Fall 2026 Newsletter

# BAPTISTE LAKE ASSOCIATION

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## *BLA fights for our lake*

*See article page 5*



*La Vallee Bay. Photo by Paul Coleman*



*The road runner heron. Photo by Paul Coleman*



*Early crowd at corn roast. Photo by Hilary Phillips*



*Are you ready for this? Photo by Anne Coleman*

## *BLA 2027 Events*

**OPENING EVENT**
May 23, 2027, Birch Cliff Lodge, 5:00 to 7:00 pm

**CANADA DAY PARADE**
July 1, 2027 Paradise Landing and ends at Dog Bay

**PIKE TOURNAMENT**
Saturday, July 3, 2027, 7:30 am to 3:00 pm
Public Dock, Baptiste Village

**CANOE KAYAK DAY**
To be announced.

**REGATTA**
August 8, 2027
at Camp Ponacka
Sign up before the event.

**AGM**
August 14, 2027,
Birch Cliff Lodge, 9 to 11 am

**CORN ROAST**
September 5, 2027,
Camp Ponacka, 5 to 7 pm

A PLACE FOR THE ARTS
Store & Gallery
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Over 40 local artists including Baptiste Lake artists
Ken Balmer, Seth Macey & Robert (krys) Pearson
VISIT US
Monthly
THE ANNEX GALLERY
EXHIBITIONS

# President's Message

*By Alan Stephen*

As another summer at Baptiste Lake comes to an end and we move into the colours and quieter days of fall, I have been thinking about what makes this lake and our community so special.

It has certainly been a busy summer. Whether you were here for the whole season, came up on weekends, or joined us for one of our events, I hope you had a chance to enjoy the lake, spend some time with family and friends, and perhaps meet a few new neighbours along the way.

Our summer events are an important part of what brings the Baptiste community together. The annual Pike Fishing Derby was once again a great success. It is always a fun day on the lake, but it also serves an important purpose by raising funds for our local fish hatchery and supporting the work being done to maintain the fishery that so many of us enjoy.

The annual July 1st Canada Day Boat Parade, organized by the families of Paradise Point, was another great opportunity for people from around the lake to get out on the water, have some fun and show their Baptiste spirit. Our annual Canoe and Kayak Event also continues to be a wonderful way for paddlers of all ages to get together and enjoy the lake.




Unfortunately, the weather did not cooperate with everything we had planned. We had to cancel the annual Regatta, which was disappointing, particularly given the time and effort that goes into organizing it. Safety, however, has to come first. Hopefully Mother Nature will be a little more cooperative and we can bring the Regatta back next summer.

One of the highlights of the summer for me was our annual Corn Roast at Camp Ponacka. It was great to see so many members come together and simply enjoy the evening. Thank you again to Don, Anne, Laura, Graham and Chris for welcoming us to Camp Ponacka and for their continued support of the Association and the health of Baptiste Lake.

We are also very fortunate to have two great local businesses serving our lake community — Baptiste Lake Marina and Birch Cliff Lodge, including the 1931 Patio and Grill. Both are an important part of life around Baptiste, and I hope we will continue to support them whenever we can. Having good local businesses right here at the lake is something we should not take for granted.

I also want to thank our Board members and volunteers. Since becoming President, I have gained an even greater appreciation for how much work goes on behind the scenes throughout the year. People give their time to organize events, keep members informed, follow issues affecting the lake, work with our community partners and advocate for the long-term health of Baptiste. Much of that work is not particularly visible, but it is important, and I am very grateful to everyone who contributes.

The proposed development affecting Benoir and Elephant Lakes continues to be an important issue for our Association and the broader watershed. There is a separate article in this newsletter with an update on the situation and the BLA's involvement, so rather than repeat that information here, I encourage you to take a few minutes to read it.

Of course, looking after Baptiste goes well beyond any one issue. We need to continue paying attention to water quality, responsible shoreline

*...continued on page 3*

## BLA Officials - Fall 2026

Alan Stephen, BLA President
Marlin Horst, Vice President
Anne Coleman, Director, Newsletter Editor & Lake Plan Implementation
Eric Hooey, Director, Webmaster
Shelley Pickard, Director, Advertising, Membership Chair, Website Co-coordinator
Diane Jared, Director, Treasurer
Beth Greenberg, Director
Hilary Phillips, Secretary
Gary Pirko, Director, Watersheds Canada Liason, Fish Hatchery Liason
Anne Morawetz, Director
Don Bocking, Director
**Contact us at mybaptistelake@gmail.com**

*...from page 2 President's Message*

stewardship, development throughout the watershed and the many other things that can affect the health of our lake. Just as importantly, we need to maintain good relationships with our neighbours, local businesses, neighbouring lake associations, municipal and provincial representatives, and others who share our interest in protecting this special part of Ontario.

I also want to take this opportunity to recognize Marlin Horst, who served as President of the Baptiste Lake Association for the past 17 years. That is a remarkable commitment to the Association and to Baptiste Lake. Over those years, Marlin provided continuity, leadership and a strong voice for the lake through many issues and changes. On behalf of the Board and our members, and personally as the person following him in this role, I want to thank Marlin for everything he has contributed. I am very pleased that we will continue to benefit from his knowledge and experience as past President.

As the new President, one thing that has really stood out to me is just how much people care about Baptiste Lake. Some families have been here for generations, while others have only discovered the lake more recently. Some of us live here year-round and others spend only part of the year here. We may have different connections to Baptiste, but I think we share two things — an appreciation for what we have here and a responsibility to look after it for those who come after us.

*...continued on page 4*




*...from page 3 President's Message*

Thank you to everyone who renewed their membership this year, attended an event, volunteered, supported our fundraising efforts or simply took the time to talk with a neighbour about the work of the BLA. Every bit of involvement matters. The more people who participate in the Association, the stronger our community becomes and the stronger our voice is when we speak on behalf of the lake.

For those heading away for the winter, safe travels and we look forward to seeing you back at the lake next year. For those who stay, I hope you enjoy the quieter months and the very different character that fall and winter bring to Baptiste.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you for your continued support of the Baptiste Lake Association. More personally, thank you for making Baptiste the kind of community it is and for doing your part to look after a lake that means so much to all of us.

## Many Thanks

Many layers go into creating this newsletter, we depend highly on several contributors who are Hannah Lithographers, Rachel Etmanskie, Designer, Anne and Paul Coleman, Editors, Shelley Pickard, Advertising and several contributors who submit articles and photos. Many thanks from the BLA, we appreciate your constant and enthusiastic support.



*Painting by Fiona Reid*

# Mayor's Message

*By Tony Fitzgerald*



*New clock in Maynooth. Photo by Anne Coleman*

As I write this in early October, the leaves are brilliantly coloured, the weather is still beautiful and preparations for Thanksgiving are in full swing. But the hint of fall weather is in the air, and before you know it, winter will be approaching. For many cottagers, it's time to close up and return to your full-time homes. I wish you an enjoyable and safe winter and anticipate seeing you again next spring. For our year-round residents on the lake, it's time to fill up the wood box, clean your chimney and put on the snow tires!

The municipality is also preparing for the switchover to a new Council. By the time you read this, the election will be over and a new Council sworn in. They will need to hit the ground running, as a Capital Budget will need to be passed, and then an Operating Budget passed early in the new year. The preparation of a new Strategic Plan will set the stage for the next four years in Hastings Highlands. I can not stress enough how important this document is. I can state, without any fear of exaggeration, that without our Strategic Plan 2023-2027, our term of Council would not have been as successful as it was. It is what allowed us to focus on the major goals that we identified as key priorities, without distractions or wasted time and resources on projects that were not priorities, not within our jurisdiction or simply unattainable because of cost. Major accomplishments in this term include; 1) maintaining strong fiscal control including a competitive tax rate, 2) incredible successes in partnering with our local lake associations, the HH Interlakes group, BASC, Watersheds Canada and other stakeholders and 3) major progress on our roads, especially the $25 Million grant from the province to rehabilitate and resurface former provincial highway 62. I can only hope that the next HH Council will be as productive and co-operative as this past one. To everyone who made it happen, thank you!

# Proposed Development On Benoir and Elephant Lake

*By Marlin Horst*

A significant development proposal is raising serious alarm bells for cottage country residents in and around the Baptiste Lake area. Developer 2463756 Ontario Inc. is seeking approval for a 63-lot subdivision on the shores of Elephant Lake and Benoir Lake, located in the municipality of Dysart et al., in Haliburton County. While the proposal is for a 63 lot development if you go to the website of the developer called 95 Developments, Algonquin Gardens, you will see that the ultimate plan is for 1,271 lots. This is a development which would double the size of the residences on the watershed. The developer is taking the proposal to the Ontario Land Tribunal ("OLT").

**The Proposal**

The application is structured in two phases:

- Northern Phase — 25 backlots
- Southern Phase — 38 waterfront lots

Connected by a private condominium road network, the submitted plans also include an array of amenities: a shared clubhouse, boat launch, petting zoo, golf practice range, community garden, outdoor museum, exhibition space, and children's playground. The developer controls over 800 hectares of land, and their own website indicates an intention to ultimately build over 1,200 units in total, though only 63 lots are part of the current application. A referenced "Eastern Phase" is not analyzed in any of the 17 submitted studies and remains entirely unaddressed.

**A Pattern of Disregard**

The developer's track record is troubling. Roads have already been built and shoreline vegetation cleared before any approvals were obtained, suggesting a deliberate pattern of bypassing proper planning process. Adding to the concern, Dysart et al. has already denied the Official Plan Amendment and rezoning for the Northern Phase, citing that the lots fail to meet the Official Plan's standards, a direction communicated to the developer back in 2021 that the developers own planning reports fail to acknowledge or rebut.

Rather than accepting the denial, the developer appealed to the OLT while simultaneously resubmitting both phases to Haliburton County for subdivision and condominium approval, an aggressive, multi-channel push clearly designed to wear down opposition.

**The Downstream Threat to Baptiste Lake**

What makes this particularly urgent for the Baptiste Lake community is the fact that Baptiste Lake is downstream from Elephant and Benoir lakes, yet not a single document submitted by the developer assesses the downstream impacts on Baptiste Lake or the residents of Hastings Highlands. It is as if the water flow stopped at the municipal border.



*Water quality and wildlife are indangered if this proposal goes through. Photo by Anne Coleman*

The developer's own reports acknowledge that effluent from the 63 proposed lots will be discharged into shallow groundwater, water that will inevitably flow into the watershed and ultimately into Baptiste Lake. When you scale that up to the full 1,200-unit vision, the potential environmental damage becomes staggering. The impact on boat traffic, noise, fishing, and overall lake health in Baptiste Lake could be severe and irreversible.

If you examine the few artist renderings available on the developer's website you will see manicured lawns right up the water course in some areas. As we all know the only way to maintain such manicured lawns is through fertilizers, which again make their way into the watershed.

*...continued on page 6*

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*Meet the new BLA President Alan Stephen.*
*Photo by Hilary Phillips*



*Marlin serves up a great meal.*
*Photo by Hilary Phillips*


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*...from page 5 Proposed Development*

**The Baptiste Lake Association Fights Back**

The Baptiste Lake Association ("BLA") is not standing idly by. Legal counsel has been retained to oppose this development through every available avenue. The initial legal costs are being covered by a dedicated group of volunteers committed to protecting the lake. However, given that the BLA is up against a developer with deep pockets and, by all appearances, little regard for the natural environment, the Association needs to reach out to its broader membership for financial support as the fight continues.

Please go to the BLA website and donate specifically to the legal defense fund. The more money we can raise the more effective our objections to this development will be.

This is not just a Haliburton County issue. The communities of Hastings Highlands and all who depend on the Baptiste Lake watershed have a direct stake in the outcome. Stay informed, stay engaged, and be ready to act.

# New Directors

*By Anne Morawetz*

"We are pleased to join the board of the BLA! Both Don and Anne have enjoyed summers on Lake Baptiste for the past 50+ years. We met at Camp Ponacka where Anne grew up as the daughter of the founders, Bruno and Gwen Morawetz. Since the 1990's we have owned and operated Ponacka, a summer camp for boys. Ponacka will celebrate its 80th season in 2027. We are delighted to now pass along the camp to two of our children, Graham and Laura Bocking, third generation camp directors!



Going forward, we will have more time to devote to the wellbeing of Baptiste Lake as board members and look forward to working with this wonderful group of volunteers who love the lake and its community."

# SnowSledders

At the recent OFSC AGM and Convention at Deerhurst Resort several Snow Country Snowmobile Region clubs were recognized for their incredible milestones as members of the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs. These milestones represent decades of dedication, volunteerism, and commitment to maintaining and growing Ontario's snowmobile trail system.

North Renfrew Snowmobile Association (NRSA), 50 years

Calabogie & District Snowmobile Club, 45 years

Maple Leaf Snow Skimmers, 45 years

Haliburton County Snowmobile Association - HCSA, 55 years

Congratulations on these remarkable achievements!

These milestones are a testament to the countless volunteers who have given their time, energy and passion to snowmobiling over the years. District 6 is proud to recognize and celebrate your long-standing contributions to the OFSC, and to our snowmobiling communities.

**District 6 Outstanding Family of the Year Award**

Congratulations to the Lang Family, Steve, Sylvia, Mike & Nicole, Maple Leaf Snow Skimmers, recipients of the District 6 Outstanding Family of the Year Award, presented at the Snow Country Snowmobile Region District AGM on August 15th!

This family truly demonstrates what it means to volunteer together! Their contributions reach every corner of their club, serving as landowner coordinators, event and fundraising coordinators, and communications volunteers, while managing the club's Facebook page, messages, and email accounts.

Their dedication doesn't stop there. They provide year-round trail support, including building ice bridges, staking lakes, maintaining and inspecting trails, and clearing the way ahead of groomers to support operators. You'll rarely find them heading out without their trail patrol vests and equipment!

As trail patrollers, the Lang Family are also wonderful ambassadors for snowmobiling, connecting with riders, assisting those in need, and using those conversations to help recruit new volunteers and strengthen their club.

Their commitment, teamwork, and willingness to pitch in wherever needed make them a true asset to the snowmobile community.




*Steve and Sylvia Lang received their award.*

Congratulations to the Lang family!

A very well-deserved recognition of an incredible family of volunteers!




# 6th Annual Pike Derby

*By Gary Pirko*

Hi Everyone,

What an absolutely spectacular day we had for the 6th Annual Pike Derby! The weather was beautiful, and we had a completely full field with 77 boats and 195 anglers out on the water.

Thanks to incredible efforts, the tournament numbers were staggering: 334 pike were caught, totaling 529 lbs of fish weighed in! An impressive 60% of all boats returned to the dock with fish. This year, we also introduced our new Top Angler category (weighing 6 or less fish), and it was a huge hit, with 39% of the field declaring to compete for it.

We are also thrilled to announce that the proceeds of the event were approximately **$3,200**! **These funds will be shared by the Baptiste Lake Association and the North Hastings Community Fish Hatchery** to support our ongoing community and conservation efforts.

**2026 Tournament Winners & Results**

Congratulations to all of our official winners who took home cash rewards after some lively, friendly competition:



*Winner Carson Freymond. Photo by Gary Pirko*

- Big Fish Award ($400): Carson Freymond 8.8 lbs
- Top Angler Category ($400): Carson Freymond 24.7 lbs
- Boat Total Weight Category:
  - 1st Place ($400): Chris Mills – 36.7 lbs
  - 2nd Place ($300): Joe Fritz – 28.6 lbs
  - 3rd Place ($200): Thor Dmytruk – 28.3 lbs
  - 4th Place ($100): Arek Aksamit – 27.2 lbs

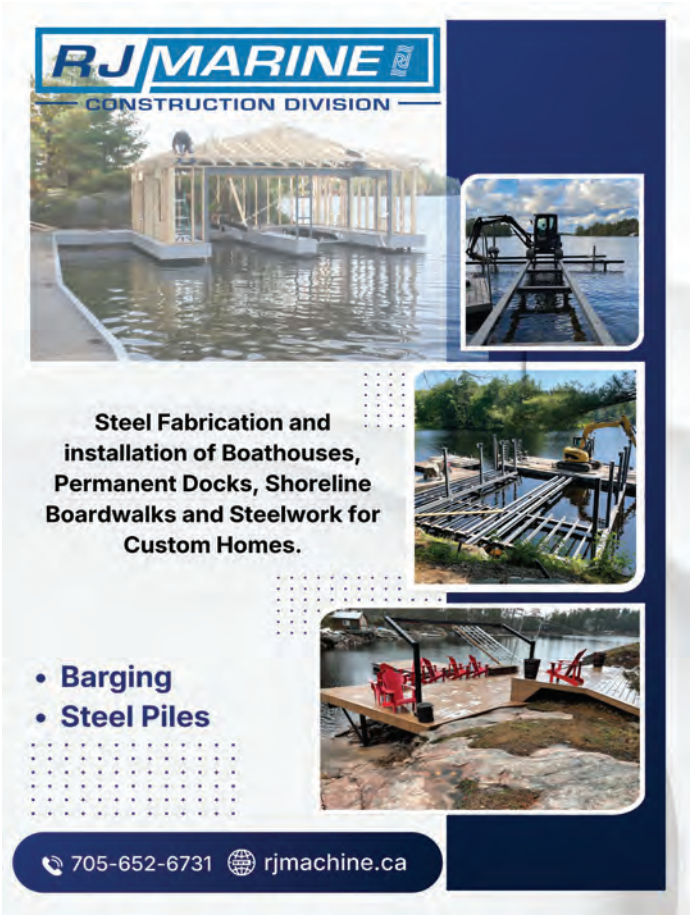
We also want to congratulate Jason Hartwick, who took home $380 as the winner of our 50/50 drawing! In addition, 7 great door prizes were awarded to the dedicated anglers who stayed to enjoy the festive afternoon weigh-in ceremonies.

**Thank You to Our Generous Sponsors**

An event with financial rewards like this is only possible because of our incredible local businesses. Please join us in thanking the sponsors who generously donated CASH for our tournament awards:

- **Pipewerks**
- **Freymond Lumber**

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*Volunteer cleaning fish. Photo by Gary Pirko*

*...from page 8 6th Annual Pike Derby*

- **Baptiste Marina**
- **Remax (Joan Grant)**
- **Makin' Waves**

We also want to extend a massive **thank you to the community businesses** that donated our wonderful door prizes:

- **IDA - Maynooth**
- **Birds Creek Farm Supply**
- **Up North Beauty**
- **Cedar & Co. Botanicals**
- **Algonquin Cookhouse**
- **Mack Attack**

**Feeding the Needy in Our Community**

We expanded our Fish Cleaning area this year, and under the leadership of Kevin Vance, a team of 7 experienced filleters stepped up alongside others who were trained right at the event to clean all donated fish.

A special shout-out goes to Paul Gosluszny, who assisted in cleaning and transporting hundreds of processed fish to be smoked. Paul and his wife finished the cleaning process, smoked the fish, and then distributed directly to the needy and homeless in the Bancroft area.

**A Shared Achievement**

Look at what we accomplished together as a community this weekend:

1. Environmental Stewardship: Safely reducing the pike population in Baptiste Lake to help bring our fish species back into a healthy balance.

2. Community Spirit: Hosting a lively, rewarding competition and a festive afternoon celebration for friends and families.

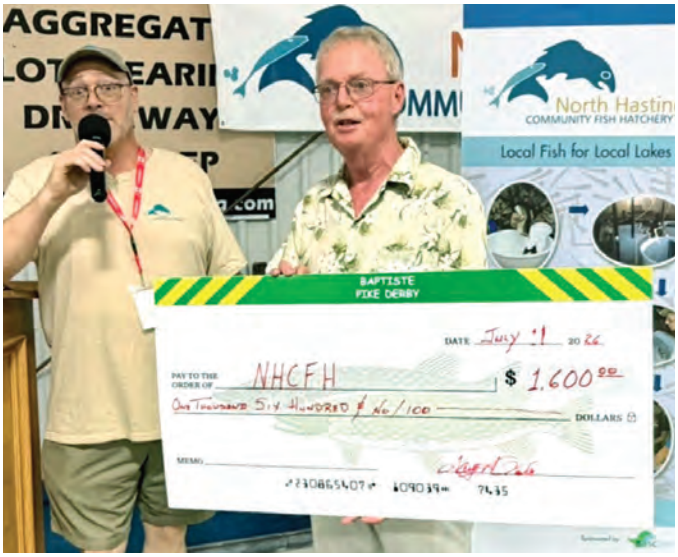
3. Helping Others: Directly feeding those in need in our local community.

None of this could have happened without our 30+ incredible volunteers who worked tirelessly to make this day run smoothly. Thank you for making this event so special.

Thank you all again for an unforgettable derby. See you July 3rd, 2027, and on the water!

Best regards, The Pike Derby Committee

## Later in July the Fish Hatchery held its Annual Dinner




*Paul Coleman, right, representing BLA for their donation to the fish hatchery. Photo by Gary Pirko*



*Peter and Joanne Varley and Deanna Pirko served as tireless volunteers for the fish hatchery dinner. Photo by Gary Pirko*

# Water Testing

*By Gary Pirko*

We completed our annual water testing for the MNR in early October 2026. A quick review shows our Dissolved Oxygen (DO) is consistently low. The MNR prefers a Dissolved Oxygen (DO) level of 7.0.

*From Ottawa Riverkeeper*

Dissolved oxygen is a measurement of the concentration of free oxygen in the water column. This free oxygen comes from organisms, aquatic plants and algae through photosynthesis, and can also be transferred from the air at the surface of the water. When the ecosystem is in balance, there is enough oxygen being produced or transferred into the water to support both decomposition and respiration. However, when there is excess organic waste from sources such as sewage and algal blooms, the oxygen demand can start to outweigh the supply. Decomposers (eg. bacteria, worms, etc) remove more oxygen from the water faster than normal so that the larger volume of waste can be digested, meaning that there is a decrease in the amount of oxygen available in the water column for fish and other animals to breathe. If dissolved oxygen gets too low, there could be an increase in the deaths of fish and other animals, producing even more organic waste and adding to the already elevated decomposition demand.

The amount of available oxygen in the water column is also affected by several abiotic factors, including temperature, salinity, pressure and depth, wind, wave action, and flow. The result is that the amount of dissolved oxygen and the capacity for it will vary between areas and types of water bodies in the Ottawa River Watershed. Seasons can also have an impact as cold water can hold more oxygen than warm water, therefore dissolved oxygen can decrease in the summer when the weather is warmer. Furthermore, smaller bodies of water are more susceptible to temperature changes and flow, which makes dissolved oxygen more variable in tributaries than lakes. This limits the ranges for some species, including fish, that have lower tolerances for changes in habitat conditions. Due to its close connection with temperature, dissolved oxygen is an indicator of watershed ecosystem health that is of particular interest in the context of climate change.



*Water quality testing is extremely important to our lake. Photo by Paul Coleman*

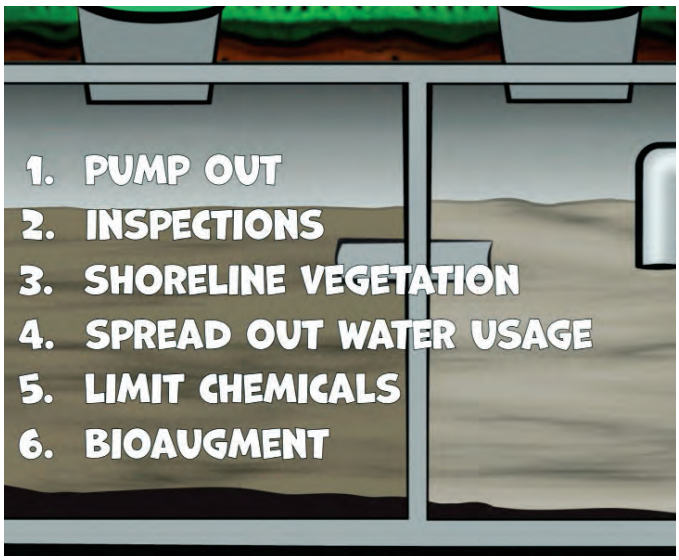



# Septic Health

Septic Systems are the single largest polluter of our lakes. All systems pollute, but the more efficiently your septic system operates, the less pollution goes into the environment, including your lake. Fortunately, there are a lot of easy things we can do to help our septic systems do their jobs as they were designed.

Septic Best Practices If you want your septic system to work the way it was designed in order to keep our groundwater, lakes and rivers clean, follow these 6 best practices:

Septic System FAQs




Q. Is it true our Septics don't need added bacteria - our guts give them what they need?

A. No. Our guts are only good at digesting human waste. They struggle with the soap, grease and toilet paper we put down our drains. This is why your system and your lake will benefit from less of soap, grease and toilet paper.

Q. How do they work?

A. A septic system works by having all household wastewater flow into a tank, where solids settle allowing bacteria break down waste. The remaining liquid effluent discharges into a perforated underground drainfield, slowly filtering down through the soil. Here, soil particles and microbes neutralize pathogens and organic impurities before the water re enters the groundwater. For the health of your lake, proper soil filtration is critical. Failing or flooded systems leak excess phosphorus and nitrogen into nearby ground and surface water, potentially triggering toxic algal blooms, severe oxygen depletion, and causing harm to aquatic life and potentially human health. Regular maintenance and proper setback distances prevent nutrient overload in lake ecosystems.

Q. What should never go into your system?

A. To prevent system failure, backup, and environmental pollution, never flush or drain:

• Non-biodegradable solids: Wipes (even "flushable"), paper towels, feminine hygiene products, diapers, dental floss, or cigarette butts; Fats, Oils, and Grease (FOG), which solidify, clog drainfield soil, and choke aerobic bacteria;

• Harsh Chemicals: Bleach in large amounts, paint, pesticides, drain openers, or solvents kill the essential bacteria treating your waste.

• Pharmaceuticals: Antibiotics and medications pass untreated into soil and nearby lake ecosystems.

• Excess Water & Food Scraps: Garbage disposals load systems with heavy solids, while rapid high-volume discharge drowns the tank.

Q. How can I improve the effectiveness of my system?

A. The three most important things you can do is to reduce water usage, be careful about what you put down your drain.

*...continued on page 12*

*...from page 11 Septic Health*

Q. How often should it be pumped?

A. How frequently the sludge, which accumulates in the bottom of your septic tank, must be pumped out depends on the size of the tank, the use it gets and the condition of the system. It's best to pump it out at regular intervals, every 3 – 5 years or so.

Q. What is happening with regard to inspections?

A. For the most up-to-date information, it's best to check with your local municipality:

**OUR MUNICIPALITY DOES NOT INSPECT SEPTIC SYSTEMS.** This is a future must change. The health of the septic system on your property is your responsibility so before your septic allows pollutants into your groundwater, you need to upgrade and keep your drinking water safe.

Old Septic systems should not be grandfathered.



*Kawartha Utility Services septic collection at Alan Stephen's cottage. Photo by Alan Stephen*



*And the barge takes it away. Photo by Alan Stephen*

# Gratitude

*By Anne Coleman*

This is our opportunity to give a Shout Out to **Birch Cliff Lodge** and **Camp Ponacka**.

Jenn Hill and Steve Bell, operators of Birch Cliff, welcomed the BLA, with open arms, on two occasions. Our opening event in the spring was a success thanks to Jenn and Steve, who combined our event with the opening of their new restaurant service, causing some interest in both functions. Later in the summer, again, with no hesitation, we were able to hold the AGM in the dining area of BCL. Camp Ponacka, under the expert direction of Graham, Laura, Chris, Anne and Don, received the BLA members for the annual Corn Roast. The weather was perfect and all present had a wonderful visit with old friends and new introductions. Thank you to both groups, we could not do without these awesome venues to keep the association alive.



*Enjoying the scenery at Birch Cliff.*

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# Garbage

*By Anne Coleman*

To those unfortunates who have had garbage dumped on their private properties by invisible hands, the BLA members are with you in your frustration. Our lake is located in such a beautiful area and those who come for brief visits but who are so classless as to leave their garbage in full sight on someone's property, they don't deserve to return. We can only shout, "Don't litter!!" If an Airbnb property is suspected as negligent, a negative rating through Airbnb is one possible way of dealing with the problem. Another is to message the actual owner of the property in question. However, this requires certainty that a suspected property is the source of the problem. Not all rental properties are Airbnb, and the information given to the renters needs to be clear and strong by all those renting out their space or be prepared to clean their clients' mess. The municipality needs to reconsider short term rentals if that will be a possible answer to random garbage dumping in the area. The best solution is for the owner to collect their client's garbage and deal with it, they are profiting from the rent money, right? Finally, skunks, racoons and bears love left overs."



*Garbage found on private property. The owners had to clean up several times due to dumping by visitors at a rental.*



*Garbage spread around by animals.*



*We would rather see this, the natural growth than garbage strewn through home owners properties. Photo by Anne Coleman*

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# Water Levels Low. Why?

*By MNRF*

On Baptiste Lake water levels and fall drawdowns are a highly managed and carefully watched issue. The lake's levels are regulated by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) via the Baptiste Lake Dam (also known locally as the High Falls Dam) on the east side of the lake where it empties into the York River.

Because Baptiste Lake is part of a sensitive cold-water fishery, water managers handle the autumn drawdown with specific protections in place:

The Fall Operating Rule for Baptiste Lake

• The Spawning Window: In 1988, revised dam operating guidelines were officially put into effect to directly protect the lake's native Lake Trout population.

• Post-Spawning Protocol: Rather than dropping water arbitrarily, the MNR manages drawdowns very slowly or coordinates them to ensure water levels protect spawning lake trout in the fall. The strategy is designed to ensure that once lake trout lay their eggs in the shallow rocky shoals, the water levels remain stable enough through the late fall and winter so the eggs do not dry out, freeze, or get crushed by ice.

• Co-benefits: This carefully timed autumn drawdown routine also indirectly protects hibernating shoreline reptiles and turtles from being exposed to the winter elements.

Local Dynamics & Recent Concerns

While the dam operations target a stable environment for fall spawning, the lake still experiences notable variations due to infrastructure and weather:

Community Habitat Efforts

Because water level management alone cannot fully save the spawning grounds from siltation, community groups like the Baptiste Lake Association have partnered with organizations like Watersheds Canada and the North Hastings Community Fish Hatchery. In recent years (including major projects in late 2024 and September 2025), volunteer teams have used high-powered water pumps to power-wash the silt off historic walleye and lake trout spawning beds, layering them with tons of clean, new stone to give eggs the best chance of survival.



*Pleinair sketch from boat.*
*Watercolour by Anne Coleman*

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# Loons, The Canary in the Mine

*From an article on the MuskokaRegion.com website, Rebecca Hudescu*

As loon chicks become less common, Birds Canada turns to Muskoka volunteers to help the iconic bird

"Supporting the lake supports loons, supporting loons supports lakes, it's all intertwined." — Kathy Jones, volunteer manager and biologist with Birds Canada.

Muskoka's lakes are some of the most important breeding habitats for common loons anywhere in the world, but Birds Canada says the iconic birds are raising fewer chicks than three decades ago, making the actions of local cottagers, anglers and boaters more important than ever.

The findings come from Birds Canada's Canadian Lake Loon Survey, a volunteer monitoring program that has tracked loon nesting success on thousands of lakes for more than 40 years. While Ontario has not seen the steep declines recorded in Atlantic Canada, researchers say the long-term downward trend in chick production highlights the need to protect lake habitat and reduce human disturbance.

What is the Canadian Lake Loon Survey and how does it work?

The Canadian Lake Loon Survey is one of Birds Canada's longest-running citizen science programs, relying on volunteers to monitor common loon nesting success throughout the summer. By tracking how many chicks loon pairs raise each year, researchers can measure the birds' reproductive success and identify long-term trends in lake health and environmental change.

Since launching in Ontario in 1981, more than 4,000 volunteers have monitored loon pairs on roughly 4,500 lakes, recording whether adults successfully hatch and raise chicks.

"We're asking people to continue the survey so that we can keep track of what's going on and doing our best to remind people that they have an impact," said Kathy Jones, volunteer manager and biologist with Birds Canada.

Jones said the survey is designed for "enjoying your lake," encouraging residents and cottagers who spend several days each summer at the same lake to take part. Volunteers only need to check on loon activity a few times each month to contribute valuable data.

As Muskoka has a number of lakes throughout the



*Photo by Beth Greenberg*

region, Jones explains loons enjoy the area more than others, making residents and cottagers apt candidates for survey participation.

What is the state of common loons, and what is

*...continued on page 16*



...from page 15 Loons

causing their decline?

Birds Canada explains that loons are in trouble. Their productivity has declined from 0.7 young per loon pair per year to 0.55 in recent years. If productivity falls below 0.48 per pair yearly, Birds Canada warns that populations will likely begin to decline.

Within their findings, Birds Canada states decline in loon productivity over time has been steepest in the Atlantic Provinces, where numbers have dropped below 0.48 young per pair per year.

Ontario, B.C., and Prairie provinces have had shallow declines in productivity, but still remain above worrisome numbers.

Although loons are not decreasing at the same rate as less common birds, Jones advocates for keeping "common birds common," adding they are just as important to our ecosystem.

Common disturbances to loon productivity

- Black flies
- Ice-off timing
- Eagles and cormorants
- Acid rain






*Photo by Beth Greenberg*

- Mercury

Reduced water clarity, generally linked to climate change, is among the greater concerns for the productivity and livelihood of young loons, according to Jones.

Loons are visual hunters that rely on clear water to spot and catch fish. When lakes become cloudier — because of algae growth, increased boating activity or changing rainfall patterns linked to climate change — adult loons have a harder time finding food, leaving chicks undernourished and less likely to survive their first winter migration.

Human disturbances and how you can help protect common loons

Though many environmental factors impact loon productivity, human disturbances are just as damaging to these birds' survival.

"We have a lot of responsibility for loons," said Jones, adding that Ontario is the biggest producing loon location in the world.

"Cottagers, and boaters, and anglers all want the same thing; they want that clear, pristine, Muskoka lake that they can go and play in, hunt, and enjoy," said Jones. "To keep that we have to work for it."

If you are unable to participate in the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey, there are various steps to take while visiting the lakes this summer that could help protect loons.

Jones suggests improving shorelines and uplands on your property.

Programs such as Love your Lake offer shoreline

...continued on page 17

*...from page 16 Loons*

naturalizing services to offer a healthier and more environmentally productive shoreline.

Jones said healthy upland areas are just as important as healthy shorelines. Replacing grass with native plants or bird gardens creates habitat for insects that fish eat, helping support the entire lake ecosystem.

She added that lawns provide little value for pollinators and can increase runoff into lakes, contributing to poorer water quality.

"Supporting the lake supports loons, supporting loons supports lakes, it's all intertwined," said Jones.

For boaters, Jones also encouraged them to slow down when travelling parallel to shorelines and reserve wake sports for deeper areas away from shore. She said large wakes can erode shorelines, stir up sediment and reduce water clarity, ultimately affecting the habitat loons rely on.

Jones also urged people to keep lakes free of litter and discarded fishing gear. Monofilament line, ropes, hooks and plastic left behind can entangle or injure loons and other wildlife. She also recommends reeling in a lure and moving to another location if a loon begins chasing it.



*Cathy's granddaughter found this Bryozoan in Dog Bay. Bryozoans indicate good water quality. Photo by Cathy Van der Voet*

**Comments for Lake Baptiste Residents**

*By Anne Coleman*

This past summer seems to have been kinder to our Loons. More chicks successfully reared, number counts of adult loons at least in the twenties, why? Perhaps thanks to higher gas prices, there was less boat traffic creating wakes, which disturb the nests, and as the summer progressed, the fewer boats allowed for more peaceful feeding by the loons. The larger wake boats, the ones that create a surf wake were not as frequently on the lake.

Another problem with loons is excess fishing line that is discarded and they get tangled in it. And lets not forget - the misguided on boats and in seadoos who circle them endlessly and end up drowning the babies.

We do have some volunteers for Birds Canada who reside on the lake and we would love to hear from you if you have had opportunity to monitor the Loon population on Baptiste. There is unfortunately continued loss of natural shoreline on Lake Baptiste, which will impede the health of our special birds.

Many people associate their summer with the calls of the loons, day and night, but we are, never the less, not making the situation ideal for these natural inhabitants and we must never take them for granted.



# 30 Years of Care. Building the Next 30

*By Keitha McNeil*

In 1996, North Hastings Palliative Support began with a vision: people facing life-limiting illness, and the families caring for them, should have compassionate support close to home.

It began with a Home Visiting Program. Over the years, services grew in response to community needs, including a Medical Equipment Loan Program, Lending Library, grief and bereavement support and, eventually, residential hospice care.

Today, 30 years later, Hospice North Hastings provides a four-bed residential hospice and a range of programs and services to individuals and families throughout North Hastings. What began as a grassroots community effort has grown into an important local service—made possible by generations of volunteers, donors, staff, families, businesses and community organizations.

All of our services are provided at no cost, and all are welcome.

Our Impact Today

The need for hospice services continues to grow. In our most recent year, the number of people receiving residential hospice care increased by more than 22%.

But residential care is only one part of what we do.

Our Grief and Bereavement Program supported hundreds of people through individual visits, groups and community education. Our Medical Equipment Loan Program provided 298 pieces of equipment, while our community hospice and volunteer programs provide additional support to individuals and families throughout North Hastings.

In a rural community, access to care close to home is particularly important. Our local hospital is small and does not have a dedicated palliative care unit. Hospice North Hastings helps fill that gap through 24-hour residential hospice care and programs that support people throughout our community.

Care close to home matters.

Community Support Makes It Possible

It costs approximately $1.2 million each year to

*...continued on page 19*

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*...from page 18 30 Years of Care*

operate Hospice North Hastings and provide our programs and services.

We receive important government funding that supports much of our clinical staffing, but it does not cover the full cost of the care and services our community relies upon. Based on our current budget, approximately $400,000 must come from donations, fundraising and other community-generated revenue.

These dollars help sustain the full range of care and support we provide—from residential and community hospice care to grief and bereavement support, medical equipment loans and volunteer programs.

Our social enterprise, Vintage on Hastings, is also part of that community support. When you shop at Vintage, you help generate revenue that supports Hospice North Hastings.

Community support isn't extra. It's essential—and it has been part of our story from the beginning.

As we celebrate our 30th anniversary, we are proud of what our community has built and are looking ahead to ensure compassionate hospice care and support remain available for the next person, the next family and the next generation.

For 30 years, our community has helped build and sustain Hospice North Hastings. Together, we can continue that legacy for the next 30.

To support Hospice North Hastings, donate at www.hospicenorthhastings.com, visit Vintage on Hastings, or contact us at 613-332-8014 or info@hospicenorthhastings.com.

Your support today helps ensure Hospice is here when someone you know and love needs us tomorrow.



*An early morning sun this fall in McGarry Flats. Photo by Paul Coleman*

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# Resilience

*Poem by Bob Pearson*

Something stark is sleeping
alive in the dead of winter

Early February morn
cold winters wind
did blow

He swept her branches
bare of the frigid blanket
that had sheltered
her limbs
That now lay bare
awaiting Aprils
Leaves of green
To explode

He swept across
the meadow painting faint
snow shadows
of cerulean blue

Cleared the pasture
exposing the abandoned
gate posts and the last
vestiges of the fall grasses
now a Raw Sienna
Lime green sprouts will
Soon arrive with spring



*Painting of tree: Unnamed: By Bob Pearson*







# Obituary of David S. Robertson

*January 25, 1947 ~ June 7, 2026 (Age 79)*

ROBERTSON, DAVID S: We are deeply mourning the sudden loss of David S Robertson — a man whose presence made people laugh, feel welcome, was fiercely loyal, and charismatic to all.

David was born on January 25, 1947, and throughout his life he created a deep connection with the family and friends in the Baptiste Lake Community and the Trillium Lakelands District School Board. His parents bought the cottage in 1946, so David is truly a lifelong Baptiste Lake cottager. Whether through family gatherings, classroom humour, staff jokes and pranks, funny conversations, hard work, shared meals, stories told around a campfire, or simply sitting together on the cottage deck, David had a way of making ordinary moments feel important.

The Robertson Cottage was more than a place to him — it was a reflection of who he was… welcoming, filled with laughter, stories, traditions, and memories that will continue long after today. We remember the many roles he carried with pride: husband, father, grandfather, brother, friend, mentor, neighbour. And while each person here knew a slightly different version of David, the common thread was always the same: kindness, authenticity, humour, and love.

We honoured him in the celebration of life, held at the cottage on July 4, 2026. May we also carry him forward — in the stories we continue to tell, the traditions we keep alive, the meals we share, the laughter we allow ourselves again, and the love we continue giving to one another.

He was the beloved husband of Donna Robertson. Loving father of Julie (and son-in-law Richard), and late son Brian (and daughter-in-law Eileen). Cherished grandfather of Melanie, Emma, Brooke, Max, Lotus,Tao and Zach. Dear brother to Shirley, Diane, and Carolyn, and brother in law to Catherine and Ron. David will be fondly remembered by his cousins, nieces, nephews, extended family, many friends, and all whose lives he touched.



Thank you, David, for your loyalty, love, guidance, humour, and your heart. You will be missed beyond words, remembered always, and loved forever.

In lieu of flowers or gifts, donations may be made to support hematology research and patient care at Princess Margaret Cancer Research Center https://supportthepmcf.ca OR To the Hospice House in Peterborough Ontario, Canada in grateful appreciation for the compassionate care and support provided to David and our family.

Huge thank you,

*This obituary is published with permission of the family of David S. Robertson and may not be copied © 2026*

2026 FALL CONCERT SERIES

October 17th CLASSIC PURPLE
November 7th THE ULTIMATE TRIBUTE TO DOLLY
November 14th THE BOWIE LIVES
November 15th THE LAST WALTZ
November 21st STONED AND ROLLING
November 22nd ALYSHA KYLE: UNRELEASED
November 28th GRACE.2: TRAGICALLY HIP
December 4th THE FITZGERALDS CHRISTMAS
December 5th TOMMY YOUNGSTEEN: PAUL SIMON
December 9th-19th SNOW White The Panto

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# Tweed & Company Theatre's 2026 Season: Spotlight on the Community

*by Eliza Zätterberg, Development Coordinator*

Another successful summer has wrapped with Tweed & Company Theatre and as we prepare for a jam-packed end-of-year, we find ourselves reflecting on how the community has been just as integral in bringing these productions to life as those working on the stage.

The Bancroft Village Playhouse produced two large scale musicals this summer, the hilariously sweet, The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee and the beloved classic, Fiddler on the Roof, the latter of which hosted the company's largest show to date with over 40 cast and crew members. This insanely talented Canadian cast from ages 10 to 75 included creatives from coast to coast and was spearheaded by acclaimed director and choreographer, Lisa Stevens.

Despite this incredible cast that brought audiences to both laughter and tears nightly over a nearly completely sold out run, what was most remarkable was seeing how the themes of community and family that have always existed in Fiddler on the Roof reflected in real life. We watched as the town and surrounding areas of Bancroft not only supported, but cherished the production from beginning to end. The community pulled out every stop to see this show come together from housing those 40+ creatives to building the set which consisted of two actual houses constructed directly on the stage. Non-resident company members were welcomed in as locals and had the opportunity to



*Mea Tonet, Olivia Daniels. Photo by Tweed & Co.*

spend the summer in one of the most beautiful places in Ontario.

This community support doesn't just stop at our productions. Earlier in the year, Tweed & Company officially launched a fundraising campaign for an accessible lift addition to remove physical barriers of entry to the Playhouse's lobby and auditorium. The current set up of the Playhouse makes accessing the theatre an immensely difficult task for those with limited mobility and thanks to the generosity of so many in the community, fundraising on the project - set to begin construction before the end of the year - is now nearly 90% complete. If you would like to learn more, please head to our website at www.villageplayhouse.ca/the-lift.

As we approach the end of the year, the Tweed & Co season is far from over! With tribute acts including Dolly Parton, David Bowie and The Rolling Stones, film screenings with the Paddling Film Festival, beloved returning acts such as The Fitzgeralds and so much more, the Playhouse is brimming with non-stop live entertainment to brighten up the darkening autumn and winter days. The 2026 Season wraps up with Snow White: The Panto, our final major

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# Library Activities

*By Anne Coleman and Kristin Seaborn*

***Library News***

This is the close of the 4th year for the Library Board. The new Board will be appointed in January by the new Hastings Highlands Council. It has been our honour to serve the community these past four years. Valerie Loney and I, Anne Coleman, shared the responsibility of chairing the meetings while the remaining trustees, Fran Hickey, Leslie Hysert, Colette Freeman, Nancy Matheson and Tracy Hagar, faithfully attended all the meetings, giving energy and wisdom to decisions made. Our CEO during that time was Wendy Keating, who created an amazing atmosphere but she has recently resigned to be closer to her family. Our Acting CEO, Kristin Seaborn, has picked up the full slate of responsibility to keep the library buzzing. She has done a spectacular job in the few months in her new position. I hand over the voice of this article to Kristin who has reported on the summer plus has shared the plans for the fall.

**CEO Report By Kristin Seaborn**

Summer Recap:

Our regular children's programming was busy, with 229 participants for Romp and Read, our 0–6 program, during July and August, and 126 participants for Come Drum with Me over those two months.

Along with our regular programming, we offered weekly crafts and activities for children throughout July and August. We had 49 children sign up for the TD Summer Reading Program, which was great to see, and 125 participants took part in our TD Summer activities and crafts. We also had our summer reading



*CEO Kristin Seaborn, Colette Freeman, Tracy Hagar, Nancy Matheson, Fran Hickey. Seated: Valerie Loney and Anne Coleman. These are the members of the Hastings Highlands Public Library Board Absent:Lesley Hunt*

Bingo Challenge, where kids could complete different reading activities and put their names in for a chance to win prizes.

For teens and adults, we ran a summer reading challenge where participants earned a ballot for every book they read, with those ballots going into a draw for prizes. It was a nice way to encourage our older readers to keep reading over the summer as well.

During July and August, we circulated a total of 3,044 items.

The Bancroft and Area Studio Tour artwork was on display in the Library throughout the summer, giving us a great opportunity to showcase local artists and

*...continued on page 24*

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*...from page 22 Tweed & Co.*

production of the year which hits the stage on December 9th until the 19th, with community members taking on a variety of roles leading up to opening night. Please find showdates and time at our website at www.villageplayhouse.ca/tickets.

We can't wait to finish out the year and to see all the ways the community will continue to shine in their generosity and care. We are so lucky to be able to contribute to arts and culture in this corner of the world. Thank you to everyone who supported the theatre this summer. See you at the next show!



*Cast of Fiddler on the Roof. Photo by Tweed & Co.*

...from page 23 Library Activities

support the local arts community.

In July, Service Canada held an information session here about the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security. Then in August, Community Employment Services was here, giving residents another opportunity to connect with local employment resources and support.

We had a student volunteer completing some of her community service hours at the Library over the summer. It was nice to provide that local volunteer opportunity and have some extra help with our summer activities.

Our giant book sale was set up throughout the summer and stayed in place until just after Labour Day weekend. We were very fortunate to have our volunteer, Leslie Eden, donate plants throughout the summer, which we were able to sell alongside the books. It was a really nice addition to the sale and another example of the community supporting the Library. There was a profitable outcome to the sale.

The Library was quite busy over the summer. We had 2,940 people through the doors during July and August, and there were lots of people using the Library as a place to work and study. We saw regular use of the Wi-Fi, with many people bringing in their laptops and spending time working here.




One of the really nice things this summer was hearing from our visitors. We had a guest book available, and people signed their names and indicated where they were visiting from. We had people from all over the world stop in, as well as lots of visitors from nearby communities.

We had quite a few people make a point of telling us how much they enjoyed the Library and complimenting the space and collection. It's always nice to hear that directly from visitors, and I think it was a great reminder of how welcoming our Library is — not just for our local community, but for people visiting the area as well.

So, overall, I think it was a really positive summer for the Library. It was a busy couple of months, but it was great to see the Library being used so much and by such a wide range of people. We're looking forward to carrying that momentum into our fall programming.

**Fall Programming:**

Moving into the fall, the school has resumed their regular Library visits. We currently have the Grade 2/3 class and the Grade 4 class coming in. During their visits, I read a story to the students, and then they have an opportunity to browse and choose books to take back to the classroom.

It's been nice to have the students back in the Library and to continue building that connection between the school and the Library.

We're also resuming our Adult Book Club, which took a break over the summer. The book club was previously run by Wendy, so this is new for me, and I'll be taking it on this fall. Our first meeting back is September 23, and I'm looking forward to getting to know the group and continuing the book club.

We're in the process of getting the Kids Book Club back up and running as well. We're hoping to have the first meeting on September 29 after school, so we're working on getting everything organized and getting the word out to families.

On September 29, we partnered with Maynooth IDA to help seniors apply for the Seniors Co-Payment Program. Two staff members from Maynooth IDA will be here at the Library from noon to 3 p.m. to assist seniors with the application process and answer

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*Annual Canada Day Boat Parade as organized by the Paradise Landing Cottagers. Photo by Anne Coleman*

*...from page 24 Library Activities*

questions they may have.

I think this is a really nice partnership because it brings people into the Library to access a service that can directly help them with their prescription costs, while also connecting them with a local organization.

**Library Outreach**

Amy and I attended the 5th Annual Kids' Fishing Derby and Community Gathering, hosted by the Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini Elders.

Amy brought her fly-fishing rod and gave the kids an opportunity to practice casting. She also taught them how to tie their own flies for fly fishing, which was a really nice hands-on activity for the kids. It was a great opportunity for us to get out into the community, take part in a local event, and connect with families outside of the Library.

Brighten the Night Parade

We've also started planning for the Brighten the Night Parade. I met with Tanya, Denver, and Bryce to discuss this year's event, which will be held on December 12, with the parade starting at 5:30 p.m. Santa will be in the library earlier that day.

Please visit the library and support our programs.



*Momma and baby on their usual walk through our property. Photo by Anne Coleman*




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# Roger's Sugar Shack

*Obituary*

It is with heavy hearts that we announce Roger Rivard's passing on Monday May 11th, 2026. With the help from wonderful family and friends, Roger's Sugar Shack was able to produce syrup for the 2026 season. It is available at the house, 79 Jogi Road in Highland Grove.

We would like to thank all of you for your support and patronage for more than 30 years. Roger was deeply passionate about maple syrup and truly loved sharing that passion with everyone of you.



# Marc L. Gagnon

*Obituary*

Sadly, Marc passed away in May 2026 shortly after Roger's passing. Marc was an architect, watercolour artist, President of Canadian Society of Painters, who lived along Ranger's Road. He captured the back country in his unique style as portrayed in the image beside. He had painted a beautiful piece featuring the Night Time scene at Roger's Sugar Shack. You can find Marc's work on Instagram.

*Watercolour image from Instagram Along The Back Roads.*






## Who we are

The Art Gallery of Bancroft (AGB) is a vibrant, not-for-profit public gallery in Bancroft, Ontario—powered entirely by dedicated volunteers. Incorporated as a registered charity, the gallery receives no operational funding. For the past 44 years the AGB has relied on fundraising, sponsorships and memberships to keep the doors open.

The AGB provides artists at all stages of their careers, working in any media, the opportunity to exhibit in a professional gallery venue. We present contemporary visual art by artists from the immediate area, region and nation, mounting up to 12 exhibitions per year.

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*A Baptiste sunset. Photo by Alan Stephen*







# Baptiste Lake Association MEMBERSHIPS

**Please check the label on your newsletter envelope for your current membership status and expiry date.**
We offer memberships for one or three year terms. Cost for one year $25, three years $60. Please note that all membership expiry dates are March 31, our fiscal year end. We offer 3 methods of payment:

- **CHEQUE** - Please complete this form and send it along with a cheque payable to "Baptiste Lake Association", PO Box 877, Bancroft, ON K0L 1C0.
- **ETRANSFER** - Send payment to MyBaptisteLake@gmail.com. Please include necessary information to ensure we have your correct mailing, lake, and email addresses.
- **ZEFFY** - BLA now accepts credit and debit cards as form of payment for memberships and donations online via the Canadian company Zeffy. If you wish to use this method, please go to https://www.zeffy.com/en-CA/ticketing/baptiste-lake-association-memberships

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◯ please check here if you have any objection to the Baptiste Lake Association including your name in our Newsletters and/or on our website.