

2017 Report to HRM Parks and Recreation



Dragon Beast Summer Training Camp Participants

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Executive Summary



Premier Women Champs 2017 Orlando Festival

The Dartmouth Dragon Boat Association (DDBA) is a non-profit organization that was established to promote and foster dragon boat paddling within HRM. DDBA wrapped up its twelfth season in 2017, and are now making plans for an exciting 2018.

The highlights for 2017 include:

- Proposal for a new multi-use building in Kiwanis Graham's Grove Park
- 33 HRM Day Camp sessions with a total 476 participations
- 14 drop-in sessions with a total 196 participations
- Nearly 100 members in two competitive crews for a total 140 sessions
- Nearly 80 participants (two crews) in dryland winter training for a total of 140 sessions
- 4th year for our Recreational crew, which had 7 members and 11 sessions, nearly 150 participations (including guest members from other crews)
- 2nd year for our Blind and Partially Sighted crew, which had 12 participants including sighted guides, for 9 sessions and a total 109 participations (including supporters from other crews)
- 8 Sunrise Paddle sessions held with a total 88 participations
- Club members representing Canada and medalling at the 13th IDBF World Nations in Kunming, China in the Senior A and Senior C categories
- Premier Women's and Premier Mixed Champions of the Orlando International Dragon Boat Festival
- New Glasgow Race on the River Champions
- Halifax Manulife Festival Champions
- Cape Breton Unionized Trades Dragon Boat Festival Champions
- 4th year for our Race League with nearly 100 participants racing on 3 event days

Many of our programs are open to the community, without restriction, at a reasonable cost and in some cases, no cost. We continue to align our programs with HRM Council's Healthy Community objectives of Inclusion and Accessibility.

Dartmouth Dragon Boat Association



Facility at Kiwanis Graham's Grove Park

The Dartmouth Dragon Boat Association (DDBA) is a non-profit organization that was established to promote and foster dragon boat paddling within HRM and has been providing dragon boat programs to the residents of HRM since 2006.

DDBA offers its programs and services at Kiwanis Graham's Grove Park on Lake Banook. DDBA currently has a lease

agreement with HRM for use of the small building within the park. This location provides easy access to our participants as many are coming from Bedford, Sackville, and Halifax peninsula. We have access to both Lake Banook and Lake MicMac, which are ideal for paddling because of the Lake Patrol, the course, and the speed limits. Because we are at the end of the lake, we can avoid interfering with scheduled events on Lake Banook such as regattas by heading under the bridge into Lake MicMac.

We feel that our presence in the park has added to the revitalization. Most nights in the summer it is a busy place with paddlers, swimmers, dog walkers, runners, and bikers.

DDBA was very pleased to hear the proposal by HRM Parks and Recreation to Regional Council in December 2017 for a new multi-use building that could accommodate the Dartmouth Dragon Boat Association. While the current location has worked well for us, it has always had a temporary feeling as it was obvious the building had a limited remaining life. As our programs have continued to grow, there have also been other issues with congestion and cancellations due to events. Water quality is also an issue, particularly in the shallow cove. We look forward to working with Parks and Recreation to determine if Kiwanis Graham's Grove Park can be a more permanent home for our club.



Programs and Services

Recreational Programs

Today DDBA offers a number of programs that would be considered recreational. This includes programs that are free and open to the public, as well as programs that are an introduction to the sport of dragon boat. No experience or skill is required, and these programs would be suitable for all fitness levels.

HRM Day Camps



Safety Instruction

Program leaders from HRM booked dragon boat sessions as part of their day camp programs, which were included within the cost of the HRM program. The program leaders scheduled the sessions through an online scheduling tool. DDBA provided staff and all equipment to conduct the sessions. The session included some orientation to dragon boat and safety protocol. Kids had the opportunity to go around the islands in Lake MicMac (Bull Rock and Owl's Nest) in hopes of seeing the eagles, or the many osprey, and sometimes even a muskrat! In 2017, there were 33 sessions held with approximately 476 children and camp instructors participating.

This was the best day ever!

HRM Camp Participant

Drop-In Paddling Sessions

Drop-In sessions are held on Friday nights throughout the summer and are open to the public at no cost. The sessions are advertised through our website and on the digital display sign on the corner of Prince Albert Road and Nowlan Street. The Hearthstone Inn also promotes these sessions to their customers. We've also had Meet Up groups take advantage of these sessions to organize an event.

Free dragon boat drop in was also offered during HRM Recreation Day, although not well publicized. In addition, one of our members has been very involved in sponsoring one of the Syrian refugee families that are now members of our community. She organized a Newcomers paddle to allow these new residents the opportunity to experience dragon boat.

These drop-in sessions provide an opportunity for people to try dragon boat and just get out and enjoy the lake. In 2017, there were 14 drop-in sessions held, with a total of 196 participations.

This service is provided by DDBA in support of our mandate to promote dragon boat in Dartmouth. While many just enjoy the chance to get in a boat, some go on to participate in other regular

DDBA programs. This program also gives DDBA a vehicle for skills development for steerspersons as the crew is slower compared to the competitive and recreation crews.

Recreational Crew

This was the fourth year for the Recreational crew, a program available for people interested in once a week fun and fitness. It is an introductory program with a focus on skill development and technical instruction. Saturday morning would often find us paddling around Bull Rock and Owl's Nest in Lake MicMac searching for eagles. This program is a good progression from the drop-in sessions for people who are interested in participating on a more regular basis, and also offers a progression to the competitive crew, if that is the goal. There were 11 sessions held throughout the summer, with 7 registered members, primarily women between 30 and 60. On average a number of members of the competitive crews would also attend these sessions in order to receive additional instruction and opportunity to work on their technique in a more relaxed environment. 2018 already looks like we will have increased numbers.



Blind/Partially Sighted Crew

2017 was the second year for our Blind and Partially Sighted Crew. This is a free program, open to visually impaired athletes, and to their supporters. We have focused on improving technical skills, and improving rhythm by learning to feel the boat. Each session ends with a competition to beat our best time on a 100-meter course. We had 6 Blind/Partially Sighted athletes

participate, as well as 6 sighted guides. The crew was regularly supplemented by volunteers from the competitive crews, who came to help provide the motion so important for these athletes to be able to feel the boat movement. There were on average 11 people at each of the 9 sessions, for a total of 109 participations.

One of our blind athletes also trains in one of our competitive crews both during the summer and also through the winter in our dryland training program.

While this program is very popular with our blind athletes, it is challenging to promote awareness of this service to the blind community. DDBA continues to work with CNIB Atlantic as well as Blind Sport Nova Scotia to promote awareness of this program. We have

also used social media and radio to help spread the word.



A significant barrier to participation in this program is an ability to get to the dragon boat site. Some are lucky enough to have a supporter to drive them, however, for those who don't, the transit schedule does not go directly to Graham's Grove, and the Access-A-Bus cannot pinpoint an exact drop off or pickup.

In addition, we have a challenge with the accessibility of the dock. The athletes must be escorted over rough terrain and a rocky drop to get to the dock. DDBA has been working with Councillors Austin and Mancini, as well as with Parks to find funding to grade the path and improve accessibility to the dock.

Path to the wharf



Having an active and healthy lifestyle is very important for many reasons. As a visually impaired person, it is very difficult to find options for physical fitness. It is even more difficult to find an inclusive team sport that offers a high intensity workout. Dragon boat paddling has given me that, and MUCH more!! There is no adaptive equipment or accommodation needed and this makes the sport easily accessible to blind and visually impaired people. There is sportsmanship and a feeling of belonging while still being competitive. The high level of support I have received from the folks at DDBA, and the dragon boat crew, is unlike anything I've ever experienced. They take special care of me and at the same time they treat me just like everyone else!

*Kimberley Cusack – Age 49
Coordinator, Halifax Transit
Member of Black Crew and Blind/Partially Sighted Crew*

I feel privileged to have paddled with the visually impaired crew offered by DDBA, to see the progression of this team over the past two years is truly an inspiration A group of visually impaired paddlers keeping stroke with their team and having a blast. A wonderful opportunity for all who participated and a credit to DDBA.

*Sandy Smyth – Age 67
Retired
Member of Gold Crew and BPS Crew supporter*

Sunrise Paddles

Another free program that is offered by DDBA is the Friday morning Sunrise Paddles. These sessions generally are a long paddle, with no technical instruction. While these sessions were open to the public this year, it was primarily attended by club members. There were 8 sessions held with a total of 88 participations.

In 2018, we will continue to offer this program to our members and past members.

Competitive Programs

DDBA offers a number of programs that are considered competitive programs, however, they are not restricted to paddlers of a certain level. The programs are open to anyone who is interested in working hard, challenging themselves, and developing their skills and fitness levels. The practices are longer, harder, more frequent and more intense than our recreational programs. Athletes all challenge their own personal baseline. The participants in these programs refer to themselves as the Dragon Beasts, sometimes known as the Beasts from the East.

Black and Gold Crews

DDBA has two competitive crews, nearly 100 men and women aged 20 to late 60s, 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, for a total of 140 sessions, usually with two boats competing side by side. These crews compete at a number of festivals within Atlantic Canada, as well as in locations such as Montreal, Toronto, and Orlando.



Black Crew at winter training workout

The Black Crew is a competitive dragon boat crew that focuses on fitness and race preparation for adult paddlers of all ages. The practices take about an hour, and are fairly high intensity with two balanced crews going head to head. Crew members race in the DDBA Race League, the Manulife Halifax Dragon Boat Festival, and at least one away festival. For the last few years that has been the Orlando International Dragon Boat Festival, in which our crew members were the Grand Champions in both the Mixed and Women's divisions.

Having participated in the annual dragon boat festival on Lake Banook since 1997, I had a degree of interest in dragon boat racing, and in 2011, I took the next step by attending one of the Dragon Beasts' practices and was hooked on the sport almost immediately. I was welcomed by the coaches and team members upon my arrival and made to feel as part of the team. The newfound love of the sport would quickly overpower the early pains of learning, and I have been an enthusiastic member of the club since.

I can't think of any other sports organization in which you can train beside a national or world champion, and be coached by a world champion in your very first practice, but it is true of Dartmouth Dragon Boat. I have watched over the past years as novice paddlers quickly become seasoned veterans capable of competing at an international level, and it has made me a proud member of this club.

*Eugene Tan - Age 48
Attorney
Member of Black Crew*

The Gold Crew is a predominantly master's (35+) racing dragon boat team with a competitive spirit and a welcoming culture. The team focuses on fitness, racing and the social aspect of being a member of a team. The Gold Crew races the maritime circuit of dragon boat festivals, one festival a year in Ontario and many members participate in the Dartmouth Dragon Boat Association Race League series.

2017 Gold Crew highlights for the Gold crew include New Glasgow Festival Champions; Sydney Festival Champions, Halifax Manulife Festival championship team included 9 Gold team members.

A number of the competitive crew 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.

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 high performance athletes. This has been a significant change of lifestyle for many of our members, and has visibly improved their health and fitness, as well as creating a significant social network!



Cape Breton Unionized Trades Dragon Boat Festival 2017 - Overall Winners

Who would have known when I attended the first dragon boat drop in session 12 years ago I would be so addicted to the sport? I went from hardly being able to paddle to the middle of the lake, to paddling up to 5 times a week on a competitive team of amazing people. Dragon boating allows people of all ages, fitness levels, and personal abilities the opportunity to participate in a team sport. A special thank you to DDBA for their vision in promoting such a wonderful sport, it has truly changed my life.

*Sandy Smyth - Age 67
Retired
Member of Gold Team*

Off Season Dry Land Training



Winter Training

Throughout the winter, dry land training is available two to three times a week for members of the recreation and competitive crews. The training is typically held in gym space leased 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. The dry land training is an important means to maintaining fitness levels during the winter months, as well as a great way to focus on skill development. It is also a good way for paddlers to transition from a recreational program to a competitive program, or to introduce new paddlers before going out on the water. Typically there are 70-80 participants. In future, if HRM proceeds with construction of a new building in Kiwanis Graham's Grove Park, the proposed space for community group rentals may be large enough to be used for the off season dry land training.

DDBA Manulife Dragon Boat Festival Participation

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 crews from other parts of Canada and the U.S. who participated in the Dragon Beast Summer Training Camp. The Dragon Beasts were the 2017 Manulife Festival Champions.

Dartmouth Dragon Boat Race League



100 Meter Sprint in the Cove

2017 was the fourth year for the DDBA Race League. The race league is a racing series, with three rounds of racing, and championship being determined based on accumulated points. This provides competitive racing for our members, as for most other sport races we would have to travel to Quebec, Ontario, or the US. The race league is open to the public, and has attracted participants from within DDBA programs, former program participants, friends and family, and other local fitness groups. In some cases, racers have gone on to join one of our regular programs. The Race League also

provides some visibility of the sport to those walking or driving by. This year, six crews participated, with close to a hundred participants. For summer of 2018, we've already had some interest from other community groups interested in participating.

World Level Competition

In 1995, the first International Dragon Boat Federation (IDBF) World Nations Dragon Boat Championship was held in Yue Yang, China. The World Nations have been held every second year since then, hosted by countries in Asia, Europe, North America and Australia. Races are held in different age categories, including Junior, Under 23, Premier, Over 40 (Senior A), Over 50



2017 Kunming, China

(Senior B), and Over 60 (Senior C). There has been a Canadian presence at all of these World Championships since 1997, often on the podium. There have been members of the Dartmouth Dragon Boat Association representing Canada at every World Championship, as athletes and coaches. In 2017, the 13th IDBF World Nations were held in Kunming, China, with Deborah Woolway on the Senior C team, and David Gallant and Jan Houseman on the Senior A team, from the Dartmouth Dragon Boat Association, all medal winners. DDBA World team members in the past had all originally paddled sprint canoe/kayak at a competitive level. This year, however, for the first

time, two of our participants, Deborah Woolway and Jan Houseman, developed from recreational dragon boat paddlers to world champions through our program at DDBA.

When I joined the Dartmouth Dragon Boat Association in 2011 I had never paddled competitively at any level. I discovered a supportive and dedicated coaching environment and a well run, inclusive club. As my technique and fitness improved, along came opportunities to compete. When I was encouraged to try out for a National Team, my DDBA coach guided me through the rigorous selection process. In October 2017, I found myself in Kunming, China, as part of the squad that represented Canada at the 13th IDBF World Nations Dragon Boat Championships. I would never have gotten to the top of the podium on the world stage without the excellent coaching, support and encouragement I have received from everyone at DDBA.

*Deborah Woolway - Age 61
Retired
Canadian Senior C National Dragon Boat Team 2017*

On the alternate years, the IDBF holds a world championship where clubs can compete against each other, again in a number of age categories. In July 2018 the 11th IDBF Club Crew World Championships will be held in Szeged, Hungary. Clubs must qualify for lanes at a national championship as there are limited entries per country. DDBA has not yet competed for Club Crew entries as we do not have the depth in any one age category, however, a number of our athletes have been asked to compete for other clubs. We have two athletes who will be

competing with an Edmonton crew, three who will be competing with an Ottawa crew, and one who will be competing with a Hungarian crew. Stay tuned!

The processes for trying to make a national team competing at World Nations or a crew going to Club Crew Worlds are very rigorous, and may include travelling to camps, testing including dragon boat ergometer and outrigger time trials, weigh-ins, and video review. In order to support our athletes who are trying out for these teams, DDBA is planning on implementing a National Team Preparation Program this year. Through this program we hope to provide access to equipment, coaching support, and testing to help our athletes be as prepared as possible and level the playing field.

I've been paddling at Dartmouth Dragon Boat since it began. I have had opportunity to paddle at an international level with the Canadian National Premier women's team because of the coaching at DDBA. Now it's like my extended family. Everyone is welcome from beginner to expert paddlers and we help each other develop skill and train hard. There is nothing better than a challenging Dragon boat practice on Lake Banook with great people!

Suzanne Mckenzie - Age 45

Vice Principal

Former member of Canadian Premier National Dragon Boat Team 2007 and 2009



External Partners

Dragon Boat East

While Dartmouth Dragon Boat Association is a non-profit, we are supported by a local company called Dragon Boat East. Dragon Boat East is a dragon boat event company that runs the competition in a number of festivals in Atlantic Canada, including the Halifax Manulife Festival. DDBA is able to lease a fleet of boats from DBE during the season at reduced rates, which relieves DDBA from the high equipment purchase costs, in addition to the cost and effort of maintaining the boats and storing during the off season.

Dragon Boat East also hosts an annual event called the Dragon Beast Summer Training Camp. This is a six-day camp which includes two training sessions plus other activities each day, ending with racing in the Halifax Manulife Festival. Participants have access to world level coaching, technical video and review, and opportunities to try outrigger, stand up paddling, or a sight seeing trip to the Shubie Canal. Participants are also able to access physio and massage services through a relationship with Cove Sport Therapy, located in Paddlers Cove on Lake Banook.

There are many such camps held in other parts of North America. Hosting this camp locally provides the opportunity for DDBA members to attend a camp without the expense of travelling.



6 person outrigger (OC6)

2018 will be the sixth Dragon Beast Summer Training Camp. Increasingly, we are seeing participants from outside HRM coming to the Camp. This year there are nearly 40 registered at this point, and approximately 30% will be visitors to Halifax. We have had participants from other parts of Atlantic Canada, including Truro, Sydney, and Saint John's (Nfld). We have also had participants from Boston, Jupiter (Florida), Ottawa, Baltimore and Qatar. These participants are all finding local accommodations, eating, shopping, and sight seeing as schedules allow.