

Leech Lake **Cottagers' Association** **NEWSLETTER**

January 2023

President's Message – Susan Baskin

Your LLCA executive is delighted to bring you our first newsletter of 2023.

After the combination of snowy and rainy weather Mother Nature has been sending us, Leech Lake is finally frozen. Winter sports have begun with reports of skating, snowmobiling, winter motorbiking, cross-country skiing and ice fishing on the lake. As always please proceed with caution and be on the lookout for areas that are not fully frozen over—especially along the shoreline where there are creeks and streams.

I want to give a special shout out to Muskoka Landscapers and their dedicated staff who have gone the extra mile clearing our roads and driveways. As you will read in this newsletter, their work is not without an element of risk. We are so relieved that their operator Ryan survived a most unfortunate mishap on Christmas Eve. Thankfully he is fine, and we hope that there will never be a similar situation in the future.

Ryan's experience is a reminder to all of us to be fully prepared when driving in winter: pay close attention to the weather conditions; be sure your vehicle is appropriate for snow and ice-covered roads; and ALWAYS carry emergency gear in your vehicle—it could save your life!

We are excited for 2023 and the joys that each time of the year brings to us. The months always fly by, and before we know it winter will melt away, the birds will be flying north, and spring and summer will arrive. As always, we appreciate it when our members send in their dues in a timely fashion so that we can attend to the many tasks we need to accomplish.

Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to our newsletter, and to Leslie for putting it together so beautifully. We are blessed to have such marvellous volunteers.

Happy New Year!

It's That Time Again – LLCA 2023 Membership Dues

The LLCA has more members than ever, and is delighted to be creating a vibrant lake community for everyone to enjoy. Taking care of the roads, keeping an eye on issues in the District of Muskoka and advocating for you, shaping lake stewardship plans, running an annual regatta, bringing you information and connecting us through social media are some of the more visible things your association does. It's time to send in your dues for 2023 (which have not increased in many years) so we can plan our activities for this year.

The fees are \$315. The dues invoice is attached. Please fill it in and email or mail it to treasurer Shelley Bumstead at the addresses in the dues invoice document. The easiest way to make payment is to e-transfer your dues to Shelley at leechlaketreasurer@gmail.com. Please use **2023dues** as the password.

Fleming College Project Update

Our team of Fleming College students were at the lake this past fall taking water samples and completing a comprehensive shoreline survey based on the LoveYourLake protocol. Over the next couple of months they analyzed the raw data, compared it to previous years and prepared a detailed report which was delivered to the Stewardship Committee in December 2022, along with an information pamphlet they developed.

The Stewardship Committee is processing this wealth of information and will share it with everyone at our Annual Meeting in the spring. We hope to put some recommendations into action this year and in future, to help us all learn more about our lake's health and how to be good stewards so we will have a healthy lake for years and years to come.

A Winter Wonderland

The blizzard that was predicted over Christmas did not disappoint those in the Muskoka region, unless you are from the Anti-Snow minority. A few of the lake residents had the foresight to come to the lake earlier in the week to outrun the advancing blizzard. For that kind of forward thinking you were rewarded with a magical, storybook snow-laden Christmas Eve, Christmas, and Boxing Day. Everything around your property was painted in snow be it bushes, trees, cars, decks, staircases, etc., with nary a hint of green to be seen. It was all very charming and scenic.

Even with all of the high winds (maxed out at 52kms) and snow (2-3-4 feet) that came into our region there were no major power outages around the lakes that connect to Fraserburg Rd, just the odd 10-20 second outage. Parts of Gravenhurst, Muskoka Lakes and Bracebridge did have a prominent outage caused by the blizzard. The longest power outage affecting our lake was days after the storm had passed when Hydro-One was bringing power back online, one line at a time. This outage lasted only 90 minutes.

Several properties experienced broken tree branches and small downed trees due to the snow weight and wind. There may also be larger fallen trees on your property.



Santa and the Snowman Saga

The storm that hit us just before Christmas has an amazing story attached to it for us Leech Lakers. Read on, dear readers...

Those in the weather business said it would be a generational storm. It would start Thursday Dec 23 with above freezing temps, followed by rain, then some flurries. On Friday Dec 24 there would be a mix of rain and/or snow, along with a flash freeze. A deep freeze was to follow. The blizzard would come at us in full force with lots of snow and high winds, with the potential for 90km gusts. With the rain, freezing rain, snow and high winds across our region power outages were also expected. Would it end up being a winter hellscape or a winter wonderland, and could Christmas be saved? We shall see how it all plays out.

There would be no snow clearing services on Christmas Day so that the staff at Muskoka Landscapers (ML) would have this day to be with family and friends. It was not all fun and games for our plow operator Ryan, though, who was tasked with clearing the snow from our roads on Christmas Eve and Boxing Day. The blizzard started up slowly late Thursday evening Dec 23. It brought a few inches of snow overnight and with previous accumulations on our roads Muskoka Landscapers were called in to clear the snow on Saturday Dec 24.

ML was onsite by 07:00am on Dec 24th. The weather network indicated that we were in the red zone for the storm. Hour by hour rolled by and the weather forecasts were updating the snow accumulations for our region ranging from 10cm to 20cm and up to 80cm to 90cm. It all depended on how much the high winds pushed the snow bands towards our lake. Once the blizzard settled into our region the expected snow accumulations were now between 40cm to 70cm.

Ryan battled the snow all day long. Once he had all the roads cleared of all snow he went back to the other end of the lake and cleared them again. Daylight turned into twilight and then moved into evening. At 11:45pm Ryan reached out to our roads team to report that mother nature had taken the lead in the battle to fight the blizzard and keep the roads clear. Ryan was determined to beat mother nature but he called it a day after 16 hours of being onsite. He had to get home to play Santa for his

young daughter. He would return on Boxing Day.



snow on Fraserburg Rd. -- and he spent all night there. Ryan was looking to Guy to rescue him that morning to ferry him over to the ML boss (Colin) who was waiting at Healy Lake Rd. Guy's snowmobile was not winter-ready yet but he offered to get Ryan over to Healy Lake Rd. via his ATV. Ryan said that wouldn't work as from our lake to Healy Lake Rd. the District had not yet plowed that portion of Fraserburg Rd. and there was 3-4 feet of snow accumulation.

Fast forward to Christmas Day and Ryan reaches out to Guy just before 09:00am, looking for help. After Ryan left our lake at almost midnight on Christmas Eve he got a few kms towards home when his truck went off the road and was beached in the

Since Guy was unable to get to Ryan, Colin headed back into Bracebridge to flag down either a District or Town plow operator to come out and rescue Ryan. Around 11:00am Colin got a plow operator out onto

Fraserburg Rd. and by 1:00pm Christmas Day Ryan was finally back home. He couldn't play Santa for his daughter as planned on Christmas Eve, but she was the first to greet him at the door when he got home. There were smiles all around on Christmas Day as everyone was back at home together, and everyone was safe and sound enjoying their Christmas in a winter wonderland.

Ryan did yeoman's work getting and trying to keep our roads passable through the blizzard and over the holiday season. Many in the region and in the province were stranded and/or shut in for days while crews worked to clear roads, and we're grateful for the attentiveness and loyalty of Muskoka Landscapers.

Muskoka Second Home Survey

The District of Muskoka is looking for information from 'second home residents', i.e. people who own second homes in Muskoka. The District has more second home residents than permanent residents, and is looking to better understand what is important to them. Your feedback informs community organizations and partner municipalities about how we can deliver services to suit everyone's unique needs. If you are a second home resident, answer the Second Home Survey [here](#) before February 27, 2023.

Lake Ice Safety

As of Jan 15th the ice thickness on Leech Lake was approximately 8". This can vary from place to place on the lake, and the shoreline ice is most often less thick. Be careful about going on the ice and be sure you're safe before you go – it's not worth an accident. See the graphic below for more info.

Recommended Minimum Ice Thickness

(Rough Guidelines for New Clear Ice Only)



Keepers of the trash

The District Of Muskoka off season garbage / recycling collection started Sunday Nov-06-2022. They will be onsite every two weeks up until the first week of May 2023. Their garbage/recycling vehicle will be stationed behind, or close by, where the mail boxes are located on Lorne Rd. All of your recyclable paper/cardboard waste can now go into one bag, no more sorting.

As a property owner in Bracebridge you're freely entitled to dispose of the following at each collection:

- Maximum of 4 bags of garbage
- Unlimited bags of recycling

Also of note, the district is now charging for the disposal of brush, branches and tree trunks at the Rosewarne Rd. dump site. Tree trunks must be no larger than 12" in diameter. There will be days or weeks in the future when you can dump this for free, but only if it's storm-damaged brush.

We are waiting on the District Of Muskoka to publish its 2023 waste collection schedule as there were rumours/discussions about introducing bi-weekly curbside pick-up on Leech Lake.

A Few Things To Do In Muskoka In Winter

It's hard to believe, but after skating on the lake, snowmobiling on our roads and trails, building a snowman, having a snowball fight, enjoying hot chocolate around an evening bonfire, sitting in front of a cozy woodstove, etc., people might still be looking for things to do. Muskoka does not disappoint! There are loads of opportunities to keep busy outdoors and indoors, the things below are just a few to whet your whistle.

Take a goat along with you on a scenic walk on a forest trail: <https://www.muskokagoaway.com/>

Dogsledding: <http://www.northridgeranch.ca/index.html>

Snowshoeing trails: <https://www.discovermuskoka.ca/things-to-do/snowshoeing/>

Skating trails: <https://www.discovermuskoka.ca/things-to-do/ice-skating-trails/>

Snowmobile rentals and tours: <https://www.discovermuskoka.ca/things-to-do/snowmobiling-rentals/>

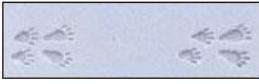
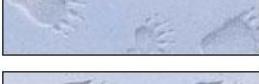
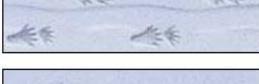
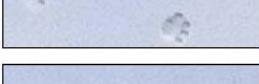
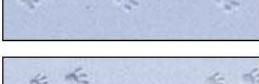
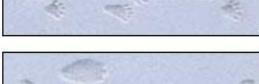
And one of the best:

Fire and Ice Festival – Food, Fun and Frost in the Town of Bracebridge

Sat Jan-28 and Sun-Jan-29: <https://fireandicebracebridge.com/2023-schedule>

Animal Tracks

*Paintings by Erick Ingraham
Tracks are not to scale.*

White-footed Mouse		
Long-tailed Weasel		
Common Porcupine		
Gray Squirrel		
Eastern Chipmunk		
Moose		
Black Bear		
American Beaver		
Gray Wolf		
Lynx		
Striped Skunk		
White-tailed Deer		
Red Fox		
Red Squirrel		
Common Raccoon		
Snowshoe Hare		

What Is That Animal Track In The Snow???

There are oodles of animals and birds around Leech Lake. Some are happy to co-habit with us, but many others prefer not to interact. Sometimes we hear them. Less often we see them, and that is always a treat. More often, they are elusive and we live in hope of a glimpse.

Winter is an amazing time to see the movements of the many birds and animals with whom we share our lake and surrounding land. The snow shows the evidence of their tracks as they make their way across our lake and land looking for food and shelter.

It's great fun to put on your Sherlock Holmes hat, pick up your magnifying glass and investigate the tracks you find around Leech Lake. Here are some good resources that can help you figure out what you're looking at and who your bird and animal neighbours are!

- Ontario Parks:

<https://www.ontarioparks.com/parksblog/snow-sleuths-winter-tracking/>

- Canadian Wildlife Federation: <https://cwf-fcf.org/en/resources/DIY/outside/tracking-down-winter-wildlife.html> (there is also a guide you can download)

- Farmers' Almanac:

<https://www.almanac.com/content/animal-track-identification>

If this is a real interest in your family, there's a great book you might like to add to your cottage collection:

<https://www.canadianoutdoorequipment.com/animal-tracks-of-ontario.html>

Keepers of the Lake – Thank You!

Lloyd Watson - For his time, energy and expense to move the last of the fallen leaves back into the forest. The piece of equipment he used not only moved all the leaves from the road edges, but it also cleared loose brush, twigs, small rocks, leaves and branches from the ditches as well.

Steve Cooke - For his time and energy taking down a few dying/leaning trees to make the North road safer and provide increased driver visibility.

Bits 'n Pieces

1. **FOCA Alert:** the most recent Federation of Cottage Associations newsletter is full of great [information](#).
2. **MIA:** A floating dock / raft is currently moored at the boat launch. This 8'x8' or 10'x10' dock is the 3rd orphaned one found in 2022. Come and claim it in the spring if it's yours. By Victoria Day weekend it will end up at the District's dump site.
3. **Leave it to Beavers:** Watch your shoreline for damage or removal of Birch and Cedar trees/Hedges. We have a total of 5 beavers living in the area close to the Turtle bridge / Echo Creek Hunt camp. They have been known over the years to visit Leech lake during the winter months to dine on your trees.
4. **Friends of the Muskoka Watershed (FOTMW):** They will be hosting a Zoom meeting on "Salt and Lake Health" on 01/24/2023 at 06:00pm. In order to attend / participate you need to be a member. Reach out to sandy@fotmw.org to register/participate in this presentation.
5. **FYI:** FOTMW is now a registered charity. Visit them here <https://fotmw.org/>
6. **Ash Drive:** The fireplace, campfire and woodstove ash collections will be starting up again in 2023. You can drop off your ash at the District of Muskoka dump site on Rosewarne Dr. More than 1,000 people have contributed 27,000 kilograms of ash to the Friends of the Muskoka Watershed (FOTMW) in the past three years to help protect Muskoka's forests and watersheds. Upcoming ash collection dates are **Saturday January 21st - 9:30am to 1:00pm and Saturday February 18th - 9:30am to 1:00pm.**

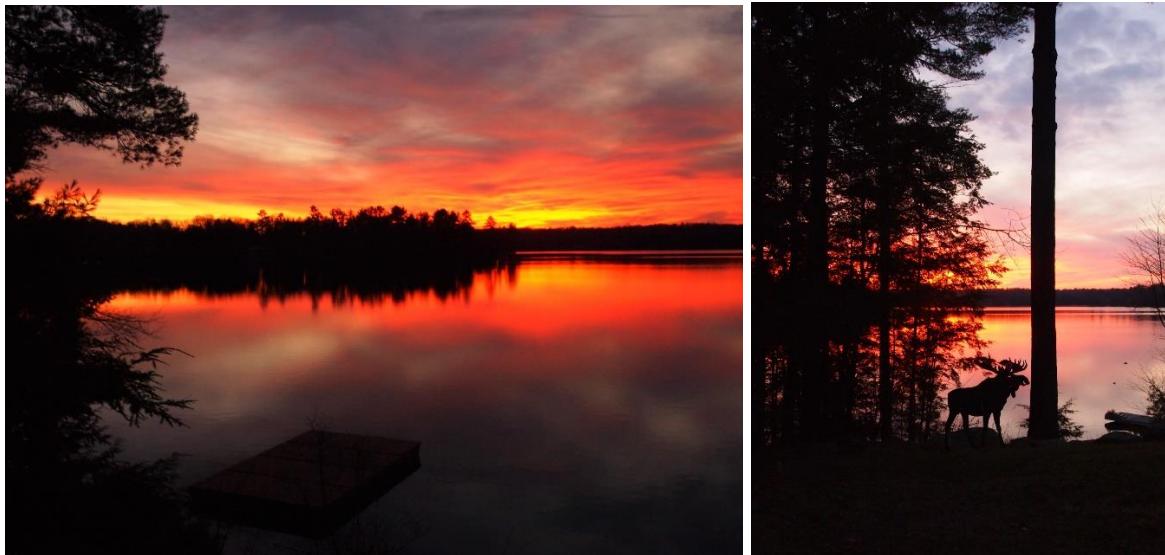


Photo Cred: all the beautiful photos in this newsletter were provided by Guy Pattison.

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