

Cliffs of Fundy aspiring Global Geopark update

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At present, there are one hundred and twenty-seven Global Geoparks in thirty-five countries. Canada has two formally recognized Geoparks and nine aspiring Geoparks, one of which is in our backyard: the Cliffs of Fundy Aspiring Global Geopark, spanning the shore from Apple River to Portapique River. This area includes dozens of sites showcasing globally significant geological history and many vibrant coastal communities, businesses, and geotourism experiences; it is a visually stunning and scientifically rich area that the Aspiring Geopark aims to promote. A Geopark designation is intended to be an empowering community-driven project that attracts the international community to explore globally significant geology. At the same time it functions to promote local communities, culture, and sustainable development. Consultation with Mi'kmaw elders through the Elders Advisory Council, which has endorsed the project, has allowed for the inclusion of a Mi'kmaq interpretation of the geology and landscape. The project is successfully advancing through the steps toward formal admission into the Global Geoparks Network (GGN). The Geopark Steering Committee of the Cumberland Geological Society is currently finalizing the initial application to the Canadian National Committee for Geoparks (CNCG), and this will be followed by a site visit by the CNCG this summer. The next goal will be to have a formal site evaluation by the GGN/UNESCO in summer 2019 with a decision announced in 2020 for formal admission into the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network. The Aspiring Geopark's boundaries were recently expanded following enthusiastic engagement from the community. Initially the Geopark boundaries comprised the area between Apple River and Economy Point but it was proposed that the boundary be extended to include Bass River on the basis of its significant mining and timbering history and its present cultural sites and businesses. A public meeting held in Bass River in January to assess community interest was embraced with enthusiasm, leading to the proposal of a new eastern boundary that would include an area up to the Portapique River, extending north to include the Portapique River Wilderness area. The community brought forth this suggested boundary given the significance of the area in Bass River's history and its continued importance for outdoor clubs and activities. The Committee continues to work to develop the Cliffs of Fundy Geopark brand, spread the word about the project, and prepare the application.