

and appropriate allocation of those resources, with reduced conflict and better decisions. The development of a systematic geoheritage list will assist government agencies in fulfilling their mandates, and in bringing scientists and communities together. Most importantly, this approach will foster promotion of the richness of geoheritage, with greater opportunities for building awareness at a time when there is a need more than ever to heed the lessons of Earth history to prepare for the future, on this Earth.

A geoheritage strategy for Nova Scotia

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The Earth's geologic past has imbued Atlantic Canada with a rich heritage, dramatically exposed by the interaction of land and sea. Long recognized by some of the world's great scientific minds, including Lyell, Darwin, and Dawson, the geological heritage of Nova Scotia has been commemorated by local communities, in provincial and federal parks, by private sponsors, and by the ultimate recognition of UNESCO World Heritage. None of this, however, has been achieved from a systematic vision, and the desire for new commemoration requires a systematic approach, both to take inventory of geoheritage and to provide a clear vision of sites that should be recognized, and in some cases promoted or protected.

Geoheritage is defined most succinctly as geological features that inform humanity of its relationship with the Earth. Like UNESCO World Heritage, geoheritage can be divided into two categories: (i) cultural/social geoheritage, where value is tied to human interaction with the site (comprising spiritual sites, mine sites, and stoneworks); and (ii) physical geoheritage, where value lies in the aesthetic qualities of landscape, or in informing us of Earth history and Earth processes. Geotourism refers to the marketing of visitation to geoheritage sites and its economic benefits. Although there is great potential in geotourism, not all geoheritage sites are appropriate candidates, for reasons of integrity, visitor safety, or even scientific obscurity (type sections being one example).

Input from the geoscience community will help to establish the geoheritage list, using a rubric that considers: (i) level of significance; (ii) interpretive potential; and (iii) appropriateness as a geotourism site. In the absence of a systematic geoheritage vision, promotion of sites by individual advocates can lead to competition and allocation of resources to the 'squeaky wheel' rather than to the most meaningful or appropriate sites. In the worst case scenario, this could include sites that are inappropriate as geotourism venues because they pose risk to visitors, or are scientifically vulnerable. In contrast, a science-based inventory of geoheritage can lead to long-term dedication of resources