

**Toronto Beekeepers Collective (TBC)**  
**Monthly Meeting (ZOOM)**  
**June 17, 2021**  
**7:00 - 8:45 pm**  
**Agenda and Meeting Notes**

Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m.

**Members attending:** Alessandra, Allan, Anne, Audrey, Buzz, Deirdre, Gita, Humza, Jonathan, Julien, June, Kerry F., Kerry G., Kit, Laura, Luc, Lynne (note-taker), Maker, Manny, Maria, Maureen (Mo) P., Nancy, Nicki, Niyi, Patricia, Patrick, Robin, Sophie, Sue G., Susan W., Winnie

**Regrets or not registered on the Zoom call:** Alana, Alison, Amanda, Bernie, Christine, Connor, Deborah, Gillian, Helen, Jeff, Jessica, Jude, Marie, Maryama, Maureen G., Melanie, Oliver, Orlando, Robert, Roy, Savino, Sierra, Tesla.

**1. Welcome and DRAFT Land Acknowledgement (Anne/Robin/Oliver)  
(NOT AS READ AT THE MEETING FOLLOWING MEMBER COMMENTS)**

We acknowledge that the land we are situated on is in the traditional territory of many Indigenous peoples, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat, and that it is home to many diverse Indigenous, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is subject to Treaty 13 between the Crown and the Mississaugas of the Credit as well as being in “Dish With One Spoon” treaty territory, a treaty that binds us all to share and protect the land.

Those of us who are uninvited settlers commit to listen, learn, and be guided by our Indigenous allies as we work towards reconciliation.

**2. ABC Bees: Les Crowder’s natural beekeeping (Robin)**

- Les Crowder – beekeeper in Texas; great proponent of top bar hives and natural beekeeping
- Discusses the reality of varroa mites, now a constant – if you’re raising bees, you’re raising mites, and the big question is, are you managing the mites, or do you just \*have\* them?
- If we breed bees, we are also breeding mites now.
- Some strategies for dealing with mites (by bees; by Crowder):
  - o Russian bees quiver when they get a varroa mite and sister comes along and knocks it off. Our bees are not that reactive.
  - o Change comb and equipment regularly. Old comb is contaminated by herbicides, pesticides, and beekeeper treatments as well as bee detritus -- it contributes to disease.
  - o Bees that are left to their own devices will often figure out their own strategies for minimizing mites, even if it’s just absconding.
  - o Crowder moved from mite eradication (didn’t work) to medication

- (didn't work) to management.
- o Pays to know the biology of the bee and the mite: Mites originated in Asia, where it lives off *apis ceranis*, which has a shorter life cycle than our *apis mellifera*. The shorter life cycle means mites can only reproduce in *apis ceranis* drone cells - and that keeps numbers down. *Apis mellifera*'s breeding cycle is ideal for mites - but it meant that mites flourished and then killed their hosts.
- o Therefore he looked for a way to 'breed' bee-tolerant mites (rather than mite-tolerant bees) that would not kill their host hives, and uses brood breaks and drone cells to keep numbers down
- o Crowder likes smaller boxes - faster spring swarming, natural brood breaks - better for the bees
- o Some bee larvae emit a pheromone when bitten by mites; nurse bees will open cell and remove larva and mite
- o Does not like formic acid as it shortens life of queens.
- o Suggests letting drone cells alone until they are close to hatching, then can remove drone cells with maximum mite infestation.
- o We don't keep bees as much as we enable them. Work with them rather than managing them.
- o Crowder likes top bar hives because the bees make their own comb - he noticed they make larger cells in the fall, which means larger bees which are better able to survive through the winter.
- o Using juniper bark for the smoker as a natural miticide.
- o Constantly cycles out queens if hives are struggling.
- o Goal is a biologically balanced system to breed 'up' bees and 'down' mites
- o We can't live without bees. They CAN live without us. Makes sense to pay attention to what they are telling us so we can all rise together.

### 3. **Beekeepers Report (Luc/Alana/Patrick)**

- a. BCCF (Patrick): doing well - producing "tons of honey"; hives are super strong; will be pulling brood to make more space in the hives. May be able to use them to make new hives.
- b. FRY (Luc): "Looking pretty good"; Luc wants to know how people are enjoying hive notes; strong hives, pulled "a decent amount" of brood. Applied a probiotic treatment. No harvest yet until Province opens up restaurants and hotels.  
*Question from Chat: Why are they pulling brood? To prevent swarming, and also a way to keep varroa mites down by providing a brood break. Capped brood is pulled because that's where the mites are.. Chef thinking of having chickens on the roof - will eat small hive beetles. (nice bit of humour in the chat - Will chickens fly over the walls? Only if they're "Free range")*
- c. DVP (Patrick): Things are picking up in terms of numbers of colonies and strength. Pulled some brood to prevent swarms and make new hives once they have a new queen. Queens starting to lay. Small hive beetles

are a problem. Warm weather is encouraging them. Sorted through all the frames and put them aside if infested. Will burn them. Any equipment (frames) that had minimal impact were put aside for freezing. If any members have extra space in freezers would appreciate having frames picked up. At DVP, shed was put in order, grass cut, etc. Plastic foundation has to be popped out before frames (wood) are burned. Sadie's hives - 3 remaining though one looks very quiet. 2 others have been added by Sundance Harvest, which has taken over Fresh City Farms' property - with a beekeeper (Selina Mendez). Robin will talk with her and Cheyenne Sundance as TBC beekeepers of record on the property.

Anne thanks to Luc and Patrick for extraordinary efforts in midst of the pandemic. Zoom applause.

#### **4. Committee Reports**

##### **a. Finance (Nancy, Jessica)**

- Updated safety protocol. Proposal to allow for up to 3 people outside the yard rather than just 1. No longer required to wear gloves but must use hand sanitizer *with 70% alcohol*.
- Accident and General Liability Insurance - FoodShare went with a new insurance broker this year and TBC was no longer covered under its policy. TBC needs to have coverage of \$5 million general liability to comply with client sites. Hard to ensure because a group, rather than individuals, but happily able to get a new policy via Cooperators' Insurance. *Many thanks to Nancy for her tireless work on this.*
- OMAFRA has a new grant program coming up to help beekeepers with sourcing queens locally, improving wintering over, purchasing harvest equipment, etc. Jessica is taking lead on the grant (thanks!).
- Toronto Community Housing Corporation -GordonRidge and Birchmount properties had hives via Alvéole. TCHC is now willing to fund the communities to support them directly, rather than working with Alvéole. TCHC has asked TBC and FoodShare to provide equipment, to provide education, and to assist as community requires.
- TBC patches and propolis tincture can now be made available via Anne's porch and other drop-off "depots" next Tuesday. Maureen has offered her porch as the depot for the west enders. North enders can pick up from Nancy. Let Nancy know where you want to pick up and she can ensure there are sufficient packages for all.
- Pollen collection at OSC - Nancy will begin and set up schedule and show how to do the collection and disengage the trap. Once someone knows, he/she can pass along knowledge the next time. Kerry and Kit volunteered.
- Pick-up sites:
  - Anne: 973 Logan Ave., one way north of Danforth, east of Pape 416-949-6697 (cell)
  - Maureen G: 58 Westmount. Dufferin and St. Clair area.

- Nancy: 65 Hounslow Ave., North York 647-918-2533  
[nbardecki@hotmail.com](mailto:nbardecki@hotmail.com)
- b. Equipment (Maureen/Robin)**
- Short on “woodware” – need frames and boxes, but Luc will be getting a shipment next week.
- c. Website (Jonathan/Melanie)**
- Humza put together material provided by TBC members and made the newsletter which has been posted to the website. Thanks, Humza!
  - Reminder from Jonathan: Make sure that there is an updated mobile number with your members profile.
- d. Social Media (Jessica/Jude)**
- No report
- e. Education (Audrey/Maria)**
- More kudos for Humza for a great report/newsletter! Thanks. Humza said he had more material and would put another newsletter together.
- f. Membership (Nicki/Lynne/Christine)**
- Membership will go through list of members and committees to ensure information is accurate then send to Jonathan to update on the TBC site.
- g. Health & Safety (Kerry F. and Anne)**
- Anne had an encounter with a bee becoming entangled in her hair then stinging her. She was not prepared to deal with the sting (no EpiPen, Benadryl, etc.) Kerry reminds us that, for many of us, we have not been in the bee yard for close to 2 years so may not have same comfort level we had before. When doing a hive check, take the bee suit (whether you choose to wear it or not), make sure you have a hat (sun safety and bee safety with a brim), and watch behaviour of bees. If they are buzzing around the face or bumping/aggressive, then time to leave bee yard or take some precautions. Take a walk away from the yard, take a break (literally) away from the bees. Measure your own comfort level carefully, especially if you have not worked with the bees before or recently. Take time to take care. Pay attention to how the bees are feeling and acting. Stay calm, don’t panic!
  - Anne and Kerry were just watering the plants at OSC, so Anne’s sting was unexpected. Once you are “marked”, says Allan, you may be followed. If one is upset, the others may respond likewise. Don’t expect you will get a warning, such as a bump. Wash your suits after every visit or two, especially if stung. Pheromones may linger. Moving from yard to yard – wash after each before moving to next (unless the same trip, of course!).
- h. Accessibility (Lynne/Kerry/Maria)**
- Pollinator garden at OSC – Kerry reported the boxes are in place, beds filled, and perennials planted! There are bench seats built in, so feel free

to perch! Beds are attractive to bees, not least because of drops of water on leaves.

- TBC is currently responsible for watering. Add your name to the chat indicating willingness to be part of a watering roster. (So far: **Deirdre, Nicki, Kit, Winnie, Lynne, Audrey, Sue Gulley**) We need to get a key to open the water. Kerry and Anne have been watering each night to ensure plants get established. OSC has had some issues with people accessing back area, so we need to tell Security that we are there. They will give us a key and unlock/lock the gate. Call when ready to go. Water access beside the main security doors at back of the building – about 30 metres from water source. 100 foot hose in the shed (need combination) – lightweight and expands to make the hose easier to use.
- Kerry will offer a “Watering 101” session if anyone wishes. Hose is stored in orange bucket in shed. Lock code – the last couple of times Kerry has been there, the code had not been reshuffled. 4 digit code – after locking need to scramble the numbers on the “dial”. **Number = 2827**
- For watering roster: Sign-up on the TBC events page. Remember to fill in online COVID screening and send it to Luc or to link on SignUp (will be forwarded to Luc). Normally Patrick also gets COVID form but not for watering.

#### **5. Ask Me Anything with Luc** – questions about your bees, our bees, Hamilton bees, the world’s bees!

- Question from Humza: For those who don’t have feeders, are there any quick and easy ways to feed?
- Luc: Fill Ziploc bags that can fit on top of frames. Cut lines in bags at top so bees can feed on syrup and bring it down into the frame. Maria says that TBC used to make pollen cakes by mixing pollen with honey in a bag and placing that feed into hive in March. Good for queens as they prepare to lay in early Spring.

#### **6. Other Business**

- Kerry – Alison Best at DVP asked if anyone would be interested in doing a beekeeping presentation for the “Adults in Nature” program. Last time Maria and Sue did this. This year, July 19 (?) for presentation, depending on COVID restrictions. Time – morning, TBA. For about 30 minutes. Maria says they want 3-4 presentations to smaller groups of various ages. Kerry will send out as an e-mail with details. Would like to advise Allison Best by early next week of TBC availability.
- Will hope to begin organization for harvest at next meeting. A good meeting to be there.

Meeting ended: 8:45 p.m.

Next Meeting: Monday, July 19, 2021 (remember to SignUp!)