



Big Rideau Lake
Association

President's Letter

Spring has sprung and you'll soon be back at your cottage and ready for another wonderful summer in the paradise called Big Rideau Lake.

Thanks to the help of all our volunteers, 2023 was a very successful year for the Big Rideau Lake Association as we built on the successes of previous years. This year is going to move us to the next level.

Our website had not been updated in many years, leaving it out of date in content and usability. We have invested a lot of time and money to develop a brand-new web site and the associated marketing tools to ensure consistency in our messaging and visual design. This update will also help us use our web site as our central communications platform. You will continue to receive Drift Words on a regular basis and see us on social media at Facebook and Instagram - but with new logos and crisp graphics - the messaging will steer you back to our web site for more information and regular updates.

It's only April and already our Cow Island Summer Day Camp is 75% booked. We have a magnificent volunteer, Jennifer Harper, running the camp and the accolades poured in throughout the summer of 2023 regarding the tremendous impact of this program. The camp is limited to members of BRLA, their children, and their grandchildren ages 4-13.

Continuing with last year's successes, Jennifer will be organizing Family Movie Night (July 3rd) and a Teen Dance Nights (Aug 3rd) on Cow Island for BRLA members and their families. Speaking of the Day Camp, we are planning some significant infrastructure improvements to Cow Island to provide the day camp with a much more pleasant environment. We will be adding a new solar power system, a water system to provide drinking water and water for an indoor flush toilet, and a septic system. We have applied for a Trillium Grant and will hear back in June or July if it was accepted. We will also be launching a capital campaign in a few months to help support our plans. This upgrade was sparked by Terry Cowan's generous donation of a boat last summer with the proceeds in memory of his late brother Keith Cowan who just loved Big Rideau Lake. That donation exceeded \$10,000 – thank you Terry.

One of our key objectives this year is to significantly increase our membership base. Our work over the last couple of years has definitively shown that “in person” contact is THE most successful method of adding new members. Think of this based on your experience and I'm sure you'll agree. You see a brochure asking you to join an organization OR you get a personal recommendation from someone you know asking you to join an organization and explaining the benefits. Which one are you most likely to act upon? Your board of directors is challenging each of you to add one new member to BRLA. When you

refer a friend and they become a new member, you will be rewarded with a BRLA ball cap. If you add 5 or more new members, you will receive a free membership in 2025.

We have some exciting new benefits that are being offered by our corporate partners, such as promotions to members of BRLA. That could include things like a 10% discount for BRLA members or something free if you purchase more than \$X in merchandise. We will leave the development of those offers to the creativity of our partners and will relay all of them to you. To access these promotions, we will provide a new digital membership card for you and anyone included in your membership (partners, children, grandchildren).

In addition, don't forget about the yearly Fireworks (June 29th) show, Summer Sounds (July 20th) and the BRLA Regatta (Aug 10 & 11). Your Board of Directors is always looking for volunteers to help with current events and contribute ideas for new events. please contact a member of the board at info@bigrideaulakeassociation.com.

On the Government relations side, we are working with Township governments on licensing for Bass tournaments focused on reducing the conflict around parking spots, boat launches and fishing too close to docks when cottagers are in the water. We are also keeping a very close eye on the wastewater treatment capacity issues that are facing Westport as that community continues to grow.

The summer of 2024 should be very exciting for all of us, and we look forward to your continued support of BRLA. It is our volunteers who help make our activities a success, so if you are interested in volunteering, please reach out to a board member.

By the way, here are our Board Members who have invested countless hours in moving things forward.

- Mary Pochobradsky – VP and Director of Communications
- Charles Buckingham – Treasurer
- Peter Merkley - Secretary
- Elisabeth Preston
- Tom Kohler
- Mary Ann Calzonetti
- Michael McSweeney
- Courtney McCarney
- Brian Jokat

Please join me in thanking them for all their efforts and plan to meet us in person at this year's Annual General Meeting, July 6th, 2024.

Hansen Downer, President – Big Rideau Lake Association

April 16, 2024