

# THE WATERSHED OBSERVER

Wavey Creek Photo: Jesse Vanderhart

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“There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.” – Meg Wheatley, American leadership consultant

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

As the Lake Winnipeg Foundation enters its 15th year, I’m thrilled to be starting my term as LWF President. We have a fantastic, engaged board of directors who support a truly dedicated team of staff working to make Lake Winnipeg and its watershed a healthier place. The breadth and diversity of the articles in this newsletter demonstrate the growing impact the foundation is having on behalf of the lake.

I first learned about LWF nearly 10 years ago, while working at the University of Manitoba in a provincial government-supported program, researching solutions for the water-quality problems in the Lake Winnipeg watershed. I was pleased to be able to support the foundation; in 2015, I began volunteering with the Grants Committee. I served a few years there while also bringing my skills and knowledge from my time working to prevent water pollution with the UK Environment Agency to LWF’s Science Advisory Council. I remain a SAC member – and, in 2016, I joined the board.

With beach season now underway, a time to enjoy the lake with our families and friends, things look a little different. Social distancing has become a new normal, our vacations have become ‘staycations,’ and our favourite patios, restaurants and stores have had to adapt to meet the requirements brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. Even our annual fundraising has gone virtual, and I hope you are finding ways to participate.

However and wherever you enjoy your summer, stay healthy and stay safe.

– Selena Randall, LWF President



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Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram! We share updates about our work, photos and videos, interesting facts about Lake Winnipeg, and links to information on freshwater science and water stewardship.

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## HAVE YOUR SAY ON CANADA'S FRESHWATER FUTURE

The federal government is soliciting public feedback on current and future freshwater management challenges, and the role a new Canada Water Agency could play in protecting our nation's water.

The new agency was first mentioned in the December 2019 mandate letters issued by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to the federal ministers of Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Its goal is "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."

In June 2020, ECCC launched an online consultation process hosted on the digital engagement platform PlaceSpeak. This is an opportunity for citizens to share their thoughts with federal decision-makers.

To be effective, the new agency must recognize regional water priorities, scale up existing successes and increase collaboration across sectors. LWF will be releasing specific recommendations later this year – stay tuned!

Lake Winnipeg is the world's 10th largest freshwater lake. It is ecologically, economically and culturally important to our nation, and its health must be a national priority.

**Visit [placespeak.com/CanadaWaterAgency](https://placespeak.com/CanadaWaterAgency) to speak up for a healthy Lake Winnipeg.**

## LONG-TERM, CITIZEN-GENERATED WATER-QUALITY DATA IDENTIFIES TRENDS, INFORMS ACTION

Long-term data generated by the Lake Winnipeg Community-Based Monitoring Network (LWCBMN) are providing valuable information to guide local action and address algae blooms.

In 2019, LWCBMN's fourth field season, citizen volunteers and watershed professionals collected 2,039 samples from 161 sites. Phosphorus hotspots were once again identified in locations consistent with hotspots observed in 2016 and 2017. This highlights the value of long-term monitoring: by identifying spatial patterns that persist over multiple years despite interannual variation in precipitation, LWCBMN helps focus local efforts to manage phosphorus across rural landscapes.

The start of LWCBMN's 2020 field season coincided with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic – an unprecedented circumstance which required an innovative response. Since March, LWCBMN has been sampling at select sites using adapted protocols to protect the health of volunteers and staff. For example, to minimize physical contact, volunteers are using drinking-water bottles to collect samples instead of the bottles usually distributed by LWF as part of their kits.

Data continuity is an important aspect of any long-term monitoring program. Thanks to the commitment and dedication of LWCBMN's citizen scientists and partners, the network can continue to inform practical solutions for local waterways and Lake Winnipeg.

**Find LWCBMN's 2019 network report online at: [lakewinnipegfoundation.org/lake-winnipeg-community-based-monitoring-network](https://lakewinnipegfoundation.org/lake-winnipeg-community-based-monitoring-network).**

## FOCUS ON PHOSPHORUS

Victoria Beach on Lake Winnipeg, 2019, Photo: Mikaela MacKenzie, Winnipeg Free Press



### UNDERSTANDING THE CAUSES AND CONTROLS OF FRESHWATER EUTROPHICATION

Eutrophication – the overfertilization of aquatic systems – results in excessive growth of algae, with economic, health and environmental implications. Lake Winnipeg, like many lakes across Canada and around the world, is experiencing increasingly severe algae blooms as a result of human actions and land-use change within the watershed.

In the 1960s, when algae blooms first plagued the Great Lakes, the government of Canada established the Experimental Lakes Area, a one-of-a-kind freshwater research facility in northwestern Ontario comprised of 58 small lakes and their surrounding watersheds. Created to answer questions about eutrophication, this unique natural laboratory conducts whole-ecosystem experiments which mimic real-world situations, making scientific conclusions more reliable than those based on small-scale lab studies.

The first experiments tackled at the Experimental Lakes Area (now known as IISD-ELA) were designed to identify the cause of algae blooms on freshwater lakes. Several nutrients were put to the test.

In the middle of Lake 226, a plastic curtain was installed. Carbon and nitrogen were added to one side of the lake, while carbon, nitrogen and phosphorus were added to the other side. Only the half which received phosphorus produced algae blooms. The answer was clear.



The Lake 226 experiment demonstrated the connection between phosphorus and algae blooms. This iconic picture has been described as the single most powerful image in the history of limnology. Photo: IISD Experimental Lakes Area, 1973

Another experiment, on Lake 227, is the world's longest-running controlled study on algae blooms – it began in 1969 and continues to this day. At first, researchers routinely dosed the lake with excessive amounts of both phosphorus and nitrogen. Over the years, the amount of nitrogen added was gradually decreased and, in 1990, researchers stopped adding it completely. Algae blooms continued to appear in Lake 227 with the same intensity because of the ongoing addition of phosphorus. Nitrogen reduction had no effect.

Our responses to urgent environmental challenges must be based on the best-available data, and decades of research at IISD-ELA have demonstrated that in order to control algae blooms, we must focus on phosphorus. With this impressive body of knowledge guiding our work, LWF remains committed to reducing phosphorus loading to Lake Winnipeg in order to improve the health of this vital freshwater ecosystem.



## SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT

### FIFTEEN YEARS OF FRESHWATER STEWARDSHIP

In 2005, LWF's founders met around a kitchen table on the western shore of Lake Winnipeg, concerned with the changes they were observing on the lake and determined to make a difference.

Since then, LWF has evolved into a leading freshwater organization in Manitoba, nationally recognized for our ability to link citizen-driven action and evidence-based policy. With the guidance of our Science Advisory Council, we have invested in research and collaborated with partners on important initiatives across our shared watershed; advocated governments and provided lake-lovers with practical tools to do the same; and deepened public understanding of the complex challenges facing Lake Winnipeg – and the need for solutions.

Through it all, the passion and dedication of our members has remained at the forefront, spurring our efforts forward.

After 15 years of collective effort, our shared concern for Lake Winnipeg's health continues to connect us. As we adapt to new realities, we remain committed to building the political will, partner capacity and public support needed to create meaningful change. Thank you for being part of our community.



Manigotagan River; Photo: Paul Mutch



Deanne and Bill at their Victoria Beach cottage; Photo: Scott McDonald

### A FAMILY TRADITION

For almost a decade, Bill and Deanne McDonald have been a constant presence within LWF, but the couple's personal connection to Lake Winnipeg dates back much further.

"Buying our Victoria Beach cottage in 1981 was definitely one of the best decisions we've ever made," says Deanne, a retired teacher and avid volunteer.

Since then, the couple, along with their three children and eight grandchildren, have made the most of cottage life: enjoying golf, tennis and swimming; connecting with friends over coffee on the Village Green; or relaxing with a book at the beach. "Even when it's cloudy, it's a pleasure to just be outside," Bill says.

A retired civil engineer who previously served on the executive of the Victoria Beach Club and as reeve of the Municipality of Victoria Beach, Bill joined LWF's board of directors in 2011, contributing a wealth of experience gained through years of community service. When his term on the board ended this spring, he left as its longest-serving member.

Deanne's involvement with LWF began in 2014, when she and longtime friend (and fellow VB cottager) Sandy McCaig took on co-coordinator duties for the Victoria Beach & District Walk for Water. Together with a team of passionate volunteers, they grew the annual event into one of LWF's most successful fundraisers. The work also inspired Deanne to learn more about the issues affecting Lake Winnipeg. "If you're going to be for something, let's understand what we're for," she says. "It's been an education."

Like Bill, Deanne stepped away from her role this year. The couple's son, Scott, has now picked up the torch: spearheading Bike to the Beach 2020, a fundraising group ride from Winnipeg to VB on Aug. 7, and continuing the McDonald family tradition of service to the lake they love.



## LWF IN CONVERSATION



Daniel and Alexis on the banks of the Whitemouth River, the boundary between Treaty 1 and Treaty 3 territories. Photo: Daniel Gladu Kanu

**Alexis Kanu is the Executive Director of LWF. Daniel Gladu Kanu is the Director of the Lake Winnipeg Indigenous Collective. Together, they are freshwater allies, spouses, co-parents – and treaty people.**

**ALEXIS:** This year, I read Treaty 1 for the first time. I've lived on Treaty 1 territory for four decades, and just now read the agreement that enables my very presence here as a non-Indigenous Canadian.

**DANIEL:** Treaty education has been absent from our schools. Even as an Anishinaabe person from Treaty 3 territory, enrolled in Indigenous Studies in university, I wasn't required to read any of the treaties. The general perception is that treaties grant generous rights to Indigenous people, but this ignores the Indigenous signatories' offer to share this beautiful land.

**A:** The treaties, by definition, were reciprocal agreements between sovereign nations. The British Crown sought consent to open Indigenous territories up to settlement and immigration, while ensuring "peace and good will" between Indigenous people and Canadians living within these territories.

**D:** For Indigenous people, the treaties were sacred, affirmed by pipe ceremonies that created a bond between nations as strong as any signature. Elders say the intent of the treaties is to share the land and ensure our people can maintain our way of life. Unfortunately, the experience for Indigenous people hasn't lived up to this promise. The newly formed country of Canada

didn't take its responsibilities seriously. Within a decade of signing Treaty 1, the effort to build residential schools and assimilate Indigenous people was in full swing. Yet, Indigenous people are still here.

**A:** And the treaties must be recognized as ongoing, perpetual agreements – not just historic documents.

**D:** Many Canadians now acknowledge the land and treaties. But acknowledgement should lead to reflection, and the potentially uneasy realization that each of us has played a role in perpetuating injustice.

**A:** We have focused on treaty rights – but perhaps even more important are treaty responsibilities.

**D:** Protecting water requires us all to work together. A renewed treaty relationship must ensure that Indigenous voices are respected in the fight for Lake Winnipeg.

**Lake Winnipeg is within the territories of Treaties 1, 2, 3 and 5. To learn more about treaty rights and responsibilities in Manitoba, visit the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba at [trcm.ca](http://trcm.ca).**

## LEAVE A LAKE LEGACY

Lake Winnipeg is both a part of our shared heritage and the legacy we're creating for future generations. Now, you can invest in tomorrow's lake memories with a gift that will keep giving for years to come.

In late 2019, LWF established an agency endowment fund with The Winnipeg Foundation. Supported through planned giving, this fund will serve as a long-term source of revenue, enabling LWF to direct resources to areas of greatest need while ensuring we deliver maximum impact. As a non-profit organization, having a diversified approach to funding is important – especially during uncertain times.

Improving Lake Winnipeg's health requires a lasting commitment to advocacy and action. Together, we're up for the challenge.

By leaving a legacy gift to LWF, you are building a hopeful future for our beloved lake.

To learn more about making a planned gift to LWF's agency endowment fund, contact The Winnipeg Foundation (204-944-9474) or visit [wpgfdn.org/giving/legacy-gifts](http://wpgfdn.org/giving/legacy-gifts).



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## YOUR GIFT MAKES A HEALTHY LAKE WINNIPEG POSSIBLE



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## GET INVOLVED ...for Lake Winnipeg!

Donate to our 2020 summer campaign or set up your own personal fundraiser.

Learn more at: [lakewinnipegfoundation.org/forlakewinnipeg2020](http://lakewinnipegfoundation.org/forlakewinnipeg2020)

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