

# RIVER TALK

sept/oct, 2025



**TIA SUMMER RECAP**  
**FIRE PUMP RECAP**  
**FALL BIRD MIGRATION**  
**FIRST BOATBUILDERS**





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The Thousand Islands Association (TIA) is a not for profit organization that is proactive in addressing safety on the river, promoting environmental preservation and supporting the interests of the Community for the benefit of the 1000 Islands region of the St. Lawrence River.



# From the Editor

It's been a strange end of the season on the river this year. The trees, having lost their leaves very early, seemed to give us a very long runway for fall. But we are officially here now, staring down the final acts of closing up and pulling the water line.

Sometimes the moment leaves me with sadness over the end of the summer, but often I find solace in the seasons knowing there will be anticipation of spring and a promise to return to the river.

The goodbye isn't an end, but a "see you later".

Cue the countdown to spring 2026.

*Stephanie Scott.*  
*Editor*

Due to seasonality, varying water levels, vandalism and equipment failure, the Thousand Islands Association (TIA) disclaims any liability for the absence of any of its shoal markers from time to time.



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# President's Message

Peter Fitton

**Bring on the arrival of fall, harvest festivals, and changing of fall foliage!**



September and October are beautiful months on the river, full of tranquility and colours. It is a significant time for bird migration, as flocks travel to warmer climates for feeding and breeding. This migration is shared by summer residents, who are closing cottages and hosting fall suppers with river friends and family as they clean out their kitchens!

It's an annual time for us to enjoy this season and focus on the fall harvest and preparations for winter months. Thanksgiving gives opportunities for gatherings and sharing traditions. It's also prime time for apple picking, so here are a few recipes to test from the Farmers Almanac:

Perfect Apple Pie, Apple Waffles & Cyder Syrup, and Baked Apples Filled with Sausage

Fall is a time to reflect and give thanks to our local business sponsors, to our membership, and to our Grant Partners for your much appreciated and continued support allowing TIA to fulfil its river community mission.

Enjoy the season and reading this issue of River Talk!

## **TIA was busy this year with its River Safety, Environmental Awareness and Community Support missions, examples include:**

**Fire Pump Initiative** – TIA partnered with Leeds 1000 Islands Fire Services to promote Fire Prevention clinics demonstrating the pumps and giving presentations about island fire safety. The Fire Services Team attended the July 19 AGM showcasing the new fire boat Marine 3 and the two portable fire pumps donated by TIA.

**CPR and AED Training** – On July 10, at the 1000 Islands History Museum, over 20 area residents participated in a TIA sponsored 4-hour certified training session provided by ACTION FIRST AID INC. A show of hands by the membership at the AGM indicated a desire for TIA to continue with this initiative for 2026.

**Environment Awareness** – Our Committee headed by Jean Dabros and Allie Regan was very active: website information enhancement, building Turtle nest boxes, distribution and attending Turtle Hatching Release Day at Landon's Bay with Parks Canada, networking with Wolfe Lake international loon conservation group and promoting elimination of harmful lead fishing tackle, TIA representation at Dock Talks and STR Winter Conference, organizing trash free river clean up events, and more.

**Community Support** – Under the management of the Environmental Committee, awarding Canadian and American scholarships for high school graduate applicants from the local river community who were accepted and attending post-secondary education (more about this opportunity on our website).

**Rock Marker Reinvestment** – With the support of TLTI and the Town of Gananoque, TIA researched and purchased 40 new Rock Markers from a new manufacturer to replace inventory worn out by the forces of nature. Read more here about our Director Jim Côté's Case Study reporting to Sealite on TIA's purchase decision.





Cathy (TI Kayaking), Phil (Gananoque Rotary Club) Allie (TIA) Mike Dabros, Mike (TI Kayaking).  
Photos by Jean Dabros

# Trash Free River Cleanup Day

Thousand Islands Association joined forces with Save the River for a second bi-national river cleanup day this season. On Saturday, Sept. 20th several environmentally motivated volunteers collected buckets of unwanted trash being removed from the shorelines.

TIA would like to give a special shout out to Thousand Island Kayaking for their donation of a dedicated barge/driver/volunteer pickers to take volunteers out to three of the National Parks Islands-Aubrey, Beau Rivage and McDonald.





# TIA Receives Social Impact Award

At the 2025 1000 Islands Gananoque Chamber of Commerce Awards night, TIA was recognized for its commitment to the flagship shoal marker program ensuring the safety of boaters, aid to emergency rescue efforts, dedication to environmental awareness and community support.

Certificates from both MP, Michael Barrett and MPP, Steve Clark were received by Dan Baldock, TIA Secretary-Treasurer.



**TIA Secretary-Treasurer, Dan Baldock, receives acknowledgements on behalf of TIA at the 1000 Islands Gananoque Chamber of Commerce Awards night**



# TIA's 2025 Fire Pump Initiative: A big THANK YOU to Leeds 1000 Islands Fire Services

By: Jim Côté, Chair, River Safety

By all accounts, the 2025 Fire Pump Initiative was a resounding success, thanks to Leeds 1000 Islands Fire Services. Fire Services held six clinics demonstrating the pumps and giving presentations about island fire safety. In addition, they attended the July 19 AGM showcasing the new fire boat Marine 3 and the two portable fire pumps donated by TIA. Three clinics were held on islands and three on the new Ivy Lea Wharf. The initiative was so successful that it was covered by CBC TV and radio, and Fire Services were contacted by a cottage association in Québec about the using the initiative as a model in their area.



TIA extends thanks to Chief Mike Prior, FPO Doug Richardson (featured speaking in the accompanying photos), Captain Peter Evans and the other Fire Services personnel who participated in the clinics, including Randy Dickson and Bob Rymshaw.

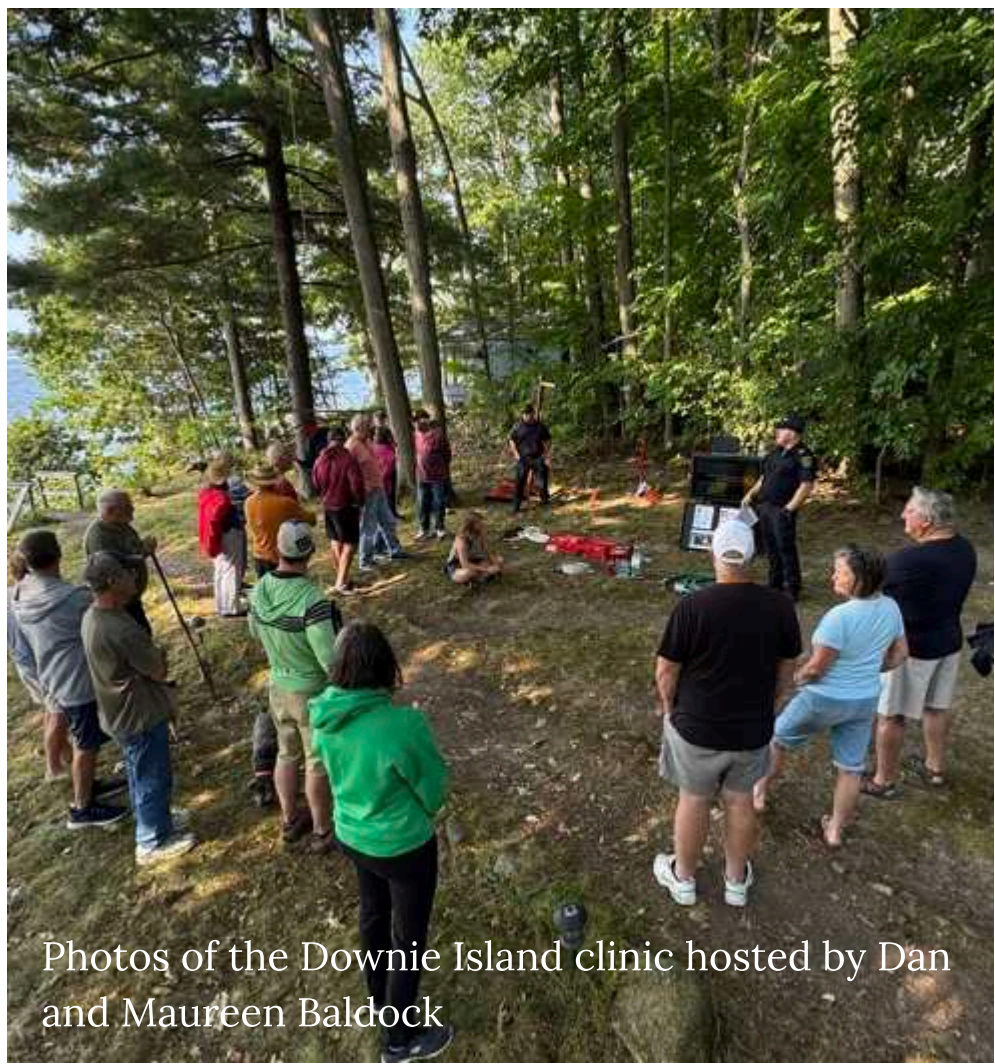


Thanks are also extended to the dozens of people who turned out for clinics and to the hosts of island clinics, including Dan and Maureen Baldock, and Jeff and Abby Rand. Feedback from those who attended these clinics included comments like “informative beyond words” and “this presentation opened my eyes to a number of things I hadn’t been thinking about ... particularly with regard to fire prevention and having a serious fire pump system on my island.”

In addition to the clinics this summer, Fire Services responded to numerous calls on the islands, many of these in the new fire boat, Marine 3. As of mid-September, they responded to 17 fire calls, 10 medical assists, and 11 other incidents (false alarms, police assists, and rescues). These calls included the fire on Ash Island that destroyed a cottage but thanks to Fire Services’ quick response time, the fire did not spread to the rest of the island. On this call alone, the new fire boat paid for itself.

We are truly fortunate to have such well-run and professionally organized Fire Services in our area.

Stay tuned for announcements of more coordination next year between TIA and Leeds 1000 Islands Fire Services in promoting public education about fire safety and emergency preparation.



Photos of the Downie Island clinic hosted by Dan and Maureen Baldock



# Thousands of Birds are Migrating this Fall While You are Sleeping

By: Stephanie Scott

On any given night in the fall, hundreds of birds migrate through the sky of the Thousand Islands on their way south. While some fly during daylight hours, it is common for warblers, vireos, sparrows, and other smaller land and songbirds to fly at night.

While it's a largely an unseen migration, it's not completely quiet. Most of these birds are quietly making night flight calls. Ones that differ from their sweet, springtime mating calls. If you are really careful, you can hear their night time calls.

## Why fly at night?

1. Free of daytime thermals, the atmosphere is more stable, making it easier to maintain a steady course, especially for smaller birds such as warblers that might fly as slowly as 15 miles per hour.
2. Cooler nighttime temperatures also help keep hard-working birds from overheating.
3. For birds that frequently wind up on the menu of hawks, cats, and other daytime predators, flying under cover of darkness can be a lifesaver.
4. Navigation: The stars and the moon provide celestial cues that birds use to navigate and orient themselves during their journey.



## How do birds navigate and find their way south?

**Celestial Cues:** Birds can use the position of the sun during the day and the stars at night to orient themselves. They can also detect polarized light through the clouds, which provides directional information from the sun.

**Earth's Magnetic Field:** Birds possess a type of "magnetic compass" that helps them sense the Earth's magnetic field. This allows for navigation even when the sun or stars aren't visible. Some evidence suggests a molecule called cryptochrome in their retinas is sensitive to the magnetic field, while other research points to magnetite receptors in their beaks.

**Landmarks:** Over time, birds learn to use recognizable landscape features, such as rivers, mountain ranges, and coastlines, to follow specific routes.

**Sense of Smell:** Studies show that some birds can navigate over land using their sense of smell, indicating another navigational sense is in play.

**Spatial Memory:** Experienced birds develop strong spatial memories, similar to how they remember food caches. This enables them to "map" and return to specific locations, a skill that improves with each successful migration.

Photo of Niagara and Bloodletter Isl. by Larry Pringle

## Want to learn more?





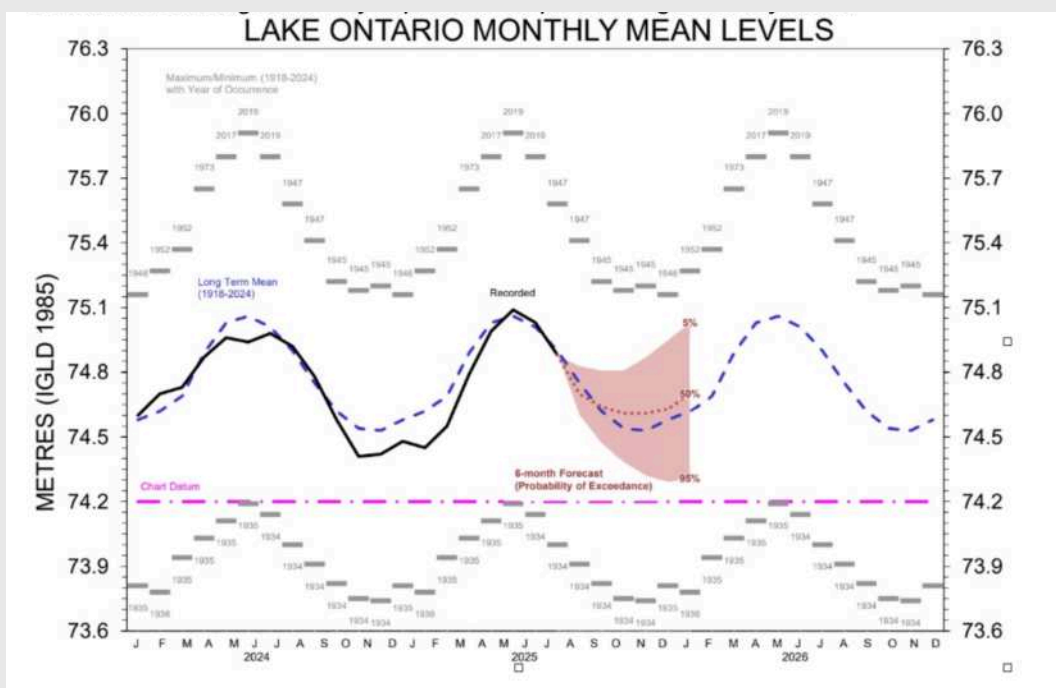
# Shallower Water Levels are STILL Profoundly NORMAL

## Sept 26, 2025

By: TIA Water Levels Committee, Barton, Stewart & White

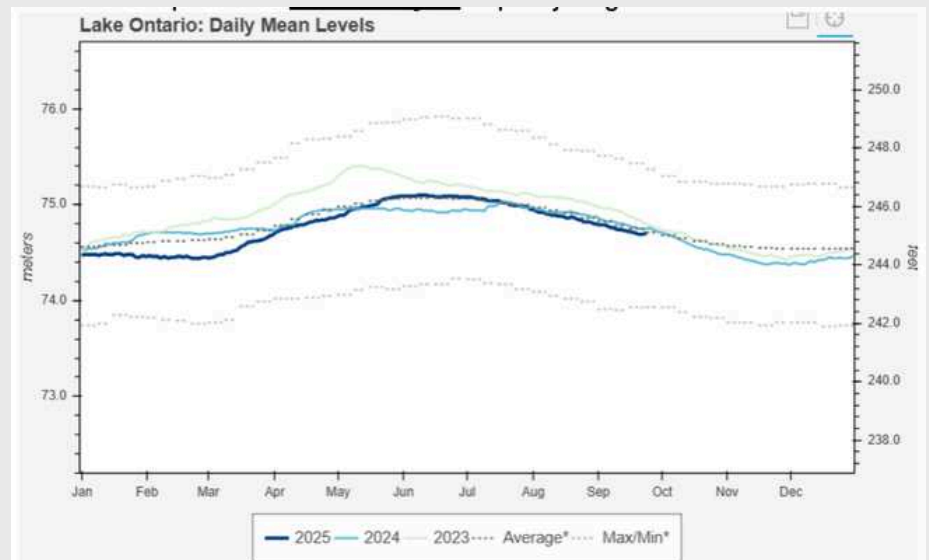
The average level of Lake Ontario (LO) for the last week of September is 74.71m. As of Sept 26th, the current level is 74.70m. It doesn't get much closer to average than that! In the River at Alex Bay, the water level is 1.5 feet above chart datum. It has risen a little bit in the last couple of days thanks to a week of much needed drought-breaking rain in the LO Basin.

According to the ILOSLR Board, the August monthly mean level for Lake Ontario was just 2 cm below the monthly average (1918 to 2024). That's right in the middle of the normal range of levels we usually see in August, even when much of the Lake Ontario Basin had entered Drought Level 1. We just haven't been getting enough rain. The islands are tinder dry. Last weekend there was a small underground fire on Island 54, just NW of Downie and south of Bouchier Islands. The fact that fire on these islands often travels underground may explain the surprise during these dry times.



One surprise with the Sept 6-month forecast is the range from 5% to 95% probability is greater than the seasonal level swing! That's huge uncertainty – but that's the reality of how much difference a really wet fall/winter vs. a very dry fall/winter could have on the system. The forecast data we take most seriously is the red dotted line indicating the 50% mean prediction.

The Lake Ontario (LO): Daily Mean Levels is an interactive graph showing this year, 2024, 2023, historical average, and min/max. Notice how 'Average' our levels have been since April 2025. Click to try it



We'd also like to call your attention to something a little unusual that's happening this fall. The International Lake Ontario – St. Lawrence River Board just issued a press release indicating they will make a minor deviation in mid-October to aid boat haul-out in Lac St. Louis. You might be thinking “Wait, don't they do that frequently??” It IS a common practice to aid boat haul-out in Lake St. Lawrence in the fall – but this year, they're doing it to help Lac St. Louis further downriver! That hasn't happened since 2012.

Lake St. Lawrence levels are considerably higher than average, so they don't need any special attention this year. Lac St. Louis, however, has been running nearly half a meter below average for weeks. The minor deviation will send them some extra water for 36 hours from early October 17th to late October 18th to raise levels for boat haul-out. The impact on Lake Ontario and upper St. Lawrence River levels will be extremely minor – just a temporary 0.34 cm impact that will be offset/paid back in future weeks. This is a great example of utilizing the capabilities of the system to benefit of a set of stakeholders without causing harm to others. For more info about this uncommon minor deviation, you can find the full press release [here](#).



# Pest-Prevention Checklist: Keep Rodents out of your Cottage this Winter.

By: Stephanie Scott

Few things are as disheartening on cottage opening day in the spring than discovering unwanted squatters moved in over the winter. It's worth the extra time to run through this pest-prevention checklist.

## **Seal & Block Entry Points**

- Inspect the foundation, siding, and roofline for gaps or cracks; seal with steel wool, caulking, or expanding foam.
- Install or repair door sweeps and weather stripping.
- Cover chimney openings with a screen or cap.
- Check and repair window screens and vents.
- Plug pipe and wire entry holes with steel wool or metal mesh (mice can chew through foam alone).





## **Remove Attractants**

- Take home or seal all food (pantry staples, pet food, dry goods).
- Empty and clean fridge, freezer, cupboards, and drawers.
- Remove garbage, recycling, and compost.
- Store candles, soap, and scented items in sealed containers (critters love them).

## **Deter Rodents & Insects**

- Place dryer sheets, mothballs, or cedar blocks in closets and storage bins.
- Consider rodent repellents (natural or commercial).
- Set snap traps or bait stations in strategic spots (if safe from pets/kids)

## **Protect Fabrics & Paper**

- Remove or store bedding, towels, and clothing in sealed bins.
- Protect books, magazines, and paper products (they're nesting material).

## **Outdoor Prep**

- Bring in or secure BBQs, cushions, and outdoor furniture (squirrels nest in them).
- Store firewood away from the cottage (at least 20-30 feet).
- Pick up leaf piles, birdseed, and fallen fruit that attract critters.

## **Final Steps**

- Close the fireplace damper.
- Flush and cover toilets, sinks, and drains (or add RV antifreeze to traps).
- Make sure windows and doors are locked tight.
- Do a final walk-around to check for openings critters could exploit.







Celebrating 45 Years on the River in 2026

## TIA Supporter St. Lawrence Cruise Lines

In today's fast-paced world, finding genuine connection and relaxation can seem like an impossible dream. Yet along the historic St. Lawrence River, an extraordinary experience awaits those seeking the perfect blend of relaxation and discovery. St. Lawrence Cruise Lines offers an intimate journey that transforms the traditional cruise experience into something truly remarkable, where every moment unfolds at exactly the right pace.

St. Lawrence Cruise Lines began operations in 1981 with the goal of introducing Canada's rivers to the world and that tradition continues in 2026. Travellers can experience the tremendous beauty and rich history of the St. Lawrence River on the small ship CANADIAN EMPRESS. This past year, the vessel was recognized as the '2025 Ship of the Year' by the American Steamship Historical Society.

This one-of-a-kind small ship has an exterior profile that evokes a classic 20th century riverboat, complete with brass railings and other aspects reminiscent of the Victorian era. This profile, in combination with a modern interior style and conveniences, makes it the perfect vessel to transport passengers through some of the most beautiful spaces in North America.

Cruise options for 2026 range from four to seven nights, starting at \$2234 CAD per person, based on double occupancy. Single supplement rooms are available, if required. Stateroom fares include all accommodations, meals, ship's reserve wine and domestic beer during meals, and daily shore excursions.

Call 1-800-267-7868 to find out more about cruise availability on the Canadian Empress, or request a brochure through their website.

# 2025 AGM Prize Winners



## **Grand Prize:**

Charles Stuard and Pamela Frederick, Squaw Island, Lake Fleet group received an original 16x20 acrylic artwork "Stormy River" by local artist Debbie Morrison.

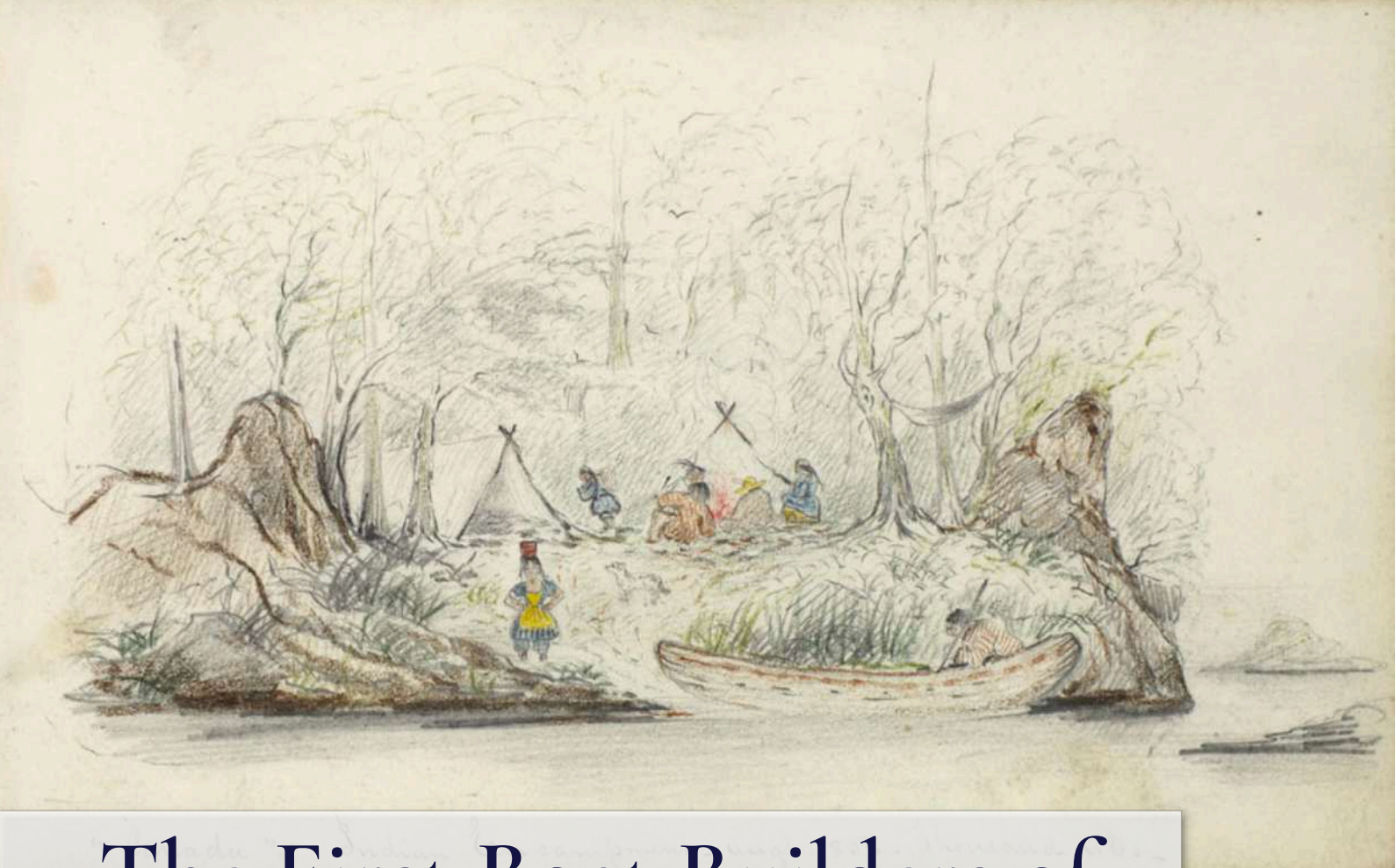
## **1st Runner up:**

Winston Brown, Canadian Boater

## **2nd Runner up:**

Bill McLaird and Denise Lyons, Bonnieview Island, Ivy Lea group





# The First Boat Builders of the Thousand Islands

By: Karen Wand

The original boat builders of the Thousand Islands were First Nations, who skillfully designed and built the first canoes. Indigenous people historically used bark canoes on the St. Lawrence River; for them, the birch bark canoe was their primary means of water transportation, trade, and survival, as it was especially suited to the region's geography and environment.

Although a settlement was identified at Toniata, now known as Jones Creek, near Mallorytown, Ontario, the principal inhabitants of the area were nomadic groups, especially the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee. They moved in and out of the area, depending on the season, travelling to where they would find food. We are aware of this as they left evidence on the islands indicative of their presence.

Before the first mass-produced wooden canoes were built in the mid-1800s, Indigenous peoples had developed a method for constructing light, durable, and waterproof canoes from readily available natural materials. Birch bark was the perfect material for building canoes, as it was smooth, hard, lightweight, resilient, and waterproof. Unlike other trees, birch bark offered exceptional building qualities, as its grain ran around the tree rather than along it, enabling the bark to be shaped more skillfully. Bark sheets would be sewn together using black spruce roots. White cedar was the preferred choice for the framework. Spruce gum was melted and mixed with fat to keep the seam flexible and waterproof. The material used to build these canoes can be found in the forests of eastern Canada. Canoes are efficient and adaptable boats. They are ideal for various conditions, ranging from shallow, sandy rivers to rocky rapids. A skilled paddler can manoeuvre a canoe past obstacles, forge upriver against strong currents, or glide quietly across a calm lake. Canoes are portable and can be carried or portaged around waterfalls or between rivers.

The canoe enabled transportation and trade through the farthest reaches of what would become Canada. When explorers from Europe arrived in the St. Lawrence River Valley in the 1600s, they immediately recognised the value of this amazing Indigenous boat and adopted it for their use.

First Nations historically engaged in fishing and hunting as a vital means of survival. In contrast, for non-Indigenous people, these practices have evolved into recreational activities that have significantly contributed to the region's tourist and recreational development since the 1860s.

The birch bark canoe is a treasured national icon, symbolising community, family, and connection for Indigenous Peoples.



The background image shows a close-up of a beekeeper wearing a white protective suit and a mesh veil. The beekeeper is holding a wooden frame from a beehive, which is densely populated with bees. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting with foliage.

# The Hives of Huckleberry

By: Stephanie Scott

**They say that at a certain age your hobby choices are pickleball, curling or gardening. I chose BEES instead!**

For several months leading up to the spring of 2023, I spent hours watching educational videos, taking courses and joining a local group of beekeepers to gain as much knowledge as I could. I was confident in my new venture providing I could get one question answered; Would there be enough food at the cottage to sustain 2 hives of bees? We weren't on the mainland, there were no large fields of neighbouring crops to pollinate, the only food for the bees would be what grew naturally present on our property. Yes, I knew bees would fly a few kilometres to find food, but they also don't fly when the wind is up. So that posed another possible concern.

In May of 2023, I set out with my new bees. I donned a very new and clean beekeepers suit, loaded my boat with two bee hives and ferried the bees out to the island looking more than a bit crazy.

My very first year was a success by all accounts. The bees found enough food and I had a decent amount of honey to harvest! Well, that is to say, enough to share with some family and friends.

It turns out the bees were all over the pollen from our Maple and Willow trees in the spring, the wild raspberry and wild rose flowers in the summer months and the wildflowers that popped up along the shoreline that bloomed until the fall (see the pics below). I even caught them on the rivers edge drinking water on hot days.



Following my first year, success with my bees has been up and down. Sometimes a hive would not survive the winter, sometimes the varroa mites were harder to manage. This year I had a swarm leave (sincerest apologies to my neighbours). The drought this past summer was also hard on the bees since few things flowered to the extent they usually do. The summer dearth was long, and there was no extra honey to harvest. I left it all to the bees for the winter this year. I guess you win some and you loose some.

Despite the lack of honey this season, I wasn't upset. I tend to measure my success more in terms of bee education. I've been known to round up my cottage guests, suit them up and drag them into my hives for a lesson or two on the wonders of the honey bee. They are truly amazing creatures.



## Local wildflowers bees love in the fall:

**Milkweed**

**Goldenrod**

**Astor**

**Yarrow**

**Joe Pye  
Weed**





A large white and blue tour boat with "ROCKPORT BOAT LINE" written on its side is sailing on a body of water. In the background, there is a large, historic stone castle with multiple towers and a conical roof, surrounded by lush green trees. A small white lighthouse is visible on the left side of the image.

# TIA Supporter Rockport Boat Line

Rockport Cruises is a world class leader in tourism with thousands of tourists from all over the world visiting the picturesque historic village of Rockport Ontario each season.

The sightseeing cruises showcase all the major features of the islands including Zavikon Island, Boldt Castle and Millionaire's Row. Visitors can explore the magnificent Boldt Castle as the cruise takes them to the most famous of the 1000 Islands, Heart Island or a full day excursion on a Two Castle Tour with a picnic lunch served onboard. All cruises showcase Boldt Castle.

Rockport Boat Line was founded in 1954. There was one wooden twin engine boat that carried 47 passengers. Four years later a new tour boat was added and several additions were made in the company's services including a souvenir gift shop and a full service restaurant. Rockport Boat Line has grown into a strong vibrant company over the years. Today the business includes 4 tour boats ranging from 200-300 passengers, Rockport General Store and Gift shop, Island View Restaurant and Patio Bar. In 2007 the company purchased the neighbouring resort known as the Boathouse Country Inn and Cornwall's Pub.

Rockport Boat Line is passionate about giving back to their local community. The boat line has been an active supporter of local charities, events and organizations. [www.rockportcruises.com](http://www.rockportcruises.com)



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