

Guest Speaker: Brian Craig

Brian Craig is the president of the Long Point Biosphere Reserve Foundation. UNESCO designated the reserve in 1986 as a special place because of its coastal ecosystem and Carolinian forest. In the last 30 years, the Long Point area has advanced in its protection of trees, plants and wildlife. At the same time, the shoreline is threatened by an invasion of tall weeds called phragmites.

Brian has volunteered with the reserve for 24 years. He grew up in the Ottawa Valley and came to Norfolk in 1978. He retired five years ago after working at Stelco, Environment Canada and Parks Canada. He says if we want a good economy, we must have a good environment.

Brian showed a 50-minute documentary from TVO called Striking Balance: Long Point Biosphere Reserve. Here are some highlights from the show.

History: In pioneer times, Long Point was difficult to police so in 1866 Canada sold it to the privately owned Long Point Company, which preserved and protected the point. The company gave back the eastern half of its property, 8,000 acres, to Canada in the 1970s.

Pioneers cleared so many trees that western Norfolk became a desert. Trees from the St. Williams Forestry Station helped stabilize the land, which became the successful home of tobacco farming in the 20th century.

Restoration: Today the area has nearly 30 per cent tree cover. In the 1980s wild turkeys were reintroduced. Prairie grasses are helping diversify the land. The Nature Conservancy of Canada has spent \$37 million to buy and restore 5,000 acres, including the Backus Woods. Ten culverts help snakes, turtles and other amphibians travel safely under Long Point causeway.

Phragmites threat: This tall weed has taken over 40 per cent of the shoreline of Long Point. If left unchecked, it will cover the whole point in five to 10 years. Government has given emergency permission to spray with Roundup, roll and burn phragmites.

Bruce Bowyer introduced and thanked Brian.

Note: You can watch the documentary on TVO's website. Go to:

<http://tvo.org/video/documentaries/striking-balance/ep-1-long-point>



Brian Craig

How about them apples?



From left: Joyce Wright, Cal McDougall, Gerry Kott, Nestor Rosa, Helen Uren, Fred Wassmer, Rick Middaugh, Keith Rumble, Jack Beamer, Dave Montross, Frank Brock, Dennis Banning, Dan Pearson and guide Tanya Keirsebilck-Martin watch apples take a water ride.

PROBUS tours Norfolk Fruit Growers Association

Twenty PROBUS members and their guests enjoyed a tour of the Norfolk Fruit Growers on Jan. 5. The association can store more than 900,000 bushels of apples in more than 3.5 acres of buildings on Highway 3 in Simcoe.

The association had 200 members when it was founded in 1906. Today its seven members harvest 1,300 acres of orchards within a 20-minute drive of Simcoe. The association stores, sorts, packs and ships its apples across North America and the Caribbean. The main varieties are Empire, Red Delicious, Macintosh and Gala. Its main customers are Sobey's, Wal-Mart and Metro.

Every apple is sorted and tracked digitally. Bar codes keep track of every case and every skid of apples. Apples can be stored up to a year in 48 sealed controlled-atmosphere rooms. Once apples are taken from storage, they are sorted, packed and shipped in as soon as one day.

There is minimum waste, said guide Tanya Keirsebilck-Martin. Small apples are bagged as school apples for children. Blemished apples are sold for juice or fed to livestock.

Our tour ended with coffee and the Apple Store's famous apple cinnamon doughnuts. Thank you, Tanya, for leading the tour. And thank you, Dick Pearson, for organizing this interesting and educational event.



President Murray Uren chats with guide Tanya Keirsebilck-Martin.