



Wilderness Connections:

**Community, Belonging
and the Outdoors**



What is CHWRA?

At our core:

"We're a place that strengthens body & spirit.
We care for the land, we care for people, and we try to make it joyful."

Vision

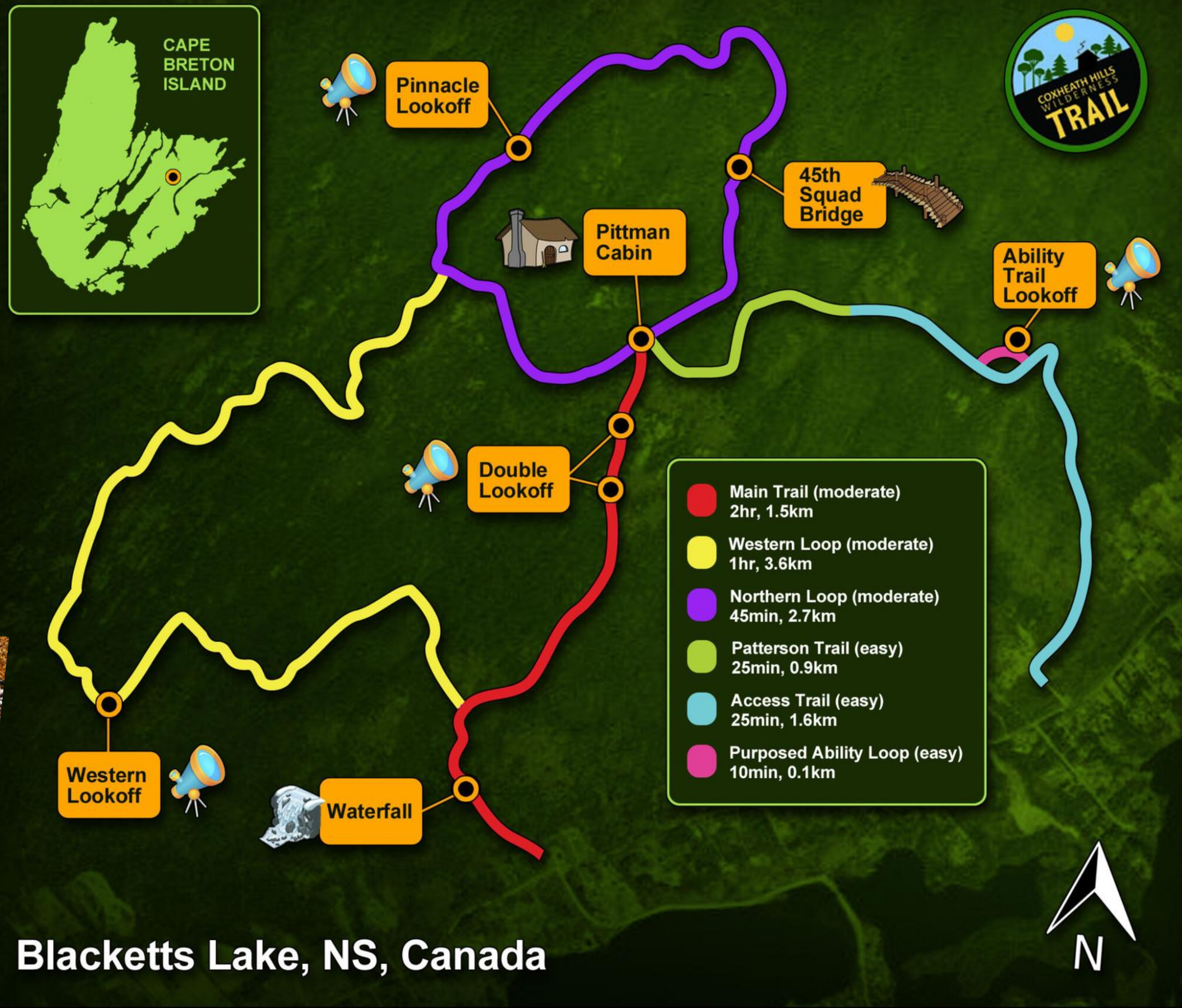
A thriving, inclusive community where beautiful trails and gathering spaces connect people to nature, culture, and one another—fostering health, belonging, and environmental stewardship.

Mission

We protect, sustain, and develop our trails and cultural spaces, and co-create programs that connect people with nature, each other, and our shared heritage.



The Trail System



Coxheath Hills Cultural Centre



Coxheath Hills Community Centre



The Pittman Cabin





Rooted in Relationship

- Partnership grew from a shared invitation
- Hiking together created space for real conversation
- Relationship deepened through co-creation of events, including a Multicultural Summer Solstice Celebration
 - Cape Breton and Nigerian co-hosts
 - Indigenous Elder sharing teachings on season and ceremony
 - Fiddlers, step dancers, jingle dress and Bhangra dance
 - Bonfire, song sharing, and storytelling under the stars
- From these shared experiences, trust and understanding grew
- Inspired the creation of Wilderness Connections to foster belonging through nature.





What We Heard



"What do I wear?"

"Will I be safe?"



"I want to get outside, but not sure where to start."



"Will I feel welcome?"

WHAT IF...



A trail system could be more than a place to walk?

It could be a doorway to belonging?

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

DESIGN PRINCIPLES:

- Experienced leadership
- Beginner-friendly
- Relationship centered
- Supportive
- Land-based & experiential
- Small Groups
- Experienced leadership
- Partnerships (CBRM, CBICI, CCTH)
- Community, belonging & the outdoors
- Reduce Barriers to Participation



Wilderness Connections

WORKSHOP 1 - Getting Started: From Home to Trailhead

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- The 10 Essentials for your pack
- Layering and footwear basics
- Shared norms for safety and respect
- First positive, supported trail experience

The goal isn't to conquer a summit; it's to leave thinking, "I can do this. I belong here."



WORKSHOP 2 -

Getting Equipped: Skills for the Woods

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Leave No Trace principles
- Weather & terrain awareness
- Reading maps & markers; basic navigation
- Wildlife awareness and common-sense safety
- Foundational survival skills

This session turns “I’m nervous”
into “I’ve got this!”



WORKSHOP 3 - HOW TO BE IN THE WOODS

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Builds connection with self, others, & place
- Practices mindful walking and sensory awareness
- Supports well-being and emotional balance
- Celebrates diverse perspectives on healing and belonging
- Inspires a return to the land and continued connection

This session is less about doing and more about noticing - tuning into our senses and the rhythms of the land.



Testimonials

“I loved meeting people from all ages and backgrounds. Everyone brought a story, and somehow we all connected through the land.”

“The trails were incredibly beautiful, and the instructors were so knowledgeable and down-to-earth. They made everything feel possible, even for beginners.”

“I came away more confident — not just about hiking, but about feeling that I belong here, in this community and this landscape.”

Testimonials

“I learned so many practical skills — what to pack, how to plan a hike, even how to read trail markers. Now I feel ready to explore more on my own.”

**“It was such a great experience for the whole family.
We all learned together and felt completely welcome!”**

“Before this, I was nervous about being in the woods. The animals here are so different from back home, but once I learned about them, my fear turned into curiosity.”

**“Somewhere along the trail I realized I could actually relax and just be in nature.
It's hard to explain — I'd never felt that kind of calm before.”**

What's Next?

Spring 2026

**More people feeling at home on the land
and with each other.**

**Nourish leadership and belonging
across community.**



Activity!

“The land is always ready
to welcome you back.”





Heart of the Project: RELATIONSHIP

Reflect, Pair and Share

- Introduce yourself
- Something that stood out or surprised you
- Something that you learned or want to learn more about

When we build recreation that is rooted in relationship, we also build belonging.



Thank You!

**“The land is our first teacher:
When we listen, we remember, we belong.”**

SCAN ME!



coxheathhills.com



STAY IN TOUCH!

Nicole Cammaert or Doug Lionais
WILDERNESS CONNECTIONS
Coxheath Hills Wilderness
Recreation Association

nicole.cammaert@gmail.com
doug.lionais@cbu.ca

Unama'ki / Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia