



President's Letter Winter 2020

Greetings All,

The late fall and early winter months have streamed by, in part no doubt due to the array of activities engaged in by your Board of Directors.

It's already February and soon thoughts of cottage life on the Big Rideau will be coming to mind. I'd like to share with you some of our 2019 highlights as well as our plans and on-going activities for the upcoming season.



Financials

BRLA remains in a strong financial position under the watchful eye of our newest Director, Treasurer Charles Buckingham. Membership is stable and we have substantially increased Corporate Sponsors with plans underway to grow membership.

Safety

As always - 110 BRLA shoal markers were put in place and monitored throughout the season. 10 new markers were assembled from materials supplied by Taggart Construction to replace those that had failed. Thank you to those who notified us of faulty or failing markers – the safety of all of us who use the lake depend upon these buoys!

Social and Recreational Programs

- Family Fun Day saw record attendance with over 80 participants for the aquatic fun and games on Cow Island.
- The annual sailing regatta was successfully revived with a series of races for different classes of boats. The turnout was strong - even with questionable weather. We're looking to grow the event this year so dust off your sailboat!
- Last summer's children/youth and adult sailing programs reached maximum registration levels, so this summer we are expanding these programs to 2 weeks, with both one or two week options. The 2020 sailing programs will run *July 6th to 17th*. Registration opened February 1st – [click here](#) to register or to find out more information.

- For 2020 the Children's Day Camp is expanding to 6 weeks and will run *June 30th to August 7th*. A search for qualified staff is underway. If you know a student looking for a great summer job please encourage them to apply – more details are posted [here](#).
- Summer Sounds continued BRLA's long standing tradition of hosting great music and delicious food in our unique island setting.

Environment

- The Environment Committee expanded its Water Rangers water testing program and added tests for the detection of e coli and nitrates.
- An on-going watch is being maintained on the test results for contaminants emanating from the now closed Portland waste site that could be entering the lake from Sheldon's Creek.
- Ontario Bill 205 proposed an open hunt for Double Crested Cormorants running from March to December of each year with a daily bag limit of 50 birds, allowing hunters to shoot from anchored boats. This Bill proceeded to second reading but, as far as can be determined, has not been passed.

Cow Island

Cow Island docking was doubled with the addition of new docks, and work is continuing to spruce up the club house. We are very fortunate to have this asset - we hope those of you who have yet to experience it will join us for an event this summer!

Government Relations

- Considerable effort was spent to provide input to the Rideau Lakes Township Official Plan Update process with a focus on policies that will underpin responsible development and lake protection.
- Detailed representations by the BRLA and several other Lake Associations convinced the Rideau Lakes Township Council of the need to register on title conditions associated with the approval of waterfront site plans. Council approved registration on title, and Township staff will now be able to assure that conditions attached to waterfront development permits are met by owners undertaking development or redevelopment.
- Arie Hoogenboom, the Mayor of the Township of Rideau Lakes, created the Rideau Lakes Lake Association Committee of Council, which provides a forum for Lake Association representatives to hear and discuss issues of concern to their members and make recommendations to the Township. The Mayor also initiated an annual grant program for qualified Lake Associations, and BRLA was one of the grant recipients..

'Safe Quiet Lakes' Initiative

Excessive noise from performance boats running off muffler remains an aggravating problem on Big Rideau. We have aligned with Muskoka's *Safe Quiet Lakes* initiative to address boat speed and noise concerns, with the strategy that Lake Associations working together across the province will have more impact with Transport Canada and its agencies, and greater influence to deal more effectively with this issue.

By-Laws


The Association's By-Laws had not been updated since 1963 and, in the context of the world of 2019, there were some glaring omissions and shortfalls. A team of BRLA Directors drafted a revised set of By-Laws that will be acted on once the Province has passed its new Non Profit Corporations Bill. In the interim, an update was passed at the AGM to expand the membership eligibility criteria to allow membership by all residents of the Big Rideau from the Narrows Lock to Poonamalie.

Volunteer Support

Volunteerism is critical to the health of the Big Rideau Lake Association. Volunteering is a great way to meet new people and help support BRLA's mission. We appreciate all the volunteer support we receive, and we know many of you would like to get more involved.

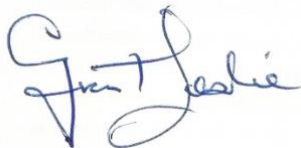
As mentioned in our Fall Newsletter, we are working on improving how we communicate volunteering opportunities to you. Support tasking 'maps' are being developed to make it easier to see the volunteer options available and confirm what level of commitment each task requires.

To the right is an example of the tasking map for our annual Fireworks event. This approach is being confirmed for all BRLA events. Members have a wide array of activities to choose from. In each program or event, we use a Lead Volunteer to coordinate interested volunteers, who include those involved in previous years as well as anyone new expressing interest.

 BRLA VOLUNTEER SUPPORT - FIREWORKS			
Support Task & Tools	Date / Time	Time Required	Volunteer(s)
BRLA Volunteer Lead	June 1	4 Hrs	TBA
Confirmation of fireworks professional team	June 1		Mike Fraser
Fire Department coordination Call	July 1		Mike Fraser
Fireworks set up support on Cow Island - assist in unloading supplies / assembly of launchers / rack setting / fire pump test / set hand pumps / fill & place sandbags (Bring water, sun screen, water, cordless drill with # 2 robertson and spare battery)	July 4	2Hrs (10AM – Noon)	TBA (see 2019 volunteer list)
Storm watch / Cancel decision (if cancelled – trigger media)	July 4		Mike Fraser / BRLA Lead / BRLA Communications
BRLA representative on Cow Island during event (protective coveralls and hardhat provided by Mike Fraser)	July 4	2 Hrs	TBA
Clean up on Cow Island – grounds and stack boxes for pick up	July 5	2 Hrs (10AM – Noon)	TBA
Transport refuse to Lens Cove	July 8		Contractor

To find out more about the volunteer opportunities for this summer, please drop us a line at volunteers@bigrideaulakeassociation.com. And watch for more on volunteer activities in the Spring edition of DriftWords.

Cheers!



Grant Leslie
BRLA President