

Niagara Escarpment Visionary: Eluned “Lyn” MacMillan

Eluned “Lyn” MacMillan had the vision of a Niagara Escarpment protected from inappropriate development. For being instrumental in establishing the Coalition On the Niagara Escarpment (CONE), Lyn is a Niagara Escarpment Visionary.

In the spring of 1978, Lyn and four others gathered around her kitchen table, decided to form an umbrella coalition of support for the preservation of the Niagara Escarpment, and called it the Coalition On the Niagara Escarpment (CONE). They were responding to a Queen’s Park private member’s bill that would have repealed the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act. Overjoyed by the bill’s defeat, Lyn attracted representatives like John Willms from the Canadian Environmental Law Association, Ron Reid from the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and others from Canadian Nature Federation, Pollution Probe, and the Foundation for Aggregate Studies, a group opposing aggregate extraction.

CONE’s first victory was to stop the development of a retreat to be known as Contraction at the Forks of the Credit. Lyn organized a letter-writing campaign when the Minister of Housing approved the project after it had been denied by the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC). The letters drew attention to the possibility that



From left: CONE members Monte Dennis, vice president, Robert Patrick, president, Lyn MacMillan, founder, Josh Gordon, director.



Lyn MacMillan and Don Scott, chair of the Niagara Escarpment Commission, hold Lyn’s Niagara Escarpment Lifetime Achievement Award.

this development approval may have been a political favour to the developer. The Ontario Cabinet stopped the project.

In 1980, Lyn led a delegation to see Premier Bill Davis to secure conservancy funds to acquire and preserve environmentally sensitive Escarpment lands. She left the meeting with a commitment for a million dollars from the Premier.

Lyn arranged to have CONE members present at all three public meetings for the rollout of the Niagara

Escarpment Plan, where CONE members often encountered open hostility from local residents and proponents for real estate and aggregate development. She recounts that she walked into community halls where local landowners buffeted her with their elbows out and tried to intimidate her by burning effigies of Bill Davis in the parking lot.

Lyn “walks the talk!” She doesn’t ask others to do what she would not do herself. And she leads by example. She and her late husband

Bob MacMillan donated their Vaughan farm to the Nature Conservancy of Canada to protect it from inappropriate development in perpetuity. The farm was valued at over 12 million dollars and was at the time, the single largest conservation donation in Canadian history.

Here’s another story that has circulated about Lyn. Once when she felt she had to see a certain government minister, she just showed up at his offices. His receptionist said that he was extremely busy and perhaps Lyn could make an appointment to see him another time. Instead, Lyn said that she could wait, and sitting in his outer office, took out her knitting to keep her occupied until they could meet. Lyn was determined to see the Minister. Her determination was one of her great gifts that made CONE so strong.

In 1985 Lyn was appointed to the NEC. Other people who have helped run CONE over the years include Rob Leverty, Cathy Spoel, Jason Thorne, Bradley Shaw, Phyllis Lee, Leslie Adams and Chris McLaughlin. As current president of CONE, I can state that Lyn continues to be an inspiration to us as she conveys her interest in our activities and continues to be an active supporter of CONE.

In May 2012, she was awarded the Niagara Escarpment Lifetime Achievement award by the NEC. **NEV**