



LES AMIS DE LA RÉSERVE NATIONALE DE FAUNE DU
LAC SAINT-FRANÇOIS

ANNUAL RAPPORT 2019



**FRIENDS OF THE OF LAKE SAINT-FRANÇOIS NATIONAL
WILDLIFE RESERVE**

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Discover the natural diversity of the reserve!

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A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Board of Directors of the Friends of the Lake Saint-François National Wildlife Reserve had a tough job this year due to staff turnover. The board of directors made decisions with regards to the management level of the organization. Promoting Karina LeClair to the position of manager has made it possible to successfully finalize the year 2019. This task was facilitated by the return of our competent maintenance and nature interpreter-guide team.

Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) continued its investment in animation and updating of interpretation activities (animation plan, leaflets and interpretation signage, etc.). This investment is major and allows us to ensure the continuity of our awareness-raising mission.

I would also like to thank the members of the board of directors for their involvement this year. We must not forget the volunteers: thank you for your help!

2020 promises to be a positive year with new projects, although we still cannot get confirmation of long-term funding from the Haut-Saint-Laurent MRC. Nothing is perfect. I forgot; Karina is now the coordinator of the organization. A new challenge that seems to please her ... she has a lot of ideas and her job doesn't prevent her from sleeping, at least that's what she tells me.

Denis Gervais, president

A WORD FROM THE COORDINATOR

The Haut-Saint-Laurent region is, in my opinion, the best kept secret in the Montérégie. The Lake Saint-François National Wildlife Reserve, located at its southern end, captures the hearts of visitors who explore it for the first time. Those who already know it cannot resist the urge to return, to rediscover it through a camera lens or by walking its paths. I myself was won over by its charms, and I am honoured to be entrusted with the coordination of activities for the end of last season and for the season to come.

2019 was a year of adaptation for the organization: new management and the restructuring of the team; lots of challenges to face and a season that went by far too quickly. I would like to thank each of the employees for their support and excellent work. Your involvement makes all the difference!

I would also like to thank the entire Canadian Wildlife Service team from Environment and Climate Change Canada, as well as the Cap Tourmente team for their support in keeping up with the changes in the organization. Your patience and your confidence have enabled the Friends organization to go through this transition and provide quality service to our visitors.

Finally, I would like to thank each member of the board of directors for their invaluable advice, support and involvement throughout the season.

The 2019 season was marked by the intense heat wave of July and August and by strong winds. These two weather conditions made our activities on the water more difficult. Nevertheless, the public showed up and we are proud of the results that we present to you today, because it is the result of solid, determined teamwork.

Thank you for this great season!

Karina LeClair, coordinator

MISSION

To publicize, promote and protect the wetlands of the Lake-Saint-François National Wildlife Reserve.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Members of the 2019 Board of Directors

- Denis Gervais, president
- Serge Bourdon, vice president
- Erin O'Hare, secretary
- Johanne Leduc, treasurer (representative of Saint-Anicet)
- Amy Stolecki, administrator and translation support
- Yves Lalonde, administrator (representative of Dundee)
- Curtis Lazore, administrator (representative of the Mohawks of Akwesasne)
- Jean De Marre, administrator
- André Picard, administrator

During 2019, the board of directors and the executive council met 10 times to ensure the effective running of the organization as well as the implementation of the ECCC contract regardless of changes to management.

TEAM 2019-2020

The 2019 team of Friends of the Lake-Saint-François National Wildlife Reserve consisted of:

- An administrative assistant / receptionist / manager
- A maintenance employee
- Two student interpreter-guides
- A student interpreter-guide and maintenance support
- A general manager

At the start of the season, Caroline Thivierge, general director, resumed her studies and Marie-Ève Rochefort took the position of acting general director. Unfortunately, Ms. left this position by Rochefort mutual agreement. Subsequently, the board of directors made the decision to promote Karina LeClair, the administrative assistant, to the position of manager for the rest of the season.



From front to back : Marie-Ève Rochefort, Simon Thibert, Daniel Lafleur, Karina LeClair, Dylan Burrows, Julia Nieuwenhof

VISITOR PROFILES

Visitor profiles are varied and are much the same as in previous years. However, the profiles encountered according to their frequency are:

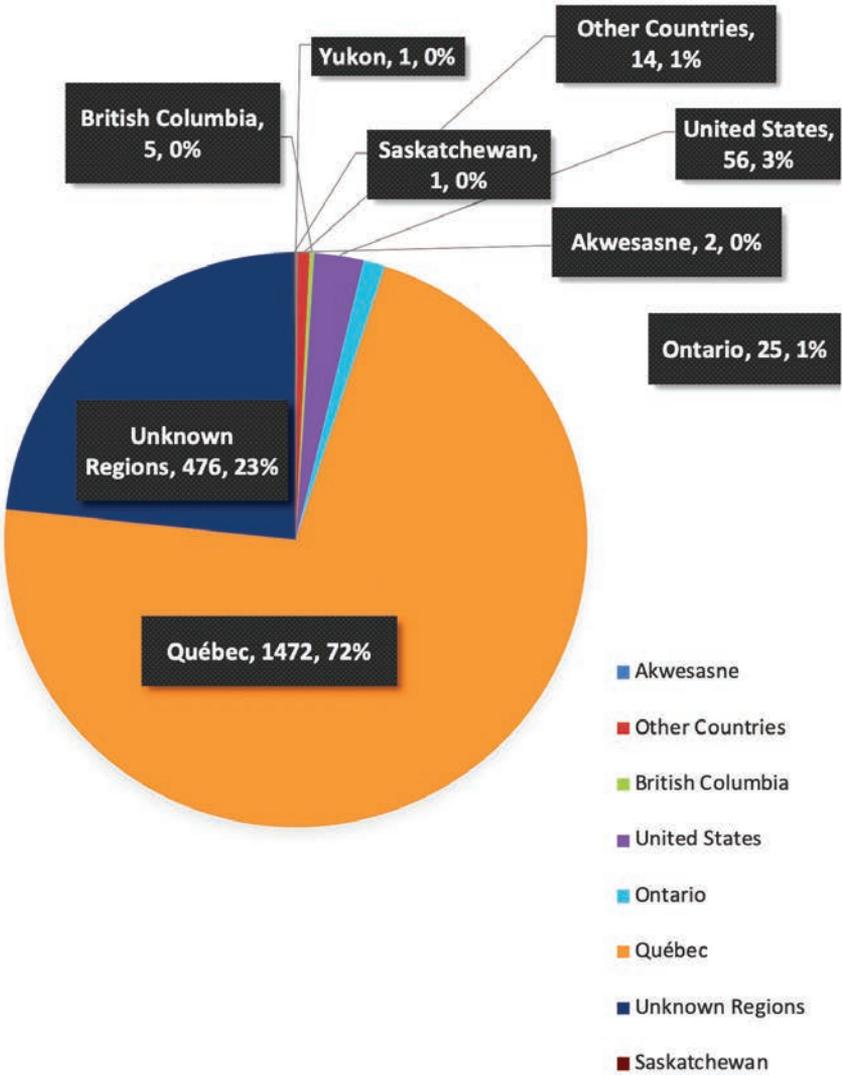
- School groups & day camps & businesses
- Ornithologists
- Couples
- Families
- Walkers
- Dog walkers *

* On this subject, we receive many positive comments since places where dogs are accepted for hiking are scarce.

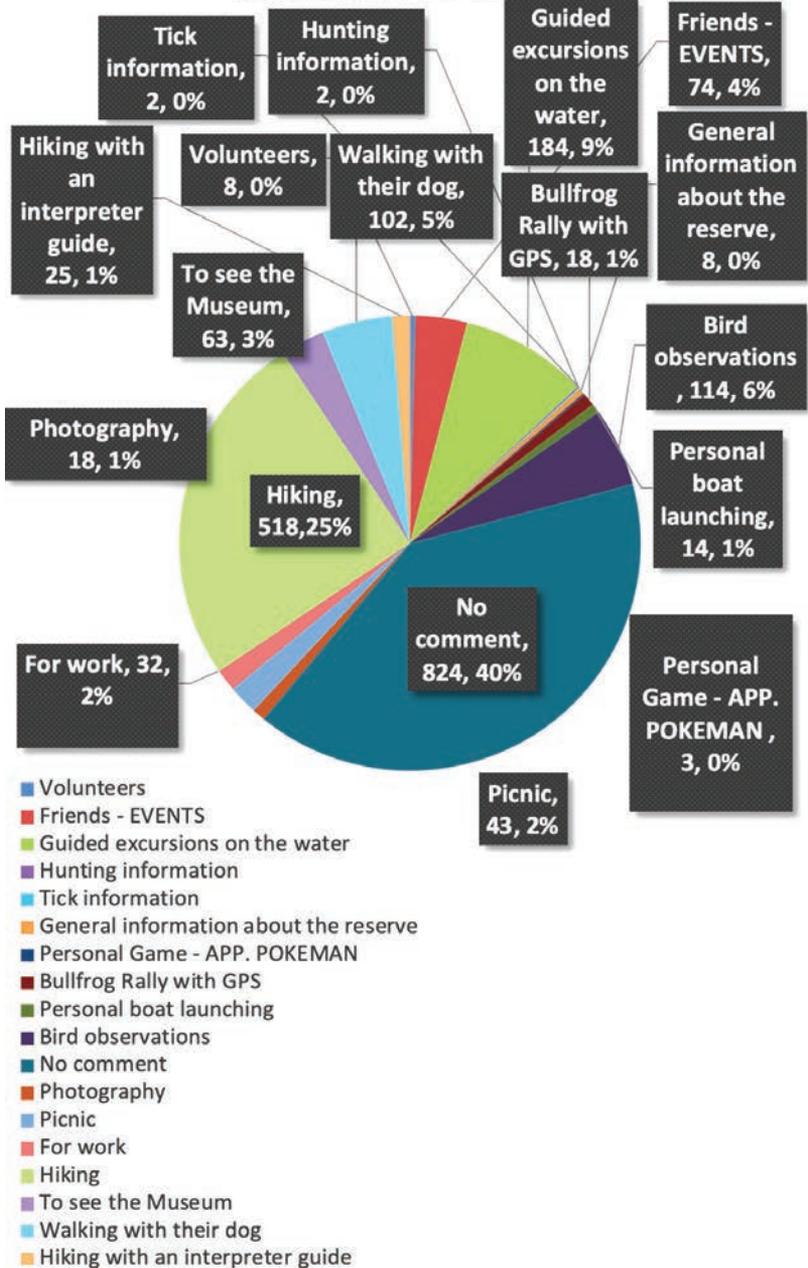
It's impossible for us to count the number of visitors who go directly to the trails without passing by reception. However, between May 1 and October 31, 2019, 2052 visitors passed by the site's reception desk or participated in one of our activities. We estimate the total number of visitors for the season at 3200 people, a decrease of 15% from our usual traffic. The oppressively hot summer temperatures were often mentioned by visitors who canceled their excursions. August was the busiest month with no less than 386 visitors at the reception desk alone.

The majority of our visitors come from Quebec (1472 people). The citizens of Haut-Saint-Laurent use the reserve's trails on a regular basis. That said, the most of our visitors come from outside the region (table attached to this report). We also draw your attention to visitors from outside Quebec: 25 people from Ontario, 56 people from the United States, 7 people from other provinces (British Columbia, Yukon, Saskatchewan), 476 people who did not specify their region, as well as 14 people from other countries, including France, Switzerland and England. We estimate 65% French-speaking customers versus 35% English-speakers.

BY REGION



VISITORS INTERESTS



How they heard about us	Total number of visitors
Had worked for the Friends of the RNF LSF	3
Highway 132 signs	19
Ballise Québec / Balise.ca	3
Ormsdown Library	3
Bird Protection Québec	2
Bird Studies Québec - Sheldon Harvey's group	14
Word of mouth	6
Camping Dauphin	2
Paper maps	2
Cottages in Sainte-Anicet	4
Cottages on Pointe-Fraser	29
Knew the place, but never came	5
Had already visited a few years back	36
Leaflets from Friends RNF LSF	8
Television show called FOU DES OISEAUX	14
Online	6
Visiting a friends cottage in Dundee	4
FACEBOOK Page : Friends RNF LSF	22
Google maps	27
Groups: Visitors exchange (Valleyfield - France)	41
Group Joie de Vivre	13
Group SOFA	3
Dog Guide / hike with my dog	8
Guide books of Montérégie	8
Guide books on hiking	15
Guide books on birds	4
Tourist guide books	24
Frequent visitors of the Lake Saint-François reserve	158
IGA Huntingdon	2
Unknown / No comment	1128
INSTAGRAM	1
Internet	13
Droulers site	3
Cooper Marsh	1
Regional county municipality (MRC) of Haut-Saint-Laurent	11
Out of curiosity	2
From acquaintances	184
By ornithologists	7
By chance	3
By the company called AMBIOTERRA	1
Through work	7
Official geocache trail	1
Québec oiseaux magazine	13
Internet research	183
Bothai restaurant in Huntingdon	4
Friends of RNF LSF website	2
ENVIRONMENT CANADA website	3
Total visitors for Season 2019	2052

SOCIAL MEDIA

Those who subscribe to our page	February 28 th 2019	February 28 th 2020	Increase or reduction of our subscribers
FACEBOOK 	1807 people	2012 people	+ 205 people
INSTAGRAM 	N/A	36 people	+ 36 people

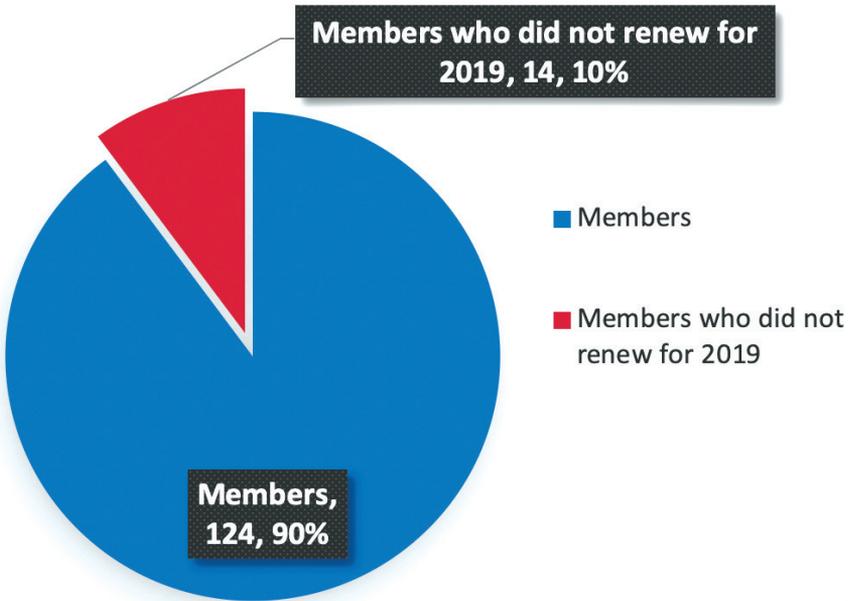
VOLUNTEERS 2019-2020

The Friends of the Lake Saint-François National Wildlife Reserve thank all those who have been volunteers during this season:

- Denis Gervais, president, Friends Board of Directors
- Serge Bourdon, vice president, Friends Board of Directors
- Patrick Laniel, naturalist guide
- Martin Larochelle, bioecology technician
- M. and Mrs. Leduc, volunteers to fill the feeders in winter

OUR MEMBERS

138 registered members, 124 active and 14 not renewed for the 2019 season



OUR PARTNERS

The Friends of the Lake Saint-François National Wildlife Reserve thank all those who supported us this season:

- Environment and Climate Change Canada
- Local employment center (Emploi-Québec)
- Service Canada (Canada Summer Jobs)
- Federal MP Anne Minh Thu Quach
- Regional County Municipality (MRC) of Haut-Saint-Laurent
- Community Development Corporation (CDC) of Haut-St-Laurent
- Tourisme Montérégie (Tourism Montérégie)
- The COOP Unifrontières — BMR (Sainte-Barbe)
- Municipality of Dundee Township
- Municipality of Saint-Anicet
- Municipality of Elgin
- Municipality of Sainte-Barbe
- City of Huntingdon
- Native North American Travelling College
- Mohawk Council of Akwesasne
- Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe
- Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs
- M. Stéphane Billette, MP
- Ms. Claire Isabelle, MP
- Mrs. Marie-Claude Picard, political assistant at the office of Ms. Claire Isabelle
- Patrick Laniel, naturalist guide
- Martin Larochelle, bioecology technician
- Dorothy Lazore, Mohawk translation
- The members of the Friends of the Reserve
- Visitors who have made an anonymous donation
- Nature Conservation of Canada
- And all those who support us, year after year!

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Friends of the Lake Saint-François National Wildlife Reserve are involved in the community in various ways. Here's how we got involved this year:

- Member of the CDC Haut-Saint-Laurent
- Member of the Tourism Montérégie
- Member of the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Beauhar-
nois-Valleyfield & Haut-Saint-Laurent

During the 2019 season, we gave gift vouchers to the following organizations:

- Presqu'île Youth Committee (60,00 \$ value)
- CLSC Huntingdon (120,00 \$ value)

(ECCC) CONTRACT SUMMARY

For 26 years now, the Friends of the Lake Saint-François National Wildlife Reserve have been responsible for the reception, maintenance, animation, supervision and security of the site. This year again, we honored our contract by fulfilling our mandate with rigor and professionalism, although the amount of funding was insufficient to cover the costs incurred for the completion of the contract. Among the specific tasks to be accomplished, the control of invasive species is a major challenge for our organisation, as it must be done during busy times of our season, namely at opening and during the month of July, when visitors are in greater numbers. In addition to buckthorn, we have the responsibility of controlling, under the supervision of ECCC, *alliaria petiolata* (garlic mustard) *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae* (frogbit).

Control of *alliaria petiolata* (garlic mustard)

We completed the uprooting of *alliaria petiolata* (garlic mustard) on all the sites identified between May 24 and July 6. The temperature was unusually hot and it was difficult for the workers dressed in overalls to protect themselves from ticks, to work more than 3 hours at a time.

The work was carried out on average by 2 employees between May 24, 2019 and July 6, 2019.

Here are some observations related to this work:

Growth was much more advanced at the Great Egret Trail. Flowering was abundant there. In the Piasetski sector, flowers were still clearly visible, although clove development was advanced.

- It is difficult to quantify the number of plants uprooted. We filled 12 garbage bags of 42 by 48 inches (compared to 8 bags in 2017 and 11 in 2018).

Control of *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae* (frogbit)

The heat wave seemed to accentuate the proliferation of this plant. The team worked to remove it throughout the season. This task required a lot of time of the Friends team and despite our best efforts, we believe that we were able to remove only 50% of what was in Frog Bay (boat launch area).

TRAINING

The guides completed their training in first aid, kayaking, canoeing, rabaska, and flora and fauna.

2019 PROJECTS & CONTRIBUTIONS

FARR Project :

For this project, we chose to work with the urban planning firm Arpent, a dynamic non-profit organization that shares our values and works with a diversity of contributors and partners. This study analyzes the potential for developing 'atypical lodgings' at the reserve, which would allow visitors to stay near the site and better explore various activities during their visit. We received the feasibility study (FARR) which provides much pertinent information. We plan to revisit this project in 2021.

2019 Projects :

Contribution project 2017-2019 (ECCC)

This was the final year of ECCC's 2017-2019 contribution project, which we successfully completed despite the restructuring of the Friends team.

There will be several new activities available for families, groups and new interpretation tools.

Contribution project 2017-2023 (ECCC)

Several projects will be monitored in 2020. As part of this new 2019-2023 contribution project from ECCC, we will hire a naturalist.

The naturalist will take care of developing a new animation activity on migratory birds, creating a thematic map of the NWR, designing an interpretation panel on the history of the rabaska, developing an activity on aquatic fauna (fish), promoting the Nodding Wakerobin trail and creating an animation activity around it, developing a creative workshop on wildlife and habitats, creating hockey-style cards promoting the 'stars' of the RNF LSF, and finally updating our action plan.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

We proposed and accomplished the following tasks:

- Cleaning stream banks
- Floristic inventory
- Monitoring, maintenance and addition of trees to the plantation
- Annual monitoring of reptile and amphibian shelters
- Checking and adding nest boxes
- Activity report

The implementation of a new five-year plan with Waste Management Inc. was set aside for this year. However this is partnership that the Friends wish to see continue in years to come.

SCHEDULE

2019 season :

May 1st to October 31st

Opening hours :

Wednesday to Sunday from 9:00 am
to 5:00 pm

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Throughout the season, we offer various activities to our visitors: guided excursions on the water by sea kayak or rabaska, guided excursions on the trails, activities for school groups and a family GPS rally “On the Bullfrog Trail”. We are also part of the international geocaching network.

IN ADDITION TO OUR REGULAR ACTIVITIES, WE OFFERED SEVERAL SPECIAL EVENTS TO OUR VISITORS:

**Ornithological Outing (Birdwatching trip)
(in collaboration with the Winged Wildlife Observation Society)**

Saturday May 18th 2019, Piassetki sector

Number of participants: 15

Cost : free

**Annual general meeting of the Friends of NWA LSF
(General manager: Caroline Thivierge)**

Sunday, May 26th 2019, in the Multipurpose room

Number of participants: more than 12 people present

Cost : free

Three YOGA events

(Teacher : Mélanie Veldhuis)

- May 25th 2019 (with meditation in the Frog Bay)
- June 22nd 2019 (with meditation in the Multipurpose room)
- July 27th 2019 (meditation at the Tower Trail - observation tower)

Number of participants: more then 12 people present

Cost : free

Conference— Tick, Lyme disease and West Nile virus

(animator : François Milord)

Thursday June 6th 2019, in the Multipurpose room

Number of participants : 21

Cost : free

Conference and awareness-raising activity for land owners on the shore of Lake Saint-François

(in collaboration with the Nature Conservancy of Canada – Valérie René)

Saturday July 6th 2019, in the Multipurpose room

Number of participants : more then 10 people present

Cost : free

Ornithological Outing (Birdwatching trip) on the water

(animator : Patrick Laniel)

Saturday September 14th 2019, Reception desk and in the Fraser Marsh and Lake Saint-François

Number of participants : 13

Cost : 20 \$

Culture Days

(in collaboration with the Native North American Traveling College of Akwesasne - NNATC)

Friday September 27th 2019, in the Multipurpose room

Number of participants : 10

Cost : All activities were free

**Exploring Canada's Cranes
(conference and ornithological walk)**

Saturday October 12th 2019, in the Multipurpose room

Number of participants : 10

Cost : 15 \$ (13 \$ for members)

**Ornithological Outing (Birdwatching trip)
(in collaboration with the Winged Wildlife Observation Society)**

Saturday October 5th 2019, Great Egret Trail

Number of participants : 14

Cost : free

Due to lack of time and resources, there was little work done on advertising and promotion (signage at the entrance of the trails, website, newsletter and Facebook). Nevertheless, our visitors were enthusiastic and participated actively in all the events of the 2019 season.

The 2020 program is being prepared and is sure to provide great surprises, for both young and old. The details will depend on the funding available for the activities, and the finalized program will be revealed in the spring.

NEW FOR THE 2019 SEASON

For the second year, we offered the animation activity: Guide Training. This activity is intended for children 6 to 12 years old interested in knowing more about being a nature guide-interpreter. Participants learn, among other things, the basics of identifying flora and fauna, the art of locating the passage of an animal, and the art of communicating knowledge to a group. Offered at a very affordable price, it is an ideal activity for children's parties. During our season we received two (2) family groups for this activity.

During the 2019 season, we developed and offered an entertainment activity: What a Bird! This activity is intended for families, school and day camp groups. Participants discover the avian world by trying recreate a bird observed on the trails or even creating a brand new one! What kind of beak should a bird of prey have? Should a great blue heron have webbed feet? Did the bird observed on the trails have a crest? These are the kinds of questions we ask when watching birds and can help identify species in the reserve.

Promotional material

The Friends of the Reserve added hypoallergenic necklaces to their stores this year with a pendant of our logo, the Marsh Wren. We also have a uniform for employees (t-shirt with our logo) to make us more easily identifiable to visitors.

MARSH WREN – HYPOALLERGENIC NECKLACES



THE TEAM : JERSEY (T-SHIRT)



We want to increase our product range next year and thus increase our independent revenues and our visibility. Visitors expressed interest in children's hats, water bottles, tick clips, sweaters and key chains. These proposals will be studied and new products should be available in 2020.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

On Wednesday July 10th, 2019, the team visited Thompson Island to learn about programs offered to the public, and to re-establish the ties we had in the past.



Good news, we will be able to offer excursions to Thompson Island during the 2020 season. Our customers can choose from several packages.

Come see all that Thompson Island has to offer! In collaboration with the team of the Thompson Island Cultural Camp, the Friends of NWA LSF will offer excursion packages for the 2020 season.

The departure is from Frog Bay – Tower Trail.

The activities offered on Thompson Island:

- Presentation and tea tasting
- A medicine walk
- Meals offered on site
- Cabins for rent
- Fishing tournaments



Photo credit: Thompson Island Cultural Camp

PHOTOS OF OUR 2019 SEASON



Daniel Lafleur,
2019 maintenance



Karina LeClair,
2019 Manager



Dylan Burrows,
2019 Chef Guide



Julia Nieuwenhof,
2019 Senior Guide



Simon Thibert, 2019 Guide
& Maintenance Support



Marie-Ève Rochefort,
2019 General Director

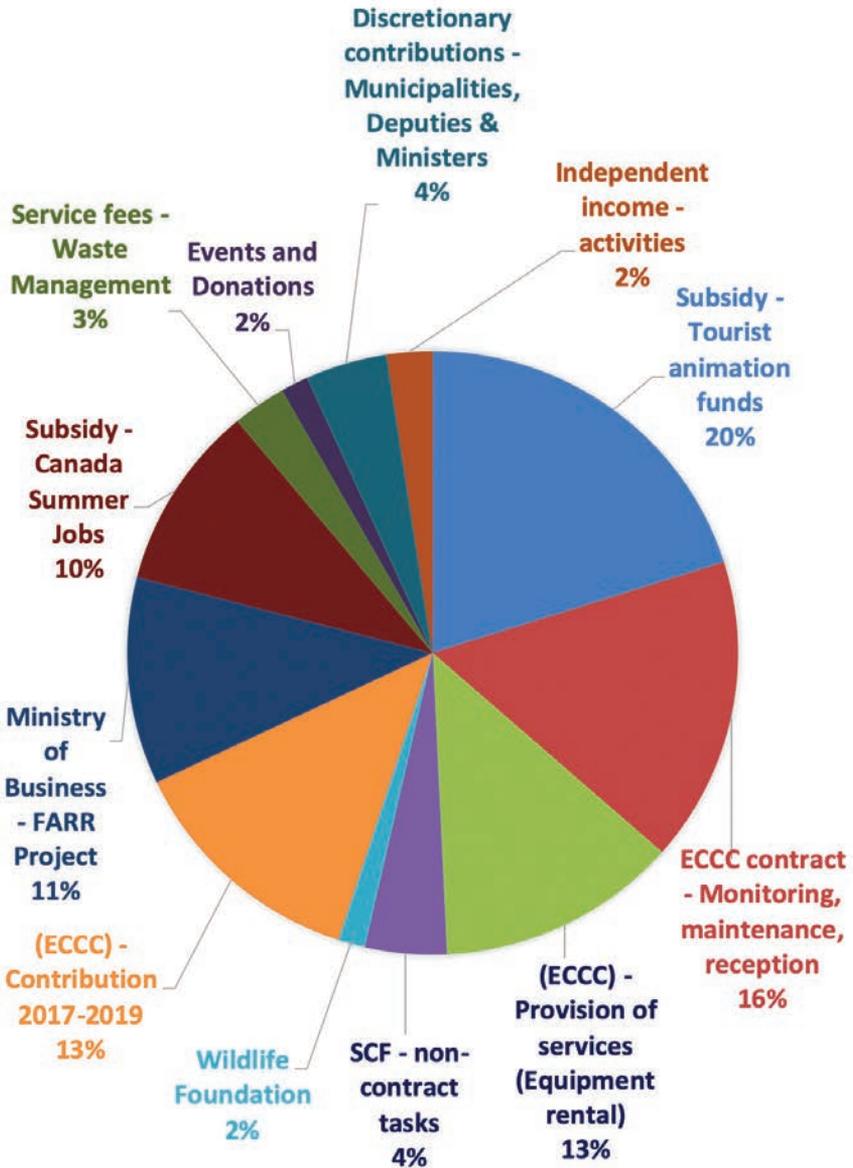
Ornithological outing (Birdwatching) evening in the marsh and on Lake Saint-François



Culture Days, September 2019



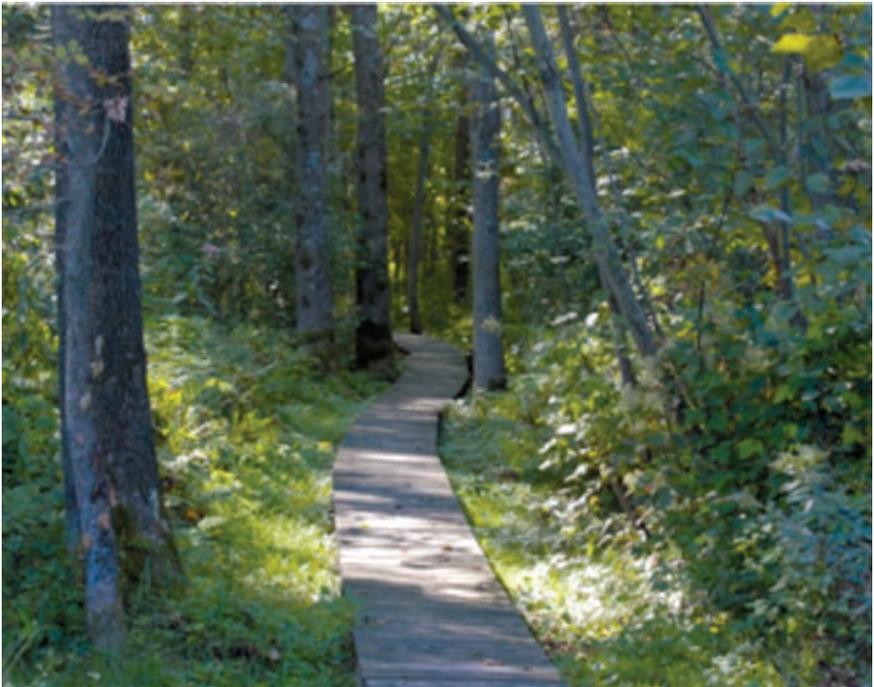
2019 - REVENUE SOURCES



A FINAL WORD

The Friends of the Lake Saint-François National Wildlife Reserve are known for our perseverance. Many efforts are made each year to raise awareness among elected officials and local partners in order to renew their financial support. This work is bearing fruit and we are proud of the trust that our MRC and the Canadian Wildlife Service place in us every year. The activities offered by our organization help attract thousands of visitors annually. This not only has a positive impact on local tourism, but also provides the opportunity to educate a wider audience on the importance of wetland protection.

2020 will bring great new additions that we can't wait to share with you!





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