlands Conservancy Award

Sault College and Algoma University students were recognized for their academic excellence and commitment to the AHC's four core values by receiving the first ever Algoma Highlands Conservancy Award in 2018.

Jake Kment



Nathan Earle, is a graduate of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Technician Program and is in the process of completing a post-graduate certificate in GIS. Nathan is an avid bird watcher and hopes to one day obtain employment in a related field.

Jake Kment, is in his fourth year of an honours BSc degree in biology at Algoma University. He hopes to become a physician in Northern Ontario.

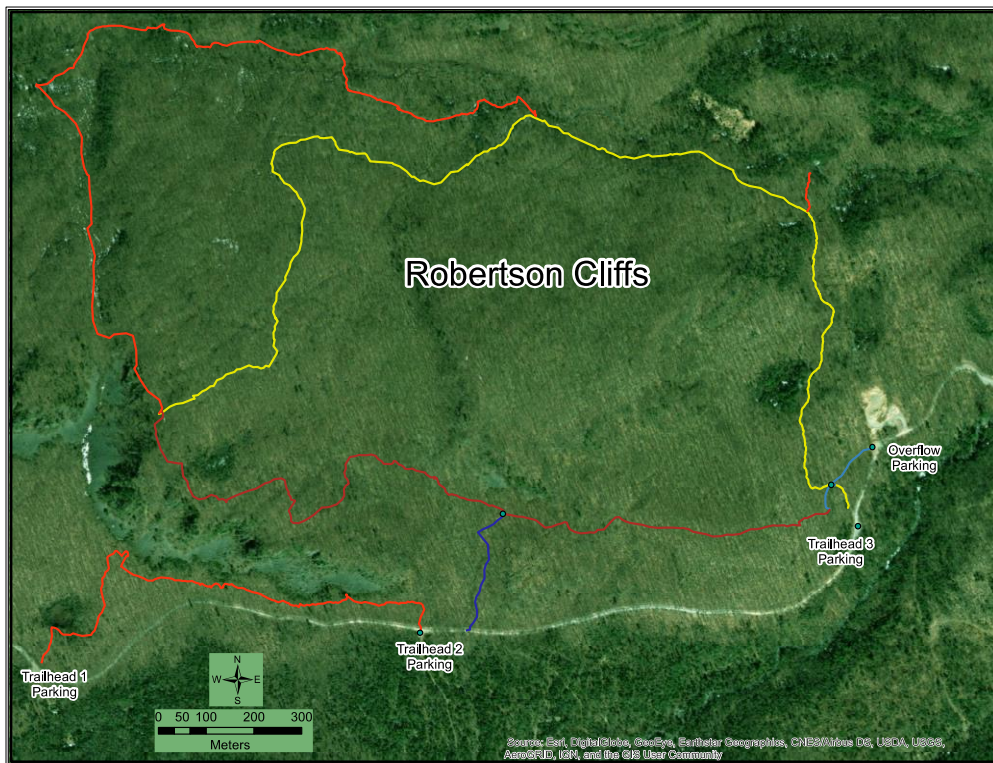
Congratulations Nathan and Jake! Best of luck to you!

Nathan Earle





## AHC Highlights – Robertson Cliffs Trails



2018 saw the implementation of the first phase of trail improvement activities that were identified in 2017 by the joint AHC-Voyageur Trail Association (VTA) committee. Our strategy to deal with foot traffic pressure and vehicle congestion is to create more access points along the 2-km cliff property boundary. Having a single access point with parking for only 15 vehicles lead to trail erosion and unsafe road-side parking during peak hiking season. In 2018, additional parking space for about 30 vehicles was created halfway between the western most parking (trailhead parking 1) and the existing trailhead (trailhead parking 3). A spur trail linking

the new parking lot with the main VTA trail was identified, flagged in, brushed, cleared and blazed, thus creating a second access point. A third access point was established at the western most parking lot by linking it with the new parking lot through a 1.5 km family-friendly trail following the base of the cliffs. The trail visits a small pothole-type of wetland near the cliff base and meanders amongst giant boulders that have calved off the cliffs through a beautiful maple-yellow birch forest. The trail offers spectacular views of the imposing cliffs during the leaf-free season, and has already become a favourite destination for snowshoeing. We thank the volunteers from the VTA and various Sault College programs (in particular students from the Natural Environment and Outdoor Studies Program) for helping build the new trails. Plans for 2019 include construction of a 300 m bypass on the main trail to avoid a badly eroding trail section with multiple wet creek crossings, to install new trailhead signs and to place trail maps at each trail intersection.





## AHC Highlights – Crank the Shield

Crank the Shield is a 3-day mountain bike stage race. It is organized and managed by Sean Ruppel of Superfly Racing and approximately 178 riders participated in the event held mid August in 2018. On Saturday, August 18<sup>th</sup>, the second day, riders were challenged by trails on Algoma Highlands property. They started at Stokely Creek Lodge, where many had spent the night and finished at Searchmont.



## AHC Highlights – Norm's Cabin



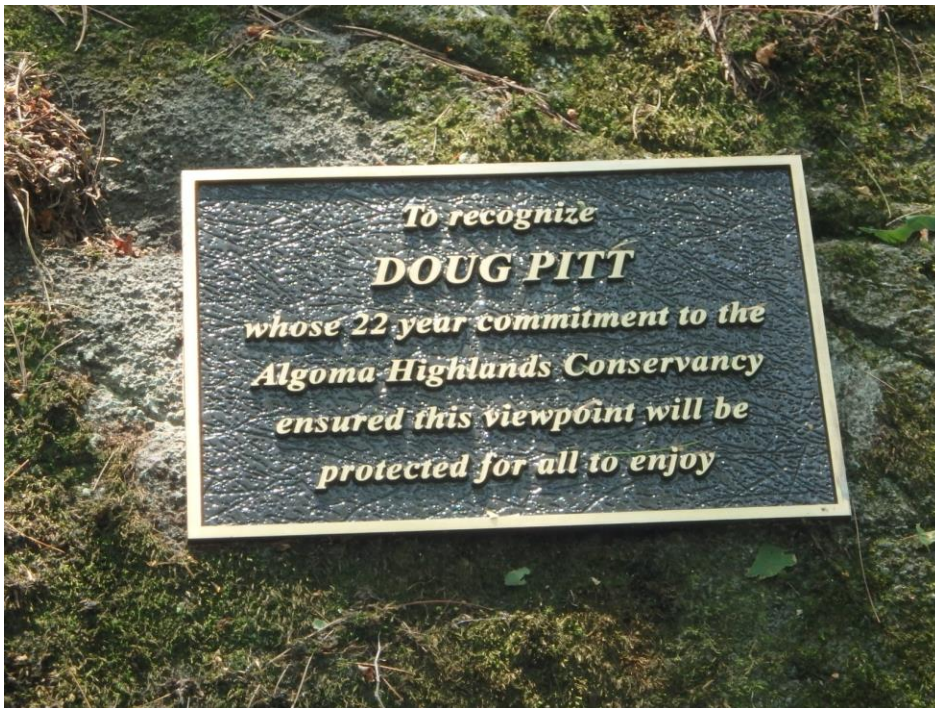
Norm's cabin continues to be a wonderful destination for skiers, hikers, bikers and overnight guests. During the ski season the AHC continued to provide weekend hosts to provide skiers with tea, cookies and a chat in a warm cabin. Relaxing by the fire is so attractive that it is often difficult to get going on the trails again.

Rentals of the cabin have been organized by Carole Blaquiére of Blaq Bear Eco Adventure Routes. In the ski season, guests are required to bring in their own gear and purchase a ski pass. However, in the other seasons, Carole offers a porter service. There were 14 clients in the winter of 2018 and the reservations were through the Blaq Bear website. However, Carole offered Norm's Cabin on AirBnB outside the ski season and was able to rent the cabin for 15 nights between June and September. The guests included 4 people from France and it appears that there is a trend for an increase in overnight bookings.



## AHC Highlights – Doug Pitt

Doug Pitt was a member of the AHC Board of Directors for 22 years. He was tireless in his pursuit of purchasing King Mountain, negotiating a mortgage and subsequently quantifying and selling carbon offsets. The sale of carbon credits allowed the AHC to pay off the remaining mortgage debt in 2017 and subsequently, once the AHC was in a secure financial position, Doug resigned from the Board.



In recognition of Doug's outstanding leadership and dedication to conservation in the Algoma Highlands area, a plaque was secured near the Robertson Cliffs lookout. There was a group hike to view the plaque on Thanksgiving Monday and to toast Doug for his remarkable 22-year contribution to the AHC. After the hike Doug noted that, "We've all worked very hard for a long time to enjoy this little piece of paradise."



## **2018 FINANCIAL POSITION (CANADA)**

*(Notice to Reader)*

<b>ASSETS</b>	<b><u>2018</u></b>	<b><u>2017</u></b>
Current Assets	\$135,389	\$87,107
King Mountain Property, at cost	\$1,522,147	\$1,522,147
Robertson Lake Cliffs, at cost	\$48,412	\$48,412
New Norm's Cabin, at cost	<u>\$252,767</u>	<u>\$252,767</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	\$1,958,715	\$1,910,433
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</b>		
Accounts Payable	\$12,653	\$22,261
Long Term Debt	-	-
Unrestricted Net Assets	<u>\$1,946,062</u>	<u>\$1,888,172</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	\$1,958,715	\$1,910,433
<b>REVENUES</b>	\$122,695	\$152,488
<b>EXPENSES</b>	<u>\$64,805</u>	<u>\$79,948</u>
<b>EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES</b>	\$57,890	\$72,540

## **2018 FINANCIAL POSITION (U.S.A.)**

*(Notice to Reader)*

<b>ASSETS</b>	<b><u>2018</u></b>	<b><u>2017</u></b>
Cash & Receivables	<u>\$4,045</u>	<u>\$54,592</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	\$4,045	\$54,592
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</b>		
Accounts Payable	\$1,199	\$1,200
Unrestricted Net Assets	<u>\$2,846</u>	<u>\$53,392</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	\$4,045	\$54,592
<b>REVENUES</b>	\$692	\$50,000
<b>EXPENSES</b>	<u>\$51,238</u>	<u>\$51,233</u>
<b>EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES</b>	\$(50,546)	\$(1,233)