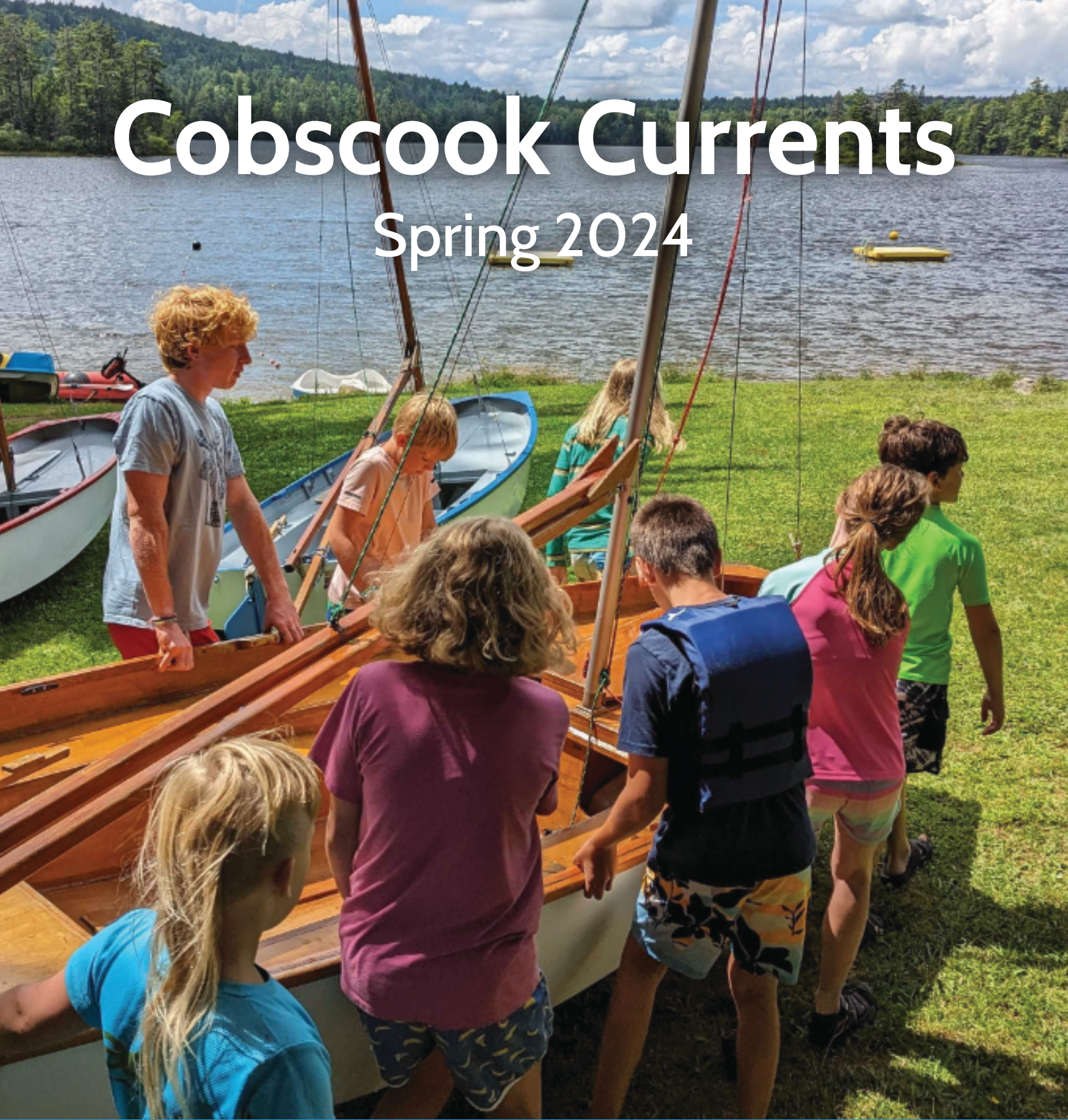


# Cobscook Currents

Spring 2024





## Upcoming Dates:

Permaculture Design Weekend: April 27<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup>

Spring Birding Festival: Memorial Day Weekend

Educators Conference - Elevating Trauma Responsive and Equitable Practices in Education: June 27<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup>

Youth Summer Camps: June-August

AEI Bus Reunion: July 8<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup>

Iota Writing Conference: October 10<sup>th</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup>



**Cobscook Currents**  
**Volume 20 Issue 1**

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Formerly Cobscook Community Learning Center



1999

Can we enhance life through creative, bold, grassroots discourse and organizing?



# Generations

Dear Cobscook friends and family,

Welcome to the Spring 2024 Cobscook Currents. The theme of this newsletter is “Generations” because it is Cobscook’s 25th anniversary! This relates to the past, present, and future generations of Cobscook. The relationships Cobscook has made with the community are incredibly amazing and inspiring.

Cobscook has been open to everyone through programs, community events, and schooling. Cobscook has a wide variety of programs, some of which include yoga, pottery, and music. There is an access fund for local folks to help with the cost of programs/ classes. The access fund is fairly new, and it has helped so many community members have new experiences and enjoy their hobbies. I have used it for pottery and yoga. I loved both programs. I got to go at my own pace of learning and could ask for help and receive it when needed.

Now to get a little personal, I am a graduate of Cobscook Institute. I started school here in 2019 and graduated in 2023. Going to school here gave me so many opportunities and helped me come out of my shell. I got involved with Cobscook the summer before the school year started through one of its summer programs “River Camp.” I loved it so much even though I got very homesick. In the four years of school, Cobscook became a home away from home for me. I went on adventures, learned life skills, and got to explore options for my future. My high school years were definitely the most memorable. The second half of my first year was difficult because the pandemic just started and we all had to Zoom school. It was hard not socializing in person but I still felt so supported with my school work and our teachers gave us time after our class so we could socialize even though it was not in person.

Cobscook is a place of opportunities, people, and changes. Many people have entered, moved on, and stayed at Cobscook. One who has moved on but still checks in is Alan Furth who is a Co-Founder of Cobscook, and someone fairly new is Shaun Haskins who is Co-director for Cobscook Institute. Cobscook has such a wonderful history due to the people who have been there in the past and now in the present. I have no doubt that the future generations will carry on and make everyone proud to be a part of Cobscook Institute.



**Daisy Jones**  
Cobscook Experiential Programs  
Class of 2023

## Our Team

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Experiential Programs*

**Maria McMorrow**  
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Programs Teacher*

**Dylan Pardue**  
*Director of Technology and  
Systems, Climate Response  
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**Valorie Peasley**  
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*Cobscook Experiential  
Programs Teacher &  
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How does a community  
homeplace support well-being?

## A Lifetime of Service Inspires a Generation of Generosity

When Helena “Lynn” Brown, a longtime resident of Cooper, passed last winter, an important and irreplaceable part of our community went with her. Over her lifetime she wore many hats: musician, educator, community volunteer, and town Selectperson, among many others. In all things, her joyful generosity of spirit and her values, including her commitment to the well-being of every person in our community, were at the forefront of her work and her life.

Lynn’s sense of purpose and commitment to serve were important parts of her identity. After graduating with a Master’s Degree in Divinity, she chose not to enter the church but the schools, working with disadvantaged youth in New York City before eventually moving here to Washington County and continuing to work to make life better for her neighbors. Lynn and her husband, Russ Warne, were well-known for their gatherings of music and dance up in Cooper, but they were also regularly part of our Cobscook Institute community as well—participating in programs, volunteering for events, and supporting our community however they could.

When Lynn’s sister, Susan Brown Eyster, and her family came to the area after Lynn’s passing, they visited campus to see first-hand what Lynn had shared with them—the excitement of this unusual public school environment and the ways it transforms the lives of our area’s youth through relationship-building, hands-on learning, and supportive whole-person education.

“We didn’t grow up in a family of educators,” Susan reflects. “But education was always important to us. Lynn had a strong sense of what was right and what was wrong, and that always included taking care of the people in your community who have less.”



## How do we sustain an educational setting?



It's not an exaggeration to say that the people of our community are committed to taking care of each other. We know from long experience that the good times don't always last and hard times can hit when we least expect them, so we learn to share what we have when we can and trust in our families and our neighbors when the situation calls for it.

In this spirit, Susan and her family have made an extraordinary gift to Cobscook Experiential Programs. Committing to ensuring CEP continues changing the lives of our community's kids for another generation or more, she has given \$50,000 to start an investment fund dedicated to ongoing support. As a public high school program offered through Calais High School, Cobscook Experiential Program partly relies on student tuition dollars provided by taxes to deliver programs and support teaching staff, but these funds cover only about half of what our innovative program requires. Since its launch, CEP has also relied on year-to-year contributions from generous organizations and individuals such as those found on the gratitude pages of this newsletter.

This investment fund, the Lynn Brown Memorial Fund, will be a consistent source of funds every year to guarantee our youth-orientated education work continues. The initial \$50,000 gift will generate at least \$2,000 in support each year—which means no later than 25 years from now, this gift will not only provide reliable support for our students' learning but will generate support greater than the initial value of the gift. This is especially exciting as we celebrate the 25th year of the great experiment in community building that Cobscook Institute represents and look forward to the next 25 years.

Susan Eyster's gift serves as a testament to the enduring power of love and the impact of one individual's commitment to making a difference. This gift represents a legacy—a lasting impression in a material sense to mirror Lynn's enormous contributions to the people of this region—through her singing and music, joyous spirit, and selfless service to others.

We invite you to join Susan in building the long-term impact of the Lynn Brown Memorial Fund. Every donation, no matter the size, will play a crucial role in supporting Cobscook Institute's high school program and ensuring that Lynn's commitment to education and community service lives on.

To make a donation or learn more about the Lynn Brown Memorial Fund, please visit [cobscook.me/donate](http://cobscook.me/donate). Together, we can continue Lynn's legacy and inspire the next generation to carry the torch of service and community building here in the Cobscook Bay region.



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## How do we realize responsiveness?



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# Strategic Plan Update

## Advancing Towards a Sustainable and Equitable Future

Nearly a year ago, our board and staff completed a new strategic plan to guide us into our next quarter century of innovation and impact. We are proud to report significant progress made toward our year one objectives. Rooted in our core values of sustainability, equity, and community engagement, these initiatives mark clear steps toward realizing our vision of a thriving, inclusive learning environment. As we reflect on these milestones, we remain steadfast in our commitment to continuous improvement and community-driven change as we point our compass toward creating a more sustainable, equitable, and resilient future for generations to come.

### Staff Training for Racial Justice

One of our key priorities has been to cultivate a culture of inclusivity and equity within our organization. To this end, we are prioritizing staff training related to racial justice, recognizing the importance of ongoing education and dialogue in fostering a more diverse and equitable community. Through workshops and open discussions, we will lean in to confront biases, challenge systemic injustices, and champion diversity in all aspects of our work.

### Sustainability Plan and Climate Resiliency Goals

Central to our strategic plan is our commitment to environmental stewardship and climate resiliency. We have developed a comprehensive sustainability plan aimed at reducing our carbon footprint and mitigating the impacts of climate change. As part of this plan, we are proud to announce the installation of two induction stoves to replace our propane stove, significantly reducing our reliance



2020

## What does shared leadership look like?



on fossil fuels. Additionally, we have installed heat pumps in the Roost, our administration building, further decreasing our carbon emissions and enhancing energy efficiency. On the horizon is a complete on-site solar conversion, reducing our reliance on fossil fuels and improving our cold-weather resilience.

### **Growing Our Staff**

To support our growing initiatives and enhance organizational capacity, we have welcomed two new members to our team. A Fundraising and Communications Steward will support efforts to amplify our impact, cultivate strategic partnerships, and elevate our presence within the community. Additionally, a Retreat Center Steward will oversee the management and operations of our hosting facilities, ensuring a seamless and enriching experience for all participants. We are also working in a collaborative and relational process to design a new role focused on Indigenous teaching and learning to more effectively reflect Indigenous knowledge and wisdom across Cobscook's programs and strengthen its role as a Wabanaki community resource.

### **Upgrades to Infrastructure and Facilities**

We are nearly complete with upgrades to the cabin on our Straight Bay campus in Lubec. These enhancements include locally-built furniture, an off-grid heating system, and the installation of a simple solar system for lights. These improvements ensure that the cabin is a comfortable and usable space for decades to come. Our programming circle is now tasked with developing a plan for how the Straight Bay campus can be leveraged to further our mission.

### **Trauma-Responsive Practices and Equity Initiatives**

Recognizing the importance of holistic well-being and equitable access to resources, we are actively working to become trauma-responsive and advance equitable practices across our organization. Through training, reviewing and updating procedures, honing our systems for seeking and responding to community feedback, and engaging in community partnerships, we are creating a supportive and inclusive environment where all individuals feel valued, respected, and empowered to thrive.

2024

*Are we fostering  
community that respects  
people and planet?*



## Cobscook Experiential Programs: Leveraging the Power of Relational Education

In the bustling landscape of education, where the quest for innovation often dominates conversations, it's easy to overlook the value of low-cost strategies that can increase student engagement, achievement, connection, and happiness. In our 14 years of teaching and learning with teens in Cobscook Experiential Programs, we've come to recognize the profound impact of relational education, recognizing it as a cornerstone of our interdisciplinary, place-based high school program.

A recent article in the New York Times by Adam Grant, "What Most Schools Do Wrong," Oct. 2023 shed light on this crucial aspect of education: the significance of continuity and long-term relationships between students and teachers. The article delved into the power of having the same teacher for more than one year, highlighting the positive outcomes such as increased trust, deeper understanding, and enhanced academic performance. According to Grant, "With more time to get to know each student personally, teachers gain a deeper grasp of the kids' strengths and challenges. The teachers have more opportunities to tailor their instructional and emotional support to help all the students in the class reach their potential. They're able to identify growth not only in peaks reached but also in obstacles overcome. The nuanced knowledge they acquire about each student isn't lost in the handoff to the next year's teacher."

This is what happens naturally at Cobscook Experiential Programs. As a smaller, multi-grade learning community, students stay in relationships with the same teachers over multiple years. Through this relational approach, we cultivate a sense of trust and familiarity that lays the groundwork for meaningful engagement and collaboration. This continuity enables teachers to gain deeper insights into each student's strengths, challenges, and aspirations, allowing for tailored support and personalized learning experiences.

Moreover, the enduring relationships forged within our programs extend beyond the academic realm. Students and teachers travel together, play together, and learn together. As Daisy Jones, CEP 2023 graduate reflected in her opening letter for this edition of Currents, "In the four years of school, Cobscook became a home away from home for me. I went on adventures, learned life skills, and got to explore options for my future." Students not only learn from their teachers but also alongside them as mentors, allies, and partners in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. In this way, we model the value and joy of lifelong learning.

We invite you to witness the transformative power firsthand at Cobscook Institute. If you're a community member with skills or experiences to share that may support a high school curriculum, please reach out. We also invite you to be a student again and sign up for a class at Cobscook, where relational teaching and learning is modeled throughout our programs.



## Andrew Bladen

is from Machias and joined Cobscook his freshman year. Drew is proud of the way he's become more comfortable interacting with people while at Cobscook. He is an incredibly creative individual with a variety of interests and a gentle spirit. While in high school, Drew served on the staff of Downeast Teen Leadership Camp. He is looking forward to pursuing a liberal arts degree after high school, where he may combine his aptitude for math and sciences with his passion for fine arts and theater. Drew is especially hoping to engage more fully with the arts when in college.



Over the Years: Cobscook Experiential Programs Annual Enrollment

Creating responsive educational opportunities that strengthen  
personal, community, and global well-being.



# 25th Year Celebration

Saturday, September 28th

Join us for a day of  
festivities, supercharged  
from our hearts to yours!

Lodge & Camping available for our out of town guests.

[cobscokinstitute.org](http://cobscokinstitute.org)