

# RAINY LAKE CONSERVANCY



Preserving the Rainy Lake Watershed

## A Rainy Lake Reflection Sam White – A Passion for the Wilderness

At age 14, Sam and his younger brother Bob spent the summer of 1932 as new campers at Camp Kooch-i-ching on Rainy lake. Camp Kooch was a good fit for Sam, and he was voted best camper that year. By 1937 Sam had become the camp's canoeing councillor, leading many trips into Ontario and Manitoba. These wilderness trips honed his camping skills and began to create a passion for wilderness travel that would stay with him throughout his life.

Serving as a major enhancement to this passion was the rare experience offered to Sam and Bob when "Ober" (Ernest Oberholtzer) invited them to stay at Mallard Island after camp closed in August of 1936. It was just before Sam entered Harvard as a freshman.

Ober had planned a 12-day canoe trip down the Seine River from Lac des Mille Lacs to Mine Centre, and he asked Sam and Bob to accompany him. They began their journey in two canvas

canoes. Billy Magee, Ober's lifetime guide and Ojibwe mentor, sterned Ober's canoe. Sam and Bob paddled the second canoe.

Not long after launching the canoes on the first Seine River rapids, Ober took a route left and signaled Sam and Bob to steer to the right. As the Kooch-trained boys approached a huge rock in the rapids, they realized they couldn't avoid disaster. Hitting the rock squarely on its side, the canoe's back broke. This left the boys



*Sam White, Harvard Class of 1940*

*Rainy Lake Reflection continued on page 3*

## Namakan River Hydroelectric Project Update

As part of an Ontario Government program to increase small-scale hydroelectric power, a 10 MW facility has been proposed by the Lac La Croix First Nation for the Namakan River at High Falls and Hay Rapids. This historic and beautiful river is located just west of Quetico Park and just east of Rainy Lake. The Namakan River is an important part of the Rainy Lake/Rainy River watershed, accounting for 30 to 40% of the water flow into Rainy Lake.



*Namakan High Falls, photos by cottage owners on Namakan Lake and Rainy Lake*

environmental impact studies are underway by Chant Construction on behalf of the corporation, Ojibway Power and Energy Group (OPEG), set up to design and operate the facility. The environmental assessment will be completed some time in 2008.

During the annual International Joint Commission (IJC) meeting on water levels held August 21, 2007, in International Falls, several Rainy Lake Conservancy members voiced concerns about the plans. The project's developers contend that the impacts have not yet been determined and that it is too soon to judge

*Namakan River continued on page 3*

# 2007 Great Grants Award

Recognition of outstanding work by Rainy Lake Conservancy,  
Rainy River Valley Field Naturalists and the Nature Conservancy of Canada

On September 28, 2007, the Ontario Trillium Foundation presented their Great Grants Awards to six area non-profit and charitable organizations to recognize their outstanding work and lasting



Award ceremony

photo by Julian Holenstein

contributions to their communities. Phyllis Callaghan accepted the Environment Award on behalf of the Northwestern Ontario Conservation Partnership and the Rainy Lake Conservancy who was the lead applicant for the \$48,900 grant awarded to the group in 2004. The Ontario Trillium Foundation recognized the work of the three organizations in establishing the Nature Conservancy of Canada in Northwestern Ontario, completing the first phase of the Rainy River Valley Field Naturalists bog walk, and identifying and conserving significant natural heritage properties in the region.

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## Bass Research in the North Arm

A detailed report of the research conducted under the leadership of Dr. Stephen Cooke and Marie Ange Gravel will be available soon at [www.rainylakefisheriescharitytrust.com](http://www.rainylakefisheriescharitytrust.com). One of the goals of the 2006-07 research was to assess the quantity and quality of nesting habitat of smallmouth bass. Readers will be hooked by all sorts of interesting things they can learn about smallmouth bass such as their choice of nesting sites and the role of the male as protector of the nest while the female takes a summer holiday. The "post tournament" studies also provide clear direction for additional research on Rainy Lake to ensure that the released fish have the best possible chance of surviving.

*Rainy Lake Conservancy's representative on the  
Rainy Lake Fisheries Charity Trust board: Dale Callaghan*

## A Note from the President

Well, I have been president of the Rainy Lake Conservancy a bit over a year now and I am feeling pleased with myself for saying yes to this job...It has been an honor to add my voice, to contribute as a board member, and now as president, working to nourish this precious place as it has nourished us. It has also been fun for me personally to get to know more of you better. Even the board meetings are fun. We don't always agree but the lake gives us the energy that enables us to work together as one, willingly and joyfully.



Changes to the board in 2007 are the departure of Trish Hogan and the arrival of Alan Lowe. Trish will be remembered especially for her devotion to respectful treatment of shoreline and beaches. Alan brings long experience as a science teacher in the Fort Frances schools and consultant to the Ministry of Natural Resources.

In the upcoming year you will see Conservancy members continuing to learn more through scientific inquiry about such topics as the quality of the water and the effects of invasive species like the spiny waterflea. Making connections to individuals and organizations who seek the well-being of the border area is an ongoing effort also. And here on Rainy Lake there continue to be people on both sides of the border who are interested in conservation easements and other land protection options on their properties.

Some causes for celebration: »The Fort Frances Museum under the direction of Pam Hawley celebrated its reopening in June following renovation of its historic building. »The Rainy Lake Conservancy continues to attract new members including folks from Namakan Lake and the North Arm. »Take a look at our new, NEW, completely renovated website at [www.rainylakeconservancy.org!](http://www.rainylakeconservancy.org!)

Anne Newhart, President

## Rainy Lake Reflection continued from Page 1

swimming in the rapids, all their gear following to a wet but safe campsite down river. Disaster had struck on the first day. One can imagine what thoughts went through the minds of Ober, Billy and the two young men. How could the trip continue with four men, all their provisions, and a single canoe. "We can do it," said Sam, and Ober agreed. For the rest of the trip, Sam and Bob were Ober's passengers in a canoe now carrying all four men and 800 pounds of food and gear.

Sam remarks, "When you spend 12 days on the water with our nation's outstanding conservation advocate, you truly enjoy a wilderness experience. Ober talked as he paddled. He talked on the frequent portages, and he talked when we all made dinner and prepared the campsite. You can imagine how this trip influenced my whole life."

Sam's love for the region, his "we can do it" approach to life, his commitment and leadership for conservation on Rainy Lake benefits us all. His passion for the area still thrives and continues to bring him and his family back every summer. Keep coming Sam!

*Article by Sam and Stephanie White and Kay Larsen*

## Namakan River continued from Page 1

the merits. In response, the IJC agreed to inform the Canadian and U.S. governments that this project is an emerging issue in the border region. The governments will determine whether or not the IJC becomes directly involved.

Conservancy members said the project could have impacts on walleye, lake sturgeon and smallmouth bass populations by disrupting upstream and downstream migration and changing water levels in critical spawning habitat. Although the Conservancy is neutral towards the project at this point, we would like to encourage more public scrutiny and more public discussion of economic development alternatives for the Lac La Croix First Nation.

Dale Callaghan, Rainy Lake Conservancy's past president, referenced conservationist Ernest Oberholtzer's long battle in the 1920s and 1930s to save the border region from further hydropower development. "Ernest Oberholtzer would be appalled that someone wants to put two or three dams on the Namakan River," said Callaghan.

More information is available from the web sites of Ojibway Power and Energy Group (<http://opeg.ca>) and the Ontario MNR. Recent articles have also appeared in the International Falls Daily Journal, the Fort Frances Times, and the Ely Timberjay.

*Environmental Research Committee contact: Paul Anderson*

## Border Officials Clarify Issues

Again at the Annual General Meeting in August the necessary business of the organization was accomplished, the year was reviewed, and a good time was had by all.



*Superintendent Doug Cuthbertson*

We had the honour of having Canada Border Services Agency Superintendent Doug Cuthbertson, with backup from Jennifer Silver, Enforcement Liaison Officer, talk to attendees about border regulations concerning both American and Canadian seasonal residents living on the

lake. The officers answered questions submitted in writing by Conservancy members prior to the meeting and fielded questions from the floor.

In this regard, we thank Conservancy member, Allan Juers, who gave of his time and energy to compile this border crossing information for our use. If any of you would like to have a copy for your own benefit, please contact the Conservancy using any of the contact methods listed on the last page of the newsletter.

*AGM Committee contact: Anne Newhart*

The 2008 Annual General Meeting will be on Sunday, August 10, 3-5:30 pm at La Place Rendezvous, Fort Frances. Circle that date and plan to BE THERE!

## A Welcome to New Members

I am pleased to report that membership has increased significantly through July 31, 2007. Membership at that time stood at 186 voters, up from the low 160s in prior years. A number of Namakan Lake and North Arm cottagers have joined; they are a welcome addition to the Conservancy's ever expanding membership base. Also, an effort to contact past expired members who might wish to renew proved to be successful.

As I do each fall, I'd like to remind members that your memberships come up for renewal July 31st of each year.

Lastly, Don and Rhoda Dickson have again provided an invaluable service during the past fiscal year in tracking and administering the membership list and renewals. A great big thank you to you both!

*Membership Committee contact: Paul Larsen*

## Loon Platform's Happy Sequel

We are delighted to report that our floating loon-nesting platform resulted in a successful nest and the hatching of a healthy chick this past summer. We felt especially fortunate, for this was our first endeavor. The platform was a four foot square made of white PCV pipe. Jim covered the surface with cloth, sand, dried brush and live plants. He painted the PVC sides black to prevent predators from being able to see it easily. Although we did not do this, we have heard it is a good idea to put dowels in the corners and connect them with string in order to keep eagles, with their large wingspan, from being able to land on the platforms. We have loved watching our wonderful loon family. We hope that other platforms will have future success and that together we can help sustain the population of these beautiful birds on Rainy Lake.

*Claudia and Jim Horne*



*Loon nest by Phyllis Callaghan*

*Loon family by Susan and Bob James*

RAINY LAKE CONSERVANCY  
FALL 2007 / VOLUME 9, NUMBER 2

Newsletter Editor: Mary Lysne  
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This newsletter is published in the spring and fall by the Rainy Lake Conservancy, Post Office Box 223, Fort Frances, Ontario P9A 3M6  
E-mail: [info@rainylakeconservancy.org](mailto:info@rainylakeconservancy.org)  
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Charitable tax ID number: 86941 2585 RR 0001

### EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

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### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

|                   |               |               |
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| Paul Anderson     | Claudia Horne | Anne Newhart  |
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| Stephen Challis   | Alan Lowe     | Ginny Sweatt  |
| Don Dickson       | Gordon Martin |               |
| Robert Hammar     | Ed McLeod     |               |

## Nature Outing

Picture a lovingly restored 50-foot wooden cruiser moored at the dock of one of Rainy Lake's vintage cabins. This island scene greeted Conservancy members as they began their August 15th nature outing. The island is Robert's Island, known also as Atsokan, once owned by Major Roberts but now owned by the family of our gracious host Jim Hanson. We toured the charming lodge and one of the several cabins dating from the early 1900s as Jim shared some of the island's history. Following the walkabout, Jim treated us to a ride on the *Virginia*, a depression era, classic wooden Elko. Originally belonging to Major Roberts, this beautiful boat had left Rainy Lake and fallen into disrepair. It is fitting that the *Virginia* has found its way back to Atsokan. What a glorious event!

*Nature Outings Committee contact: Ginny Sweatt*



*The Virginia, restored and back on Rainy Lake*

*photo by Mary Lysne*

### DID YOU KNOW?

Rainy Lake covers 92,100 ha (227,604 acres) and has 3000 km (1850 miles) of shoreline.

### LOVING YOUR LAKE

Soften your shoreline and improve erosion protection with native trees, shrubs, grasses and aquatic plants.

### Mission Statement

To work with property owners, governments and local communities to preserve and protect the natural beauty, historic features, and ecological and recreational values for present and future generations, particularly within but not restricted to Rainy Lake.

[Visit our web site at www.rainylakeconservancy.org](http://www.rainylakeconservancy.org)