

***Re-Greening Dwight Beach: A Story with a VERY happy ending.
Deb Cumming, Environment Chair***

The Dwight Beach re-greening project started as most LOBA projects do: the Association identified a need that became an action plan with identified goals and objectives that serve the organization's mandate.

Dwight Beach is a well-loved and actively used community park, swimming beach and boat launch. The beach, however, was uninspired; it is a single strip of sand with a small grass bank and retaining wall without natural plantings. The Environment Committee has been musing for several years about a 're-greening' initiative for Dwight Beach that would make the beach more aesthetically pleasing, provide much needed shade and help process overland water flows .

Beautification is not part of the Environment Committee's mandate but we couldn't resist the opportunity the project provided to show that re-greening and recreation are not incompatible. Every function of the beach has been respected and maintained – swimming, community events, picnicking, the boat launch - recognizing that Dwight Beach serves a vital role in the life of the community. But the re-greening has demonstrated that fun and functionality do NOT have to be sacrificed to environmental stewardship. The pier now has an indigenous plant garden that softens the landscape, stabilizes soil and overland water flows (to a small degree) and shows shoreline plantings don't automatically compromise views – they enhance them. The new maples along the Dwight Beach Road (and we may well plant a few more in 2012) will provide much needed shade and add to shoreline stability and storm water management. And ... a few bright red Muskoka chairs will be in place for anybody and everybody to take in the magnificent views of Dwight Bay and consider that environmental stewardship isn't tough – not when it involves protecting something that is important and valuable to us all.

I started this piece by referring to the Dwight Beach re-greening as a typical LOBA project. And it certainly followed a typical pattern up to a certain point. But what made (and is continuing to make) this story special is the degree to which the LOBA team and their project were supported, encouraged and ultimately adopted by members of the Dwight community.

Stefan Szczerbak, the Township planner was very helpful in getting the project to Council which then gave us a big grin and said ... go for it! Rebecca Krawczyk of Bark Nursery completely understood the concept and delivered her usual terrific design plan, showing once again why she is our go-to girl for stewardship planting. Becky and her husband Peter were the team leaders and Gloria Woodside, Brian Simpson, Betty McDonald and I took two days in June to move topsoil, grade beds, dig holes, do the planting and water, water, water. That's the LOBA piece.

But this was NOT just a LOBA endeavour; members of the Dwight community embraced the project wholeheartedly. Peggy Hurley was an invaluable source of support and encouragement to me in the planning stages of this project and provided good solid advice in terms of how to advance it. Peggy believed in the re-greening of Dwight Beach from the start and worked unselfishly and effectively to enable it. She shared our vision from the outset.

Linda Keown of the Dwight Garden Centre was another stalwart member of the team. The intention had always been to use the Centre as a major supplier of soil and trees. But, Linda (being Linda) was not prepared to stop at the role of arms-length supplier. Linda has not only financially supported the project, but come up with some creative ideas that she implemented at her own cost, such as the wonderful flower barrels that Algonquin Mini Storage supplied and Dwight Garden Centre stocks. In addition, she pursued the dream of “reading chairs” that Peggy and I shared until they became a reality, by contributing to them herself and encouraging the community to donate. Thank you to Dwight Lions’ Club and Algonquin Mini Storage as well as members of the community at large! Watch for installation in the spring of 2012!

The Dwight Beach is a LOBA project – it would be unfair to LOBA (who footed the lion’s share of the bill) to imply otherwise but ... it is NOT an exaggeration to say that the project team was made stronger and more effective through Peggy and Linda’s contributions. We also got a lot of moral, financial and logistical support from others in the community, including Jan Brown, Colin Winterbottom, Gary Best, Elaine Griffioen, Brian Simpson ... and sadly, I may be missing a few!

It gives me (your Environment Committee, your executive and your Board) great pleasure to introduce you to your new and improved Dwight Beach – a community project!



Dwight Beach – BEFORE



Dwight Beach – AFTER

The Work In Progress...



Rebecca Krawczyk and Peter Budwall of Bark Nursery unloading trees and plants



Gloria Woodside and Becky move topsoil to prepare the garden bed



Breaking ground.....

Deb Cumming and Brian Simpson planting a maple



Becky with volunteer Larry Maki from Corbett Cove



Pete, Becky and Deb planting the indigenous garden



Jan Brown delivers lemonade to the thirsty workers!



***Dwight Beach,
enjoyed by all this summer...***



The garden flourished...



The trees grew...

Fall colours...

