

2016 Report to HRM Parks and Recreation



HRM Day Camp Participants

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Executive Summary

The Dartmouth Dragon Boat Association (DDBA) is a non-profit organization that was established to promote and foster dragon boat paddling within HRM. DDBA has just wrapped up its eleventh season, and has had its most successful year ever in terms of the programs we offer and the number of participants. There were over 175 participants in its club programs and over 1000 people participated at no charge in its community access programs.



2000 meter Champs 2016 Orlando Festival

DDBA has been providing dragon boat activities in Kiwanis Graham's Grove Park since 2006, and in 2016, offered the following programs: Drop In/Sunrise Paddles (175 participations), HRM Day Camps (932 participants), DDBA recreational and competitive crews (107 registered members), off season dry land training (75 participants), DDBA Manulife Dragon Boat Festival participation(80 participants), DDBA Race League (100 participants), Blind/Partially

Sighted Crew (125 participations), and HRM Recreation Day (26 participants). Over 1000 people from our community, age 7 to 70, participated in DDBA programs this past season. Many of our programs are open, without restriction, to the community, and several were conducted at no cost to the participants. All costs, including equipment, insurance, coaching, and building maintenance are covered through program participation fees and fund raising. To date, DDBA has operated without any grants or sponsorship. DDBA greatly appreciates the use of the building and site at the HRM facility at Kiwanis Graham's Grove Park. The Board strives to make our programs align with HRM Council's Healthy Community objectives of Inclusion and Accessibility, and we would like to share our success story.

Background

While the sport of dragon boat racing has an ancient history in China, it has been growing in popularity worldwide. There are nearly 50 million participants in China; over 300,000 in the UK and Europe, including Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Russia; 90,000 in Canada and the USA and many thousands in Australia and New Zealand and with the sport now spreading through the Caribbean, Africa and the Pacific Basin. It is often referred to as the second fastest growing sport in the world today next to soccer.



Its popularity is due to it being a sport that can be done by people of all ages, and all abilities, whether a recreational paddler or a competitive athlete. A dragon boat is a flat bottomed boat, 41 feet long and 4 feet wide at its widest point. 20 paddlers share 10 benches, in a seated position, with a steersperson in the back. It is very stable, which makes it easier for people of all abilities to participate.

The popularity of dragon boat in Canada has been growing since the late 90's, when Canada began competing very successfully at the international level. Today, Canada is recognized as one of the best in the world at international competitions. Teams are currently being selected for the International Dragon Boat Federation (IDBF) 13th World Nations Championships in Kunming, China, August 23-27, 2017. HRM has had a number of contributors to Canada's success at an international level, and has several athletes currently participating in team selection for 2017. Lake Banook is well recognized within the North American dragon boat community as a premier place to paddle.

Dartmouth Dragon Boat Association



Facility at Kiwanis Graham's Grove Park

The Dartmouth Dragon Boat Association (DDBA) is a non-profit organization that was established to promote and foster dragon boat paddling within HRM and has been providing dragon boat programs to the residents of HRM since 2006. DDBA is affiliated with Dragon Boat Canada, and the International Dragon Boat Federation (IDBF).

DDBA promotes dragon boat by offering programs to the public. In order to ensure the sustainability of the growing programs, DDBA

minimizes overhead by:

- Leasing boats through Dragon Boat East (DBE), a local provider of dragon boat equipment and services. DBE takes on the responsibility of equipment purchase, maintenance, insurance and storage, effectively outsourcing our capital equipment requirements.
- Leveraging the HRM facility at Kiwanis Graham's Grove Park
- Supporting the administration through volunteers
- Ensuring all costs, including equipment, insurance, coaching, and building maintenance are covered through program participation fees and fund raising. To date, DDBA has operated without any grants or sponsorship, and has no debt.
- Leveraging social media, word of mouth, and HRM's digital sign on Prince Albert Road near Senobe to promote awareness of programs

Location

DDBA offers its programs and services at Kiwanis Graham's Grove Park on Lake Banook. DDBA currently has a lease agreement with HRM for use of the small building within the park. As part of the lease agreement, DDBA has been maintaining the building at a cost of approximately \$2,000 per year. In 2016, DDBA undertook some minor maintenance repairs within the building. We also periodically plan a club volunteer activity for general stewardship and cleanup of the site, and completion of any required maintenance. Most recently, volunteers cleaned debris and leaves from the beach, and from the boat cage. DDBA has spent over \$15,000 maintaining the HRM building since 2006. Next year we plan on painting the west side of the building and repairing the window frame.

This location is ideal for the following reasons:

- There is a sandy flat bottom ideal for loading boats.
- Easy access to the highway, as many participants are coming from outside of the Dartmouth area.
- The waters of Lake Banook and Lake MicMac are patrolled by the Lake Patrol.
- Speed limits on Lake Banook help reduce large boat traffic and wash that can have an impact on paddlers
- The club house provides washroom facilities, storage for paddles and life jackets, secure place to leave keys/purses while on the water
- The cage outside the clubhouse provides secure storage for the recreational canoe required for accessing the moored dragon boats.
- Proximity to local Stand Up Board rental, as there is a lot of crossover in interest.



Fall Cleanup

- Easy proximity to either Lake Banook or Lake MicMac. In case of activities such as regattas on Lake Banook, the dragon boats can be taken directly to Lake MicMac without interfering with or causing any wash for races.
- Availability of parking
- Space to provide mooring for the dragon boats
- Space to provide a wharf for loading dragon boats
- Visibility to the public as they are walking the trail or allowing their dogs to run in the park, or as they are driving by

There have also been benefits to the community from the DDBA programs and services being offered in this location:

- Increased vitality of the park
- Reduction in usage of park by vagrants or homeless building temporary shelters
- Wharf provided by DDBA utilized by paddlers, fishermen, families and dog owners
- Attraction of kayakers and stand up board paddlers
- Continued growth of dragon boat to our current level of 175 participants in club programs and over 1000 participants in community access programs at no charge.

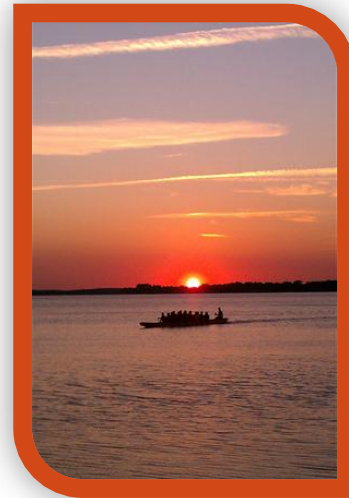


Programs and Services

Today DDBA offers a number of programs. The participants in these programs refer to themselves as the Dragon Beasts, sometimes known as the Beasts from the East.

Drop In/Sunrise Paddles

Drop In sessions are held on Friday nights throughout the summer and are open to the public at no cost. There are also Sunrise Paddles on Friday mornings that are open to the public at no cost. These sessions provide an opportunity for people to try dragon boat and just get out and enjoy the lake. This service is provided by DDBA in support of our mandate to promote dragon boat in Dartmouth. There were 11 drop in sessions held, with 80 people participating a total of 120 times, so on average 11 people attended each session. Each person on average attended 1.5 times. There were 9 Sunrise Paddles, with 33 different people participating a total of 133 times, so on average 15 people attended each session. Each person attended 4 sessions on average. While many just enjoy the chance to get in a boat, some go on to participate in other regular DDBA programs.



Safety Instruction

HRM Day Camps

Program leaders from HRM were able to call and book dragon boat sessions as part of their day camp programs. This was included within the cost of the HRM program. DDBA provided staff and all equipment to conduct the sessions. The session included some orientation to dragon boat, including safety protocol. Kids had the opportunity to go around the islands in Lake MicMac (Bull Rock and Owl's Nest) in hopes of seeing the eagles, or the many osprey, and sometimes even a muskrat! These sessions proved to be very popular, and definitely something we will continue in the future. In 2016, there were 47 sessions held with approximately 932 children and camp instructors participating.

Recreational Crew

This was the third year for the Recreational crew, a program available for people interested in once a week fun and fitness. It is an introductory program with a focus on skill development and technical instruction. Saturday morning would often find us paddling around Bull Rock and

Owl's Nest in Lake MicMac searching for eagles. Members of the competitive crews regularly attend these sessions in order to receive additional instruction and opportunity to work on their technique in a more relaxed environment. This program is a good progression from the drop in sessions for people who are interested in participating on a more regular basis, and also offers a progression to the competitive crew, if that is the goal. A number of the participants last year went on to join competitive crews this year. This year we had several people who started out in the drop in program join the Recreation Crew, and we have a few of the Recreation Crew members planning on participating in the winter training this year. We had one participant who is blind, and through these practices, learned to paddle and stay in stroke without her vision. She has now moved on to be a member of one of the competitive crews. There were 7 registered members of the Rec crew this year, all women between 30 and 60.



Competitive Crews

DDBA has two competitive crews that train three times a week, with a focus on fitness and competition. The two crews train from early spring to fall on the water, and compete at a number of festivals locally as well as in locations such as Montreal, Toronto, and Orlando. The



2016 Champions Race on the River

competitive crews have grown from a handful of people, hoping there were enough to go out in a boat, to nearly 100 participants today. Participants, both men and women, range in age from early 20s to late 60s, training together. While there is normal turnover every year, there has been continued growth, and there are a number who have been part of the club since its inception.

A number of the participants are continuing their lifelong participation in an active lifestyle. This offers them an

opportunity to continue to train hard and participate in a competitive sport, for some at a world level. Several members have participated in and medaled at World Championships for dragon boat. We currently have two members trying to make the over 40 and over 60 Canadian teams for the 2017 Dragon Boat World Championships in Beijing, China.

But for many, this has been an introduction to an active lifestyle. People who have never been athletic in their life are now training side by side with high performance athletes. This has been a significant change of life style for many of our members, and has visibly improved their health and fitness, as well as creating a significant social network!

Off Season Dry Land Training



Dragon Boat Ergometer

Throughout the winter, dry land training is available two to three times a week for members of the recreation and competitive crews. The training is typically held in gym space leased through one of the canoe clubs. DDBA has been continuing to invest in a growing amount of equipment for the winter training, such as weights, medicine balls, and dragon boat ergometers. The Dry Land Training is an important means to maintaining fitness levels during the winter months, as well as a great way to focus on skill development. Typically there are 70-80 participants.

DDBA Manulife Dragon Boat Festival Participation

DDBA coordinates the club's entries into the annual Manulife Dragon Boat Festival held on Lake Banook in support of the Nova Scotia Amateur Sport Fund. This year, DDBA entered 4 crews, a total of 80 people, comprised of competitive crew members, as well as associates from crews from other parts of Canada and the U.S. These associates, 18 in total, came to HRM to paddle with the Dragon Beasts on Lake Banook, and to participate in a training camp, paddling alongside DDBA paddlers.

Dartmouth Dragon Boat Race League



100 Meter Sprint in the Cove

This was the second year for the DDBA Race League. The race league is a racing series, with three rounds of racing, and championship being determined based on accumulated points. The race league is open to the public, and has attracted participants from within DDBA programs, former program participants, friends and family, and other local fitness groups. This year, seven crews participated, with close to a hundred participants. The Race League offers good local competition, and also provides some visibility of the sport as the Race League is held in Kiwanis Graham's

Grove Park, and easily seen by the walkers, the dog walkers, and people who have stopped by for ice cream. To see how exciting and close the races are, you can see [dragon boat video](#) of the races taken by Scotia Droning.

Blind/Partially Sighted Crew

Building on the dragon boat session conducted in 2015, DDBA established an ongoing program for Blind/Partially Sighted athletes and their guides. There were 7 sessions held over the summer. We had 8 Blind/Partially Sighted athletes participate, as well as their sighted guides. One of the blind athletes was also in a wheelchair. She was delighted to be able to get out in a boat!



The crew was regularly supplemented by a number of volunteers from the competitive crews, who came to help provide the motion so important for these athletes to be able to feel the boat movement. A number of those volunteers also participated in Sighted Guide training through the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA). We introduced a volunteer-run Dog Squad for athletes with a service dog.

DDBA worked with CNIB Atlantic as well as Blind Sport Nova Scotia to promote awareness of this program, and next year will be looking for further means to promote awareness. We also used social media to help spread the word. The program was funded by DDBA, and was offered

free of charge to the participants. The athletes went from being wildly out of stroke to being able to paddle in stroke, and even have a time trial at the end of each practice with a goal to getting faster every time. The crew is looking for an opportunity to race next year!

HRM Recreation Day

DDBA participated this year in HRM Recreation Day on June 4 from 2PM to 4PM. We had a total of 26 participants, including several families with young children. The kids loved getting in the boat and going under the highway where you could yell!

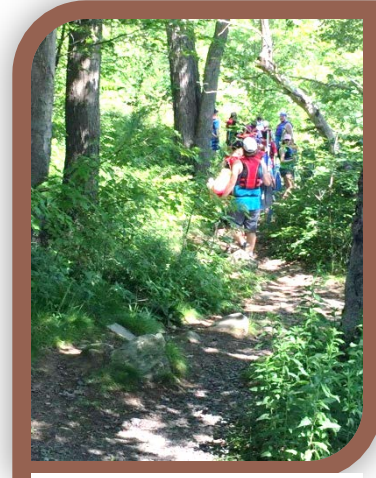
Future Plans

Growth of Blind/Partially Sighted Crew

DDBA will continue to leverage social media, and to work with CNIB Atlantic as well as Blind Sports Nova Scotia to make blind and partially sighted athletes aware of this program. We will also be looking for other means such as the media. There has already been some interest from CTV Atlantic in a story, and we have already had a preliminary discussion with CTV Morning Live about doing a promotional piece in the spring.

Accessibility

The facility at Kiwanis Graham's Grove Park is already wheelchair accessible. There are two routes from the club house to the dock, either through a path through the woods, or by walking around. Neither route is very smooth and requires quite a bit of care for a sighted guide to lead their partner athlete. In addition, it is even more difficult for a wheel chair. We are unable to get a wheelchair right down on the dock and on several occasions had to support a wheelchair bound athlete to walk to the boat when we could go no further. DDBA will be looking for some means to improve the access to the dock and looking for approval from HRM as it will involve moving some rocks.



Path to the wharf

Winter training facilities

Currently, the DDBA teams lease space from Banook Canoe Club during the winter months to conduct dry land training. The time available is fairly restrictive given the growth of the club, and given Banook's own programs. The gym does have space for our four dragon boat ergometers and other equipment, however, we are required to move it and find a spot to store it for the summer. We have no long term commitment from Banook, and have to hope every winter that the space will still be available to us. The space is also not very accessible so we are unable to offer winter training to our blind/partially sighted athletes. In the longer term, DDBA is looking for affordable space that can be used for the winter training that addresses these issues and is more sustainable.

Building

While DDBA currently has a lease on the facility in Kiwanis Graham's Grove Park, the facility is aging and there is a risk that at some point in the future, the facility may not be available for lease. DDBA has begun a building fund, with a view to replace the existing facility if that is a viable option. We have a number of members who have been with the club for many years that we feel would contribute to a building fund. Through relations within the community, we feel we could count on some companies for contributions in kind. We also believe there are fund matching opportunities through Sports Nova Scotia. While a new building is not in our immediate plans, it is on our radar and we are making long term preparations.