

Pesca Environnement celebrates 25 years

Gilles Gagné

CARLETON: – In 1991, two young biologists founded Pesca Environnement with the idea of earning a living in their field of studies. Twenty-five years later, the company employs 45 people, and up to 62 in the summer, thus fulfilling other people's dreams to earn a living in the Gaspé Peninsula.

Pesca Environnement's initial specialty, the environment, is now enhanced by other scientific fields such as forestry, engineering, geomatics as well as communications.

Company president Marjolaine Castonguay, one of the two founding biologists, vividly remembers the Pesca Environnement's first contract.

"It was for Hydro-Québec. We had to find natural methods of controlling vegetation under the power lines. The second contract was provided by the Bonaventure River ZEC. We had to carry out a salmon inventory. Marc Gauthier was director general of the ZEC at the time. He asked me if I had four guys available to do the job. I replied "yes, yes". I returned home having to find four guys for that job," she recalls with humor.

Those contracts were managed from a modest office. "The office was in my house. Pesca was started shortly before the birth of Sylvain (her third child). I had to give birth in Quebec City and when I came back home, all of Pesca's files were waiting for me, on the kitchen table. They could fit in one box," she adds.

While showing pictures of the company's second operational year, a man, Denis Arsenault, holds a chainsaw while clearing a log jam on a river. She emphasizes that times have changed.

"He worked with a chainsaw, without a helmet, without gloves, without glasses, without a life jacket, his feet in the water. He was trying to clear a log jam on the west branch of Bonaventure River. Fortunately, the methods are way safer today," she says with a grin.

"One day, I came to him asking him to use vegetable oil in his chain saw. He looked at me and said: "Are you crazy? Do you want to blow-up my chainsaw?" I went to the supermarket and bought



Photo: G. Gagné

The bulk of Pesca's work force is based in the Baie des Chaleurs area. Marjolaine Castonguay is seated, third from the right.

vegetable oil for him. He finally used it and it worked," reminisces Marjolaine Castonguay.

"At the beginning, we had no GPS (global positioning systems). We were marking some spots along the rivers with pieces of cardboard that would get wet after a rainfall," she points out.

Pesca Environnement blossomed quite a bit after that. There were two employees in 1991, Marjolaine Castonguay and co-founder Julie Dugas, the company. In 2003 the company employed 15 people. The office was of course no longer in Ms. Castonguay's house. It had moved to a building located on Highway 132 in Maria.

"We worked on many salmon rivers. Those were the

years of the Salmon Economic Development Program. We worked at restoring salmon pools and improving the fish habitat. Another big break came when we were selected to develop the Taylor Point Park in New Richmond," she says.

Starting in 2002, the development of wind energy in Quebec contributed heavily to Pesca's growth.

"Before the construction of the first two wind farms in Murdochville, we were asked to carry out a bird inventory regarding the Bicknell's thrush. I was supposed to have a weekend off with my boyfriend and upon arriving home, I told him: "How about spending the weekend under a tent in Murdochville to count birds?" In order to have a suc-

cessful business, you have to have cooperation from the people close to you, Guy (her boyfriend Guy Leblanc) has been quite helpful and patient over the years," says Marjo-

laine Castonguay.

Since 2002, Pesca has carried out 44 environmental assessment studies related to wind energy projects. Those wind farms represent an electricity production capacity of 3,200 megawatts, which represents 82% of Quebec's output in that energy field.

"We were asked to carry out assessment studies for wind farms located in New Brunswick and Ontario. We also monitored some power dam construction sites in Ontario," adds Ms. Castonguay.

Pesca's workforce increased to 25 employees in 2006 and to 35 in 2008. By that time, the two small offices in Maria had become really cramped. The employees were teasing their president by telling her that the next people hired would have to work in

Cont'd on page 12



Job Opportunity

CASA is seeking applications for a community liaison position. The successful applicant will undertake hands-on community work with English-based community organizations between Hope Town and Port Daniel, Quebec. The community liaison position will be part of a new project entitled: Community CAP (Collaboration, Awareness, and Promotion) expected to work under the direction of CASA in collaboration with the participating organizations to:

- Actively participate in the events and activities of community organizations and become familiar with the services and community outreach of each participating English-based organization
- Establish a community activity and events calendar that features/promotes month-to-month events; avoiding overlap (community activities, fundraisers, meetings, etc.)
- Assist community organizations with volunteer recruitment and in the creation/promotion of new activities
- Work with the Project Coordinator to explore and develop volunteer retention and renewal methods that contribute to the vitality of participating organizations
- Act as a liaison between individual community organizations, and between the collective of community organizations and the community at large

Successful candidates for the community liaison position must:

- Be outgoing and pleasant
- Be functionally bilingual
- Own or have continual access to a vehicle
- Be self-motivated and available to work flexible hours (evenings and weekends)
- Possess good computer and social media skills
- Enjoy interacting with multiple age groups
- Have experience with volunteerism
- Have a creative and innovative mind-set
- Be organized and on-task to fulfil the project objectives

Deadline to apply: June 8, 2016

Starting date: June 14, 2016

Please send your cover letter and CV to: fay.casa@globetrotter.net or to the following address:

CASA, 208B boulevard Gérard D. Levesque,
New Carlisle QC G0C 1Z0
T. 418.752.5995 / F. 418.752.6864



Photo: G. Gagné

Pesca Environnement president and director general Marjolaine Castonguay is confident in the future and is happy that her three children are now involved in the company.

PESCA:

▶ Cont'd from page 7

her office.

In 2008, the company bought the Thermotel building belonging to Aquamer's thalassotherapy centre. The office space was then multiplied by five. Five employees were added before the end of that year.

A full-time computer technician was hired in 2010. Now, the work force stands at 45

employees, with offices in Montreal and Quebec City. The bulk of the workforce, about 35 people, is based in Carleton.

Marjolaine Castonguay is confident in the future, despite the slowdown in Quebec's wind energy development.

"I think the slowdown will only be short term. Elsewhere in Canada, in Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan, wind energy is developing at an accelerated pace. We are trying to

position ourselves there," she says.

In Quebec, Pesca's work is mainly geared "towards accompanying industrial companies and showing them how to respect the environmental laws and adopt the best practices. We also provide communication services," says Marjolaine Castonguay.

"I am confident but not complacent. I always have doubts but it is a creative doubt. It helps us reach new

limits. The context cannot be worse than in 1991, as we started the company during a recession, with interest rates of 14%. We are always applying the same principle: work, work, work. It has been helpful," she explains.

Another good reason to be confident in the future is the involvement of her three children in the company.

"Jean-Pierre is finishing his master's degree thesis in coastal dynamics at *Université*

du Québec in Montréal, in collaboration with the Rimouski branch of *Université du Québec*. Marie-Flore is an urban planning graduate, working at our Montreal office. She comes here every month.

Sylvain holds a degree in human resource management from Bishop's University and a certificate in marketing. He was a baby when I started Pesca. Now, he brings his baby to work, like I did," she concludes.

BOURDAGES:

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year. "It goes with the crop," he adds.

Liquor sales should represent between 30 and 40% of Ferme Bourdages' total revenues in 2016.

The company had to slow down its activities during the final part of 2015 due to its debt load, which reached \$1.2 million. Most of that debt load was a consequence of the fire that destroyed the company's brand new building on March 29, 2011. The loss amounted to close to \$1 million. Bad crops also affected the company over ensuing years.

On February 10, the creditors accepted the company's restructuring plan.

have a better control of our operations," says Pierre Bourdages.

Some products have been abandoned, like sugar-free strawberry and raspberry spreads. The production and distribution of some food, like pies, was stopped in supermarkets in January.

"Some products were not selling well. The production of our other brands of food is resuming now. Our products will be present again in supermarkets next week (the fourth week of May)," points out Pierre Bourdages.

Ferme Bourdages provides year-around employment to half a dozen people and seasonal jobs to 40 more. Those seasonal jobs often last 20 weeks, sometimes more. Up



PUBLIC NOTICE

To the qualified voters entitled to have their name entered on the referendum list of the entire municipality:

PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given by the undersigned, Clerk of Ville de Gaspé, that at an ordinary sitting held on May 16, 2016, the Town Council has adopted the following By-Law:

1304-16 : DÉCRÉTANT UNE DÉPENSE D'UNE SOMME DE 2 000 000 \$ ET UN EMPRUNT DE 2 000 000 \$ PUR LA RÉALISATION DE RAPIÉÇAGE MÉCANISÉ SUR DIVERSES RUES DE LA VILLE DE GASPÉ

THAT the persons qualified to vote on the by-law on May 16, 2016, and who have therefore the right to demand that this by-law be submitted to a referendum poll will have access to a register open for that purpose from nine a.m. to 7 p.m. on May 30, 2016, at the office of the undersigned at the Town Hall in order to enter their name, address and occupation together with their signature.

IS A QUALIFIED VOTER OF THE MUNICIPALITY

A person who, on May 16, 2016, is not disqualified from voting according to article 524 of the Act respecting elections and referendums in municipalities and meets the following requirements:

- a natural person domiciled in the municipality and, since at least six months, in Québec and