

RAINY LAKE CONSERVANCY



Preserving the Rainy Lake Watershed

A Rainy Lake Reflection: Profile of an Ojibwe Elder

by Nancy Jones as told to Betty Anne West

First Nations elder Nancy Potson Jones lives these days at *Nigigoonsiminikaaning* (Red Gut Reserve) which is an Ojibwe community at the east end of Swell Bay on Rainy Lake. Born in Mine Centre, Ontario, Nancy's spirit name is *Ogimaawigwanebiik*; her spirit animal is *waahazhaa* meaning muskrat. From the time she was three days old, Nancy lived with her grandmother in a wigwam at Little Turtle Lake. As a little girl, she travelled with her grandmother all over Rainy Lake in a birch bark canoe, living off the land, trapping beaver and muskrat and picking blueberries. They traded deer and moose meat with George Stouffers on Sand Point Island for fish, flour and lard. When Nancy was



Nancy Jones, Ojibwe Elder

eight years old, she went to live with her parents. Later, Nancy married John Jones and together they moved to *Nigigoonsiminikaaning* where they raised eight children. Nancy became a Native Language teacher and served as cultural co-coordinator at Mine Centre School for many years. Although she retired three years ago, she still teaches Ojibwe to the young people in her community. She makes tobacco from herbs that she finds in the woods and she still traps animals for fur. At the 1971 Trappers' Convention she won the Fastest Beaver Skinning contest; at the 1972 Convention, she won the award for Best Handled Fur. She jokes and says she is still undefeated! Unusual in the Ojibwe community, Nancy has twin sons who are both working as professors, teaching indigenous languages and Ojibwe culture. Today this remarkable woman is working on a book in English and Ojibwe about animals, birds and leaves of the Rainy Lake area.

Conservation Easements Set to Go on Four Island Properties

The Rainy Lake Conservancy was informed by the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) on May 3rd that the Government of Canada had passed the required Regulation to provide Prescribed Donee status to the American based Friends of NCC. This means that the Nature Conservancy of Canada can now proceed with four conservation easements on American owned Rainy Lake islands. James Duncan, easement specialist with NCC, and Henry Hyatt will guide the four Rainy Lake Conservancy easement donors through the process. It is hoped that the easements will be completed before the end of the year. James Duncan has assured us that he is committed to this project and will be visiting Rainy Lake at the end of June. He will be accompanied by Julian Holenstein, newly appointed NW Ontario NCC program director. The

Easements continued on page 2

An Ounce of Prevention

New to Rainy Lake in 2006 is an invasive aquatic species, the Spiny waterflea, which is able to disrupt the natural balance of the food chain in infected lakes. These tiny aliens can spread to uninfected waters through fishing gear, bait containers, or water from live wells and boats that are contaminated with eggs or egg-laden females. Once the Spiny waterflea infects a lake, it is impossible to eliminate it. The only action boaters can take is to halt its spread to non-infected lakes.

DO YOUR PART:

- Remove all visible aquatic matter from boats and put it in the garbage
- Drain the water from your boat, motor, live well, and bilge
- Don't release live bait!
- Empty bait buckets on land
- Rinse boats with hot water, pressure spray them, or let them dry in the sun for five days before moving them to another lake.

Information provided by the Ontario MNR

Hawley Family Foundation Donates \$10,000

Our thanks to James and Roz Hawley for their family's very generous contribution to the Minnesota Land Trust/Rainy Lake Conservancy conservation program on Rainy Lake. This significant donation has given impetus to the fund raising efforts which many Rainy Lake Conservancy members have faithfully supported over the years. *Cross-Border Donations Committee contact: Anne Newhart*

Phosphates Cause Algae!

From Kelli Saunders, Dock Talk 2006

As you enjoy your beautiful Rainy Lake this summer, you can make some choices that will lighten your ecological footprint here. The chemicals you allow in your cabin impact the health of your family and the Rainy Lake area. What products are best? Products that are free of formaldehyde and petrochemicals and, most importantly, having a pH in the neutral range. Look for products without phosphates, chlorine or chemical residues. Consider alternative products such as baking soda, vinegar, steel wool, and hydrogen peroxide.

In 1988 the Environmental Choice Program (ECP) was established in Canada, allowing consumers to participate in environmental protection by helping them make educated purchasing choices. The ECP EcoLogo on products is easy to identify with its three doves in the shape of a maple leaf surrounded by a circle. When searching for sustainable alternatives, look for the EcoLogo which is North America's strictest environmental certification mark. The ECP website (www.environmentalchoice.com) lists thousands of approved products. It's worth browsing.

One informed choice at a time, you can help sustain the beauty of Rainy Lake.

Article prepared by Kay Larsen



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NCC field office will be based in Thunder Bay, but our area will continue to be served. Although we are sorry to see Ilka Milne leave her position as NCC program director here, we are confident that Julian will carry on the tradition she began and will be a strong supporter of conservation programs in the Rainy Lake watershed.

Easements Committee contact: Dale Callaghan

A Note from the President

Dear friends and lovers of Rainy Lake and environs,

As I begin to write to you I am feeling very grateful for the gift of the soaking rain falling into the parched forest which has received so little moisture of late.



I am grateful too for those individuals who have expressed what is a reciprocal relationship—that Rainy Lake is a part of them and they are a part of Rainy Lake—through generously giving of their energies, time and money to the Rainy Lake Conservancy. With these individual energies combined, we can be a presence helping to preserve ecological balance and integrity in this part of the world.

And there are those to be grateful for who continue to keep the lines of communication open, those who plan learning experiences and times to connect with each other, those who ask, receive and care for the gifts of money to us, those who make an effort to establish a connection with others who share in our feeling and connection to nature in this part of the world. Some of us have been participants and learners at the ManOMin Conference sponsored by our neighbors to the west, the Rainy River First Nations. Some of us have been working to weave a larger structure, the beautifully named Heart of the Continent Partnership, for mutual support in preservation and protection among the several organizations both governmental and non-governmental on either side and along the Border.

Many of us have a special gratitude for Ilka Milne who has been such a friend and ally during her tenure now completed as the first person to head up the Northwestern Ontario branch of the Nature Conservancy of Canada. Our best wishes and affection follow you, Ilka.

Best wishes to all of you, and enjoy a glorious and happy summer time.

Anne Newhart, President

Annual General Meeting

This year's Annual General Meeting will take place at 3:00PM, Sunday, August 5th, at La Place Rendez-Vous, Fort Frances. Members will be asked to vote for seven seats on the board of directors. Memberships are due for renewal on July 31st - come prepared to renew.

Greg Tighe and Kim Beaudry from Customs and Immigration Canada are going to be our speakers. They will give a presentation and answer questions about border regulations. Refreshments will follow the meeting.



Island area below Hay Rapids, Namakan River, photo by Stephen Challis

Goose Island 1997-2007

It's difficult to believe that ten years have passed since Goose Island was saved from development. Our records indicate it was in the winter of 1997 that a group of future Rainy Lake Conservancy members got together with the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), The Nature Conservancy (U.S.) and a conservation buyer, to ensure that most of this pristine 300-acre island would remain in its natural, undeveloped state. Today, two thirds of Goose Island is owned by NCC and managed as a nature reserve by Ontario Parks. Mining, logging and other forms of



Goose Island, photo by Phyllis Callaghan

development are prohibited. The public can, however, picnic, hike, and pick berries on the island. The Rainy Lake Conservancy is proud of its role in preserving one of Rainy Lake's most beautiful islands.

Goose Island Committee contact: Dale Callaghan

Namakan River Hydro Project

As part of a provincial-wide program to increase hydro power, a 10 megawatt facility has been proposed for the Namakan River at High Falls and Hay Rapids, situated just west of Quetico Park and east of Rainy Lake.

The Namakan River is an important part of the Rainy River watershed and it accounts for 30-40% of the water flow into Rainy Lake.

Several Rainy Lake Conservancy members (Paul Anderson, Dale Callaghan, Phyllis Callaghan, Stephen Challis, Anne Newhart) spent many hours last winter researching the project and writing letters to government officials expressing our concerns and requesting more information. The



Top of Hay Rapids, Namakan River, photo provided by Stephen Challis

project itself is currently in the feasibility phase and detailed information is sketchy. Economic and environmental impact studies are underway by Chant Engineering on behalf of the corporation, set up to design and operate the facility: Ojibway Power and Energy Group (OPEG). The environment study is due sometime next year, and a public comment period will follow its release.

The situation here is very complicated with many political, economic, environmental, and technical issues involved. Currently the Rainy Lake Conservancy is in a study mode, but we have many concerns and questions. Based on our current limited information, the project seems to be very costly considering the energy projected to be delivered to the grid (apparently a large subsidy has been promised for each KWH produced). Further, very few permanent jobs for Lac La Croix First Nation would be generated and there are many questions from an ecological and historical perspective.

Our next step is to meet this summer with the Lac La Croix First Nation Chief and the President of OPEG in an effort to learn more and to determine if options exist that would be beneficial to all concerned.

Environmental Research Committee contact: Paul Anderson

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Summer Hike on French Island

Rainy Lake Conservancy members and their guests are cordially invited to come to the Hyatts to walk around beautiful French Island. The date is August 15th at 10:00AM. The paths are quite lovely, wide and well groomed for easy hiking. Bring a bag lunch if you wish, and we will provide beverages and cookies.

Nature Outings committee: Claudia Horne, Trish Hogan and Ginny Sweatt



Great Blue Heron
by Francis Lee Jaques



Nature outing hikers on Green Island, photo by Mary Lysne

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BioBlitz the Bog

Now that the Cranberry Peatlands Interpretive Trail is officially open, we would like to encourage you to acquaint yourself with this unique place. Bring kids. Bring friends, guests, visiting relatives, anyone who would love to spend some time deeply absorbed in nature. The trail's many feet of boardwalk make for easy walking and help assure that your shoes will remain mostly dry.

Cranberry Peatlands offers an educational opportunity for adults and children alike. A brochure available at the bog's entrance gives facts about bogs and identifies some of the plants located at numbered stations along the way.

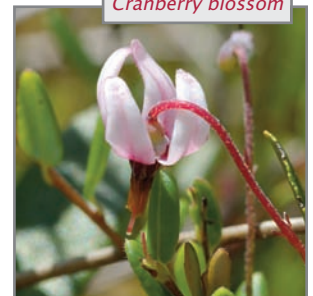
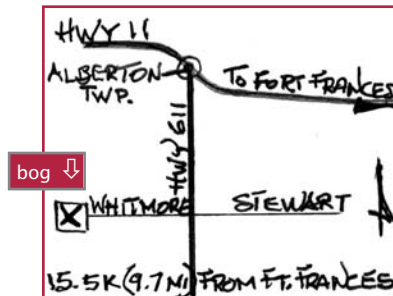
Rich with tamaracks and mosses, the bog is home to Small Cranberry, Labrador Tea, Bog Rosemary and Dwarf Birch.

Dragonfly enthusiasts will not be disappointed in the Cranberry Peatlands where meadowhawks, darners, emeralds and baskettails can be found.

Are you a birder? From Black-capped Chickadees to Peregrine Falcons, from Goldfinches to Bald Eagles, throw in an American Woodcock and some Sandhill Cranes and you will be delighted with the bog as a birding destination.

Go on over and get acquainted. Who knows, perhaps you will see one of the provincially rare species living in this wetland. Or if biodiversity interests you, consider doing a BioBlitz and leaving a record of your results in the box at the entrance. (A BioBlitz is a rapid identification of what lives in a particular area at a given point in time.)

Cranberry Peatlands contact: Ilka Milne
Rainy River Valley Field Naturalists



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