

SPRING 2006

THE QUETICO

New Ontario Parks Act
Weaker Protection for
Ontario's Wilderness

PG. 1-1

Program Highlights

Wilderness Youth Program

PG-2

Who's Park Is This Anyway?

By Quetico Park's Superintendent

PG. 1-2

CHAIR'S CORNER

BY

Chris Dobson, Chair, The Quetico Foundation

Chair's Message

It has been a busy fall and winter for our Board of Trustees, responding to major government initiatives, addressing concerns associated with a number of Quetico area planning and development projects, monitoring the economic development thrust for Atikokan, launching another successful Canadian Dinner, enhancing our activities with the US, and developing new programs.

Ken Buchan and **Arthur Saunders** have been spearheading our response to the new Park's Legislation with particular concern regarding the potential for greater use of motorized and mechanized vehicles in Wilderness parks. Arthur, as head of the Science Advisory Committee, is working with Prof. **Roger Suffling** to put together the *Foundation's* summer research program. **Cam Clark**, one of our newest Trustees, and Chair of the Liaison Committee is closely monitoring park management initiatives, Atikokan economic development activities, and other interest groups associated with the Park. Our Corporate Secretary, **Jim Douglas**, is working on a plan to introduce the Park to young new Canadians so that they too can begin to appreciate the wonders of Quetico. And thanks to a bequest from the Estate of Margery J. Warren, we are developing the protocols to support new scientific research initiatives.

Marjorie Rogers, our Annual Dinner Chair, once again organized an outstanding Dinner at the Ontario Club – our major fundraising event of the year! Rich Kelly, our lead on U.S. relations, hosted a gathering of Quetico/Boundary Waters organizations in Minneapolis in November and will be there representing the Foundation at Midwest Mountaineering this spring. We look forward to fostering closer contact with our supporters in the U.S. as our communications strategy and fundraising focus is reshaped. My gratitude is extended to our Trustees who play an important role in facilitating our programs and to our supporters, who play an ever increasing role in enabling our efforts to preserve and protect, in perpetuity, the wilderness of Quetico Park.

Changing of the Guard

Cameron Clark, recently retired Deputy Minister, Northern Development and Mines, joined the Board last May. Given his long career in both MNR and MNDM, Cam brings a wealth of natural resources experience to the *Foundation*. A resident of Thunder Bay and a northerner at heart, Cam's love of paddling and Quetico has inspired him to assemble his impressive collection of XY paddles from this Atikokan based handcrafted paddle company. Cam is the new Chair of the Board's Liaison Committee.

Rick Clendinning another addition to our Trustee roster, comes from the Barrie area. An educator by profession, Rick's love for Quetico grew from his many summers working in and supervising area junior ranger camps.

After five years at the helm as Executive Director, **Bill "Sarge" Sargent** retired last year, leaving a huge legacy of accomplishments, particularly with regard to fundraising and promotion. His knowledge, energy and stories will be greatly missed. In a seamless transition **Glenda McLachlan** is showing herself to be a worthy successor with her broad base of professional experience and deep commitment to the *Foundation's* goals.

USA Activities

Since Americans constitute 85% of the users of Quetico Park, the *Foundation* is focusing considerably more energy into promoting our presence in the U.S. Last year we took part, alongside Ontario Parks, in two major mid west outdoor shows, Canoeopia and Midwest Mountaineering Adventure Expo.

Our lead Trustee in St. Paul, Minnesota, **Rich Kelley** has begun to work with U.S counterparts including the Voyageur National Park Association; the National Forest Service; Quetico-Superior Foundation; and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. As host of a dinner meeting of such organizations, the "Group of 15" has been formed to focus on common issues and opportunities including "Heart of the Continent" centennial celebrations in 2009. In addition, the *Foundation* hired for the first time an American college student to work with our 2005 Summer Student Research Program in Quetico Park.

Join us at Midwest Mountaineering Expo in Minneapolis, April 28-30th!

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Summer Research Program- Biggest Yet!

Last summer the *Foundation* hired four undergraduate university and college students including two from Atikokan and our first American participant, Brad Peterson from Minnesota. In June they were joined by two students from Atikokan High School. The crew undertook a wide variety of research activities in the Park, including:

- measuring natural and historical logging disturbance
- continuing a photo survey of lake shores
- installing pegs for future lake level monitoring
- retaking historical photos
- preparing wood samples
- collecting soil samples.

A particularly interesting activity in 2005 was the processing of large tree “cookies” cut in 2004 by a MNR, Foundation and FON crew at the site of the Pines blowdown. With the help of Quetico Park’s workshop staff, these large red pine samples were sawn into manageable slices that revealed significant information about the frequency of windstorms and fires. The Pines site has been popular for camping and picnicking since very early times, with consequent frequent small fires. In contrast, wind storms flatten whole stands or thin them radically, which promotes more intense but less frequent regeneration events.

The cookies were sent on to the tree ring laboratory in Tucson, Arizona where they are being used to construct a flood history for the Red River Valley.

The 2005 summer crew assisted the research of University of Waterloo’s Dr. Roger Suffling (a Trustee of the *Foundation*), Dr. Nancy Luckai of Lakehead University, and Scott St. George of Environment Canada as well as that of Waterloo graduate students.

The *Foundation* is grateful to the numerous individuals and the following organizations whose generous financial support made the Program possible.

The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation

The Saint Paul Foundation

The Dalglish Family Foundation

RBC Foundation

J.P. Bickell Foundation

Helen McCrea Peacock Foundation

F.K. Morrow Foundation

The George Lunan Foundation

HRDC Canada

In addition the *Foundation* extends their heartfelt thanks to the local Atikokan support of our Program including: Souris River Canoes, Atikokan High School, the Ministry of Natural Resources, Lakehead University, Canoe Canada, Mink Lake Junior Ranger Camp and the Atikokan Intergenerational Centre for the Arts.

This year’s program is gearing up and is expected to be equally as exciting!

Wilderness Youth Program

Looking to the future, *The Quetico Foundation* is planning to launch a new program that will educate youth from families of new Canadians about the critical importance of maintaining Quetico as a pristine wilderness. The *Foundation* hopes to achieve this by sending youth on what it believes will be life changing canoe trips in the Park.

“Youth are our future business and political leaders,” *Foundation* Chair **Chris Dobson** says. “They often come from cultures that have no knowledge of our wilderness values. We hope to encourage them to value our spectacular natural environment.” This new initiative has been made possible by a substantial bequest last year from the estate of **Norma R. Ridley**, widow of **John B. Ridley**, whose own bequest 20 years earlier supports many Quetico projects such as the *Library* and *Summer Student Research Program*. Details of how the **Norma R. Ridley and John B. Ridley Wilderness Youth Program** will operate are being developed. The *Foundation* is consulting with educational agencies on how best to implement what promises to be a very ambitious program for the future of Quetico.

Margery J. Warren Research Fund

The Quetico Foundation is pleased to announce that it has received an extremely generous \$300,000 bequest from the Margery J. Warren estate to support scientific and ecological research in Quetico Provincial Park. Margery Warren, a long time supporter of a number of research and education focused charities, wished to recognize her husband Edwin Warren for his lifetime career in the mining industry and his interest in the issues associated with environmental protection and conservation. The *Foundation* is currently evaluating several options to determine the direction of its future research. Suggestions for research projects should be directed to **Arthur Saunders**, Chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee.

New Parks Act Weakens Protection of Ontario's Wilderness Parks

The Ontario Government recently tabled a new *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act* to replace the existing Provincial Parks Act that has not been substantially revised for more than 50 years. Unfortunately, the new Act, in its present form, seriously threatens the wilderness character and ecological integrity of the province's Wilderness parks such as Quetico.

Despite a statement that maintenance of ecological integrity is the priority of park management, many provisions of the new Act do not reflect this lofty goal. In particular the new Act removes the prohibition on mechanized travel that has been the cornerstone of Wilderness Park management for decades, opening the door to ATVs, motorboats, snowmobiles, aircraft and mountain bikes. In addition, although not specifically mentioned in the Act, Wilderness zones of other classes of Parks will also be degraded, because restrictions that are applied in Wilderness areas generally follow those used in Wilderness Parks.

There are other provisions of the new Act that will negatively affect both Wilderness Parks and other classes of Parks. Park management plans (the only means through which the public has input into park planning) are not required. Logging roads, mining roads and utility corridors are permitted to cross parks. The concept of a park's "greater park ecosystem", now recognized as a key element in ensuring the long-term ecological integrity of parks, is ignored. The potential negative effects of activities or development outside of parks, but immediately adjacent to their boundaries are not even addressed.

If the Act is to truly protect Ontario's park system in general, and its Wilderness parks in particular, then it must be amended to address these issues. Express your concerns by writing to Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Natural Resources, David Ramsay at dramsay.mpp.kirklandlake@liberal.ola.org

The New Act is available at: http://www.ontla.on.ca/documents/Bills/38_Parliament/session2/b011_e.htm

Quetico: My Haven

*A vital part of life, small though it may seem
Demands the thrill of nature: a soft,
paddled dream:
I enter my sweet haven. Not a sound
escapes my ears,
Because my fear of missing one guards me
with my tears.
I open up my eyes to the fresh morning
sky,
Sitting, simply sitting, as I let escape a
sigh.
A blur of white and black against the
aquiline hue
Stirs my senses, shakes my mind: a loon is
in my view.
I settle down at sunset for a quiet, restful
sleep,
Sav'ring the anticipation of a slumber
deep.
But what disturbs my pleasant peace
before I'm lost in dreams?
What chilly, nighttime arrogance would
rip at twilight's seams?
My irritation bloats my veins, when
suddenly I see
Twenty pairs of glowing eyes, all staring
straight at me.
And then, right at that moment, so
ashamed, I realize
That I mistook great, howling wolves for
beasts with mad'ning cries.
I look up to the glitt'ring sky with no
doubt in my mind,
That such a time as I did have, I ne'er
again would find.*

Michael Saunders

Minister Approves Task Force Recommendations

Minister of Natural Resources, **David Ramsay**, responded positively to the report issued by the Atikokan-Quetico Recommendation Review Team. *The Quetico Foundation* was part of the team set up by the Mayor of Atikokan and the Minister to examine recommendations to improve economic conditions in Atikokan and the surrounding region. The ongoing downturn in resource based industries continues to push recreation and tourism initiatives to the forefront.

Foundation Chair **Chris Dobson** says: "Quetico Provincial Park could be the cornerstone of many possible programs that would contribute to economic growth. With proper direction, the relationship between Quetico and the Town of Atikokan could be the model demonstrating the link between pristine wilderness and economic opportunity". The report sent to the Minister included several key suggestions:

- Investigate, plan and develop park access and recreation amenities along a scenic road corridor from the Highway 11B junction to the shore of Batchewang Lake.
- Support Township Council in the implementation of the Recreation Corridor Plan to enhance tourism opportunities on Crown Land without expanding the park boundary.
- Review all air access policies in the Management Plan Review.
- Develop tourism marketing initiatives.
- Update socio-economic impact information and measure impacts of policy and program actions and alternatives.
- Create ecological monitoring and research programs in the Atikokan/ Quetico area.
- Implement improvements to the Hwy 11B junction.

Park Biologist

Quetico Park's core staff team has now been augmented with the hiring of a full time Park Biologist, Lisa Solomon. This is the first time a Park Biologist has formally joined the organization. Over the years the park has had naturalists and heritage education specialists who became intimately familiar with the park's natural and cultural treasures and were passionate and articulate spokesmen for the wilderness. Quetico's Natural Heritage Education Specialist continues to play this role. But there are other facets to the Park Biologist's job.

Superintendent **Robin Reilly** says that Quetico, like other large parks worldwide, is being challenged to go beyond providing its visitors with an evocative or contemplative experience in a pristine setting. In the last decade parks have been increasingly tasked to maintain biological diversity and to provide opportunities to study the ecological interactions that inform the management of the whole landscape.

"In short, parks need to continue as places for personal renewal but extend to being natural sanctuaries and outdoor observatories," he says. "As part of that exercise we want a better understanding of wildlife populations and forest conditions. We need to take our many years of field records and transfer this onto more modern tools such as computerized geographic information systems. This will enable us to produce regular 'State of the Park' reports."

Since no park exists in isolation of its surrounding landscape, the Park Biologist has to have an understanding of forest management as well as fishing and hunting activities on surrounding lands, including those in the U.S.

Quetico Park Management Plan Review Expected To Begin Soon

A review of the Quetico Park Management Plan is expected to begin this spring. The review is an infrequent occurrence, the current 1995 Park Policy representing a revision to the Master Plan of 1977, and presents an opportunity to shape the Park for future generations. The public process starts with the posting of an Invitation to Participate (Terms of Reference) on the

Environmental Bill of Rights Registry (http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/env_reg/eb/english/). Public and interest groups are invited to submit written comments.

The Quetico Foundation's comments about park management will reflect our focus on preservation of the park's wilderness values and ecological integrity. We ask others who are interested in the Quetico wilderness to make known their concerns and interests to Quetico Provincial Park Staff.

WHO'S PARK IS THIS ANYWAY?

BY

Robin Reilly, Superintendent, Quetico Provincial Park

I get this question regularly... and it lies at the root of many park issues. The safest answer comes from the Park's Management Plan which states that the Park is to "preserve in perpetuity.....for the people of Ontario". In other words: *for all Ontario residents, forever*. So is that the right answer? Are there other answers?

- Some Atikokan residents would argue that the Park *belongs* to them more so than say it does to people in Toronto. They see the Park as land that they should be allowed to use motors in, or hunt in, or cut for commercial timbers as occurs elsewhere.
- Senior students from Atikokan High School have been making annual canoe trips into Quetico for 40 years without paying fees because ...in part...it is *their* Park.
- Elders of the Lac La Croix First Nation say that no one *owns* the land. They view Quetico as being part of their traditional lands. Technically, Reserves are federal property but this Reserve lies within the boundaries of Quetico. First Nation members can fish or hunt for their sustenance or travel in the park to visit sacred sites using aircraft and not paying fees because in a sense it is ...*their* Park.
- Most of the Park's users come from the US. Many have made more than ten trips, some more than 50. For them, Quetico is the home of their heart and soul. Because of this long and intimate association it is understandable that they feel it is *their* Park.
- Donors and volunteers also have a strong sense of proprietary interest.
- When Quetico (Canada) and adjacent Superior National Forest (US) were designated in 1909 there was much idealism around shared values. For some keen conservationists the natural environment is part of the World's heritage. Like the Amazon jungle, or the African plains, the border lakes of Quetico/Superior are viewed as a *global* responsibility.

Finally, "Whose Park is this?" could be said to encompass the resident trees and animals, the subject of park ecological inventories. The biotic world has the longest occupation, well, perhaps the rocks would dispute that. Questions of ownership aside, Ontario Parks maintains that the 'protection' objective is the primary one (over tourism, recreation and education), i.e. the preserve-ation of all the components of a healthy ecosystem take precedence over human use.

Quetico Park is undergoing a management plan review in 2006. How we manage the Park flows logically from an understanding of the Park's purpose. We need input from all the 'owners', including those who don't use words. As ideas are offered and evaluated it is helpful to interpret them within the context of larger beliefs, attitudes and assumptions. 'Whose Park is this anyway?' is a good place to start.

Foundation Events

2005 Annual Dinner

More than 100 outdoor enthusiasts attended the *Foundation's* annual gala dinner at the Ontario Club in Toronto last Fall.

Highlights of the *Foundation's* main fundraising event were a Souris River Canoe raffle as well as a Silent Auction featuring wildlife paintings, sculptures and carvings, paddles, bike trips, and provincial parks canoe trips.

Guest speaker **John Jennings**, Director of the Canadian Canoe Museum and Professor of History at Trent University, gave a fascinating talk and slide show presentation on the History of the Canoe in Canada.

Upcoming Events

April 28-30th – Mid-West Mountaineering Adventure Expo in St.Paul, Minnesota. *Come and see us at our Booth next to Ontario Parks and attend our soon to be announced Foundation event!*

May 6th – *The Quetico Foundation Annual Canoe Day* on the Grand River sponsored by Grand Experiences of Paris Ontario. *Call the Foundation Office to sign up for an exciting summer paddling warm up!*

October 18th – Annual Canadian Fundraising Dinner in Toronto.

Summer Student Research Program Musings

When I first learned of the summer student research program I thought that the job sounded interesting but that it wasn't for me. I was dead wrong. I learned more this summer than I have any other summer working in the wilderness, and I had fun while doing it. The Foundation did a great job of bringing the group together and supporting us through the summer. I was the first American to have the privilege to work for the student research program. Needless to say I was nervous because the research we do is very important, but Glenda and everyone at the Foundation really made me feel at home. The program is a great way to get students interested in the conservation and management of wild lands. It allows the student a chance to get out in the real world and make a difference. That difference, however, is not limited to research. A part of that difference comes from the lifelong friends we've made and the memories that we'll share for the rest of our lives. I would like to take this opportunity to thank The Quetico Foundation and its Board of Trustees, The Ministry of Natural Resources, the Town of Atikokan and my fellow group members for a summer I'll never forget.

Bradley Peterson



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