

2018 Report to HRM Parks and Recreation



Dragon Beast Building at Graham's Grove Park

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Executive Summary



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 thirteenth season in 2018, and are now making plans for an exciting 2019.

The highlights for 2018 include:

Black Crew in Montreal

Kiwanis Graham's Grove Park (pending budget approval)

- Nearly 1,000 people have participated over 7,000 times in dragon boat sessions
- 13 HRM Day Camp sessions with a total 240 participations (Participation was affected by the blue algae contamination)
- 8 free drop-in sessions with a total 108 participations
- Significant growth in our competitive programs to a total of 114 members in two crews for a total 140 sessions
- Nearly 80 participants (two crews) in dryland winter training for a total of 140 sessions
- 5th year for our Recreational crew, which had 11 members and 12 sessions
- 3rd year for our Blind and Partially Sighted crew, which had 19 participants including sighted guides, for 9 sessions and a total 146 participations (including supporters from other crews). The crew has set a goal for next year to race in the Halifax Manulife Dragon Boat Festival
- 6 Sunrise Paddle sessions held with a total 70 participations
- 5th year for our Race League with over 100 participants racing on 3 event days
- Manulife Dragon Boat Festival crew practices hosted at our site - over 600 people, 60 sessions

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 believe 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 is looking forward to the presentation to Regional Council by HRM Parks and Recreation on the proposed 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 has 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 ensure that Kiwanis Graham's Grove Park remains the home for our club.



January 31, 2019

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 are suitable for all fitness levels.

HRM Day Camps



Program leaders from HRM (Findlay Center) 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 sessions 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 2018, there were 13 sessions held with

approximately 240 children and camp instructors participating. This was a drop in participation from last year, in large measure due to the presence of blue algae in Lake MicMac and Lake Banook. We expect numbers to increase again next year to previous levels.

This was the best day ever!

HRM Camp Participant

Drop-In Paddling Sessions

Drop-In sessions were held on Friday nights throughout the summer and were 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. This year we also promoted these sessions through Facebook, which had a noticeable impact on community awareness and participation.

These drop-in sessions provide an opportunity for people to try dragon boat and just get out and enjoy the lake. In 2018, there were 8 drop-in sessions held, with a total of 108 participations, many of whom were repeat visitors. Several of those went on to join the Recreation crew.

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 speed is less challenging compared to the competitive and recreation crews.

Recreational Crew

This was the fifth year for the Recreational crew, a program available for people interested in once a week fun and fitness at a minimal cost. It is an introductory program with a focus on skill development and technical instruction. 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 12 sessions held throughout the summer, with 11 registered members, primarily women between 30 and 60. A number of members of the competitive crews would also attend these sessions in order to receive additional instruction and to help mentor the athletes in the Recreational crew. A number of the Recreation crew members joined the competitive crew at the end of the season and continued on to do the winter dryland program.



Blind/Partially Sighted Crew



2018 was the third 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. This year we had 9 Blind/Partially Sighted athletes participate regularly, as well as 10 sighted guides. The crew was regularly supplemented by volunteers from the competitive crews, who provided one to one support for the BPS athletes and supporters. There were on average 16 people at each of the 9 sessions, for a total of 146 participations.

DDBA continues to work with CNIB Atlantic as well as Blind Sport Nova Scotia to promote awareness of this program. One of our blind athletes actively promotes the program through community radio. In addition, this year we were very fortunate to have the Accessible Media Inc feature our BPS crew on a regular show called AMI This Week. The episode can be seen at <https://www.ami.ca/category/ami-week-arts-and-culture-sports-health-and-lifestyle/media/dragon-boating-dartmouth>. Councillor Sam Austin had joined us for the practice, and got to watch the crew from the film motor boat, and also jumped in to experience the race at the end of the practice.

Councillor Austin, in concert with Parks and Recreation, provided a new access path from the club house to the dock, which has made the path safer and more accessible for our visually impaired athletes.

This determined group of paddlers is already making plans to race next year in the Halifax Manulife festival, so stay tuned!

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. This program is open to any members or past members of our programs. These sessions generally are a long paddle, with no technical instruction. There were 6 sessions held with a total of 70 participations.

Competitive Programs

DDBA offers several 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



Black Crew takes Montreal

DDBA has two competitive crews that train three times a week, with a focus on fitness and competition. Both crews have experienced significant growth this year. Currently, the crews are comprised of 114 members, with a high percentage of women, from the mid-20s to the mid-70s. 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.

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. This year, the Dragon Beasts competed in the Quebec Cup in Montreal.

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 became 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.

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!



Gold Crew ready to race

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 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. This year there are more than 80 participants, including a new under 40 group that was established to attract younger paddlers. DDBA has been in discussion with the Dartmouth Sportsplex to potentially establish a new home for the dryland training, although construction delays have prevented it from happening this year.

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.

Dartmouth Dragon Boat Race League



100 Meter Sprint in the Cove

2018 was the fifth 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 or clubs. 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 over one hundred registered participants. With our increased membership, we are expecting to make changes to the format in 2019 to allow for more participants.

Dragon Boat Canada Race Series

Dragon Boat Canada has coordinated a series of race events across Canada. In addition to providing consistent race experiences across the country, these events are qualifiers for becoming eligible to qualify for an entry for Club Crew World Championships (CCWC). In 2019, DDBA has been awarded three race series events. These events are open to anyone from across the country, and provide a local racing opportunity for our athletes who would like to qualify for CCWC.

World Level and National 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. On alternate years, there is a Club Crew World Championships, where you race representing your club, not your country. Crews must qualify for the opportunity to race by competing in their country's National championships.



2018 Szeged, Hungary

A few our members raced at the Club Crew World Championships held in Szeged, Hungary in 2018. Three of those athletes won bronze medals. As the Dragon Beasts were not competing, they were able to compete for other clubs.

In 2019, the World Nations Dragon Boat Championship will be held in Thailand. Several of our athletes are currently participating in the selection process to make the Canadian team.

The Dragon Beasts will also be racing this year in the National Championships in Regina. Dependant on our results at Nationals, we are hoping to race at the Club Crew World Championships in 2020 in France.

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 2018, 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 2018*

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

The Dartmouth Dragon Boat Association is a non-profit, and is 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 and insuring the boats, as well as 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 a local event. 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)

2019 will be the seventh Dragon Beast Summer Training Camp. Increasingly, we are seeing participants from outside HRM coming to the Camp. There currently over 60 people registered for the 2019 Camp, approximately 40% of whom will be visitors to Halifax. There is currently a waiting list. Participants will be coming from Manitoba, Vermont, Maryland, and Florida, as well as participants from other parts of Atlantic Canada, including Truro, Sydney, and Saint John's (Nfld.). These participants are all finding local accommodations, eating, shopping, and sight seeing as schedules allow. There are also a number that are extending their stays either before or after the camp to take in some of the events and attractions.