

MUSKOKA

REFLECTIONS

In the lake's placid reflections are mirrored past, present and even glimpses of the future

LOVE MUSKOKA,  SUSTAIN MUSKOKA

DISCOVER WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

\$3 MILLION PROJECT

DISCOVERY CENTRE EXPANDS

WANDA III'S OLD HOME

THE HISTORIC SHIP'S TIME ON LAKE OF BAYS

S U M M E R T W E N T Y T W E N T Y



**LOVE MUSKOKA ❤️
SUSTAIN MUSKOKA**

DISCOVER WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Sustainability is a core mandate of the Muskoka Steamships & Discovery Centre.
And what better place to address it than on the waterfront?

**We are building an exhibit highlighting the challenges
of climate change, and how it will impact the Muskoka we love.**

We need donations to complete the work. Will you help us?

WITH YOUR HELP, WE CAN SUSTAIN THE MUSKOKA WE LOVE

Opening up, with the help of family

I was going through old photos recently and found this one of my three sons ready to go on the pirate cruise aboard the *Wenonah II* in 2004. It dawned on me that this is my 20th summer season with the Muskoka Steamships & Discovery Centre and that my family has been with me every step the way.

My wife Sue, along with her mom, has been serving with Karen and Norma and their team in the ships' dining rooms. Over the years, all three sons could often be found onboard selling hotdogs or fending off the pirates that dare to attack us every Sunday.

Ann at the Discovery Centre always had tasks at the ready for the kids when Dad dropped them off for ... ehm, hours ... Much to their disappointment,

jobs were volunteer contributions, but they were paid well in hot dogs and the occasional pizza.

They are now grown, with two in university and another leaving the nest soon. We are truly fortunate to have been able to involve them in our work lives for so many years.

That family theme runs through our organization with countless family members and spouses working together over the years and providing an atmosphere of teamwork, trust and strength.

In early July, we returned to prepare the Discovery Centre and the ships for our most challenging year with COVID-19 on everyone's minds. We met for pizza on the dock for a Friday lunch and talked about becoming "front

line workers," as greeting hundreds of people each day was a daunting thought. The conversation was serious but it was so reassuring to see our "family" engaged and determined. At the end Captain Murley said "and lets have fun!" and that exactly what we plan to do.

We Are Open!

As of August 1st, *Wenonah II* and the Discovery Centre are both open. We need your support this year more than ever before, please visit our website or call our locations to plan your visit.



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MUSKOKA REFLECTIONS

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MUSKOKA REFLECTIONS

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Honouring our shared journey



The Council of Rama First Nation visited the Discovery Centre on July 23 to view the building's progress and see Water is Life for the first time. They were highly impressed with the beautiful wood frame structure.

Elder Mark Douglas (middle left photo) performed the smudging ceremony, creating a cleansing smoke bath that removes evil spirits and welcomes positive thoughts. After Mark spoke everyone in the circle gave themselves a smoke bath to purify their bodies.

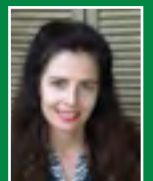
District Chair John Klinck joined the gathering and can be seen (top left photo) with Gary Getson, Ted Williams from Rama First Nation, and Rick McGraw.

Everyone is looking forward to the Indigenous exhibit Meeting Place of Nations opening in 2022 on the second floor of the new building.



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Becoming even more relevant

We continue to present dynamic, entertaining, and educational Muskoka experiences through our ships and the Muskoka Discovery Centre. While COVID-19 closed our entire operations until July 6, it did not halt our progress though the phenomenal contribution of our entire team, whose volunteer efforts have propelled us forward.

The physical evidence of our revitalization is now visible with the new sustainable timber frame boathouse and galleries that will house our three new exhibits: *Wanda III; Muskoka, Past, Present & Future*; and the Indigenous stories of *Meeting Place of Nations*. Enjoy reading about our major exhibit campaign to be unveiled in 2022, in Rick McGraw's article on page 11.

This year, to complement our Watershed Wonders we have added the new exhibit *Water is Life*. Come and see the Indigenous interpretation of water as told by the Indigenous Water Keepers. Gain an understanding that water is a being with a spirit, not simply a commodity to be bought and sold.

Our desire to be relevant across the entirety of Muskoka from Georgian Bay

to Lake of Bays is now strengthened by adopting the additional core theme of Sustainability. We welcome many readers from across our geography with this first digital version of the *Reflections*.

You will read in this issue the broad scope of many organizations that are engaged in the environmental sustainability of Muskoka and how applicable this is to all our visitors.

To have something new in 2021, we will be opening an exhibit that will inspire visitors to take broad actions that will help all of us sustain our communities.

We welcome the new partners and endorsers on the journey as we collectively strengthen the awareness and ways we can contribute to the sustainability of our lifestyle built on the foundation of our beautiful waters. Contact me to contribute ideas, time, and capital. All are appreciated.

We are pleased to have an Advisory Council, with Muskoka District chair John Klinck as our honorary chair and Ted Williams as our Indigenous advisor, giving

insight into the Anishinaabe peoples, who make up many – but not all – of the Indigenous nations that have inhabited Muskoka. In addition, we have twelve other thought leaders who assist us in connecting with our community.

Do come and visit us, either on our ships or in the Muskoka Discovery Centre as we engage our community in a safe manner, recognizing the ever-present risks imposed by the virus.

Across our entire community we wish to enrich your family with a wonderful Muskoka experience.



GARY GETSON CHAIR



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Sustainability focus is a perfect fit

On behalf of The District Municipality of Muskoka, I would like to congratulate the Muskoka Steamships & Discovery Centre for their new sustainability exhibit initiative. The District recognizes and appreciates the high-quality exhibits and initiatives the Discovery Centre has created in the past, like the recent Watershed Wonders Exhibit.

The District has a long history of supporting the Muskoka Discovery Centre and its initiatives, and has been actively working to develop, promote and encourage sustainability and climate change initiatives like our solar project at the Golden Pheasant Waste Water facility, and the creation of a corporate

climate change action plan, among many other programs and projects.

The timing of this sustainability initiative also coincides nicely with an exciting new Greenhouse Gas (GHG) project the District is launching this summer and fall. This project will create a detailed corporate GHG inventory that the District will work to reduce, but also a Muskoka-wide GHG inventory for all community emissions in Muskoka. Starting this fall, the District will engage with community members and groups to help develop community GHG reduction targets and strategies. We believe there is a great opportunity for these initiatives to complement each other.

The District has a number of staff professionals who will assist the Muskoka

Discovery Centre in developing and marketing this exciting new initiative and we are looking forward to its launch in the Summer of 2021.



JOHN KLINCK DISTRICT CHAIR
THE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY OF MUSKOKA

“The timing of this sustainability initiative also coincides nicely with an exciting new Greenhouse Gas project the District is launching this summer and fall.”



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Celebrating and thanking our valued members

Member benefits include a no-charge cruise, discounts and more

Members of the Muskoka Steamships & Discovery Centre are valued.

And it's easy to be a member. For just \$100 per family or \$65 per person, you can have all the benefits of membership and support all this growing organization represents.

Members support the provision of a unique experience in preserving, promoting and celebrating the culture, heritage and sustainability of Muskoka.

The new normal has not yet enabled us to cruise in large groups or have events at the Muskoka Discovery Centre. But we are still building and expanding our relationships with our members. Our Annual General Meeting was virtual and was very well attended. Due to COVID-19 we regretfully could not hold our member cruise. But we are opening on August 1 and we will be in touch with you to make

arrangements for no-charge cruises before the end of the season. We will be offering our members "Last Minute Club" discounts on our cruises and special group rates for your social circle of 10 at the Muskoka Discovery Centre.

As the landscape shifts daily during the COVID-19 pandemic, Muskoka Steamships & Discovery Centre is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for our guests, members, volunteers and staff. We are family orientated, building a cultural hub through education and engagement of our community, a continual collaboration with staff and volunteers, and mutual enjoyment with over 700 other members.

The 2020 season will include new legislated protocols developed to keep our visitors safe. The season will be short, with limited capacity on the *Wenonah II* and at Muskoka Discovery Centre. Your support by sailing with us

and visiting the Discovery Centre will be instrumental in having a successful shortened season.

Thank you for being a valued MSDC member. Like others, our organization is actively monitoring the situation for its impact on larger issues of public health, as well as on the mission and vision of Muskoka Steamships & Discovery Centre.

If you're not already a member, now's the perfect time to join. Or give a friend or family the gift of yearlong enjoyment.

For details on the specific benefits and categories of membership and how to join. Go to RealMuskoka.com/membership, or call Pat Durrant at 705-687-2115.

– Pat Durrant, Membership Chair



Family memberships help adults to introduce their children to the joys of Muskoka's rich boating heritage.

Cruising resumes on Lake Muskoka

We are exciting to announce that *Wenonah II* will be offering cruises starting Aug. 1st!

It's been a long spring and early summer, and all of our staff have been working extremely hard to develop a plan that will allow us to resume cruising.

We have been working particularly hard over the past few weeks to ensure our passengers and crew are safe while everyone is aboard the ship, enjoying the spectacular Muskoka landscape. The *Segwun* will not be sailing this year, but the *Wenonah II* will be offering one- and two-hour cruises. Our sailing schedule is posted on our website, with daily cruises available right through to the fall.

On all our cruises we will be following special COVID-19 protocols, which are listed on the website.

All cruises will include live commentary. Beverages and light snacks are available in our lounge. And the Commodore's Dining area and private patio is available for social bubble groups.

We are also delighted to be able to offer charter cruises – a truly spectacular way to share the lakes with your guests.

We look forward to welcoming you back this season!

– *John Miller, President of Muskoka Steamships & Discovery Centre*

ACTIONS WE ARE TAKING:



Physical Distancing of 2m required on shore and on board.



Mandatory Face Covering for all passengers and staff when indoors or when moving about the ship.



Hand Sanitizing Stations installed on shore and on board in convenient areas.



Complete Cleaning and Sanitizing done of the ship and shore facilities between departures.



Temperature Checks for all passengers prior to boarding.



Mandatory Safety Screening Checklist to be completed by all passengers prior to boarding.



Reduced Capacity to ensure safe distancing while on board.



Honourary Director for Life

Mary Storey has given exemplary service and leadership

One of the pleasures of the board chair's role is to be able to recognize the exemplary contribution of individuals. On Sept. 13, 2019, the Board of Directors approved the appointment of Mary Storey as an Honourary Director. This is an appointment for life and recognizes extraordinary service, exemplary leadership, financial contribution, and ongoing commitment to our organization.

Throughout Mary's life her strong interest in history and engagement as a volunteer has facilitated many connections with others. It was therefore natural that she would play an essential role when the Muskoka Discovery Centre was built to celebrate the culture and heritage of Muskoka.

She and her husband John have been members since the late '80s but her involvement really started when she moved to Muskoka full-time in 2001. She joined the committee for a new museum working with staff plus volunteers Hank Smith, Ron Sclater, Ian Turnbull, and Murray Walker. "We met every Wednesday (except Christmas) for more than two years," she says. She was proud to be there when it officially opened on June 24, 2006.

She has also chaired the education committee, the temporary exhibits committee and for many years the management committee and retired as

a member of the board in 2018, after serving for 14 years.

An enduring passion of Mary's is archives. She's been the leader in enabling connection with the community and attracting a diverse and talented archive team of researchers and writers; a demonstration that we are a Cultural Hub in Muskoka. Mary maintains over 6,000 archival items. These objects tell the many interesting stories and experiences of Muskoka.

An extremely popular outcome has been the building of the wooden boat database of up to 8,000 boats. Currently they are supporting the MDC revitalization and the construction of the new Stanley Meek Gallery: Muskoka Past, Present and Future. This is all working to give more access to Muskokans to our museum collection and the heritage exhibits.

She retired from her role as *Reflections* magazine editor last spring, but still continues as history editor, coordinating historical articles written by the archive team. Under her direction, the archives team has published three books; *A. P. Cockburn*; *Railways of Muskoka*; and recently *Lakes Muskoka, Rosseau and Joseph: as Seen from the Deck of a Steamship*.

Our future is bright thanks to the outstanding leadership of MSDC thought

A key founder of the Discovery Centre, Mary Storey is one of only three people to have been named Honourary Directors.



leaders and founders such as Mary Storey. She joins Stanley Meek and Murray Walker as an Honourary Director.

"I'm proud of the exhibits we've built, the organization of the archives and the connections we've made," she says. "I'm honoured to join those who already are honorary directors."

– Gary Getson, Muskoka Steamships & Discovery Centre Board Chair



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When completed, the newly expanded Discovery Centre will be a dramatic presence on Muskoka Bay.



SPECIAL EDITORIAL FEATURE

\$3M needed to build world-class exhibits at the Discovery Centre

Muskoka Steamships and Discovery Centre (MSDC) exists to preserve and celebrate the Culture and Heritage of Muskoka. It's also a pretty fabulous place to bring friends and family who want to better understand the wonder of Muskoka. It is continually evolving and changing, so there is always something new to see.

The Discovery Centre is starting Phase Two of fundraising in support of the ongoing revitalization program.

With the Water Gallery exhibits in place and the new building to be substantially complete by October, efforts are now being focused on raising \$3 million needed to build three world-class exhibits that will make the Muskoka Discovery Centre an exceptional northern Ontario destination.

The Discovery Centre is functioning as a cultural hub in the District of Muskoka and growing more and more relevant for residents and visitors. Recent growth included the added core themes of Indigenous Culture and Heritage, Water, and most recently, Sustainability.

The new exhibits will increase the diversity of the content and ensure the engagement of every visitor regardless of age.

Three Exhibits To Be Built

- **Meeting Place of Nations.** A 3,000 sq. ft. exhibit to present Indigenous Culture and Heritage as told by Indigenous peoples based on the 5,000-year-old story of the Mnjikaning Fish Weirs, which is a Canadian National Heritage site. This is a fascinating story involving many

Indigenous communities who roamed the country as a way of life, but routinely returned to the fish weirs in Orillia. Opening 2022.

- **Muskoka, Past, Present and Future.** A 5,000 sq. ft. exhibit to present the history of Muskoka that has not been told before, including the tensions that existed between the Indigenous and European settlers in the early days of Muskoka. It will describe the beginnings of Muskoka and ponder the future. A team of volunteers have identified over 300 stories that are worthy of consideration. Opening 2022.

- **The Steam Era.** An exhibit about a formidable period of Canadian history, featuring the historic yacht Wanda III, a unique working artefact. The age of steam had a huge impact on the development of Muskoka and Canada.

Revitalization Committee Chair Rick McGraw is helping to raise the funds to build and equip the expanded Discovery Centre.



The massive original steam engine will be on display to underscore engine development. Opening 2022.

World-Class Exhibits Are Expensive

World-class exhibits are expensive but worth every penny. It is a very demanding and challenging process to distil vast quantities of information and then present that information in an interesting and engaging manner. We have all been to enough museums to know that some are boring, but others are so absorbing that you want to spend hours exploring. We want every visitor to the MDC to have such a dynamic and impactful experience that they will tell their friends it's a must-see, and they also come back to visit again and again.

One technique to achieve that positive experience is present information in layers so that a visitor can quickly get the overview on a particular subject, but if they want to know more can drill down. The best way to do this is with interactive touch screens. But they are obviously quite expensive.

Once the design is finalized, the exhibit has to be fabricated and tested to make sure the interactives work as planned and are durable enough to withstand the steady

stream of visitors. The site preparation and exhibit installation is also a job for professionals, and their expertise can represent upwards of 20 per cent of the total cost. So, behind the finished exhibits described above is a tremendous amount of work by a team of professionals and volunteers.

Fundraising Campaign

We are determined to raise the last \$3 million of a \$6.85 million project. The first \$3.55 million has been raised and spent on the Water Gallery and its two permanent exhibits – Watershed Wonders and Water is Life – as well as the 12,000 sq. ft. building and significant work on Wanda III.

We are soliciting funding from both the Federal and Provincial Governments through appropriate funds and departments, foundations which have common interests, and individuals. We are looking for either one-time donations or multi-year commitments.

Ideally, we will find a generous sponsor after whom we could name the building. Stan Meek generously sponsored the Stanley Meek Gallery which will host Muskoka Past, Present and Future. We hope to find someone or an organization that would like to sponsor the gallery that will host The Meeting Place of Nations. We have other sponsorships available and of course, encourage and welcome all donations regardless of size.

We are doing these exhibits for the community and people who visit. We are owned by the community.

*– Rick McGraw,
Revitalization Committee Chair*

Water is Life

Our newest permanent exhibit, *Water is Life*, is about the Indigenous relationship with water. It was installed in early May in the Water Gallery adjacent to the Watershed Wonders exhibit.

Water is Life was developed as a joint venture with Rama First Nation, adhering to our approach of “Indigenous stories by Indigenous people.” This

small but important display received input from Ben Cousineau, Rama First Nation Archivist. It was facilitated by Sunniva Geuer whose company, Bouw Design, has produced a number of award winning Indigenous exhibits.

One of the highlighted aspects is the significant role of women in the protection and nurturing of water. Recognized as “Water Keepers,” five well

known Indigenous women are featured in the exhibit.

There are differences in thinking by Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities about Muskoka’s most valuable resource, and we are excited to present them adjacent to one another because it makes the Muskoka Discovery Centre a stronger cultural hub for the District of Muskoka.



Sustainability focus at the Muskoka Discovery Centre

Who loves Muskoka? Everyone, of course, so shouldn't we do whatever we can to sustain it?

Sustainability and associated environmental considerations – including biodiversity and climate change – have been steadily gaining recognition as issues to be addressed with urgency. The current pandemic has created more discussion because it highlights the impact and importance of natural systems and the reality that we are indeed capable of making major changes in our lives

Sustainability is a natural and complementary theme for the Muskoka Discovery Centre for several reasons. It links to our strategies and to our Vision: To lead the preservation, promotion and celebration of the culture and heritage of Canada's Muskoka District. It relates to our Water Gallery as well as the proposed Indigenous Exhibit and will be integral to the theme of the Stanley Meek Gallery. The topic has appeal to many generations, and is of particular importance to young people.

For these reasons, the Muskoka Steamships and Discovery Centre Board formally added Sustainability to the core themes of our organization with the objective of incorporating the theme of sustainability more fully into our Strategic Plan, our operations, our marketing and our plans for exhibit revitalization and renewal.

This includes building a new permanent exhibit focusing on climate change and sustainability in the Muskoka Discovery Centre that will be informative, engaging for all ages and loaded with practical ideas based on the knowledge of some of our communities' most informed and experienced people. Converting the Wanda III to electric motor propulsion is a particularly good example we are leading with.

Our organization must continually evolve and maintain its relevance to the community of Muskoka. As part of this initiative, we are collaborating with a broad range of like-minded organizations. In a very short period of time we have formed a relationship with 18 such organizations in and around Muskoka who endorse our initiative and are willing to help us execute

the plan. Their first step was agreeing to send this issue of Reflections to all of their members and supporters. Many of these organizations are highlighted in this edition. Together, we will reach over 40,000 Muskoka residents. What a great start to what is a community campaign!

As a truly community-based campaign, we would like to secure donations of any size from as many people as possible. We also have hopes for a corporate sponsor. All money raised will be invested in the exhibit.

When it comes to sustainability, we who love Muskoka are truly all in this together. We all have one planet and one Muskoka and one life, let's live our best life in the best possible place. Please consider supporting our project today.

Rick Zytaruk is new to the MSDC board of directors. He provides additional thought leadership related to Sustainability and building the community of organizations that support sustainability across the entirety of Muskoka.

*– Rick Zytaruk, Board Member,
Muskoka Steamships & Discovery Centre*



Partners believe in sustainability

With the focus of sustainability, the work and goals of the Muskoka Steamship & Discovery Centre resonate with more and more people.

Watershed Wonders, with the major assistance of FedNor, made a \$500k investment in an educational and entertaining attraction in 2018. While working with the Muskoka Watershed Council, the Friends of Muskoka Watershed, Muskoka Conservancy, the District of Muskoka and Ministry of Natural Resources on that project, the Discovery Centre recognized there were many community partners interested in their work with a sustainability focus. (See the related article on page 13.)

Board chair Gary Getson and board member Rick Zytaruk decided to reach out into the community and see if there were more organizations interested in working with the Muskoka Steamships & Discovery Centre with the focus on the theme of sustainability.

They were overwhelmed with the positive response, which resulted in eight Partners and nine Endorsers, and the project is barely underway.

A few have chosen to share their stories and suggestions on how others can incorporate sustainability into their lives.

Muskoka Lakes Association

The Muskoka Lakes Association (MLA) recognizes that only through our collective stewardship can the clean waters, forests, biodiversity and serenity of Muskoka be preserved for our appreciation and enjoyment.

“We are all concerned about flooding,” says Chris Cragg, chair of the MLA environmental committee. Key factors in flooding are how much of the snowmelt and precipitation runs off our properties and how fast. If water can be held on the land and encouraged to soak into the ground, then there is less water to swell the volume in lakes and rivers and a reduction in shoreline flooding.

He recommends keeping property in a natural state when possible. “Maintain your trees. Keep them healthy. The trees intercept precipitation and slow its descent to the ground. Leaves, needles, and tree trunks catch and hold water and allow some of it to return to the atmosphere as evaporation. Coniferous trees shade the ground and slow snowmelt in the spring. During the growing season, trees return water vapour to the air by the combined processes of photosynthesis and evapotranspiration. Bushes and plants on the forest floor help with this process.”

Naturalized shorelines also help keep erosion and surface contaminants out of lake waters, he explains. Where a property has hard, impermeable surfaces – such as roofs, decks, paths and driveways –

directing runoff into collecting devices such as rain barrels and retention ponds can slow its progress towards the lake. Every little bit helps and if we all act together, we can make a difference. If we all pitch in and all do our bit, Mother Nature will thank us. Lake sustainability really does belong to all of us.

Georgian Bay Forever

The people at Georgian Bay Forever know the story of the past. One hundred years ago our water quality was horrible. By the 1960s the Great Lakes were dying. Lake Ontario and Lake Michigan were like a COVID-19 victim on a ventilator and Lake Erie was declared dead. Rivers were on fire and algae blooms suffocated aquatic organisms.

It was not until the emergence of public involvement in demanding sustainable practices that the government began to enforce changes to clean up our water. It was for this purpose that Georgian Bay Forever was formed.

Today we are experiencing a resurgence in sewage discharges into the water as treatment plants are forced to divert the huge surges of sewage laden stormwater around the plants in order to protect facilities constructed without anticipating that climate change would increase storm intensities beyond their design.

Georgian Bay Forever understands these impacts on our water and that we must take actions now. Individually, we must proactively prepare for increasing flood, fire, heat and wind.

“Perhaps the most important next steps individuals can take are: to transition to 100 per cent electric vehicles to eliminate emissions from transportation; and to renaturalize our shorelines through a reacquaintance with and embrace of natural coastal processes that buttress the effects of floods, waves and storms and protect wetlands that cleanse our water,” says David Sweetnam, Executive Director of Georgian Bay Forever.

Climate Action Muskoka

Impatient with inadequate government action on climate and aware of the urgency of keeping warming below 1.5 C, Muskoka citizens, led by Sue McKenzie and Tamsen Tillson, formed the collaborative, non-partisan Climate Action Muskoka (CAM) in late 2019. Although it is known publicly for its weekly climate strikes raising the visibility of the climate issue, much more is going on behind the scenes.

“The power of citizens speaking up to support their politicians cannot be underestimated in achieving urgent action locally to address climate warming,” says McKenzie, co-founder of CAM. She believes the District of Muskoka and the municipalities have a huge role to play in transitioning to a new green, just economy since local decisions impact our lives on a daily basis.

“Currently, CAM is asking the District to declare a Climate Emergency and to implement policies to reduce Muskoka community greenhouse gas emissions by 50 per cent by 2030.”

CAM recognizes that government action is not enough. “Every single person is needed to achieve this goal,” says McKenzie. Therefore, CAM is issuing a Community Challenge to all

permanent and seasonal households in Muskoka to calculate their own impact, set a goal of 50 per cent reduction of GHG emissions by 2030, and develop a household Carbon Budget.

“When developing your plan, don’t forget to include the often-overlooked GHG impact of your recreational choices and your travel,” states McKenzie.

The steps are easy: Calculate your current household carbon footprint with this easy calculator: <https://www.gbbr.ca/carbon-calculator/> (Note: Does not include flights.)

Examine and assess where you can make changes to eliminate emissions by 8 per cent a year.

Write down a Carbon Budget plan to be updated annually.

Builders for Climate Action

A growing coalition of designers, builders, developers, policymakers and material manufacturers are working together with a goal of zero-carbon buildings. They are actively transforming their practices to become climate positive as quickly and intelligently as possible.

“People should consider the environment when they do renovations or new building,” says Chris Magwood, founder of Builders for Climate Action. Magwood, who studied building science for his Masters, wants people to understand that buildings contribute up to 40 per cent of global carbon emissions and that building material choices can have a dramatic effect on this contribution. Alternately buildings can actually be a carbon sink, helping to mitigate climate change.

The Clear Lake Property Owners Association

The Clear Lake Property Owners Association is an active cottage association representing a small lake community of about 100 cottages in Torrance. “We see Clear Lake as our shared asset and we ask every cottager to share our vision and to take the Clear Lake Pledge: To preserve its quality, we use no fertilizer, weed killer, detergent or soap in the lake or on the surrounding property; we maintain approved septic systems; we protect fish habitat and encourage shoreline vegetation; and we observe fire safety and boating regulations.”

Ian McClelland, president of the association says Clear Lake has a long history of environmental sustainability. They have participated in the Muskoka Lakes Association water quality program for over 15 years, but have been monitoring the health of their own lake water since 1973.

“Several years ago, we discovered that we were above the threshold for phosphorus and used this data to initiate an environmental education program with all cottagers on the lake. We put together an information package with free samples of enviro-friendly products and went cottage to cottage to discuss the situation with our lake community.” The result was a reduction in phosphorus levels in each of the last five years, and a below-threshold measurement in each of the last two years. “We encourage other cottage associations to do something similar and would be happy to explain our program,” he says.

At Clear Lake, they also think beyond their border. “We also believe that our responsibilities for environmental stewardship extend beyond our lake water and include advocacy on behalf of the

Torrance Barrens Dark Sky Preserve,” says McClennan. In 1999, Torrance Barrens Conservation Area was designated as the world’s first permanent Dark Sky Reserve. The 4,700-acres of Crown land is bedrock and wetlands, with trees and bushes that are stunted in height. For stargazers, this means a spectacular 360-degree view of the night sky, unhampered by light pollution. The Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve is one of the most striking geological areas in Muskoka.

“We are actively lobbying surrounding municipalities to adhere to their commitments to reduce light pollution at night”, says McClennan. They have provided funds and manpower and are still waiting for the government agencies responsible to repair the boardwalks, impose a fire ban, and provide a coherent policy on camping. “Until that happens we will continue our pursuit of preserving the cottage environment we grew up with for our children and grandchildren.”

Lake of Bays Renewable Energy Co-operative (LOBREC)

In 2014, out of concern for the need for education and awareness related to renewable energy to replace fossil fuels, Melinda Zytaruk pulled together a board of like-minded individuals and formed the Lake of Bays Renewable Energy Co-operative (LOBREC).

They sold community bonds and installed a 50KW solar system on the roof of the Baysville Community Centre. Each year a portion of the revenue is returned to the community to support additional education related to the climate crisis. This year, for example, they awarded the first annual Brooks White Youth Environmental Leadership Award to a local student.

LOBREC recommends residents have a serious look at renewable energy alternatives to reduce dependency on fossil fuels. For example, install solar panels or replace your furnace with an Energy Recovery Ventilator (ERV), essentially an air source heat pump that can provide both heating and cooling very efficiently. An ERV uses electricity but Ontario’s electricity grid is very low carbon compared to other jurisdictions or other fuels, so this change produces fewer greenhouse gases.

Gravenhurst Chamber of Commerce

At the Gravenhurst Chamber of Commerce, there is a new sustainability committee which has taken on the task of identifying directions that the Chamber can take in order to make sustainability an approachable target for the organization and membership.

“While of course businesses need to focus on generating profits, we know that businesses must be sustainable to be able to survive and thrive,” says Chamber President Eric Daly. “Our new committee wants to help businesses explore sustainable options that can complement their business operations.”

Sustainability is a term, of course, that can mean many things. The Chamber is beginning with this project by exploring tangible actions that businesses can take in three key areas: ecological integrity, economic sustainability, and social sustainability. They believe that many small actions can contribute to significant positive change.

“We envision a future where businesses, residents, and visitors in Gravenhurst can all benefit in a meaningful way from making choices that support a sustainable lifestyle within our community,” says Daly.

These are just a few of the supporters and endorsers of the Muskoka Steamships & Discovery Centre. With their enthusiasm, support and concern, we have a strong team heading into a more sustainable future.



“Our new committee wants to help businesses explore sustainable options that can complement their business operations.”

Understanding Climate Change

Small changes are adding up to a profound difference

Like many people around the world, we in Muskoka are working to better understand climate change.

Climate change can be experienced as changes to the usual weather patterns resulting from overall warming of the earth. These are long-term shifts in weather conditions, characterized by changes in temperature, precipitation, winds, and other indicators. Most of us already recognize that we will have hotter summers and warmer winters.

In addition to changing weather patterns, one of the most serious impacts of climate change is how it will affect water resources around the world. Water is tied to other resources and social issues, such as food supply, health, industry, transportation, and ecosystem integrity.

While we are told the polar ice caps are melting and the earth's temperature is rising, are there things we see and feel

every day in Muskoka that make climate change impossible to ignore?

Muskoka is home to respected scientists Dr. Norman Yan and Dr. Peter Sale. We are lucky to have these environmental science champions in Muskoka.

Norman Yan, fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and chair of the Friends of the Muskoka Watershed, is a freshwater ecologist who has devoted his career to understanding the impacts on lakes of man-made stressors, especially acid rain, toxic metals, invading species, and, more recently in Muskoka, calcium decline, and road salt.

As the climate changes, he says, there will be too little wind for any sailing, but also paradoxically, more violent storms. Average wind speeds have declined by 50 per cent over the past half century, but that calm will be offset by more violent periods of wind, such as occurred this July.

We will see more blooms of toxic blue-green algae, despite good control of nutrient pollution of our waters. Blue-green algal blooms are on the rise, despite falling levels of phosphorus in our lakes.

We may have more desire to swim, but the lakes won't be as refreshing as in the past. Brandy Lake hit 30 degrees C at the surface in early July 2020, an unheard-of temperature for a Muskoka lake, and one that is lethal to some creatures that live in the water.

Muskoka will likely see more spring floods, but this won't prevent summer droughts. We are seeing both of these now.

More salt may be used on our roads as lake effect snow will increase and there will be more freeze/thaw cycles as winter warms. Road salting pollutes our lakes and is costly to us, rotting our cars and clothes, damaging pet paws and concrete infrastructure.



There will be fewer opportunities to go skating in the winter, as outdoor rinks will melt. Equally, skiing, snowshoeing and other winter sports will be impacted.

Incremental change

Peter Sale is a tropical marine scientist whose career took him around the world, investigating the ecology of coral reefs on the Great Barrier Reef, in the Caribbean and in many places in between, before returning to retire in one of the most wonderful parts of Canada. His reef studies brought him face to face with the tragic effects of climate change as the reefs he loves decline around him.

He reminds us that our lives have changed in many ways over the last decade or so, yet few of us have noticed. Climate change is like that: a little change every year, which adds up to a profound difference.

It's similar to changes in technology, he explains. We didn't just go instantly from rotary phones and party lines to video chats and smart phones that allow us to connect instantly with anyone on the planet. We arrived here through a series of small yet profound steps. Climate change is a similar stealthy process – one that we cannot ignore.

Avid gardeners, at least the older ones, remember when Muskoka was primarily in plant hardiness zones 4b and 4a. Now we are in Zones 4b and 5a, and plants that would previously not survive our winters can thrive here.

If you wanted to remain in the same climate, at the current rate of climate

change in Muskoka you would need to move approximately one kilometre north each year. That's pretty slow for someone in an SUV, but pretty fast for a maple tree. Yet maple trees and everything else need to move their ranges north this fast, just to keep up with our changing climate.

What does this tell us about future Muskoka? Well, we will see a slow but continuous change in the mix of species that call Muskoka home. This change is directly caused by the changes we are making to the atmosphere, and it will continue until a new equilibrium is reached.

Some aspects of this change in climate can be beneficial – we have new plants to grow in our gardens – but other aspects will challenge the ways in which we have always managed our lives. This is real and important.

People need this information and more to understand the climate changes we are causing, and make appropriate decisions.

A trusted source

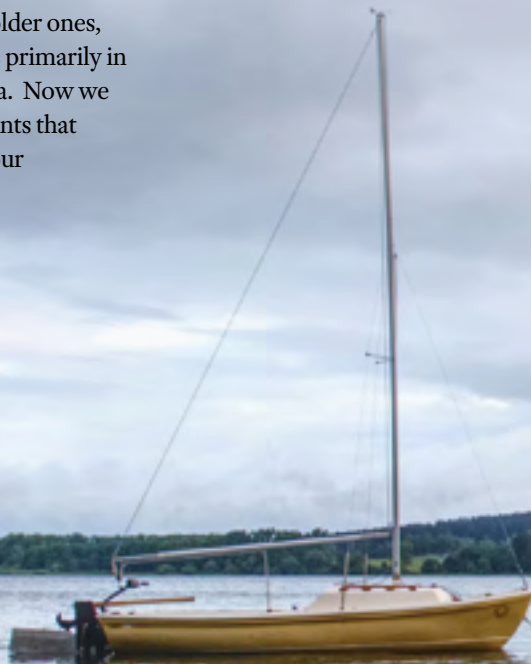
Climate change can be a controversial subject, one that museums are taking on as

trustworthy sources of facts and information. The Muskoka Discovery Centre team recognizes we have a role to share knowledge about climate change and its impacts along with the actions that can provide a sustainable future.

An exciting new exhibit that opens in 2021 will focus on climate change. Impacts of Climate Change: Changing Behaviours and Actions for a Sustainable Future will educate visitors about climate change and encourage them to: become more involved at a local, regional or national level; to be more informed about how everyday activities can affect real change; and empower them to make change happen. The goal is to provide visitors with an understanding of local climate change and its impacts so it will inspire action and they make the necessary changes in their behaviour.

And Yan says, it isn't all bad news. There are some changes that can be embraced:

- There are more opportunities for distance learning and working, which can lower carbon emissions.
- As acid rain has been largely resolved, healthier forests and less-acidic lakes should increase resilience to other stressors.
- Young people, inspired by activists such as Greta Thunberg, are much more engaged and eager to prevent further climate change.
- There are many opportunities to create many meaningful jobs in a greener economy, with no loss of our standard of living, as we come out of the pandemic.



Yan also sees this as an opportunity for Muskoka to provide leadership for small communities. And the Discovery Centre has an important role.

Through the exhibit you will discover the mitigation strategies that the world is talking about and how you can choose to be part of a sustainable future. You will learn how you can make a difference by changing your ways. Our exhibit will explore energy-efficient buildings, renewable energy sources, electric vehicles and biofuels and more sustainable uses of land and forests

All of us are capable of changing course! Our exhibit will help you find more concrete actions so that you can be more active in climate change. In the end we hope the exhibit inspires you to become a more engaged citizen, more active in your community, be inspired by local and global climate change champions and become a champion of fighting climate change and taking sustainable actions.

We have an opportunity to influence our future and the sustainability of Muskoka, but there is much for us to learn. All people can learn from Indigenous teachings and come to realize and respect Mother Earth's gifts.

To ensure our future and make changes happen, we need to develop a respectful relationship with the earth and all living things.

LOCAL EFFECTS

Here are some of the ways climate change is already impacting Muskoka

- Surface waters of lakes are warming at about 0.5 degrees C per decade, faster than the air is warming.
- Animal plankton play a vital role in cleaning the lakes and eating algae. Some species found in our lakes die when water temperatures rise above 29 degrees C, as has happened in some lakes this summer.
- Wind speeds in Muskoka have fallen by 50 per cent over the last half century. This may be contributing to more algal blooms in Muskoka lakes.
- Warmer winters keep the Great Lakes ice free longer. This leads to more lake-effect snowstorms in places like Muskoka, that are downwind of big lakes.
- The average duration of winter ice cover has fallen by 3 weeks in Muskoka over the last four decades.

Many Years, Many Owners

Wanda spent decades on Lake of Bays

In 1915, *Wanda III* was built for Margaret Eaton, the widow of Timothy Eaton. The boat measures 29 metres (94 feet) long with a narrow beam of 3.6 metres (12 feet) and was powered by a triple-expansion steam engine. She is one of the finest steam yachts ever built in Canada and has survived 105 years. *Wanda III* spent 67 of those years on Lake of Bays, the longest she has spent on any one lake.

During her time on Lake of Bays she had many owners, many purposes and many experiences. She served as a hotel livery boat and a private cruising vessel, was docked at a cottage, and sat idle for long periods. Despite being somewhat neglected over the years, she ended her time on Lake of Bays being cared for and respected by an owner who was also a marine engineer.

In 1930, C. O. Shaw of Bigwin Inn, Lake of Bays, purchased *Wanda III*

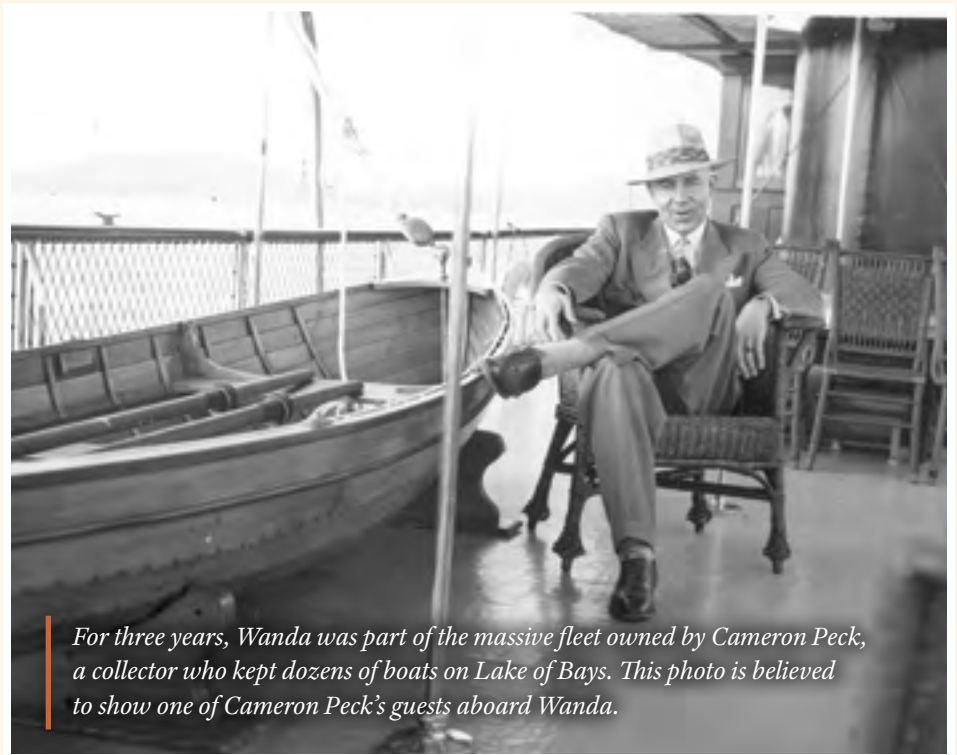
and her lifting equipment from the Eaton family for \$7,000, much less than the \$34,574 Margaret Eaton paid for her in 1915. Moving a large boat from Lake Rosseau to Lake of Bays was quite a feat in those early days. *Wanda III* cruised from Ravenscraig, Lake Rosseau, through Port Carling to Lake Muskoka, and then on to Gravenhurst. At the Muskoka Wharf, *Wanda III* was loaded onto the railway and transported to Huntsville,

“Moving a large boat from Lake Rosseau to Lake of Bays was quite a feat in those early days.”



then put in the Muskoka River. She was pulled by barges through Fairy and Peninsula Lakes to North Portage at the south end of Peninsula Lake. For unknown reasons, she passed the winter of 1930-31 moored at North Portage.

When spring came, the next task was moving her over a 2.33-kilometer (1.45 miles) track that had an average 5.8 percent grade up to the summit and down again to Lake of Bays. The *Huntsville Forester* reported, "This was accomplished by using teams of horses and steam winches and a great deal of patience." Although the track ran parallel to the narrow-gauge Portage Flyer Railway, the yacht was too heavy for the tiny railway cars. The passage from one lake to the other took several days. From South Portage, she was delivered to Bigwin Island.



For three years, Wanda was part of the massive fleet owned by Cameron Peck, a collector who kept dozens of boats on Lake of Bays. This photo is believed to show one of Cameron Peck's guests aboard Wanda.



“When Mr. Thomson bought Wanda III, he stated that ‘it was like a boyhood dream come true.’”

Wanda III's role at Bigwin Inn was to carry hotel guests on excursions. However, the vessel's construction did not lend itself to carrying a large number of people. She was licensed for only 44 passengers, which is double the amount of today's restrictions. Consequently, for more than 20 years she spent most of her time just sitting idle in the Bigwin boathouse.

In 1949, *Wanda III* was sold to Cameron Peck, a wealthy collector of antique boats whose father owned the Bowman Dairy Company in Chicago. He continued to store her in the Bigwin boathouse, which was the only boathouse on the lake that was long enough for her. During this period, he had *Wanda III* converted from coal-fired to oil-fired. In 1952, Mr. Peck's extensive boat collection was

auctioned off, interestingly “except for *Wanda III*,” which returned to Bigwin Inn as a livery boat once again. She was, however, not operated regularly.

Cameron Peck sold *Wanda III* in 1955 to newly elected Member of Parliament. The new owner planned to relocate her to the Ottawa River. The job of moving the boat was given to Cal Martin of Baysville Marina, who was operating his marina in the buildings that formerly housed Peck's boat collection. When the planned move did not take place, Mr. Martin acquired *Wanda III* through a mechanic's lien for unpaid work that was done on a marine railway for the boat.

A few years later, in 1963, Mr. Walkdon of Tapley's Bay on Lake of Bays owned *Wanda III* for one year, during

which he painted the boat white. The following year, Ted Hungerford and Steve Pinkard, owners of Lumina Lodge, bought *Wanda III*, beached her and used her as a party boat near their resort.

For over 49 years, *Wanda III* had changed hands many times, but she was sailed very rarely. In 1968, she was purchased by marine engineer Sandy Thomson, owner of the Thomson-Gordon Group and Thordon Bearings in Burlington.

When Mr. Thomson bought *Wanda III*, he stated that “it was like a boyhood dream come true,” since he remembered the boat from when he was a child. Using his engineering skills, he took his ownership of *Wanda III* seriously and worked to preserve this mechanical masterpiece. He

In 1968, Sandy Thompson became the last Lake of Bays resident to own Wanda. He had her lovingly restored, and kept her at his cottage for 26 years.



From 1930 to 1994, Wanda was a familiar sight at the docks in Baysville, and cruising on Lake of Bays (right). For a few years in the early 1960s, she sailed with her superstructure painted white (below).



constructed a marine railway at his cottage on Rat Bay of Lake of Bays, complete with a steam-powered winch for hauling the vessel out of the water for hull work, and he painted her every four or five years. He restored the engine and boiler, and he even took *Wanda III* out cruising on Lake of Bays.

In 1969, with the boat in proper working order, Mr. Thomson took a voyage with a group of his friends aboard, attracting a lot of attention from boaters and people on the beaches and docks around the lake. In subsequent years, he used her less and less, but still maintained *Wanda III* as well as he could.

Having fulfilled his childhood dream, in 1994 Mr. Thomson saw that the boat was taking more and more of his leisure time, so he offered her to Muskoka Lakes Navigation Company. And as the saying goes, “the rest is history.”

– Mary Storey, Archives Volunteer



Escape to the woods

Muskoka has a history of summer camps

For more than a hundred years, children from the cities have been coming to Muskoka to enjoy overnight camping.

It's the ideal spot, with its many lakes for water sports, forests to explore, and trails for hiking, as well as medical assistance close by. It's within easy transportation reach from Toronto, so many camps supply bus transportation from there.

The summer camp experience provides the campers with a relaxing rural setting which contrasts with their usual busy routine of school and their often congested urban area.

Experts know that there are many benefits for children to go to an overnight camp. Maureen Monaghan, a clinical psychologist of Children's National Medical Center stated in the Washington Post, "I think it is a great

idea to give kids an experience of being on their own in a structured, supportive, supervised environment. The time away from parents provides an excellent opportunity for even young children to take initiative, exercise their autonomy and develop leadership, problem-solving and social skills, which often builds self-esteem."

Parents are sometimes the ones who feel at a loss without having their

"The time away from parents provides an excellent opportunity for even young children to take initiative, exercise their autonomy and develop leadership, problem-solving and social skills."



children to care for. However, others are delighted to have time for their own endeavors.

Currently, there are about 30 summer residential camps in Muskoka, catering from campers aged from five to 21. Most are completely co-ed, such as Arrowhead Camp on Lake of Bays. Others offer separate sessions exclusively for either girls or boys.

The oldest camp in our district appears to be Camp Pine Crest on Clear Lake, established in 1910. The latest to be created is The Great Moose Adventure, which opened on the Kabshe River in Gravenhurst in 2013.

Some camps are historically affiliated with organizations, like Camp Tawingo which the YMCA launched on Lake Vernon in 1960. Others were established as private endeavors, such as Camp Wenonah, which was founded by Jeff Bradshaw in 1996.

But many more were launched by faith groups. The Baptist church began Camp Widjiitiwin on Mary Lake/Muskoka River in 1930 and Camp Kwasind on Skeleton Lake in 1943. The United Church of Canada was responsible for starting others like Camp Big Canoe in 1968 on Hart Lake near Fraserburg and Ryde Lake CGIT Camp in 1952 on Buck Lake. The Presbyterians began the Cairn Family of Camps on Echo Lake in 2006. The Brethren group set up Echo Lake's Beacon Camp in 1963 and Camp Crossroads on Black Lake in 1980, both near Torrance.

There are also interdenominational Christian camps, including the



Summer camp has been a tradition for generations, from modern children at Muskoka Steamships & Discovery Centre (left) to campers at Fairhaven in 1945 (below) to this undated group of boys (above).



InterVarsity Pioneer Camp on Clearwater Lake/Doe Lake in Port Sydney (1939) and Muskoka Woods on Lake Rosseau near the village of Rosseau (1979).

Jewish Camps include Camp Shalom, which opened on Lake Muskoka near Gravenhurst in 1948, and Camp Ramah on Skeleton Lake in 1960.



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Many camps have a specific educational focus. The Great Moose Adventure in Gravenhurst emphasizes STREAM activities (science, technology, reading, engineering, arts, and math). Camp Muskoka, established in 2001 on Fraserburg Road in Bracebridge, uses the psychological concept called Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to build activities that encourage safety, love/belonging, esteem and self-actualization.

Others are specifically for children with challenges. The Ontario Camp for the Deaf opened on Lake Joseph in 1960. Camp Oochigeas caters to campers ages 6 to 18 who are suffering with cancer – it began in 1983 near Rosseau. Camp Huronda on Lake Waseosa near Huntsville takes campers who have diabetes. Camp Winston on Sparrow Lake offers the camping experience to children from 7 to 17 who have complex neurological disorders.

Some camps, like Huntsville's Olympia Camp, emphasize sports; others, such as Paddlefoot Camp, give campers wilderness activities. Swallowdale Camp on Lake Rosseau works with the Canadian International Student Services, giving overseas

youth from ages 7 to 16 a true Canadian experience.

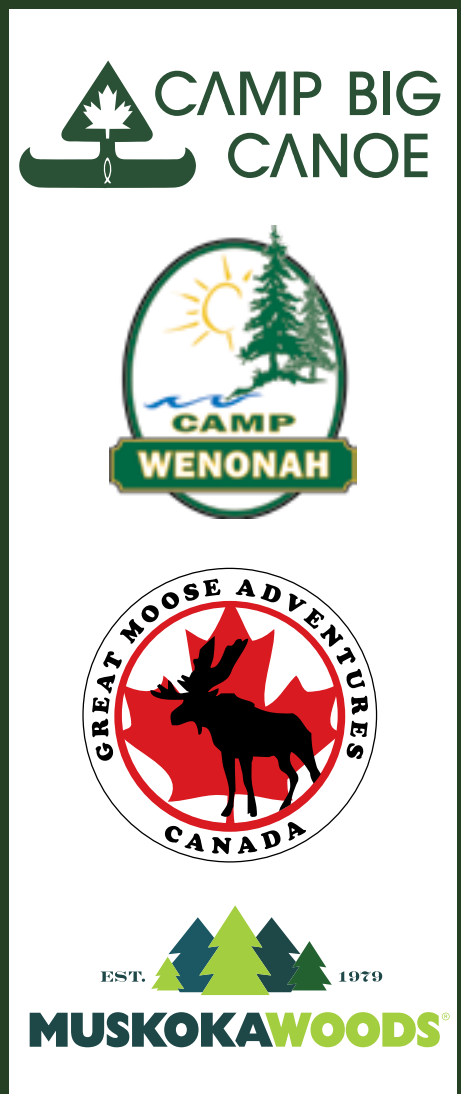
The cost for each camp also varies considerably, ranging from free to more than \$1,000 a week.

This year, the COVID-19 pandemic has closed all overnight camps in Ontario. But once it's safe to do so, this proud tradition is sure to go on.

Did you go to summer camp in your youth? What was special about your experience? Where you one of the many that returned year after year, eventually becoming a counsellor or leader? Are you still in contact with your fellow campers?

If you have fond memories of your experiences at a Muskoka residential camp or if you can add information on this subject, we would be glad to have you share them with us. Email us at archives@realmuskoka.com. I am sure we, as former campers, all learned a lot as we dwelt with our cabin mates in our dorms, ate with each other in the dining rooms, and took part in all the wonderful activities that were offered.

– Eileen Godfrey, Archives Volunteer



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The sound of steam

How do steam whistles work? It's all a matter of physics

In Muskoka we are familiar with the sound of the whistle of *RMS Segwun*, which is the only local whistle operating on steam. When it responds to a passing boat or a cottager waving from their dock, it sounds a *Who Wh Wh*, which is distinctive, and evocative of times past. Incidentally that signal has no official meaning in the formal sound signals of marine navigation.

So, you may ask, how does the steam whistle work?

The key parts of a whistle are a valve, which admits high pressure steam from the boiler; the upper “bell,” which is a hollow tube, usually cylindrical, whose length determines the musical note of the whistle, mounted a critical distance (called the “cut up”) from the steam inlet in the “foot”; and the “languid plate”, a circular plate in the foot which creates a thin slot (called the “flue”) between it and the foot around its perimeter. This slot is critical.

When the valve is opened, steam passes into the foot, then through the

slot, and then it hits the lower edge of the bell as a fast-moving jet. At a suitable pressure, this pushes into the bell, which is closed, so resistance creates pushback and the steam flow is pushed out of the bell. This behaviour alternates, setting up a rapid vibration between in and out, which creates audible sound.

You can imitate this effect by blowing across the open end of an empty glass bottle. Your blowing creates the same vibrations as the steam does in the whistle, and the musical note is audible.

Visitors can hear the sounds of these whistles on display at the Discovery Centre.



The length of the whistle bell determines the frequency of the musical note. The length is essentially one-quarter wavelength. The musical tone also depends on the speed of sound in steam (or air).

The formal relationship between these is

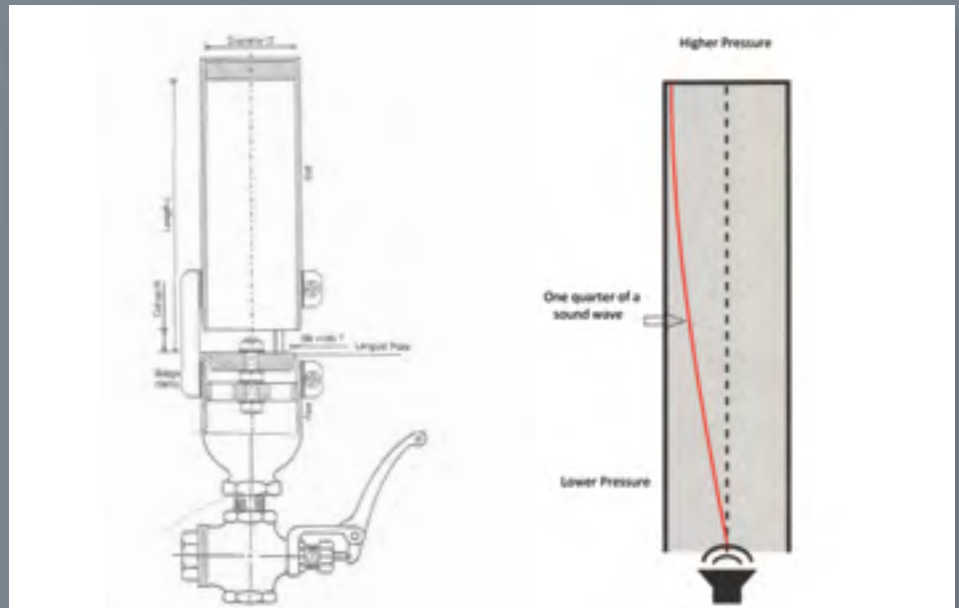
$$F = V \div (4 \times L)$$

Where F is the frequency of the note in cycles per second; V is the speed of sound (which is 400 metres/second in steam and 343 metres/second in air); and L is the length of the bell in meters (or centimeters divided by 100).

If we go back to the glass bottle, which measures 22 cm or 0.22 meters in height, its frequency will be $343 \div (4 \times 0.22)$. That's 390 cycles per second, which is the note G above middle C.

In the Muskoka Discovery Center, there is a display of five whistles salvaged from five historic ships: *Waome*, *Constance*, *Ahmic*, *Muskoka* and *Shamrock* (although the provenance of some of these is slightly uncertain). These range from 12 to 38 cm in length, which with steam would give frequencies from 265 to 820, or middle C to A nearly two octaves higher.

Because the simulation in the Discovery Centre is using air rather than steam, the whistles sound at frequencies from 227 to 703, or A (two tones below middle C) to F.



As high-pressure steam rushes into a steam whistle (left) it is pushed through the whistle's various parts, creating sound. The pitch of the whistle (right) is determined by the length of the whistle bell.

Steam whistles exhibit a somewhat “haunting” sound, which is partly due to the influence of the steam heating the metal parts of the whistle, which then expand slightly, changing its pitch slightly.

Some steam whistles, notably on railroad locomotive engines, had multiple chambers of different lengths, which when blown generated a chord of music. Only one of our display (Ahmic) seems to have multiple chambers.

In the illustration the steam valve has a curved handle. In use on

Segwun, this is connected by a rope line which runs down the funnel, then forward into the ceiling of the wheelhouse.

The Captain and Mate of *Segwun* like company, so next time you are cruising with them, go forward, climb the steep stairs to the wheelhouse, introduce yourself and ask if you can pull the cord to sound the whistle. Whoo, Wh, Wh.

– Jack McIrvine,
Archives Volunteer

“You can imitate this effect by blowing across the open end of an empty glass bottle. Your blowing creates the same vibrations as the steam does in the whistle.”

Get off the Dock... Get into Town!

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GRAVENHURST
GATEWAY TO MUSKOKA

The Sixty Mile Cruise

An all-day excursion through Huntsville and Lake of Bays

We often hear of the historic 100 Mile Cruise from Gravenhurst and the re-enactments in 2012 and 2016, but we seldom hear about another long cruise, the 60 Mile Cruise on the eastern Muskoka lakes.

Muskoka Steamship & Navigation Company ran the 100 Mile Cruise, while

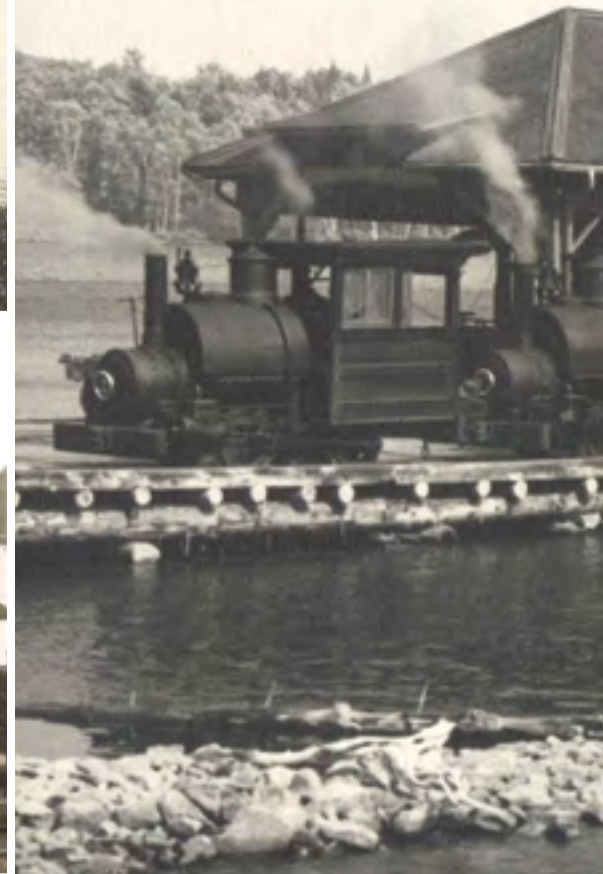
the 60 Mile Cruise was an all-day cruise offered by the Huntsville and Lake of Bays Navigation Company in the 1940s.

The cost was \$1.25 for those travelling in a party of four or more people and \$1.75 for those in smaller parties. The SS *Algonquin* ship would depart from the Huntsville Town Dock promptly at 8 am and make her

way under the swing bridge to the North Muskoka River, then through Fairy Lake, making several stops along the way to drop off mail and supplies before entering the canal into Peninsula Lake.

Deerhurst Resort was the first regular stop on the lake followed by Pow Wow Lodge and then other resorts such as Grasmere, Tally Ho and Limberlost Lodge. Her trip ended at North Portage where passengers disembarked and boarded the Portage Flyer Railway for the short overland

The ships stopped at the main resorts, including Deerhurst, to pick up passengers and mail.



“Passengers had the option of going ashore at resorts along the route and awaiting the afternoon return trip.”

tip to South Portage on Lake of Bays where the steamer SS *Iroquois* awaited the passengers.

Lake of Bays residents could also do the cruise in reverse. They would start at Dorset, boarding the *Iroquois* in the morning. She stopped at Port Cunningham and then proceeded to Bigwin Inn. Sailing onwards toward South Portage, she made several stops to pick up mail.

She arrived at Portage around 10 am to await the South Portage Flyer bringing passengers from the *Algonquin*. Passengers who began the cruise in Huntsville would board the *Iroquois*, and those who started on Lake of Bays would ride the steam train

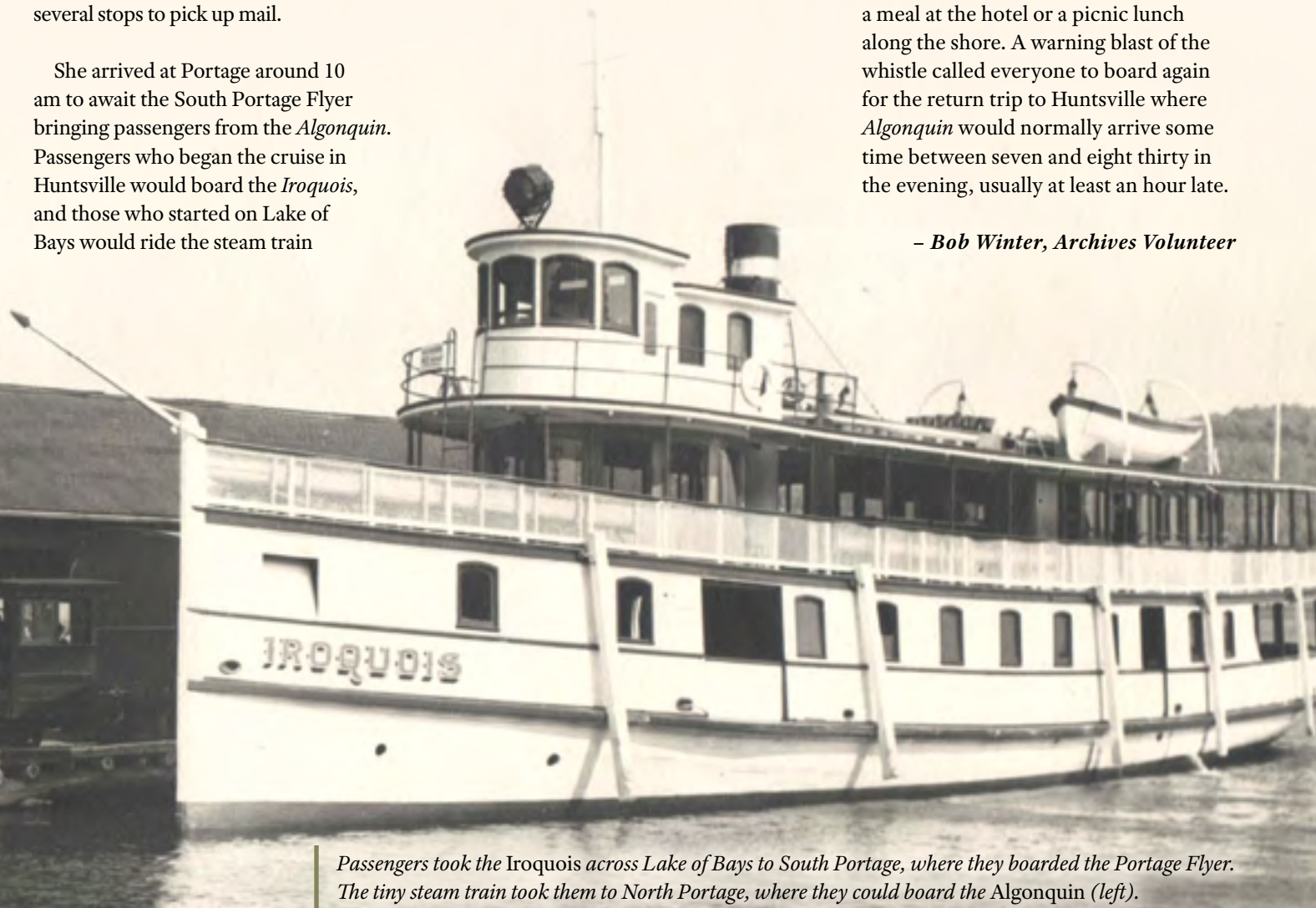
back to North Portage and board the awaiting *Algonquin*.

The *Iroquois* would set sail, carrying mail for Britannia Lodge and Bona Vista Resort. A launch would meet the ship mid lake to exchange mail for Point Ideal Lodge and Whitehouse. *Iroquois* would continue to Glenmount and Bigwin Inn.

Passengers had the option of going ashore at resorts along the route and awaiting the afternoon return trip. This was popular as the noon meal could be enjoyed in one of the excellent dining facilities in the resorts.

Iroquois in the meantime continued on to Dorset, making mail and flag stops. At Dorset a stop of one hour permitted a meal at the hotel or a picnic lunch along the shore. A warning blast of the whistle called everyone to board again for the return trip to Huntsville where *Algonquin* would normally arrive some time between seven and eight thirty in the evening, usually at least an hour late.

– Bob Winter, Archives Volunteer



Passengers took the Iroquois across Lake of Bays to South Portage, where they boarded the Portage Flyer. The tiny steam train took them to North Portage, where they could board the Algonquin (left).

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Up in Flames

A fire in Toronto nearly doomed Muskoka's steamships

On the night of Sept. 17, 1949, at about 2:30 a.m. a terrible fire began at the Toronto harbour. The SS *Noronic*, of the Canada Steamship Lines, with a full complement of passengers, had sailed into the Toronto harbour from Cleveland and other cities on the Great Lakes. The fire broke out in a linen closet and quickly spread throughout the ship. By 5 a.m., the vessel was only a smoldering shell. Over a hundred passengers were dead and many others injured. One passenger drowned; the others were asphyxiated. Many were seriously injured as they jumped from the top decks to the docks below.

At about the same time as this accident happened, Gravenhurst lawyer, W. Eric Wasley, who was the manager of The Muskoka Lakes Navigation & Hotel Co., was concerned that the company

was paying more attention to its hotel holdings than it was to its steamship business. He decided to incorporate his own company, naming it The Muskoka Lakes Line Limited, with himself as president. He bought the entire fleet and accessories from the Navigation Company for \$150,000 with a cash down payment of \$50,000. He used his own personal funds as well as monies from a number of friends and backers to raise the balance of the capital.

He had great plans to expand the steamship operations, by accommodating more passengers and offering more choices of cruises. He hoped to build more staterooms and to create a cruise connection overland from Gordon Bay on Lake Joseph to Parry Sound in order to be able to connect with cruises from there to Midland.

Unfortunately for Wasley, because of the *Noronic* fire, the Ontario Ministry of Transport set out new fire and safety regulations for all steamships that carried over 100 passengers. The Muskoka Lakes Line Limited had three such vessels; *Sagamo*, *Segwun* and *Cherokee*. Suddenly owners of these steamships had to deal with strict demands for much expensive new equipment and refits of their vessels.

In 1951, Wasley had to spend about \$8,000 on hoses, hydrants and fire extinguishers as well as fireproofing decks and bulkheads. *Sagamo* alone needed a complete sprinkler system, along with automatic valves on all the fire pumps, and two annunciator boards – one for the pilothouse and one for the engine room, which would be used to warn crew of abnormal events or

At the time, the Muskoka Lakes Line Limited had three vessels that carried over 100 passengers: the Sagamo, the Segwun, and the Cherokee.



conditions aboard the ship. Sirens and an automatic bell system needed to be installed. These additions alone were estimated at \$45,000.

To make matters worse, the steam engines had to be dismantled in order for the Provincial inspectors to deem the pistons acceptable.

At this time The Muskoka Lakes Line Limited employed about 90 people and was financially stable. Until this point, the company had done all the marine safety measures necessary, such as carrying life rafts and life belts. The company thought that the new regulations were necessary but should be adjusted to meet local conditions. For instance, it would be easy to beach a ship in case of fire in Muskoka because the

shore was always nearby. Unfortunately, the Ontario government did not agree.

The work needed to be started immediately after Easter 1951 if the ships were to be ready for the coming season.

George Martin, president of the Muskoka Tourist Development Association, stated that these new provincial regulations could have a catastrophic effect on the tourist industry, affecting over 50,000 passengers annually in Ontario. He felt that Gravenhurst, Bracebridge and the resorts of the province could not afford to have the steamships cruises and services stopped.

He held public meetings to draw attention to this plight, explaining that

the Muskoka Lakes area, as the leading tourist area of Ontario, was facing the most serious situation in its history. "It is the feeling of our association that if the steamer service is discontinued on the Muskoka Lakes, it will be a tremendous set back to the tourist business of the entire district," he said. "We look upon the ships as of supreme importance to the district. Tens of thousands of visitors who come to Muskoka have never had a steamer trip and the cruise on the lakes is the highlight of their vacation. Everyone in the district benefits. We must organize support for this integral part of the tourist industry but as an organization we haven't the funds to help."

How was Eric Wasley going to get the funds he needed to keep his investment afloat? He was anxious to secure the



The SS Noronic sailed the Great Lakes, but when she burned in Toronto harbour, the tragedy affected ships throughout Ontario.

“We look upon the ships as of supreme importance to the district.”

\$30,000 to \$35,000 by public subscription at once. George Martin urged every business establishment in the district and every summer resident who could do so to invest in five per cent redeemable and convertible preferred stock at \$100 a share. His organization canvassed the district, sent out 500 letters to summer residents explaining the situation and encouraging them to buy company stock.

Wasley named three new directors to his board of five to assist with this crisis. He even asked Cameron Peck, the steamship millionaire buff from Chicago, who owned many antique boats on Lake of Bays (including *Wanda III*) to invest in the company. Peck demanded at least 66 per cent of the Company's stock in exchange, which was not accepted.

On May 11, 1951, Wasley filed for voluntary bankruptcy. He used funds from his legal practice to pay off some of his leading fellow investors. This caused an uproar locally, since many citizens had bought stock believing their contributions would help to keep the ships sailing. Businesses were concerned that the district would lose a major tourist attraction. The Muskoka Tourist Development Association offered to help solve this serious problem.

The old company of the Muskoka Lakes Navigation and Hotel Company repossessed the steamers, and by June work started on upgrading *Sagamo* and *Segwun*. The government softened their regulations only if these ships never sailed more than a mile away from shore. They allowed *Sagamo* to sail for one

year with two-thirds of the required equipment. *Segwun* received new hoses and hydrants but was henceforth only allowed to carry 100 passengers instead of the former 243. *Cherokee* would be upgraded later.

Several cruise routes had to be greatly modified. For example, ships would no longer sail from Bracebridge to Bala. Luckily, the company still had the mail contract and continued to carry cargo. The company hired Arnold Warren as the new manager of the ships with Eric Wasley as his assistant. The steamships of Muskoka are still in business today after this near business disaster.

—Eileen Godfrey, Archives Volunteer



In the end, the provincial government softened their regulations for ships that never sailed more than a mile from shore, allowing ships like the Sagamo to continue operating.

Volunteers and members keep Pat busy

“I like what happens here. And I love the people.”

It was more than six years ago that Pat Durrant started working part-time answering the phones at the Muskoka Steamship's Discovery Centre.

Today she has a much bigger role. She is the volunteer coordinator, membership chair, looks after the organization of the Murray Walker Grace and Speed Boathouse, and assists with events – everything from

weddings and birthday parties to corporate functions.

“I like what happens here,” she says of working at the Muskoka Steamships & Discovery Centre. “It’s got a great vision and is always moving forward.”

“I love the people.” And by that Pat is referring to the 700-plus members and 100-plus volunteers who dedicate their time and energy to the not-for-profit organization and the thousands of visitors, of all ages, who frequent the Discovery Centre to learn more about Muskoka and its fascinating past.

“There are so many stories that I learn from our visitors,” she says. It’s not uncommon for someone to come in to visit because they want to know more because a grandfather or other family member worked on the ships or in an old Muskoka hotel or resort. Pat explains that often it’s the volunteers in the museum who help these visitors find their answers.

Volunteers also work in the wood shop, the archives and assist with events. “Our volunteers are so important,” she says.

Membership is one of Pat’s many responsibilities. “We have over 700

members and they are so valued,” she says. “They support our organization’s vision and mission.” Their continued financial support assists the Muskoka Steamships & Discovery Centre continued operation.

“It’s easy to become one,” she says. “They are all people who support and have a passion for Muskoka.”

While she has many roles and loves them all, she admits, it’s the visitors and their stories she likes best. “The anecdotes that people tell you, they are so interesting. We try to record them all.”

“A man in his 90s came in to visit,” she says. The visitor was Norm Rattray, who worked on the ships. He shared that his first position at age 14 was deckhand on the *Sagamo* under Commodore Lee and the next year as a purser on the *Segwun*.

“This work is always so interesting and rewarding,” says Pat. “Oh, and I do love the wooden boats.”

To learn more about becoming a member or a volunteer, contact Pat at membership@realmuskoka.com.

– *Sandy Lockhart, Volunteer Director, Muskoka Steamships & Discovery Centre*

“We have over 700 members and they are so valued.”





PHOTO COURTESY OF TIMBER SYSTEMS LIMITED

WILL YOU JOIN US?

We are funding and creating three world-class permanent exhibits to help create a unique cultural hub in Muskoka for present and future generations. The three permanent exhibits will be housed in a spectacular new building connected to the Muskoka Discovery Centre in Gravenhurst.

THE THREE EXHIBITS:

MUSKOKA PAST PRESENT FUTURE:

A fascinating presentation about how Muskoka became what it is today over the last 150 years, with some probing questions about its future.

MEETING PLACE OF NATIONS:

An intriguing presentation of Indigenous heritage and culture based on the oldest story in Canada – the 5,000-year-old fish weirs at the south end of Muskoka.

THE STEAM ERA:

An entertaining showcase of a powerful bygone period in history featuring a newly restored and electrified *Wanda III* – a unique operating artifact.

THE CASE FOR SUPPORT:

Every community needs a vibrant cultural hub that will generate and maintain respect for all members of the community. The story of Muskoka should be told for the benefit of present and future generations. Indigenous culture and traditions should be explained by Indigenous people so that the non-indigenous community can gain a better understanding of the Canadian fabric. *Wanda III* and the Steam Era deserve to be celebrated in a Muskoka-focused presentation about an era that changed the world. A community-owned, responsibly financed cultural institution is uniquely positioned to preserve and celebrate the history and culture of Muskoka.

This is a road map to the future. “We don’t know where we are going if we don’t know where we have been.” Maya Angelou



NAMING SPONSORSHIPS AVAILABLE

- The new Building and Exhibit Hall over the water
- Stanley Meek Gallery showcasing Muskoka history **SOLD**
- Indigenous Gallery: a unique presentation of a 5,000-year-old story
- Steam Era Boathouse: aspecial presentation of the era that changed everything
- The Link: small gallery giving an overview of all new galleries
- The Water Gallery: exhibits focused on the Muskoka Watershed and the Indigenous perspective about water

CAPITAL FUNDING WILL FUEL THIS REVITALIZATION

Revitalizing the Muskoka Discovery Centre will cost \$6.85 Mil and is being pursued in two phases. A total of \$3.55 Mil has been raised to date from a combination of Government and private sources.

PHASE ONE: Includes the building of two permanent exhibits (Watershed Wonders and Water is Life), the concept development for two new exhibits and the construction of the new addition to house three permanent exhibits and a home for *Wanda III*. The building will be closed in by October 2020. Cost is \$3.2 Mil.

PHASE TWO: The building of three new permanent exhibits and the electrification of *Wanda III*. Research and development for this phase has been going on in parallel with the activities of Phase One. A capital campaign has been launched to raise the necessary \$3.0 Mil to complete the project.

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