

DECEMBER 2022 GUEST SPEAKER

Howard Clifford: *cliffLAND Speaks to the Conservation Puzzle*

Why is land conservation so important for Nature and human health? It contributes to planet's resiliency to climate change, ameliorates biodiversity and habitat loss, and promotes healthier community, yet often finds little support. Finding a balance between the needs of a healthy natural world and those of the community is a puzzle that Howard Clifford will address based on his family's actions creating cliffLAND.



cliffLAND is a 1250 acre wilderness tract of land in northern Lanark Highlands owned by Howard, his wife Jean and family. Deeply committed to preserving its natural heritage, in 2009 they placed a Conservation Easement on the land with the Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust. This legally binding agreement is registered on title and restricts the use of the land, forever conserving the property as a wilderness sanctuary where the forests will be allowed to develop and mature into old growth (thus mitigating climate change), where logging, hunting, trapping, and the recreational use of motorized vehicles is banned. The land will unfold naturally with little or no interference by humans, all to the benefit of our threatened flora and fauna.

At the heart of cliffLAND is Blueberry Mountain, named one of the Seven Wonders of Lanark County, annually receiving thousands of local, national and international visitors. This is possible because the Clifford family has also legally mandated that the wilderness remain, in perpetuity, accessible to the public as a healing backdrop to meet the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual needs of people.

Future conservation depends on the commitment of the community who in turn must value Nature. It is not scientists with data and Latin names, but rather it is authentic nature experiences that are the bedrock of a culture of long-term support for conservation and biodiversity. Howard and cliffLAND are compelling advocates.

Howard was one of the founding members of the Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust, a charity whose goal is land conservation. For many years he was the President, leading that organization to be one of the acknowledged

innovators in the Land Trust movement. For example, he introduced the use of Bioacoustic Monitoring to better understand our natural heritage, supplementing traditional annual monitoring with audio recordings to help track changes in habitat health. These audio data sets are important for long term scientific analysis related to climate changes and biodiversity loss. Typical of Howard, he then used audio recorders and amplifiers so land trust visitors can listen delightedly to the sounds of Nature amplified through headphones, revealing an often under appreciated aspect of our natural world.

Before Howard Clifford became known as a champion of nature, he had a distinguished professional career in the fields of mental health focused on children and day care. Some highlights of this professional career:

- Established the first Alberta foster home program for psychiatric patients and the first half-way house for psychiatric patients
- Canadian Mental Health Association president for Alberta;
- Day Care Consultant to Health and Welfare Canada, 1972 – 1995;
- Federal Government Coordinator for International Year of the Child;
- Recipient of numerous awards at federal and provincial levels for his outstanding work in service to children and families.

His contributions to conservation and community health have also have been recognized locally and nationally:

- the *Lanark Highlands Achievement Award*
- Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists' *Champion of Nature*
- one of 5 finalists for the Museum of Nature *Canadian Nature Inspiration Award*
- Ontario Land Trust Alliance *Vision Award*
- CliffLAND recognized by Environment Canada as one of ten Canadian nature reserves across Canada to be specially featured in ECCC publicity
- Leeds Grenville and Lanark Health Unit's video, [Nature 4 Life](#) featured Howard's successes in addressing the nature deficit in children.

On December 7, you will have the opportunity to hear the accomplished, thoughtful and inspiring Howard Clifford talk about the current conservation issues, cliffLAND and the conservation puzzle.

