



President's Message

by Donna Tucker

As 2024 draws to an end and I am reflecting on WCA's activities over the past year, I recognize that it will soon be time to turn the page to 2025 and begin to plan for next year. Please get in touch with us at info@westcarling.com if you have ideas for projects or events or are interested in joining our Board.

Many thanks to our volunteer Board for their support and dedication to the Carling community, including Tom Betts, Jay Burford, Carol Hodson, Craig Johnston, Bruce MacKay, Cynthia Milburn, Bruce Milburn, Allison Needham, Peter Pook, Steve Vokes, Janis Wade, Nanci Wakeman, Richard Wilson, and Katherine Yantzi. The highlights of our accomplishments for 2024 include:

- Working with our "sister" ratepayers' associations to engage Carling Council on communication, tax use, and recreation within Carling.

*see **President** on page 2*

Editor's Message

by Tom Betts

This is the first winter issue of the West Carling newsletter, at least in quite some time, and it is certainly the first winter issue of *Shorelines*. I hope that this issue, coming perhaps as the snow is flying outside and temperatures have plummeted, can serve as a reminder of how special Georgian Bay is during all four seasons. Some would argue, and I count myself among them, that winter on Georgian Bay is just as amazing as any other season, with sights and sounds and recreational opportunities that the other seasons just can't offer.

This issue will also be the first without the watchful eyes of Nanci Wakeman. Nanci served on the West Carling Board for nearly a decade, and was the newsletter editor for much of that time. A few years ago, she twisted my arm – just a little bit – to join the Board and also to help with the newsletter. I was plenty happy to do so, and have benefitted from our relationship as co-editors. Now we will have to be satisfied with just

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President, from page 1

- Attending and reporting on Carling Council meetings.
- Monitoring and reporting on the West Parry Sound Pool Project.
- Successfully lobbying to keep waste transfer stations open on holiday Mondays.
- Partnering with the Ministry of Natural Resources and local officials to explore repairs to the Pancakes picnic docks.
- Advocating for adequate parking and docking for water-access properties.
- Organizing phragmites monitoring and cutting, supported by volunteers and obtaining a \$5,000 grant from Carling, in partnership with Georgian Bay Forever.
- Creating a new look and format for our newly named *Shorelines* newsletter.
- Revising our corporate by-laws.
- Hosting an annual meeting with guest speakers and presentations, followed by a BBQ picnic.
- Keeping members informed through newsletters, emails, and our website.

WCA greatly appreciates your support and your continuing participation in our events and activities.

I am wishing for you and your families a healthy and prosperous New Year!



Editor, from page 1

our “cottage-neighbor” relationship, and I will tell you, we could not ask for better neighbors than Nanci and Damian! Having said that, we have wonderful neighbors all around us, and together we enjoy close friendships that have been forged by this amazing landscape. And after all, isn’t that what the whole cottaging experience is about?

On that note, please feel free to submit articles or artwork to us for a future edition of *Shorelines*. Stories, thoughts and reflections, poetry, cottaging tips, sketches, photography, and more are all welcome. Please send via email to this address: tcmbetts@gmail.com. The deadline for submissions for the Spring, 2025 newsletter will be March 10.

Development of Carling Bay Beach Park - Public Feedback Survey

(from the Carling Township website)

In 2018, as part of a subdivision agreement, the Township acquired a lot on Bayview Drive near Carling Bay Marina, designated as parkland. This land was set aside to create a community park, and we are excited to bring this vision to life. We invite you to share your thoughts and ideas about this development, including the amenities you would like to see at this location. Your feedback is invaluable in shaping the future of this park.

Please take a few moments to complete our survey, available at <https://carling.ca/> until January 15, 2025. Thank you for helping us create a space that meets the needs and desires of our community!

Champlain Would Be Shocked

Article and photos by Bruce Davidson

I think most of us have grown up with the notion that the shoreline of the Georgian Bay today looks pretty much the same as it did to Samuel de Champlain, widely considered the first European to view it, in 1615. A comfortable notion for sure, but a fiction nonetheless. It's actually a whole lot greener today than it was four centuries ago, which is quite surprising in the short time period we are talking about.

Now the reason why I can say this with such certainty is that I have seen remarkable changes on a barren island with my own eyes in my own lifetime. Thanks to having been rooted to one location and having the same island to look at for some seventy odd years, the subtle changes Peachey Island (off the south-east corner of Franklin Island) has endured are irrefutable. Stagnant ponds have become totally filled in with mosses while bushes and small trees have sprung up where there had been nothing.

Like it or not, Mother Nature marches to the drum of photosynthesis, and the vast outpouring of energy from the sun has either to be reflected back into space, transformed into another energy form such as heat, or converted into biomass. It is this latter phenomenon that accounts for the greening of the Georgian Bay. It is easy to see the growth of biomass in action today. Perhaps a few photos will help demonstrate this phenomenon in action.

The photo to the right is of a shield lichen common in our



area. As you can clearly see this organism can thrive on bare rock, which accounts for its being the first life form to colonize an area after glaciation. What is really cool in my view is that this lichen is actually comprised of two different life forms, each reliant on the other for survival! Such an association is occasionally seen elsewhere in both the plant and animal kingdoms and is called a symbiotic relationship. Two types of fungi create the architecture that harbours a single cell green alga called *trebouxia*. The alga turns sunlight into carbohydrates that feed the fungi, while the fungi provide some nutrients and vitamins in return. Isn't that amazing? A simple green blob on a rock having three life forms growing seemingly on nothing and living hundreds or even thousands of years!

When lichens erode due to the action of wind, water and ice the first soils are created and retained in ponds and crevasses.

The photo below captures a small pond in the midst of being colonized by mosses and grass. Note the lichens along the shoreline and the pool of water still able to provide habitat for life forms like mosquito larvae, dragonfly nymphs and tadpoles. This is what I remember seeing on Peachey Island when I was a kid.



see **Champlain** on page 4

Charlie's Big Fish

by Larry Moses

Take a moment to look closely at the photograph included with this story. It is iconic in that it holds so much that is present but very much more that is not present.



Charlie is a poster boy for all that is positive about creating a fishing memory that will last a lifetime. All young boys fishing are much the same as Charlie. Maybe you even have a Charlie at your cottage.

Let us look first at what is present in the picture – certainly that is Georgian Bay in the backdrop, and the girls looking on in awe and envy are his cousins. On the left we see a fishing knife and just the tip of a filleting board.

Also on the left of the picture is John, Charlie's uncle, who is going to coach him in the art of fish filleting. You might also notice that Charlie is wearing a filleting hand protector, a gift from his Grandpa Peter.

That big fish is a beautiful bass, freshly caught and mercifully killed in order to provide a fresh fish meal for those at the cottage. As part of the process, Charlie has learned some important lessons: That the

see **Charlie** on page 5

Champlain, from page 3

The photograph below shows the deep pond on Peachey Island where I caught tadpoles, 60 or 70 years later.



Clearly photosynthesis is alive and well on the Georgian Bay, working to make it more hospitable to some, less rugged to others. Note the cedars thriving in the back corner where the mosses first took over while the whole of the remaining pond has been covered by the mosses. And this pool was 30 to 50 centimeters deep back then!

I suppose several thousand years from now the Canadian Shield will be carpeted in green with only a few rocky outcrops along the shoreline attesting to the fascinating beauty that lies underneath and which we all love so dearly. While we may lose the vast sweeps of exposed gneiss and granite, perhaps there may be slightly fewer mosquitos as breeding ponds disappear.

Retiring Board Member

submitted by Donna Tucker

Nanci Wakeman has served on the West Carling Association Board since 2016. She has been a very valuable member of the Board in her role as Newsletter Editor, in recruiting new members, and in organizing and moderating the All Candidates meeting sponsored by the West Carling Association in 2022.

Nanci has consistently brought sage advice and enthusiastic support to our activities. Many thanks to Nanci for sharing her talents and the many volunteer hours she devoted to the Board and the West Carling community. Nanci will be greatly missed on the Board.



A Reminder ~ Dues Are Due ~

Now is a good time to update your membership with your 2025 dues. And this year consider adding an Associate Member or two (details on page 17). Your support is very much appreciated.

Charlie, from page 4

legal harvesting of a fish poses no real threat to the species, especially when compared to the many other threats that bass and other species face. And that “to remain noble, you must eat any game or fish that you kill.”

What is not shown in the picture is also very important, especially that the location where he is fishing is where his Great Grandpa built the family cottage – specifically for the fishing and the view of Georgian Bay. Also not apparent in the photograph is the history of Charlie learning about putting a worm on a hook, rigging his line properly with a correct weight and bass hook, learning how to cast properly, how to set a drag, and how to successfully net a fish. Charlie has also learned about patience and persistence.

Glance again at the picture, and you will see the look of pride and achievement on Charlie’s face. Well deserved, I would say!

Uncle John helped Charlie clean and fillet the bass and showed him how to throw the entrails and skin onto the distant rocks for the gulls to devour, all part of Nature’s plan. It seems likely, though, that Charlie will eventually become a fish release advocate, especially after finding out how much work is needed to fillet a fish!

As lunch time was approaching, Aunt Laura created some magic with the fillets by adding panko, plenty of butter, and salt and pepper. For everyone present, Charlie had provided a fine bite of cooked bass served on toast. For fish lovers the taste of freshly-caught bass from Georgian Bay is unforgettable.

“Charlie’s Big Fish” is now cottage lore – a happy and positive memory for everyone.

Think again – do you have a picture, at least in your memory, of a Charlie at your cottage?

Our Loon Family

by Cathy and Bob Hylands

We first noticed a loon baby in the bay around Mowat Island sometime in early July. He or she first looked like a soft brown cotton ball floating on the water.



Both Mama and Papa were only metres away at all times and very protective. Mama would come up with a small fish or crayfish with a short cry and baby would head towards Mama where she would pop the food directly into his mouth.



After several months of watching this and watching baby just hanging around, waiting to be fed, we started calling them, “parachute parents.” Baby took his first dive in early September and we heard his first attempt at a loon call around the same time – it was barely recognizable :)

The brown fluff ball gradually grew as parents were attentively feeding, and the

plumage started to change towards the end of September. Interestingly, rather than the pronounced black and white of the summer colours, we saw it moult directly into the lighter winter pattern.



It is now October, as we write this, and many of the loons have started to fly south. We hope that the parents have taught our baby well, as we still see him hanging around on the water, trying to decide on when to leave.



all photos by Bob Hylands, with a Nikon Z8, 600 mm, 2x teleconverter

Editor’s Note: Photos help us celebrate this incredible beauty all around us. With or without a story, they are always welcome in *Shorelines*. I thank Bob for providing information on his photo equipment and would welcome others to do the same. Send in those photos!

Champion of the Bay *by Allison Needham*

The Georgian Bay Association's inaugural Champion of the Bay Award honours exceptional community members who actively protect Georgian Bay and promote environmental well-being. The West Carling Association received multiple nominations, and the individuals recognized were so outstanding that we decided to award TWO winners from the WCA!

Learn more about our winners and who nominated them below.

Nominee: Richard Wilson
Nominated by Briana Zur and Rainer Herterich (2 separate nominations)

1. Describe why this person is an environmental Champion of the Bay. Tell us about what they do.

I nominated Richard because he embodies what a Champion is. As a volunteer, he wears many hats. His never-ending energy and willingness to work hard are due to his love of the environment, especially Georgian Bay. From his work on the West Carling Bay Association board to his work with Georgian Bay Forever and the Georgian Bay Association, especially all his long days battling phragmites, Richard always comes up to the plate with a friendly smile. Of course, as a stalwart volunteer with Sail Parry Sound, his work also involves his community to ensure that future generations of kids and adults develop a deep connection to The Bay. I believe that Richard is an exemplary role model for our entire community. He works, never expecting any recognition or thanks. In short, I proudly nominate Richard Wilson as a Champion of Georgian Bay. ~ Briana Zur

Leading phragmites removal program. West Carling Association executive and promoter of its programs and membership. His achievements are well noted in GBA newsletters. ~ Rainer Herterich

2. How do the contributions of this individual affect the community and/or the surrounding environment?

Helping rid the local shorelines of phrag and increasing awareness of this issue and others affecting local and other residents. Supporter of Sail Parry Sound, teaching and encouraging young people to sail. ~ Rainer Herterich

3. How long has your nominee been doing these activities? (We encourage and welcome new initiatives and young people starting out).

Several years.

At least 10 years. ~ Rainer Herterich

In Memoriam

Nominee: Don Clement
Persons to receive the award in his honour: Aaron and Dan Clement
Nominated by: Allison Needham

1. Describe why this person is an environmental Champion of the Bay. Tell us about what they do.

Don volunteered to assist in finding a suitable location for an osprey platform in the Snake Islands and use his new pontoon boat to transport the materials (unfortunately, Don passed away before the site was chosen).

see Champion on page 8

Champion, from page 7

This is an excerpt from an article by Bruce Davidson about his friend Don:

One of the things that set Don apart from the crowd was that he was a giver. That's a pretty scarce commodity in today's society and really appreciated. When we asked Don whether he could lay his hands on some old pictures of the boats that ferried patrons to the old Camp Franklin, he rummaged around in the proverbial attic and, lo and behold, came up with a fabulous painting of the Mindwandum, circa 1930. Not content with that gem, Don went into Parry Sound and checked with the gals at the Museum.

Generously, Don was the first guy to raise his hand when the West Carling Association were looking for volunteers to vet the draft of Carling's Official Plan. Who other than Don would give unstintingly of his time for decades attending Carling Council meetings on behalf of WCA?

Another fine attribute of Don is that if he

didn't have the answer, he always knew someone who did. And that was because he spent his lifetime in Carling and made a point of getting to know all his neighbours and everybody else who shared his love of the Bay. And I guess that's what hurts the most. I can't pick up the phone anymore and say, "Hey, Don, have you got a minute?"

2. How do the contributions of this individual affect the community and/or the surrounding environment?

His love for ospreys has inspired the board to build a new Osprey nest in his honour; Don's sense of community inspired many others to get involved with the WCA board.

3. How long has your nominee been doing these activities? (We encourage and welcome new initiatives and young people starting out).

Don served on the WCA for many, many years.



Photo by Tom Betts

Creature Feature – The Least Weasel

by Tom Betts

Seldom seen but playing a critical role in northern ecosystems are several species of weasels, and of these perhaps the most unlikely to be observed is the remarkable least weasel. A tiny but fierce predator, the least weasel (*Mustela nivalis*) can be found throughout most of Canada and the northern United States. It is the smallest member of the Mustelidae family, and is classified as the smallest carnivore in the world.



Weighing in at about two ounces (56g), on average, and measuring about seven inches (18 cm), the least weasel makes up for its diminutive size with an impressive ferocity. It is a skilled and able hunter with a reputation for killing more than it can consume. Its sleek and slender body allows for the inspection of almost any burrow or tunnel where a mouse or other small rodent may be hiding, and these small and plentiful mammals comprise the bulk of the least weasel's diet. However, the animal will supplement its diet with voles, insects, birds, and bird eggs at times, and will occasionally kill even a rabbit whose body mass can be as much as 10 times that of the weasel's.

The weasel remains active year-round, and in northern climates will adapt to winter

with a variation in its fur color. The handsome summer brown of its back, flanks, legs, and short tail (contrasting with white underparts), will change to nearly all white. Moving quickly against a snowy background, he is nearly indistinguishable.

Like most members of the weasel family (weasels, minks, martens, fishers, otters, and more), least weasels are curious and energized. Should you ever have the opportunity to observe one in the wild, enjoy the moment ... it will last but briefly.

A Call for the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

The next newsletter will be out in early April ... shortly before Open-up for most cottagers. We would like to include any memorable event you have from a cottage Open-up (and we all have them!). Your submission can be as short as a sentence or two, or whatever it takes to tell the story. Funny or not-so-funny, feel free to share a memory from one of your Open-ups.

Here is one from your editor, a true story:

April 29, 2006 – Eight of us from the family group (ranging in age from 6 to 79) had just boated in to our water access cottage. It was a sunny, beautiful spring day and the excitement of another cottage year could be felt by all. Our daughter, Madison, age 6, went running up the long trail to the cottage. Suddenly we heard yelling: “Daddy, daddy, it’s something bad,” she exclaimed. “What’s bad?” I questioned from a distance. “You just have to see it. The porch fell off!” And indeed it had, the deck was down. And so began 2006.

Please submit by March 10.

Deputation to Carling Executive Summary

by Donna Tucker

The West Carling Association (WCA), Pengally Bay Ratepayers Association, Deep Bay Association and Bayview on Parry Sound Association made a deputation to Carling Council on August 13, 2024. We presented ideas to improve communication, financial management, recreation, and community engagement. Council was generous in taking time on both September 24th and October 22nd to hear our concerns and recommendations. This is a high-level summary taken from those meetings. Please take the time to read the full report at this link:

<https://westcarling.com/deputation-to-carling-council-august-2024/>

Communication Recommendations

- Designate a Community Liaison as a contact for residents
- Outline a clear process for residents to communicate with Council
- Release Council agendas earlier than Friday afternoon to give residents an opportunity to provide input into Council decision making
- Provide updates on regional events in the community calendar
- Review internal processes to achieve consistent, timely response to correspondence and concerns
- Increase use of e-blasts and work with established community groups to share information
- Increase opportunities for residents to interact with Council and provide public input into budget preparation and strategic planning

- Consider setting aside a portion of a Council meeting to have a public dialogue on a quarterly basis

Summary of Communication Issues

Improving communication with residents was an election promise by all candidates. Council perceives that they are communicating frequently and transparently. The claim that letters are acknowledged within 48 to 72 hours is inconsistent. Council favours receiving feedback from residents via deputations. More than half of the residents are seasonal and attending a meeting in person is out of reach at least one-half of the year. Many of Carling's year-round residents are working and don't have the luxury of attending a Council meeting at 9 a.m. on a Tuesday. The high-level summaries of Council meetings are welcome but have not been provided consistently. We have seen progress in communication from Council but recommend an analysis of communication processes and tracking of response time.

Financial Recommendations

- Develop a process to allow residents to have earlier input into annual budget process
- Explore revenue and outsourcing opportunities
- Limit excessive accumulation of general reserves
- Form a financial advisory committee
- Increase public input and transparency related to large projects such as the pool
- Adopt multi-year budgeting linked to a strategic plan

see Deputation on page 11

Deputation, from page 10

Summary of Financial Issues

The process initiated for residents to have earlier input into the budget process this year is positive. The pool project remains a poor investment of tax dollars for Carling due to the small number of residents that will use the facility versus the climbing capital costs and unknown operating expenses. We are disappointed in Council's continuing resistance to form a financial advisory committee that would include qualified members of the public to provide additional expertise in financial planning.

Reserves should not be maintained for multiple years for general purposes but instead be tagged to specific projects with itemized notes in the budget. Carling is looking to fund some major projects next year. Council needs to make some tough choices among competing projects. It is not acceptable to raise taxes and fill up reserves without a specific purpose.

Recreation and Leisure Recommendations

- Develop a volunteer committee
- Review utilization of the community centre
- Develop a "let's try it" perspective

Summary of Recreation and Leisure

We appreciate there are limited municipal funds and manpower to plan and hold events. Our Council values volunteers and recognizes the need to recruit more volunteers. WCA favours development of a volunteer committee supported by a small budget for events or activities within Carling (e.g., rejuvenation of the market or sports leagues). We look forward to learning how

WCA could be involved in events or assist with volunteer recruitment.

The community centre is a great facility. Review of the calendar for the Community Centre building shows that most of the activities are held in the morning. There are no activities listed in the afternoon. More promotion of the availability of the space could increase its use.

WCA appreciates the time that Council took to discuss our issues. Mayor Murphy noted that our recommendations will be helpful in informing future decisions. We look forward to working with Council to achieve progressive change in Carling.

Georgian Bay Vision 2050: Safeguarding Our Future

submitted by Allison Needham

What is Georgian Bay Vision 2050?

Georgian Bay Vision 2050 (Vision 2050) is an ambitious initiative led by the Georgian Bay Association (GBA) to protect and preserve the future of the Georgian Bay coastal region. Recognizing the increasing environmental and developmental pressures on the Bay, this project aims to establish a comprehensive regional vision and plan that promotes responsible growth and conservation.

see **Vision** on page 12

Vision, from page 11

Why is Georgian Bay Vision 2050 necessary?

The Georgian Bay region faces mounting challenges from climate change, pollution, and urban expansion. Population growth, particularly in areas like the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and Muskoka, is projected to rise dramatically by 2050 — 50 percent in the GTA and up to 40 percent in Muskoka — putting immense strain on the Bay’s ecosystems. Without proactive measures, we risk losing the unique habitats, natural beauty, and tranquillity that define Georgian Bay.

Historically, reactive approaches have failed to address these issues adequately. Governments alone are ill-equipped to manage this scale of growth while safeguarding the environment. GBA’s leadership in crafting a forward-thinking, actionable plan is critical to ensuring a sustainable future.

Key Objectives of Georgian Bay Vision 2050

Vision 2050 focuses on:

- **Preservation and protection:** Safeguarding the Georgian Bay coastal region, including the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.
- **Conservation expansion:** Enhancing the protection of natural areas, ecological corridors, and environmentally significant lands.
- **Strengthened planning standards:** Advocating for robust and consistent policies in official plans and zoning bylaws.

- **Collaboration and support:** Building alliances with Indigenous communities, NGOs, and other stakeholders to align with initiatives like the Global Biodiversity Framework and Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas.

Developing Georgian Bay Vision 2050

The project’s first phase involves commissioning top environmental and planning experts to create a Position Paper to outline a vision and roadmap for long-term preservation. This foundational document will persuade governments and stakeholders to adopt and implement the plan.

Who is involved?

GBA leads this initiative with support from:

- Georgian Bay organizations (e.g., Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve, Georgian Bay Land Trust, Georgian Bay Forever)
- Ontario and federal governments
- First Nations communities
- Municipalities and park authorities
- NGOs and residents

Funding and Supporting Georgian Bay Vision 2050

The Vision 2050 Fund in Memory of Wally King has been established to finance the creation of the Position Paper, with a fundraising goal of \$150,000. Thanks to the generosity of many individuals and organizations, significant contributions have already been received, bringing us closer to our target. However, widespread support is essential to realize this vision.

see Vision on page 13

Vision, from page 12

To succeed, Vision 2050 requires financial contributions and advocacy. The Georgian Bay Association (GBA) is seeking 25 to 30 core supporters willing to contribute and lend their names to this initiative. By joining this effort, you will ensure that Georgian Bay remains a sanctuary for future generations and inspire others to take action by adding credibility to the cause.

Contact Us

To learn more or to contribute:

Email: executivedirector@georgianbay.ca

Website: georgianbay.ca/georgian-bay-vision-2050-project

Let's work together to protect Georgian Bay's extraordinary ecosystems and communities for future generations. Your involvement is crucial in shaping a sustainable and vibrant future.



"Stormy Evening On Franklin"
Acrylic painting by Maddie Betts

The Winter Wonderland of Georgian Bay

Story and photos by Tom Betts

For most of my first 20 years or so of life, my relationship with Georgian Bay amounted to a week or two of family vacation, sandwiched in between summer baseball and the start of school in rural western Pennsylvania. They were memorable and magical moments, these days at Sand Bay Resort or Wawanaisa, but they were brief and gave me a sampling of the north country only in the warmth and sunshine of summer.

Then came a period in which I typically managed to schedule in a few days in summer but also added a few days of shoulder time in May and September. It was fascinating to see Georgian Bay at these unfamiliar times – the fishing was different, the birds and flowers were different, and my sense of place and purpose just simply “felt” different.

But in the summer of 1998 when our family joined the cottage community of Carling Township, I was determined to see an even more dramatic side of Georgian Bay – Winter!

Never mind the small detail that the cottage my parents had just purchased, while part of the mainland, was nevertheless water access. And never mind that during my adult life I had watched as Pennsylvania winters degraded from snowy and stormy to sloppy and subdued. To be honest, it had been a while since I had dealt with much snow – occasional snowfalls of just a few inches would make headlines in our local news! For many the change was welcome. For me, it was not.

So I welcomed the opportunity to see what winter might be like, five degrees of

latitude to the north. And I wasted little time planning my outing.

My first trip north in the winter was in February of 1999, a weekend overnigher constrained by my high school teaching schedule. But let there be no doubt – it was worth every ounce of effort I put into the nine-hour drive up and the nine-hour drive back, with a very short story of adventure in between.

My first impression of my beloved Georgian Bay region, now locked in winter’s icy grip, was that it was “other-worldly.” I struggled then and I struggle now to find the words to describe the feelings and the sights that winter on Georgian Bay can bring. I keep coming back to “other-worldly.”

New to winter on Georgian Bay and a bit unsure of things, I had promised those back at home that I would exercise caution



*see **Wonderland** on page 15*

Wonderland, from page 14

and not ski on the lake itself ... but the tracks of snowmobiles dispersing in all directions across the frozen lake gave me comfort, and some of the best cross-country skiing conditions a person could ask for. So out onto the lake we went! With my canine companion of the time, Tasha, a Siberian husky, I cross-country skied around as much of Georgian Bay as I could in that afternoon of daylight on Saturday and during the morning of Sunday.

To this day, I can recall so much about that first trip. I remember feeling so isolated as we paused a short distance off the southwest edge of Franklin Island and scanned the muted white vastness that is so brilliant blue in the summer. The treeless islands that I knew so well appeared only as white “bumps” across the flat frozen lake. With Tasha by my side, I had the very real sensation that we were alone in the Arctic, exploring a landscape where few had gone

before. Convincing me further was that the snow cover deadened all sounds, and when the north wind wasn't blowing at gale force I experienced a deafening quiet the likes of which I had never known.

I knelt on the ice that first evening and scraped away an arc of snow, exposing the ruggedness of many inches of ice, and a deep dark abyss below. From my summer fishing days, I knew that I was skiing over water that would vary from 40-60 feet deep. I stared into the black for a moment, contemplating that fact, and I rubbed my gloved hand across the ice a few more times. At that moment I felt very small.

My inner thoughts could not run wild for long however, as right about that time a tremendous *crack!* came from ... from somewhere ... and was followed by sounds I had never heard before but quickly realized were the painful groans of the ice as it adjusted to forces of the frozen lake on which I sat. These groans came at regular intervals, and while they were unnerving to



say the least, I soon realized that this was all part of Georgian Bay in the winter. Different sights, different sounds.

My first winter excursion to our cottage left me speechless, except to say to myself emphatically and to anyone who would listen, “I will definitely do *that* again.” And I have. There are many variables, of course, but it is always my goal to make it up to the cottage at least once in the winter. With every trip, I continue to find myself in awe of that wintry landscape – the legendary Canadian Shield poking through deep snows, the quiet that convinces me that life

has departed the earth, the track of a wandering wolf across the lake, and the shifting of the ice ... this and so much more keeps me coming back when conditions are suitable and safe.

I would never argue that Georgian Bay in winter is prettier than Georgian Bay in summer. But I wouldn’t argue against it, either. I suppose I will settle on: “just different.”



Photo by Keegan Schoch



Associate Membership

Looking for a Great New Year's Gift for Your Adult Children or Other Family Members? This year, give the gift of Georgian Bay!

If you are looking for a unique gift, the West Carling Association may be able to help. For just \$25 per person per year we offer an Associate Membership that is ideal for family members sharing the family cottage. Associate Members receive WCA's newsletters and are eligible for other membership benefits. As of July 2024, Associates have the right to vote at our annual meeting. We encourage their participation on our volunteer board and on our committees.

You can add your family member as an Associate Member by entering your profile on our website. Your username is your email address. If you have misplaced your password, you can request a new one on the website. Our membership year runs from January to December. After January 1, 2025 payment for both you and your associates can be arranged in three ways: You can pay by credit card, e-transfer or cheque. There are instructions for payment on our website.

We have provided a gift certificate below for you to use.

Congratulations!

**Your 2025 Associate Membership in the West Carling Association
has been prepaid by:**

We welcome your participation and look forward to meeting you.

