**Bell and Fraser Lakes Association**

**2023 Annual General Meeting**

August 26, 2023

10:00 AM – 1:30 PM

59 Horace Cross, La Pêche, QC J0X 2W0

Present: Julie Cote (President), Doug Forster (Treasurer), Kathryn Reynolds (Secretary), Wayne Selman, Tanya-Hill-Lariviere, Andrew Fairbairn, Justin Unsworth, Claudine Simard, Ruth Salmon, Louise de la Gorgondiere, Dominic Hill, Kathy Winsor, Janet St-Jean, Dawn Cooper, Micheline Beaudry-Somcynsky, David Frere, Amy Whiting, Monique Lariviere, Ron Hill, Brian Cross, Hope MacLean, Eva O’Grady, Lino G. Alves, Jen Roy, Bruno Roy, Lynda Renaud, Anik Bernatchez, David Cross, Barb Riedel, Kendall Nichols, Veronique Rivest, Gary Cole, Emily Duncan, Justin Nadeau.

1. **Approval of 2022 minutes**

Hope queried why the 2022 minutes did not reflect the vote on trapping beavers. Kathryn

explained that the discussion about trapping beavers is captured in the 2021 minutes.

The 2022 minutes were approved.

1. **Treasurer’s report**

Doug presented the 2022 treasurer's report. The treasurer’s report was approved.

1. **Website update**

Eva introduced the BFLA updated website, [www.bellfraserlakesassociation.ca](http://www.bellfraserlakesassociation.ca). The new site is built on wix.com, is user friendly and easy to maintain. All members are encouraged to visit the site and update their browser so they find it more easily rather than the old site. Eva will continue to build and maintain the site.

There are FAQs, which require more content. Certain minutes are missing. All members are asked to take a look at the available minutes on the website, and search their records for the years that are missing. Please send them to Eva, who will add them to the site.

Emily explained that some Association records were damaged by flooding in her basement. Hope was working on drying them out to try to salvage them.

The newcomers’ booklet requires updating. Jen and Dawn volunteered to update the booklet and Lise offered to reflect those changes in the French version.

It was suggested to add a chat to the events page so that residents can add specific events of interest, and a link to be added to the municipal mailing list.

1. **Lake testing**

David explained that he collected the lake water samples on Thursday, and as such the tests are not yet ready. Although only 2 sites per lake were tested last year, David returned to the 4 testing sites per lake, in order to maintain the same data points for comparison year over year.

He conducted an extensive survey of aquatic plants present in Bell and Fraser lakes, which he distributed in hard copy at the AGM. He will email it to anyone who requests it, and will send it to Eva for posting on the website.

David did not observe any cyanobacteria bloom in the lakes. He has purchased a microscope to be able to observe Cyanobacteria in water samples.

David observed numerous branches gnawed by beavers floating in the lakes. He and many others observed the water quality seemed very good this year.

Property owners can remove a corridor of weeds in order to access the lake, but it is best to leave as is, as they grow back.

1. **Report on beaver control and mitigation measures**

Ron explained that the beavers blocked the culvert at Horace Cross, which he has to clean every day. They have taken down many trees on his property, and many others have observed the same.

Ron contacted the MRC, met with them. The MRC examined the culvert at the egress of Bell lake (rte 366 culvert). The MRC confirmed they would pay for the trapping of beavers to maintain free flow of water. The trapper came July 25, 2023 to lay the traps. He caught 1 beaver at the Horace Cross culvert.

Since the beaver was caught, Ron has not had to clean out the culvert between the lakes. However, the culvert at the Bell lake egress is not being maintained and the water level rose so high the water was flowing backwards from Bell to Fraser. This required volunteers to clean on a daily basis.

Ron intends on continuing to trap on his property as necessary.

Janet stated that she contacted the trapper and he explained that beavers caught in the off season are waste, whereas beavers caught during the trapping season (between October 25 and March 15) are of higher quality and are given to an Inuit woman who uses the beaver pelt and meat. Janet stated that, in addition to the one beaver that was caught, two muskrats were also trapped, and two turtles were trapped but released.

Janet proposed an alternative to trapping beavers, in the form of beaver deceivers.

Hope raised concerns that trapping beavers may result in a weakening of the dam between Bell lake and the wetland above it. As recorded in the 2012 minutes, 10 beavers were trapped in 2012, and the same year a huge volume of water and material flowed into Bell lake from the wetland due to a busted beaver dam. Three years later, the cyanobacteria bloom occurred. Hope suggested that perhaps the beavers did not return to rebuild the dam and therefore the marsh continued to feed nutrients into Bell lake. To remove beavers entirely from the lake would be a mistake, as it may lead to future toxic blooms. We should look to Europeans and the British, who are reintroducing beavers into their environments.

Ron noted the beavers do come back every year, and that the intention of trapping beaver is not to kill every beaver, but to reduce the population and deter them from damming the culverts.

Julie explained that Graham Ramstead had prepared a proposal for a new beaver deceiver, which would cost $2500.

Kathryn stated that a consideration in installing a beaver deceiver is whether it will touch or go through the grate. Currently, the pipes installed pass through the grate, which is MTQ property. These were installed without permission from the MTQ. However, the materials were all free, either picked up from people’s garbage or donated by residents. Therefore, there would not be much lost if the MTQ were to remove them. This should be a consideration in determining next steps. If the deceiver is costly, we may wish to take a lower risk approach, and request permission from the MTQ.

Micheline supported a long-term investment in better technology.

Anne posited that the MTQ is not likely to take any action and that she would be in support of proceeding without MTQ permission. She would be willing to put in money to help pay for it.

Ron noted that in addition to the technological solution, a maintenance program is required. An additional concern with the beavers is they remove trees from shorelines, which is contrary to efforts to protect the lakes from nutrient run-off.

Amy raised concerns about Giardia, otherwise known as beaver fever. This is an illness found in some beavers which can be passed onto humans and pets. In addition to swimming, there are people who draw water from the lakes for their household use. The beaver population is elevated in the beaver ponds on (former) Potvin land, and concerns about overpopulation and Giardia may warrant controlling the population. Kathy asked David if we could test for Giardia and he said it would likely be linked to higher coliform levels (which we do test for).

Jen noted that Giardia is present in 14% of beavers, and that Cody, a biologist who used to live in the community, always said there were pros and cons to everything.

Louise explained that in 2006 Horace Cross road was flooded and this put residents of 25-30 homes at risk. She is concerned about property damage caused by beavers.

Justin Nadeau noted that the solution must take into consideration that volunteers are required to maintain the operation of the deceiver. This has been an issue with the current scenario, as those who take on the cleaning of the culverts burn out.

Anik posited that both avenues should be maintained, that is, a technological solution for the long-term as well as trapping in the short-term if necessary.

Janet proposed a new committee be set up focussed strictly on finding a technological solution to the beavers. Members agreed to the formation of the beaver committee as follows:

* The Committee is mandated to explore and propose a technological solution for preventing the damming of both the Horace Cross and the 366 culverts.
* The Committee must develop a budget and a maintenance plan.
* The proposal must be submitted to the Association members for approval prior to proceeding.
* The following individuals volunteered to be on the Committee
  + Janet
  + Hope
  + Louise
  + David Frere
  + It was suggested by some members that Graham Ramstead be invited to participate as he has ben an active volunteer and has already developed a proposal

1. **Cross Family update**

Brian Cross explained that numerous people walk on the Cross roads. However, he stated that anyone who does not have a right of way should not be walking on the roads. This includes individuals who live on rte 366 and chemin Wells. Those who live on Parc-de-la-Peche have the right of way to access Bell lake, on foot. People who have guests should walk with them.

Several in attendance expressed disappointment and concerns that this fractures the sense of community around the lakes. Others supported preventing those who do not have legal access from walking on the roads.

Hope noted that this is not a lake Association issue, this is a private issue. Previously, when she was President, the Executive refused to communicate on behalf of the Cross family as the topic is not within the Association’s mandate.

1. **Lake Health reminders**

Kathryn provided the following reminders to reduce nutrification of the lakes:

* Avoid all phosphates in household products. All detergents should say NO PHOSPHATES or PHOSPHATE FREE.
* Maintain septic systems so that they are well functioning.
* Plant a minimum 5 metres shoreline buffer. This can also be accomplished by not mowing and letting nature take its course.
* Control run-off from your property so that it does not flow into the lake.
* Clean up fire pits so the ashes do not leach into the lake when it rains.
* Avoid all fertilisers on your lawn; limit use in small areas such as gardens set back from the lake.
* Do not set off fireworks over the lake, as the ash contains nitrogen, a nutrient which can trigger cyanobacteria blooms

1. **Elections**

Kathryn Reynolds stepped down as Secretary. Julie accepted to run again as President, with the condition that an attitude of respect prevail.

The executive was elected as follows:

President: Julie Cote, reelected

Vice-President: Hope MacLean, elected

Treasurer: Doug Forster, reelected

Secretary: Amy Whiting, elected

Hope supports that email conversations continue to discuss complex or difficult issues. Kathryn explained that the email list was created and collected only for official lake association business, and not as a conduit for individuals to communicate with members. In fact in many instances the executive has refused to provide the list to others or send emails unrelated to lake association business. This is the reason that Association communications are normally sent as a blind copy, so that the entire email list is not revealed to all. Several members agreed that they do not consent to their emails being used for group discussions.

Some suggested the Facebook group Lac Bell/Fraser lake be used for group discussions. Hope expressed that the Facebook page is not ideal for sharing complex information or documents, unlike email which does allow it. Julie reminded everyone that this is not an Association page, and she does not monitor it nor is she responsible for answering questions or concerns that are raised on that page.