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Heda/Grindstone Provincial Park; Photo: Paul Mutch

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“There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature – the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.”

– Rachel Carson, American scientist and writer

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

I hope you were able to enjoy your summer despite the COVID restrictions, which certainly made it a season to remember. I was fortunate to spend some time exploring the mountains in Banff National Park, including the western headwaters of the Lake Winnipeg watershed. Physical distancing is fairly easy in the mountains, but some usually busy spots were eerily empty. Spending a few days with everything I need in my backpack, in nature, always helps to restore me, and even though I was two days from home, being within the watershed, I still felt connected to Lake Winnipeg.

I am so impressed by the Lake Winnipeg Foundation’s work this summer. With the usual fundraising activities being curtailed, LWF staff, members and supporters used their imaginations – and the results were truly inspiring. Thank you to everyone who chose to get involved in such creative ways, and who contributed to some hugely successful events.

The snow has arrived here in Manitoba – but LWF’s efforts carry on. Locally, we continue to advocate for accelerated phosphorus reduction at Winnipeg’s north end sewage treatment plant. At the national level, we have articulated five actions for the federal government in recognition of its important role in protecting Lake Winnipeg. And, we’re developing new resources for teachers to help bring freshwater education into classrooms, even if these days, many of those classrooms are virtual ones. You can read more about all of these activities in this newsletter.

I hope you are staying healthy and safe.
– Selena Randall, LWF President



Banff National Park; Photo: Chris Randall

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Become an LWF member

With an annual donation of \$50 or more, you’ll become an LWF member, adding your voice to the call for a healthy Lake Winnipeg, now and for future generations. LWF members receive our newsletter twice a year and have the right to vote at our annual general meetings.

LWF and COVID-19

LWF continues to adapt our operations to keep our community safe. Most staff are working remotely and our office remains closed to the public until further notice. Thank you for your understanding.

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AMERICAN STUDENTS JOIN LWF'S WATER SAMPLING EFFORTS

The Lake Winnipeg Community-Based Monitoring Network (LWCBMN) has expanded into the United States with the participation of Grade 10 biology students from North Dakota.

Honour students from Minot's Central Campus are collecting samples from the Souris River, using equipment supplied by LWF and following protocols developed by LWF science advisors. The Souris River originates in Saskatchewan before looping down into North Dakota, then back up into Manitoba where it connects with the Assiniboine River, which ultimately flows into Lake Winnipeg.

Since 2016, LWCBMN has partnered with watershed districts, Manitoba schools, academic researchers, individuals, First Nations and industries to collect water samples. Central Campus is the first international partner to join the network.

The cross-border initiative has begun as a pilot project. Once LWF staff have worked out logistical protocols related to cross-border shipping, the goal is to establish a long-term sampling site in Minot.

We're excited to offer these students the chance to get outside the classroom and actively participate in freshwater science – and we're grateful for their contribution to our data set and our growing understanding of phosphorus loading to Lake Winnipeg.



Honours biology students from Minot's Central Campus collect samples from the Souris River; Photo: Joe Super



Top row (l-r): LWIC Program Coordinator Rebecca Sinclair, panelist Rosalie Labilloy; panelist Lee Spence; middle row (l-r): panelist Dr. Kelsey Leonard, panelist Waasekom Niin, LWIC Director Daniel Gladu Kanu; bottom row (l-r): LWIC Social Media and Communications Coordinator Carlie Kane; panelist Grandmother Sherry Copenace; Screenshot: Manitoba Eco-Network

WOMEN AND WATER

In Indigenous traditional knowledge systems, a unique relationship exists between women and “nibi,” the Anishinaabe word for “water.” This relationship was explored in an online event hosted by the Lake Winnipeg Indigenous Collective in October.

Panelists included an elder, a water scientist, a youth leader, a consultant and a ceremonial helper. Though each brought their own unique perspective on water and our collective responsibility to protect it, several themes emerged. One shared viewpoint was the understanding of water not as a resource but rather, as a cherished relative. Recognition of this kinship relationship can be seen in the growing global movement to grant legal personhood to rivers and lakes.

Panelists also encouraged participants to consider how each of us can take action for water, whether through participating in ceremony, learning and reclaiming traditional knowledge, getting involved in advocacy efforts or stepping into leadership roles. Water protection was called “together work.” By building a relationship to water, humans build relationships with each other – and in doing so, we become stronger.

MISSED THE WEBINAR?

Answering Our Call to Nibi: A Conversation on Women and Water is available online at youtube.com/watch?v=hBYc_so5pcQ.



LAKE WINNIPEG HEALTH PLAN UPDATE

Victoria Beach; Photo: Jeope Wolfe

FOCUS ON PHOSPHORUS AT WINNIPEG'S LARGEST SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT

One year after provincial and city governments promised to accelerate phosphorus reduction at Winnipeg's North End Water Pollution Control Centre (NEWPCC), the most recent upgrade plan for the plant still lacks a firm commitment to reduce its phosphorus load before 2032.

In 2019, LWF and our partners proposed an interim phosphorus-reduction solution – a retrofit to existing infrastructure that could be implemented quickly and cost-effectively to reduce the phosphorus load to Lake Winnipeg.

Provincial officials have repeatedly asked the city to provide a plan for interim phosphorus reduction at the NEWPCC. However, under the Manitoba government's regulatory oversight, necessary upgrades to reduce the NEWPCC's impact to Lake Winnipeg have been continually delayed. Total phosphorus concentrations in the effluent released from the plant are routinely three times higher than 1 mg/L, the provincial licence limit set in 2005.

Last fall, citizens' concerns for the lake forced this issue into the spotlight – and onto the agenda of local politicians. Winnipeg's city council passed a motion to immediately begin testing interim phosphorus-removal options; once an effective solution is identified and reviewed by the city's water and waste committee, it is to be implemented at the NEWPCC within 14 months.

In compliance with the council's 2019 motion, the city must commit to implementing an interim phosphorus removal retrofit at the NEWPCC by April 2022, 14 months after city councillors will review a 2020 report on the most effective solution.

Existing sludge facilities at the NEWPCC are projected to limit the phosphorus removal that can initially be achieved through an interim solution. Sludge, also called biosolids,

is a by-product of wastewater treatment; phosphorus-removal processes concentrate phosphorus within sludge, keeping it out of liquid effluent discharged into local waterways. This increases sludge volume.

While acknowledging that existing end-of-life sludge facilities will struggle to handle increases in sludge volume, the latest NEWPCC upgrade plan fails to capitalize on the construction of new biosolids facilities to remove this constraint and maximize the effectiveness of the interim phosphorus solution.

To accelerate phosphorus compliance, both the city and the province must commit to designing and building new biosolids facilities that are capable of optimizing phosphorus reduction and meeting the provincial licence limit of 1 mg/L.

With design of new biosolids facilities slated to begin in early 2021, the absence of such a commitment in the NEWPCC upgrade plan is incredibly concerning. We expect our governments to plan for success – Lake Winnipeg cannot afford any more missed opportunities.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Contact your elected officials. Remind them that you expect them to fulfill their commitment to focus on phosphorus at the NEWPCC. Visit lakewinnipegfoundation.org for more information and for an example of an effective message to make your voice heard.



Action 3: Setting the Standard for Wastewater Treatment

The water we use to flush our toilets ends up in Lake Winnipeg. It's our collective responsibility to ensure it's clean when it gets there.

EDUCATION FOR ACTION

NEW ONLINE EDUCATION RESOURCES TO INSPIRE YOUTH FRESHWATER STEWARDSHIP

In the words of Senegalese conservationist Baba Dioum, “In the end we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught.”

Meaningful change to the health of our lakes and rivers starts with learning. The COVID-19 pandemic has required educators to adapt established routines and activities this school year. We are adapting, too – expanding the scope and impact of our education program with the addition of accessible, online freshwater educational resources.

Through our education program, LWF assists teachers to engage students on water stewardship issues and inspire youth action. We are continuing to offer free school presentations and are now doing this exclusively online. We have also begun exploring new ways to support teachers through the development of virtual learning opportunities and other digital resources which can help bring water lessons to life for a new generation of lake-lovers. These resources will be offered in both English and French.

Our goals for an updated education program include: fostering a sense of personal and collective responsibility for the health of Lake Winnipeg and its watershed; inspiring and coordinating active water stewardship; further solidifying the understanding of key Manitoba curricular concepts by presenting them within the context of Lake Winnipeg and its watershed; and creating a space for truth and reconciliation in program delivery.

Émilie Ferguson has stepped into the role of LWF Education Coordinator and will spend the coming months working to actualize these goals. Émilie has previously worked with LWF



LWF Education Coordinator Émilie Ferguson enjoys the outdoors at IISD-Experimental Lakes Area; Photo: Émilie Ferguson

as part of the Lake Winnipeg Community-Based Monitoring Network, and has a background in both environmental science and environmental education.

“I strongly believe that environmental education is a tool for positive change because we need to recognize how the choices we make every day have an impact on our environment,” she says.

“My goal is to empower students. I want them to know that they have a voice when it comes to freshwater stewardship – and that their voice matters. I want to provide students with the tools they’ll need to take action for our land and waters.”

To learn more about LWF’s education program or to book an online presentation, visit the “For Teachers” page on our website, under “Resources.”



Action 8: Taking Responsibility

We can all take action as stewards of our precious fresh water, consumers with purchasing power and citizens living in our shared watershed.

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

THE LAKE WINNIPEG FOUNDATION THANKS ALL OUR VALUED SUPPORTERS

LWF is proud to be part of a passionate community of lake-lovers. Thank you to the following individuals and organizations who gave generously between Oct. 1, 2019 and Sept. 30, 2020. Together, we're ensuring our lake is healthy and safe, now and for future generations.

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Rob Langdon and Josephine Phelan

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Bike to the Beach riders on Highway 59, en route to Victoria Beach; photo: Chris Mason, South Basin Photoworks



Left to right: The Franz Family walking for water | Anna & Oli host a garage sale | Paul hiking Elk Island | Sullivan, Evelyn, Wren & Spencer (not pictured) host a bracelet sale | Catherine, Maude & Jane walking for water

ADAPTATION AND CREATIVITY DEFINE LWF'S 2020 SUMMER SEASON

Typically, LWF's summer is filled with community events. These offer an opportunity for lake-lovers to connect with each other, get updated on the foundation's work and generate funds to protect the lake we all love so much.

Due to COVID-19, many community-led events were cancelled and, for the first time since 2007, LWF did not host any Walk for Water events. Instead, we encouraged citizens to get involved in different ways.

Lake-lovers answered the call. People across the watershed donated to the campaign, with some choosing to organize their own initiatives, too. From individual walks and family hikes to community bike tours, craft sales, an online art auction, a reading-themed fundraiser and even a "yoga happy hour," the variety of activities was remarkable. It was particularly inspiring to see the enthusiastic participation of so many children and youth. Thank you to all the community volunteers who kept morale high and momentum rolling while adapting to changing circumstances – and thanks to everyone who chose to support healthy water in ways that also helped keep each other safe.

A highlight of the season was a new event, Bike to the Beach, a 130 km group ride from Winnipeg to Victoria Beach.

Helped along by ideal weather conditions, 43 determined cyclists raised over \$57,000 for a healthy Lake Winnipeg!

Thank you to all the riders, volunteers and donors who helped make this event so memorable. Thanks, too, to Bike to the Beach organizer Scott McDonald and sponsors Pollard Family Foundation, Canada Life, Quadrant Private Wealth, Price Industries and Spark Power, and to the Manitoba Cycling Association, Woodcock Cycle Works, Habitat for Humanity, Criti Care, Mountain Bean Coffee, Tim Horton's Beausejour, Sherwood Grocery, South Basin Photo Works and the Victoria Beach Clubhouse for their support. Discussions have already begun for next year's ride – stay tuned!

During uncertain times, it has been heartening to witness such community spirit in action. From all of us here at LWF, thank you for staying connected while staying apart as we work together to protect Lake Winnipeg.

SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT

A TRANSFORMATIONAL INVESTMENT IN HOMEGROWN AGRICULTURAL SOLUTIONS

It's been decades since Rob Langdon has called Canada home – but Lake Winnipeg still holds a very special place in his heart. Rob and his wife Jo own a cottage at Victoria Beach, a community in which he has spent summers since he was a small child and a place he continues to visit each year. "It's a huge part of my life," he says. "It's part of my identity."

Born and raised in Winnipeg, Langdon settled in Dallas, Texas, after completing medical school. He worked for 20 years as an emergency room doctor before pivoting into the technology field and starting a medical software company. The career move proved to be a lucrative one; having recently sold his venture to a Fortune 500 company, Rob now spends his retirement following his scientific curiosity and investing in his passions – among them, the lake he so loves.

It was Rob's concern for Lake Winnipeg's deteriorating health which first led him to LWF. "As the problem has increased, so has my interest," he explains. He was particularly impressed with the Lake Winnipeg Community-Based Monitoring Network (LWCBMN) and its water sampling activities across rural Manitoba. "The collaboration between the scientists and the volunteers and the staff – to me, that's amazing."

This year, Langdon stepped up his support with the largest individual donation in LWF's 15-year history: a six-figure investment in LWF's Agricultural Water Stewardship Program, an emerging focus area for the foundation. Building on lessons learned from LWCBMN, the program's goal is to identify phosphorus beneficial management practices (PBMPs) adapted for Manitoba's unique landscape, climate and farming operations. "Beneficial management practices" is a broad term for agricultural activities designed to minimize negative impacts on the environment; PBMPs are specifically focused on reducing phosphorus loading to protect water quality. "We all know how important reducing the point source at the North End sewage plant



Rob Langdon and Jo Phelan; Photo: Rob Langdon

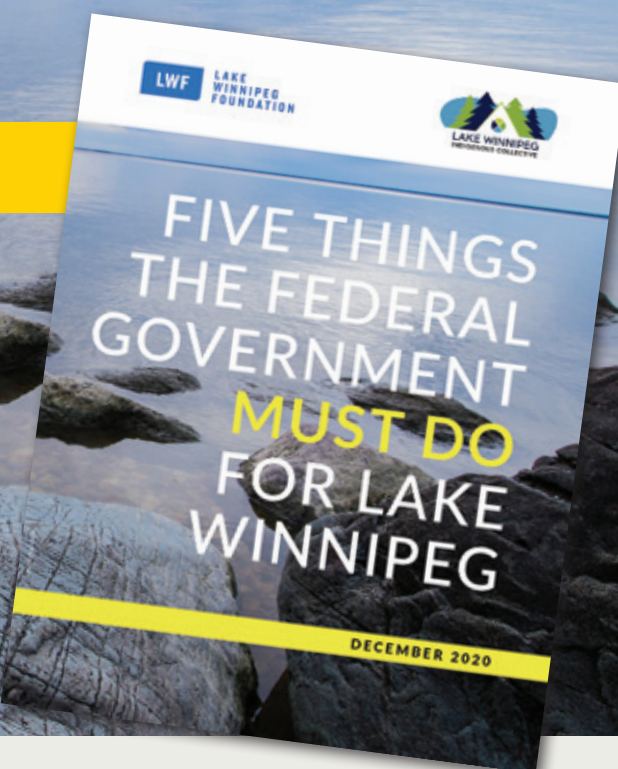
is," he says, "but really, it seems to me that the Holy Grail is the phosphorus loading from the agricultural sector and all of the non-point sources – and that's an incredibly daunting task."

Rob's generous gift is funding the evaluation of two water-retention pilot projects in south-central Manitoba. Automated monitoring equipment will be installed at the inlet and outlet points of a large-scale constructed wetland ecosystem near Holland and a small-scale retention pond near Kaleida, enabling continuous collection of water samples and water discharge throughout the open-water season. LWF will use established LWCBMN protocols to analyze data in order to learn how much and what forms of phosphorus are entering and leaving each system – and, in one project, to explore the potential for on-farm water and phosphorus recycling and reuse.

Unassailable scientific data and cross-sector collaboration will be essential components for success, Rob says. He's hoping his gift will foster new alliances that will lead to win-win solutions for both Lake Winnipeg and Manitoba's business and agricultural communities – and he's hoping to inspire others to get involved, too.

"I invite everyone to see this as an opportunity," he says. "We don't want Manitoba to be known as a province with one of the most polluted lakes in the world but rather, a place where citizens banded together to find solutions."

FEDERAL ACTION FOR WATER



Hecla Island; Photo: Paul Mutch

FIVE WAYS CANADA'S LEADERS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR LAKE WINNIPEG

In Canada – a country defined by our rivers, lakes and oceans – water touches all aspects of our lives. Nearly every government agency has a role to play in protecting and managing water, and understandably, this can lead to overlapping jurisdictions and unintended gaps. To address this, the federal government has proposed a new Canada Water Agency, “to work together with the provinces, territories, Indigenous communities, local authorities, scientists and others to find the best ways to keep our water safe, clean and well-managed.”

But do we need a brand-new federal agency to achieve this goal? We're not so sure.

Improving the health of Lake Winnipeg – and addressing the myriad other regional water challenges across the country – certainly requires collaboration, commitment and ingenuity. Finding agreement between competing interests is hard work. Effective solutions require continuous evaluation and adaptation. Turning policy into practice is never a simple task.

But a new agency provides no guarantee that any of this hard work will be easier. In fact, the very act of launching a new Canada Water Agency might itself be detrimental, drawing energy and funding away from the very real efforts required on the ground, across the country, to protect Canada's fresh water.

Perhaps, rather than starting over, we need to follow through on commitments that have already been made, to act on legislation that already exists and to fulfill mandates that have long been established.

Together, LWF and the Lake Winnipeg Indigenous Collective have released a report which identifies five things the federal government can do for Lake Winnipeg right now:

1. Recognize phosphorus as the cause of blue-green algal blooms on Lake Winnipeg;
 2. Use evidence to guarantee impact from every federal government dollar spent to reduce phosphorus loading to Lake Winnipeg;
 3. Support Indigenous peoples in reclaiming and restoring their relationship with water;
 4. Increase enforcement of evidence-based policy and practices for freshwater health;
 5. Fulfill jurisdictional responsibilities through concrete action and strengthened accountability.
-

Over a century of water challenges in this country will not be resolved by re-naming bureaucratic systems. Instead, we must focus our attention and resources on strengthening established programs, acting on robust evidence, and enforcing existing laws and regulations. With these tools already in hand, we can achieve real impact for Lake Winnipeg – and for all our country's lakes and rivers.

Find our report online at lakewinnipegfoundation.org.

NOW MORE THAN EVER

Dear LWF supporter,

It has been a challenging year.

The global pandemic has affected us all in different ways – loved ones lost, celebrations cancelled, businesses struggling, families separated.

We've all had to stay close to home to stay safe. For my family and I, as for so many others, this has meant more time at the lake. How lucky we have been, to have so near at hand these clear, clean waters and beautiful, wild places. The lake is our refuge, our escape, our sanctuary during these troubled times.

What would we do if this was lost to us? Where would we turn for peace, for rejuvenation, for connection?

Even as the pandemic slows our pace and forces us apart, it redoubles our convictions and reaffirms our connections: Lake Winnipeg, like thousands of other lakes across the country, must be protected. Now more than ever, we depend on these natural spaces that have always provided for our physical, mental and emotional well-being.

Take care – of yourself and of others. Stay connected across the distances. Together, we will emerge grateful for each other and for the lake that sustains us.



Alexis Kanu
Executive Director

cut mail-in form here

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NOW *more than ever*

Patricia Beach, Photo: Paul Mutch

YOUR GIFT MAKES A HEALTHY LAKE WINNIPEG POSSIBLE.

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