

# RAINY LAKE CONSERVANCY



Preserving the Rainy Lake Watershed

## A Rainy Lake Reflection by Jim Watson

I was four years old (in 1923) the first time I came to Rainy Lake. We drove up from Minneapolis in a Packard to stay at McPeak's at Birch Point (Ranier). At that time you had to go through Duluth to get to International Falls. It was a dirt road from Duluth to International Falls and then to Birch Point. The end of the road was at Point of Pines.

The next year we stayed at the Neetsy Weetsy Inn. The siding was half log slabs with the bark still on the slabs. At night I would lie in bed and hear the worms chewing under the bark.

The third year we rented Dr. Monahan's cabin (Dr. Monahan was Gene Ritchie Monahan's father). He sold his practice to Dr. Mary and from that came the name Doctor Mary's Point. Dr. Dunsmore, Dr. Scheldrup and Dr. Lysne used to pick up the Monahans and take them for

rides in their boats. Henry's (Dr. Lysne) boat was the *Mermaid* then. It had a narrow front with a cabin. It was a wet boat and very unseaworthy. I got to drive it when I was five or six years old.

From then on, our family stayed at Ober's (Ernest Oberholtzer) island, usually in the Cedar Bark cabin. When Ober took us on trips, we camped on the Berry Island beach. Once we climbed the forestry tower on mainland north of Swell Bay.

Ober took me on some amazing trips. One time we canoed down the Seine River and stopped at the Indian reservation. Ober could speak Ojibway; the Indians loved him. On this trip, the Indians put on a feast for him. The feast was a bear head. I was twelve years old and I was starving so I ate plenty.

*As told to Mary Lysne during a rambling interview with Jim Watson in April 2009*



*Jim Watson on Berry Island by M. Lysne*

## RLC Report Card

To mark the Rainy Lake Conservancy's 10th anniversary, the Board of Directors invited the Ontario Land Trust Alliance (OLTA) to conduct a formal assessment of our organization last June. Rainy Lake Conservancy members should be pleased with the high marks we achieved on our OLTA report card. The team informed us that we can be extremely proud of our achievements to date and that we have an impressive record of success (see the report card on page 2).

The assessment by OLTA is intended to help strengthen land trusts through a systematic review and discussion of governance and operating practices in light of Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices. One of the many benefits of OLTA membership is that OLTA covers all workshop costs including travel for the team that had to come all the way from Toronto to Rainy Lake. Ian McNabb, OLTA's new Executive



*Ontario Land Trust Alliance's Ian Macnab and Michelle Albanese, RLC board and officers*

## A Note from the President



Ten years have flown by since the foundation of the Rainy Lake Conservancy. Thanks to a very supportive membership and the dedication of directors and executive officers over the years, we can be proud of our accomplishments on

Rainy Lake. We have established close working relationships with many like minded organizations and agencies, in particular with the Nature Conservancy of Canada, the Minnesota Land Trust and the local Ministry of Natural Resources. We are grateful for their experience and assistance in our formative years. As we enter our second decade as a land trust, we look forward to furthering our efforts to protect the watershed through land protection, public education, research, and participation in planning initiatives affecting the watershed.

Our conservation easement program has been in neutral for a few years because of cross-border issues but this year we have some good news for you. By early 2010, the Rainy Lake Conservancy will hold its first conservation easement, thanks to the efforts of Sam and Stephanie White and their family who wish to restrict the use of Echo and Little Echo Islands in the future. Sam, our first president, has been an inspiration for all of us in the Conservancy. He has stated that he hopes his

conservation easement will encourage other private property owners in the Rainy Lake watershed to consider long-term conservation measures for their properties. The Echo Islands conservation easement donation to the Rainy Lake Conservancy does not mean that the Whites are giving up title to their land. It merely lays out conditions they want to establish in perpetuity for use of their island.

Board Members and Executive Officers look forward to a successful 2010 and offer a warm welcome to our two new directors, Andrea Trembath and Brian Johnson. Andrea is young, talented, and she lives and works in Fort Frances. Brian has a cabin on Namakan Lake and is passionate about preserving a healthy watershed. We also thank Claudia Horne for her long years of dedicated service as Secretary of the Board. Fortunately, she will continue to serve as a director, while Kay Larsen will assume the role of secretary. We appreciate Kay's willingness to take on this important job and to share her talents with us.

## RLC Report Card continued from Page 1

Director; Michelle Albanese, conservation easement/land securement expert; and Kathy Allan, facilitator, conducted a very enjoyable and valuable workshop for directors and executive officers. Special thanks to Mary and Kurt Lysne who hosted the event at Copenhagen Island and to board members who devoted the full day to discussing the land trust standards and practices report and evaluating future directions for our organization.

The Conservancy has already adopted specific recommendations of the report. We have developed a formal record-keeping policy, amended two corporate by-laws, drafted a five-year budget and updated our 2004-2009 Strategic Plan. The 2009-2015 Strategic Plan, presently in draft form, will be discussed and passed at the June 2010 Board meeting. Details of the final strategic plan will be presented at the 2010 Annual General Meeting. Input from members is welcome. *Phyllis Callaghan*

REPORT CARD	
SUBJECT	COMMENTS
Corporate House	<i>In order: by-laws, board of directors, funding agreements, financial statements, audits</i>
Membership Matters	<i>Stable and supportive American and Canadian membership</i>
Community Outreach	<i>Excellent outreach through professional newsletters and website, research and support for community projects</i>
Partnerships Networking	<i>Great partnerships with a number of organizations; thousands of dollars raised in partnership with the Minnesota Land Trust</i>
Land Protection	<i>Assisted in protecting approximately 14,000 acres of land on islands of Rainy Lake</i>
Recognition and Awards	<i>Rainy Lake Conservancy and conservation partners chosen by Ontario Trillium Foundation as one of its top 25 grantees for its 25th anniversary</i>

  
**Dale Callaghan**  
 President

## Reserve Fund – A Strong Step Forward

The Rainy Lake Conservancy received approval from Revenue Canada this year to establish a reserve fund. This special fund will be used primarily to support land protection and stewardship costs of future properties, educational projects to benefit the community, scientific research related to our mission, and to work in partnership with other groups and agencies dedicated to preserving the environment.

The reserve fund may also be used as an endowment fund which would generate enough annual revenue to pay the salary of an executive director. We need relief for our presently overworked volunteers who have donated a tremendous amount of their time and energy to the Conservancy over the past ten years. We have been advised by other land trusts that we would need approximately \$1,000,000 in the fund to generate enough interest to pay the salary of a staff person, to carry out our mission and to meet our obligations as a charitable organization and land trust. At present, thanks to the generous donations of our members, we have \$48,000 in the reserve fund. Your continued donations to the Minnesota Land Trust Rainy Lake Fund or directly to the Rainy Lake Conservancy will go a long way toward supporting the Conservancy's commitment to preserving this very special lake for present and future generations.

If you have comments, suggestions or questions about the fund, please contact me.

*Dale Callaghan, President*

## Best Wishes to a Friend and Partner

It is with regret that we bid farewell to Jane Prohaska as she leaves her position as executive director of the Minnesota Land Trust. Jane has been a good friend to the Rainy Lake Conservancy since our beginning as a fledgling land trust. She has always been generous in sharing her expertise with us and in providing us with a wealth of printed reference materials as requested.

Jane was also instrumental in developing a memorandum of understanding with the Rainy Lake Conservancy to set up the Rainy Lake Fund to which many of our American members generously contribute. Without grants from this fund and Jane's guidance, it would have been difficult for the Rainy Lake Conservancy to carry out its mission as successfully as it has. We wish Jane well and hope to keep in touch with her as she moves forward in the conservation field.



*Phyllis Callaghan*

## Continuing Namakan Dam Updates

According to the September 2009 OPEG newsletter, field studies are now complete and the Environmental Assessment reports are being prepared. A Notice of Inspection will be posted in local newspapers including the Fort Frances Times identifying locations where the public may view the Draft Environmental Reports and specifying dates and locations for open houses. According to the schedule also shown in the recent newsletter, the open houses will occur in the December - Feb 2010 timeframe. This project schedule has been extended many times in the past, so check the OPEG web site for the most recent information ([www.opeg.ca](http://www.opeg.ca)).

*Environmental Research contact: Paul Anderson*

## A Critical Species at Risk

Acting on a report received by the Species at Risk in Ontario committee in June 2009, the Ministry of Natural Resources is proceeding with amending the status of Lake Sturgeon in Northwestern Ontario from Special Concern to Threatened. This is good news for the local fishery in that projects impacting Lake Sturgeon habitat will likely face closer scrutiny.

The Federal process is separate from Ontario's process and will not necessarily reach the same determination as the Provincial designation, according to John Van den Broeck, local MNR Biodiversity/Species at Risk Biologist. The Federal independent body that provides advice to government (COSEWIC – Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada) has recommended that the Border water population (Rainy River/Lake of the Woods/Namakan etc.) receive a designation of Special Concern. This recommendation has yet to be adopted through the Federal regulatory process and consequently is not reflected in the Federal Species at Risk Act.

*Environmental Research contact: Paul Anderson*

## Raising Public Awareness

Radio station CFOB in Fort Frances became the venue for a Rainy Lake Conservancy public awareness campaign in August. CFOB aired sixteen 30-second shorts educating the community about the Conservancy. These radio messages, paid for by membership dollars, reaped many positive comments from listeners. An interview with Dale Callaghan and an excellent article in the Fort Frances Times in June further enhanced our presence in the community.

*Marketing and Media contact: Mary Lysne*

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## Boat Operators License Deadline

This is an FYI for Rainy Lake Conservancy members, friends and guests in Canada: Effective September 15, 2009, the "Competency of Operators of Pleasure Craft Regulations" require operators of pleasure craft fitted with a motor and used for recreational purposes to have proof of competency on board at all times. For information on this requirement, go to the following official website: [www.tc.gc.ca/marinesafety/debs/obs/paperwork/paperwork\\_operatorfaq.htm](http://www.tc.gc.ca/marinesafety/debs/obs/paperwork/paperwork_operatorfaq.htm). In addition, if you do an internet search on Canadian Boat Operators License, you will find some online sources for taking the exam.

Government Relations contact: Dale Callaghan

### Nature Outing Snapshots



Museum Curator Pam Hawley



August Nature Outing at Goose Portage



Attendees and boats at Goose Portage

## Canoeing the Heart of the Continent

In early July, Rainy Lake Conservancy members helped with the Rainy Lake segment of the *Canoe the Heart of the Continent* expedition. This 500km voyage, celebrating the hundredth anniversary of Quetico Park and the Superior National Forest, took paddlers from Atikokan to Thunder Bay, crossing the US/Canadian border to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and the Pigeon River. The Rainy Lake passage was from Crilly Dam to Sandpoint



Canoe the Heart of the Continent's North Canoe on Rainy Lake by Kurt Lysne

Provincial Park, up the center of Seine Bay, and on to the Voyageurs National Park. Nine paddlers swapping out at various intervals included Pam Hawley, John Rafferty MP, and Gila and Stephen Challis. They covered the 32-mile stretch in six hours of paddling in a beautiful fiberglass reproduction of a 26-foot North Canoe. That's really truckin' since most of us would find a ten mile canoe trip taxing.

Chase boat driver on the Rainy Lake section: Kurt Lysne

### DID YOU KNOW?

The residence time or "flushing rate" of Rainy Lake is about one year. In a lake as large as Rainy Lake, this is an especially fast turnover. Residence time is how long water entering a lake stays in the lake before it flows out of the lake. It is a factor in the clean water quality of Rainy Lake.

### MISSION STATEMENT

To work with property owners, governments and local communities to preserve and protect the natural beauty, historic features, and ecological and recreational values for present and future generations, particularly within but not restricted to Rainy Lake.

Visit our web site at [www.rainylakeconservancy.org](http://www.rainylakeconservancy.org)

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