

Winter-Spring Greetings from the Leonard Lake Stakeholders Association

It's Official - March 20, 2019 marked not only spring equinox in the northern hemisphere but the start of longer days and shorter nights! Latin for "equal night", equinoxes mark the only two points in the year when the equator is the closest part of Earth to the Sun. On the equinox, both hemispheres receive the same amount of daylight with equal parts day and night.



Leonard Lake Falls - March 23, 2019

(photo courtesy of Mark Scarrow)



Citizen Science - You are the "Eyes on the Lake"!



Citizen science quite simply means the involvement of volunteers in science. It isn't a new concept, but one that has a proven track record for producing valuable contributions of observation and data.

Over many years, volunteers on Leonard Lake have stepped up to collect water samples throughout the season and performed preliminary tests for water clarity and E-coli. Our "Eyes on the Lake Program" in place since 2017 is simple and successful and will continue throughout the 2019 season. Lake residents are encouraged to report unusual lake-water conditions to a member of the LLSA water testing team and a team member will come out to check the water and take a sample for testing, if required. This informal reporting led to the identification and confirmation of blue-green algae in Leonard Lake - an important health and safety issue for all property owners and lake residents. PLEASE KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE LAKE IN 2019!

WE ARE EXPANDING OUR WATER PROGRAM THIS YEAR AND NEED SOME "HANDS-ON" HELP!

You would be part of a small "boat" team that would volunteer a couple of hours every two weeks collecting water samples. (NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY!) The program will run for the May to October season and if you are interested in getting involved and can commit to some or all of the schedule, contact either Ken Riley at 705-764-1695 info@brooklandsfarm.ca or Esther Giesbrecht at giesbrecht.e.e@gmail.com

This extended algae monitoring program is a Muskoka Watershed Council (MWC) initiative and this year, is limited to Leonard Lake, Peninsula Lake, Three Mile Lake and Coopers Pond. Ken Riley our LLSA Water Committee lead and a member of the Watershed Algae Sub-Committee recommended that Leonard Lake be included as one of the lakes in the study. This program will provide extensive testing and analysis over a several year period and help us to better understand the status of Leonard Lake water quality.

In addition to the MWC monitoring, additional sampling will be collected by the Leonard Lake water team to follow-up on the 2017 LL study (Leonard Lake: Water Quality and Algal Blooms: Status, Monitoring and Management) with Dr. Sue Watson and Hedy Kling. The team also plans to sample total phosphorus as part of the Lake Partner Program.

North Shore Update

An appeal has been filed with the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (previously known as the Ontario Municipal Board) regarding decisions taken by Council for the Township of Muskoka Lakes on September 18, 2018 to refuse an application that would ultimately result in the creation of five new lots and one retained lot on the north shore. The appeal has been accepted to proceed by the tribunal and a future hearing will be scheduled.

The Township of Muskoka Lakes will be defending the refusal and has engaged counsel. LLSA is considering options which may include seeking party status at the hearing.

Questions or comments can be sent to leonardlakemuskoka@gmail.com



MLA Seeding Day – Saturday, May 18, 2019.
 Order forms can be found on-line at mla.com - click on “Events” or drop by the Muskoka Lakes Association office in Port Carling to order seedlings at 65 Joseph Street, 2nd Floor. This year’s selection includes lake edge flowers and shrubs and the Monarch Butterfly Garden is back by popular demand. The full range of trees, shrubs and plants can be viewed at <https://www.mla.on.ca/Seedling%20Day>

Keep Safe on the Ice in March

This month can be one of the most unpredictable times as far as ice conditions and weather goes. The Canadian Red Cross provides some tips on what to do if you fall through the ice:

Take a deep breath and stay calm. Call/yell for help. Resist the immediate urge to climb back out where you fell in - the ice is weak in this area. Use the air trapped in your clothing to get into a floating position on your stomach. Reach forward onto the broken ice without pushing down. Kick your legs to push your torso onto the ice. When you are back on the ice, crawl on your stomach or roll away from the open area with your arms and legs spread out as far as possible to evenly distribute your body weight. Do not stand up! Look for shore and make sure you are going in the right direction.



The Official Plan (OP) of the Township of Muskoka Lakes (TML) sets policies that affect us all regarding development, land and shoreline use. During 2019 and 2020 TML (through an external consultant) will undertake a comprehensive review and update of the OP that is intended to guide the Township for the next 20 years.

Community engagement and participation in the process is planned and essential to this project. Key areas of discussion of interest to both seasonal and permanent residents range from broad concepts such as “environment first”, “recreational carrying capacity” and “the impact of climate change and growth on lake health”. Specific and current issues including “the sharing economy” (e.g. Airbnb and Uber) are also on the table for debate.

It is essential that small lakes such as Leonard have a voice and a place in the new Official Plan. We can expect further news and activity as the summer unfolds and will look for opportunities to participate.

Family Fire on Leonard Lake



The King family, Leonard Lake Road 1, lost their cottage to fire December 1st. Most fortunately, there were no family members or other persons present or injured. A nearby resident saw the fire from the north end of the lake, immediately called 911 and was on hand to direct the emergency vehicles as they arrived off Hwy 118. Fire crews from three stations brought the fire under control quickly, and remained on site during the night, however, the cottage was razed to the ground as a result of the blaze.

Our sympathies to the King family - a cottage or house can be rebuilt but the loss is so much more than a building.

In memory of Gord Coomber 1923 - 2018

Gord was known as “Coach” to many of us on Leonard Lake - an endearing nickname of which few knew the origin, but was often used as a sign of respect and fondness. He understood what it meant to genuinely connect with people, young and not-so-young alike, and brought such a sense of joy and compassion to those connections... a gift that came to Gord naturally and that he shared, generously.

The Coomber family (Gord, wife Bette and sons Bruce and Steve) have been on Leonard Lake for just short of 50 years. Initially invited in the late 60's by their good friends and Scarborough neighbours, Bill and Jean McLean, the Coomers fell in love with the lake as so many families have before and since, purchased a lot, and settled on Road One. The first few years the family tent camped on the property, cleared the lot, had a septic installed, and in 1976 built their Viceroy cottage. They spent subsequent summers with a cottage full of friends and family “helping” out and enjoying the pleasures that life at the lake can bring.

At the time, Leonard Lake had some landmarks different from today...the south end of the lake had a store and there were gas pumps at the road and at the water. Cabins were under construction with plans to rent them out, but a fire changed all that and the store and cabins are now just a part of LL history. The three roads around Leonard Lake existed but not as they do today. Gord Coomber served on the Road One Association Executive for a number of years and the Coomber family recalls the challenges the committee faced. Road One had room and width for one car and there was no such thing as driving by someone. The best driver would back up, looking to create a sliver of space and the other driver would inch by, clinging to the road, or sometimes not. No maximum speed signs were necessary either - anything faster than a crawl was folly given the road conditions. A fun trip to Bracebridge meant that half of the time getting there was spent on Road One between the cottage and the highway!

Gord retired in 1971 and the family spent every summer from the week before May 24 until the week after Thanksgiving at Leonard Lake. A star athlete in his younger years, Gord joined Aston Fairways (aka Kirrie Glen) in 1971 and continued to golf (well!) for the next 40 years, retiring from the game at 86 years of age. There was a cottage to finish and the art of puttering to perfect during those years as well. While at the cottage, Gord and Bette would often take a day to canoe the shoreline of LL stopping for a picnic lunch along the way and were big day trippers to Muskoka destinations and events. The CBC and reading were favorite cottage pleasures and contract bridge a social and intellectual pleasure shared with friends in Bracebridge and Port Carling.

In 2011, Gord and Bette Coomber moved to Bracebridge permanently and continued to spend as much time as was feasible at their Leonard Lake property.

Gord will be missed by all who knew him. His legacy is that of a life well lived, a man devoted to family, and a person who believed and lived the ideal to “always be a little kinder than necessary” (James M. Barrie)

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