

# RAINY LAKE CONSERVANCY



Preserving the Rainy Lake Watershed

## A Rainy Lake Reflection – Windy Point Train Stop

by Sharon Tysz, daughter of Mildred and Bob Smith

The night train ran east from Winnipeg to the Lakehead, stopping at Windy Point to pick up or drop off passengers. The Local ran from Fort Frances to Mine Centre, stopping at Windy Point to drop off passengers, mail, and groceries. Customers on the lake would phone Filmore's Grocery in town, have their orders sent up to Windy Point on the Local, and then pick up their grocery orders at the platform.

Old Nel Seline would have the same grocery order delivered every month, and it always included about 3 dozen steaks. He would open the box on the platform and give 7 or 8 steaks to Mom and we would fire up the fire pit the next day and have a huge steak fry.

When travelers were waiting for the train, they would come down to my parents' house to visit and have a cup of coffee. Dad built a little house up by the train track so people could wait there for the

train, but it seemed they would rather come down to our house.

The Local and the night train were steam engines. There was a water tower at Rocky Inlet and one at Mine Centre. The trains would fill up at Rocky Inlet and have just enough water to generate steam to make it to Mine Centre. When they stopped at Windy Point, Mom would always have the coffee on, even at 2:00 in the morning. The engineers had to shut the trains down to conserve enough water to make it through to Mine Center without running out of steam.

I remember Dad watching for the train lights to shine on the horizon and on the tree line coming



*Little House by Railroad Tracks*

*Rainy Lake Reflection continued on page 2*

## Namakan Dams— Our Evolving Position

The Environmental Committee worked hard all winter expressing our concerns to public officials on both sides of the border over the proposed Namakan River dams, trying to convince others to get involved in raising the public visibility of the projects. Special thanks to our Namakan Lake members, Gerry Lager and Brian and Sally Johnson, and to Anne Newhart, Stephen Challis, the Callaghans, Ed McLeod and Gord Martin for the time and effort they spent on the project.

Our position has evolved from a position of neutrality to one of opposition. We now believe the costs of damming the river far outweigh any potential future benefits and that there are alternatives for the Lac La Croix First Nation's economic development. The Namakan is a unique river, one of the few undammed rivers of its size in Ontario; it is located in the heart of a historic protected area bordering on

*Namakan River continued on page 2*

## Rainy Lake Conservancy Supports Canadian Heritage River Designation

The Rainy Lake Conservancy has long been interested in obtaining special recognition for the Rainy Lake watershed. We are therefore happy that efforts are finally underway to designate the historic voyageur waterway from Lake Superior to Lake of the Woods as a Canadian Heritage River. Pam Hawley, curator of the Fort Frances Museum, heads the committee in our area, and staff at Old Fort William in Thunder Bay are responsible for the Lake Superior region. The Rainy Lake Conservancy, communities along the Rainy River, and other groups and individuals are also involved in the designation process. If designated, the waterway would join an elite group of the most historic and beautiful rivers in Canada. Additionally, this designation could open up opportunities to showcase the waterway.

*Government Relations and Networking Committee contact: Dale Callaghan*

## Rainy Lake Reflection continued from Page 1

around the corner from Simm's Siding. When he saw the lights from the train, he had just enough time to light the lanterns and get out to the platform. It was Dad's job to wave the lanterns for the conductor; green meant the train could go straight through; red meant the train had to stop and pick up passengers.

I will never forget the night Dad decided that my eldest son Robbie, at the age of 12, was old enough to swing the lanterns for the train. Robbie was so proud that Grandpa had given him the responsibility of flagging down the night train!



*Windy Point south docks and snack bar, photos from Tysz family's collection*

## Namakan River continued from Page 1

Quetico Provincial Park, Voyageurs National Park, Superior National Forest and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. We are not convinced that its wilderness character should be destroyed by weirs, powerhouses, sluiceways, raised water levels, roads, bridges, transmission lines and disturbance of the landscape caused by construction, in return for 9.6 megawatts of hydroelectric power. This 9.6 megawatts of power will contribute very little to offsetting power requirements resulting from the potential closing of the 210 megawatt coal-fired plant in Atikokan. We are also concerned about the effectiveness of proposed fish passages for the healthy population of sturgeon and other species.

Ojibway Power and Energy Group, the proponent, will present its *Environmental Assessment (EA) Screening* report at a public meeting in Fort Frances in the summer or fall of 2008. This will be followed by a mandatory review period of 60 days. If there are no significant concerns and the necessary social, economic and cultural conditions of the EA are met, the dams will likely be given the green light to proceed. If, on the other hand, there are still serious outstanding issues and concerns, the EA could be elevated which would cause more extensive independent assessments by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment.

*Environmental Research Committee contact: Paul Anderson*

## A Note from the President

Hello to all of you who love this special part of the world. As the earth turns around the sun, it brings another summer here on Rainy Lake.



It is with sadness I report that not all of us could be here this summer – Rainy Lake has lost two friends:

Russ Siebert and Henry Hyatt who were both strong supporters of conservation.

In a broader look at conservation in our region, you may remember hearing about the Heart of the Continent Partnership. The Heart of the Continent Partnership is a cross-border organization devoted to pursuing mutual interest and support for conservation in the larger

Ontario/Minnesota border area. The Rainy Lake Conservancy is an active participant in this partnership. In a bold move forward, the Heart of the Continent has strengthened its hand by hiring a coordinator, Bret Hesla.

Closer to home on Rainy Lake, some of you may be looking to feel more a part of the Rainy Lake Conservancy by contributing of yourself and your precious time and energy. You are genuinely invited to contact any board member to express an interest in running for a seat on the board of directors.

In the summer of 2009 the Rainy Lake Conservancy celebrates its 10th anniversary. Can you believe it! This would not have happened without your care and support and commitment. As the anniversary date approaches, look for future activities surrounding this milestone event.

I am so grateful for the beauty of Rainy Lake and for those of you who work so hard to preserve it.

Anne Newhart, President



## Great Grant Award and Capital Grant

Last fall the Rainy Lake Conservancy, the Rainy River Valley Field Naturalists and the Nature Conservancy of Canada received two prestigious awards from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF), one of the largest granting organizations in Canada. Having won the *regional* award for outstanding work in the environmental sector, the partnership went on to receive the *provincial* Great Grant award at a special gala celebration held in Toronto. Phyllis and Dale Callaghan, representing the Rainy Lake Conservancy, and Ria Nicholson, from the Nature Conservancy of Canada, accepted the award for the partnership. As lead applicant for the grant, we were proud to be chosen from among hundreds of nonprofit groups across the province receiving OTF environmental grants over the past 25 years.

In addition, the Rainy Lake Conservancy received an OTF capital grant of \$11,200 this spring to purchase a laser printer, PowerPoint projector, display booth, laptop computer, software, and audiovisual equipment for use at the AGM and other events. Many thanks to Trillium for supporting our volunteer efforts in the watershed!

*OTF Grant contact: Phyllis Callaghan*



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Robin Reilly, superintendent of Quetico Provincial Park, will be the speaker at this year's Annual General Meeting on Sunday, August 10th. Join us at 3:00 PM at La Place Rendez-Vous, Fort Frances, for our short business meeting, some fine sociability, and a sparkling speaker. Hors d'oeuvres will follow the meeting.

## Generous Donations by Members

The Minnesota Land Trust Rainy Lake Fund continues to thrive, thanks to the generosity of many Rainy Lake Conservancy members. Special thanks go out this year to Allan and Mary Juers and to James and Roz Hawley (Hawley Family Foundation) for their significant contributions of \$5,000 and \$20,000 respectively.

*Cross-border Committee contact: Anne Newhart*



*Rocks and Pines of Rainy Lake's Boreal Forest*



*Pelicans on Rainy Lake*

## Birth of Canadian Lake Trust Alliance



Last October, conservation organizations and individuals from across Canada gathered in Ottawa to attend the first conference of the Canadian Land Trust Alliance (CLTA). Phyllis and Dale Callaghan were among those who shared knowledge, learned much, renewed

friendships and came away convinced that CLTA will strengthen the land trust movement in Canada through education and training and will do much to promote the voluntary conservation of private lands across the country.

*Government Relations and Networking Committee contact: Dale Callaghan*

## A Tribute to Henry

When Henry Hyatt passed away last February, the Rainy Lake Conservancy lost a champion of conservation. Even before there was a Rainy Lake Conservancy, Henry was breaking new ground as he developed unprecedented land protection methods. He successfully completed easements on farm and boreal forest land, island property and historic structures. His Curtiss Island easement was one of the first, if not the first, conservation easement on Rainy Lake. He worked with founding members of the Rainy Lake Conservancy to preserve Goose Island; and he took a leadership role in moving the Conservancy's handful of prospective easements forward. In this regard, Henry said his one regret was that he would not be able to bring these prospective easements to fruition. Henry deeply loved Rainy Lake and gave generously of himself to preserve it.

His smile, his strength and confidence, his straightforward nature, and open approach to life will be greatly missed.

*by Mary Lysne, editor*

*3 SPRING 2008*

## Nature Outings

Lee Grim, man of many talents and retired biology professor, now on staff at Voyageurs National Park (VNP), will update us on many topics surrounding our fascinating Rainy Lake. He will speak about water, ongoing and new research in several areas, eagles and wildlife studies, and resource management.



Lee Grim

Can you stump the expert? Bring yourself and your questions to the VNP Rainy Lake Visitor Center, upstairs conference room, on Friday, July 25th at 1:30 PM. The room holds a maximum of 30 people.

RSVP to Ginny Sweatt at 218-244-4204 or Claudia Horne at 807-274-9124.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The average depth of Rainy Lake is 32 feet. The maximum depth of Rainy Lake is 161 feet.

### LOVING YOUR LAKE

Avoid fertilizing your lakeshore lawn. Nutrient runoff is a primary source of water pollution.

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## Oberholtzer Easements Move Forward

On May 3, 2008, the Board of Directors of the Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation approved a conservation easement on four islands in Rainy Lake. Commonly referred to as the "Review Islands," three of the four islands were directly left in the estate of Ernest Oberholtzer and the fourth, Gull Island, came to the Foundation after the death of Ted Hall, a lifelong friend of Ober's. This conservation easement goes beyond the purview of any organization and any future board of directors in that it preserves these four beautiful Rainy Lake islands in perpetuity.

Our Board studied all angles of this effort since it was first proposed over four years ago. We discussed the various options at length and looked into alternatives such as covenants and deed restrictions. We talked to attorneys specializing in land protection and they told us that, for long term land protection, conservation easements are the way to go. We are working with the Minnesota Land Trust and are confident that the end results will be what WE want to achieve as stewards of these unique islands.

"We believe that Ober would be proud to use the easement tool in this way on his islands," said

Executive Director, Beth Waterhouse. Clearly, the Board has acted courageously and for the future natural use and enjoyment of quiet solitude and the beauty of the wild.

The Oberholtzer Foundation Board of Directors sincerely thanks all those who contributed to this project, especially Rainy Lake Conservancy members for their encouragement and their donations through the Rainy Lake Fund of the Minnesota Land Trust. *by Beth Waterhouse and Tim Heinle  
Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation Board of Directors*



Photo courtesy of the Oberholtzer Foundation

### 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)