



Sailing School Returns

# Former Members Re-open Humber Bay Sailing Centre

*Bob Allin and Bob Greenhalgh*

On Thursday, October 8, 2015, a beautiful, sunny, fall day, 12 members of the Humber Sailing Club were in the midst of preparing the floating docks in Mimico Harbour for the cold, grey days of winter yet to come.

Mid-morning, a security guard from Humber College arrived and advised the HSC members that the Humber Sailing and Powerboating Centre was being closed immediately and that the HSC members had 30 minutes to be off the grounds.

Within an hour, the locks were changed and the gates were locked. Later that day, Humber College sent an email to all those associated with the Humber Sailing and Power Boating Centre stating that because the operation was providing diminishing returns, the college was closing it down, effective immediately.

Monday, October 12, 2015 was another beautiful day - Thanksgiving Monday.

Three former members of the Humber Sailing Club met for coffee and discussed the feasibility of creating a new sailing centre. After several hours of discussion and after developing several pro forma budgets, they decided to move ahead.

A second meeting was called and members of the Humber Sailing Club's board came together. A business plan was reviewed and the group agreed to proceed with the registration of a new Not for Profit corporation. **Humber Bay Sailing Centre** was born.

HBSC was incorporated in December 2015 with a mission to provide a broad curriculum of sailing courses coupled with a member driven, keelboat boat share club.

The founding Directors of HBSC

included the Commodore, the Vice Commodore, and the Treasurer of the former Humber Sailing Club as well as three other members of the HSC board. These six founding Board members now faced the challenge of moving HBSC from a vision into a reality.

The first order of business was to start the process of obtaining the lease for the site. There were extensive conversations with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, the entity that controls and administers all leases for all City of Toronto boat clubs. The TRCA advised that there would be a formal "Request for Proposal" process to ensure that all interested parties were treated in a fair and equitable manner in the assignment of the lease. The HBSC Directors developed and submitted their proposal in response to the RFP at the end of March 2016.

The second order of business was to communicate and stay engaged with the members that had belonged to the Humber Sailing Club, but who now had no sailing “home”.

Several open meetings were held and the HBSC Directors were encouraged that there were many past members interested in joining the new HBSC. That said, the fundamental question at each meeting was “when will we be sailing?”

Time passed slowly as March stretched into April and then April passed into May. Finally, in mid-May, the Board was advised that the lease had been awarded to the Humber Bay Sailing Centre. Humber College still needed to remove several assets from the site and after some last minute negotiations with TRCA and Humber College, the lease was transferred to Humber Bay Sailing Centre, effective June 13, 2016.

The nine month period between the closing of the site and re-assigning the lease had been quite a gestation period, but now the work of putting the operation back into business could begin. A core group of members signed on immediately and paid their dues before the docks were even installed, such was the level of commitment to ensuring HBSC would succeed.

With money in the bank from membership dues, and with members and friends doing the hard work, the docks were installed, the facility was repainted and cleaned up after having sat empty all winter, the class rooms were put back in order and a course schedule was published.

By early July, the HBSC sailing school had delivered the first of eight on water courses completed in 2016. Ten classroom courses were delivered, as well.

By mid July, HBSC had acquired three keelboats for the boat share club and a fourth was acquired in late August. In total, twenty five members signed on for the first year despite the uncertainties associated with this start up business.


One of the strengths of the former Humber Sailing Club was its emphasis on skills development and continuous

learning. Each year would see a few HSC members graduate to boat ownership. The sudden closure by Humber College accelerated the process in 2016 and ten past members of the Humber Sailing Club did graduate to boat ownership and are now sailing their own boats out of local clubs.

Ten monthly pass holders signed up after completing their Basic Cruising Course so they could continue to practice and develop their sailing skills on the Centre’s shared keelboats. As any new sailor can agree, 18 hours of on water instruction is not sufficient to prepare you for everything Lake Ontario can throw at you. Several of these pass holders have committed to returning as full annual Club members in 2017.

The Humber Bay Sailing Centre has now completed its first sailing season and has a firm foundation of committed members who are looking forward to returning for the 2017 season.

The boats are now on the hard, and the docks have been winterized, but the school and the club continue in full operation for the off season.

The “school” is offering a broad range of courses and programs including *Diesel Engine Maintenance, Basic Cruising Theory, Intermediate Cruising Theory, Coastal Navigation, Marine Weather* and *Performance Sail Trim* starting in January through March. 

The “club” is running a variety of weekly seminars over the winter time frame on topics such as *Weather Basics, Mentoring, Risk Management, Introduction to Electronic Navigation* and *Preparing for the New Season*. The seminars are free to HBSC members and their invited guests. The Club also has a tradition of monthly get togethers so that members can stay in touch, socialize and have fun all year round.

*For information on the winter courses and seminars, as well as the course schedule for the upcoming 2017 season, please contact [education@hbsailing.com](mailto:education@hbsailing.com).*

*Visit the Humber Bay Sailing Centre booth at the 2017 Toronto International Boat Show. We hope friends, old and new, will stop by to say hello and learn more about our plans to help make sailing safe, affordable and fun. For more information on Humber Bay Sailing Centre, please go to [www.hbsailing.com](http://www.hbsailing.com)*

