

# Report to HRM Parks and Recreation



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**Contents**

Contents ..... 1

Executive Summary ..... 2

Background..... 3

Dartmouth Dragon Boat Association..... 4

Location ..... 5

Programs and Services ..... 6



## Executive Summary

Dartmouth Dragon Boat Association (DDBA) was created to promote and foster dragon boat paddling on Lake Banook. DDBA has been providing dragon boat activities in Graham's Grove Park since 2006. In 2015, DDBA conducted the following program: Community Drop In ( 50 participants), Canoe Kids for children 7-11 (95 participants), Recreational crew (15 participants), DDBA Competitive training crews (90 participants), Beast Training Camp (20 participants



travelling from out of town), DDBA Race League (100 participants), Visually Impaired Athletes session (12 participants), Boys and Girls Club Dragon Boat Fun Day (80 participants), Community Playground afternoon sessions (80 participants). Over 500 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 Graham's Grove Park. The Board strives to make our programs align with HRM Council's Healthy Community objectives of Inclusion and Accessibility, and 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, 48 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 we began competing very successfully at the international level. Today, Canada is recognized as one of the best in the world at international competitions, and captured the Nations Cup at the World Championships hosted in Welland Ontario this year. Two DDBA paddlers won Gold Medals in this event. HRM has had a number of contributors to Canada's success at an international level, and is recognized within the North American dragon boat community as a premier place to paddle.

Dartmouth Dragon Boat Association has been providing dragon boat programs to the residents of HRM since 2006.

## Dartmouth Dragon Boat Association

The Dartmouth Dragon Boat Association (DDBA) is a non-profit organization that was established to promote dragon boat within HRM. DDBA is affiliated with Dragon Boat Canada, and the International Federation for Dragon Boat.

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.
- Leverage the HRM facility at Graham's Grove
- Utilizing a summer student (provided by HRM) to support the HRM Kids Canoe program, the Drop Ins, the Boys and Girls Club event, the HRM Playground Dragon Boat usage.
- Supporting the administration through volunteers
- 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.



## Location



DDBA offers its programs and services at Graham's Grove on Lake Banook. DDBA currently has a lease agreement with HRM for use of the former Dragon Fly canoe rental location. As part of the lease agreement, DDBA has been maintaining the building at a cost of approximately \$2,000 per year. In 2015, DDBA painted the building and did some floor and roof maintenance.

This location is ideal for the following reasons:

- There is a sandy flat bottom ideal for loading boats.
- The waters of Lake Banook and Lake MicMac are patrolled by the Lake Patrol.
- 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 the Kids Canoe Program.
- 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
- Availability of an "accessible" wharf for loading into the boat
- Space to provide mooring for the dragon boats

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

- Reduction in usage of park by vagrants or homeless building temporary shelters
- Families drawn to the park to use the wharf
- Attraction of kayakers and stand up board paddlers
- Continued growth of dragon boat to our current level of 500 registered paddlers.



## 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*

Drop In is open to the public on Friday nights throughout the summer for minimal cost. This provides an opportunity for people to try dragon boat. This program is offered through the HRM Recreation Program catalogue. While many just enjoy the chance to get in a boat, some go on to participate in other programs. In 2015, there were approximately 50 participants over the six weeks, many coming back a number of times.

### *Kids Canoe*

Kid Canoe is a program offered half days for 5 weeks for children 7 to 11. This very popular program is also offered through the HRM catalogue. The kids do dragon boat and swimming each day, ending with fun day during which their parents and/or siblings are also invited to participate. Fun Day usually means a couple of dragon boats full of people heading out to Bull Rock in Lake MicMac for some swimming, and hopefully even sightings of the eagles or the osprey that live there. This year, a total of 95 kids registered and participated in the Kid Canoe program, many of whom had participated in previous years or went for more than one week. Fun Day brought out nearly 50 family members who also participated.

### *HRM Playgrounds*

HRM Playground leaders can use the site and the Dragon Boats, free of charge. Leaders simply call and book the boats, DDBA provides staff to conduct the sessions. In 2015, approximately 80 children participated in this program.

### *Recreational Crew*

This was the second year for the Recreational crew, available for people interested in once a week fun and fitness. It is an introductory program with technical instruction. A number of the participants last year went on to join competitive crews this year. There were 15 registered members of the Rec crew, 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, both local and in locations such as Montreal, Toronto, and Orlando. The competitive crews have grown from a handful of people, hoping there were enough to go out in a boat, to nearly 90 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.

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 performance athletes.

### ***Dry Land Training***

Through the winter, dry land training is available two to three times a week for members of the competitive crews. The training is typically held in gym space 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.



### ***Manulife Dragon Boat Festival***

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 other crews from other parts of Canada and the U.S. These associates, came to HRM to paddle with the Dragon Beasts, and to participate in a training camp, paddling alongside DDBA paddlers.

### ***Dartmouth Dragon Boat Race League***

This year, DDBA established a race league, 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 participants, friends and family, and other local fitness groups. Eight crews participated, with close to a hundred participants. It has already resulted in new memberships, including bringing back some former members.

### ***Blind/Partially Sighted Crew***

DDBA reached out to Blind Sports Nova Scotia and determined that there is an interest among blind or partially sighted athletes to participate in dragon boat. Once in the boat, an athlete can rely on feeling the movement of the boat, as well as hearing the coach's commands. DDBA conducted an amazing session involving 12 visually impaired athletes, along with volunteer "coaches" and assistants from DDBA. The session was conducted free of charge. This session was so successful DDBA will be expanding this program in 2016.

### ***Boys and Girls Clubs of HRM***

One of the highlights of the summer was a sports day held for 80 children from the various Boys and Girls clubs throughout HRM. The children participated in dragon boat races in Graham's Grove, conducted by volunteers from DDBA.