

A Short History of the Rainy Lake Conservancy: 1996 to 2014

In the summer of 1996 a group of Rainy Lake cottagers met to discuss the possibility of forming an organization to preserve the natural beauty and ecological values of Rainy Lake. Thought turned to action; in 1999 the Rainy Lake Conservancy (RLC) became a nonprofit Canadian organization, and in 2001 the Conservancy received charitable status from Canada Customs and Revenue Agency. Since 1996, RLC has made notable contributions to conservation on Rainy Lake and in the area:

- **1997:** attended meetings of the Ontario Government's Boreal West Round Table and submitted a proposal to designate crown land islands and selected mainland shorelines as Conservation Reserves.
- **1998:** crown land on the islands of Rainy Lake designated by the Ontario Government as Conservation Reserves (officially regulated in the summer of 2006).
- **2000-2002:** worked in partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and the Nature Conservancy of Canada to spearhead the first comprehensive biological inventory of the Canadian side of Rainy Lake; project supported by a \$21,000 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.
- **2002:** promoted conservation through summer-long exhibit at the Fort Frances Museum, presentation at International Joint Commission meeting in Fort Frances, and display at local Farmers Market.
- **2002:** presented land protection/ conservation easements workshop to RLC members and other interested cottagers.
- **2002-2003:** worked with other land trusts and the Ontario government to effect the regulation of Bill 119 which will encourage more land protection of U.S. properties in Ontario.
- **2002-2006:** participated in water quality testing through the Lake Partners Program, Great Ontario Dip-In, Rainy River Community College/Minnesota Pollution Control Agency programs.
- **2005 -2007:** membership on Board of Directors of the Rainy Lake Fisheries Charity Trust, local organization formed to conduct fisheries research on the lake.

- **2004-2006:** worked with Voyageurs National Park to help locate loon nesting sites on Rainy Lake.
- **2004-2006:** lead applicant for \$48,900 Ontario Trillium Foundation grant to support establishment of the Nature Conservancy of Canada field office in Fort Frances, construction of phase one of the Rainy River Valley Field Naturalists Cranberry Peatlands Interpretive Trail, and land protection in the area through conservation easements and property acquisition.
- **2006:** members participated in the Lake of the Woods District Property Owners Association Dock Talk program to promote good lakeshore stewardship.
- **2007:** continued to work with the Minnesota Land Trust and the Nature Conservancy of Canada to support conservation easement programs on Rainy Lake.
- **2007:** received the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Great Grants Award in the Environment category along with our partners in the Northwestern Ontario Conservation Partnership.
- **2007:** upon the occasion of its 25th anniversary, the Ontario Trillium Foundation selected for special recognition their top 25 great not-for-profit grants from the foundation's 25 years of grants. RLC was honoured to be among the chosen 25.
- **2007-current:** worked with other interested organizations and individuals to research and provide input regarding the proposed dams on the Namakan River.
- **2008:** assisted with a conservation easement on Ernest Oberholtzer's Review Islands.
- **2009:** Board and officers participated in a formal assessment of the Rainy Lake Conservancy's organization conducted by the Ontario Land Trust Alliance. The Conservancy received high marks when held up to the light of the Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices.
- **2009: Rainy Lake Conservancy celebrated its 10th anniversary**
- **2009:** RLC provided financial assistance for Voyageurs National Park's (VNP)

research and monitoring study of the double-breasted cormorant. The study focused on the survival, diet and health of cormorant nestlings on the Ontario portion of Rainy Lake.

- **2010:** RLC provided funds to purchase the underwater camera used in Lakehead University juvenile sturgeon research on the Namakan River.
- **2010:** RLC expanded its water sampling program to include 10 sites on Rainy and Namakan Lakes History.
- **2010:** RLC representatives began serving on International Joint Commission (IJC) Citizen Advisory Task Force for the management of water in the Lake of the Woods and Rainy River Basin.
- **2011:** RLC entered into a partnership with American Friends of Canadian Land Trusts (AFoCLT) and the owners of Echo Island, Rainy Lake, to complete a Conservation Easement to protect the conservation values of the property in perpetuity.
- **2011:** RLC provided financial assistance for VNP's beaver and moose research on Rainy Lake.
- **2012:** The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), with the support of Rainy Lake Conservancy, other local partners, and the Government of Canada, adopted NCC's Lake of the Woods/Rainy Lake Natural Areas Conservation Plan. As a result of the plan, RLC will work with NCC to support the securement of core conservation areas, the enhancement of community support for conservation and of biodiversity values, and the development of partnerships in the Rainy Lake/Lake of the Woods area.
- **2012:** RLC hired its first administrative support person in the summer of 2012 to support the work of the board members, executive officers and RLC committees.
- **2013:** RLC published its first electronic newsletter to better communicate with its members.
- **2013-2015:** RLC co-sponsored Lake Sturgeon research by Lakehead University PhD Student, Jim Burchfield, through the National Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada's program (NSERC).

- **2014:** RLC was recognized by the Internal Revenue Service in the U.S. as a publicly funded charity. This recognition makes RLC eligible to receive the transfer of Conservation Easements from American Friends of Canadian Land Trusts. RLC and American Friends of Canadian Land Trusts protected over 360 acres of privately owned land on Rainy Lake by completing four Conservation Easements.