

the watershed observer

Bird's Hill Park; Photo: Paul Mutch

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message from our chair

Advocacy is an integral part of the Lake Winnipeg Foundation's mandate – but why is it so important? Advocacy refers to the actions taken by individuals or organizations to promote positive change on a specific issue. These actions may include education, raising awareness, or lobbying different levels of government to influence decisions or policies. LWF enacts these by educating our members and the public on issues surrounding Lake Winnipeg, raising awareness when action is needed, and leading campaigns to promote better regulation in support of our province's biggest lake.

How do we know what to advocate for? LWF has an amazing team of scientists on our Science Advisory Council. These leading limnologists, hydrologists, and ecologists ensure LWF's work is credible and supported by sound science, by conducting their own research and reviewing our programs. But scientific findings do not become effective public policy on their own. Thus, the need for advocacy!

LWF works diligently to promote real solutions for a healthy Lake Winnipeg, based on sound science. But we can't do this alone. Most grants received by LWF prohibit the use of the associated funds for advocacy activities. This means that LWF relies on donations from our members to support this vital work in transforming science to policy.

Plus, politicians and decision makers are much more likely to act on supporting Lake Winnipeg when we advocate for change together. Last year, LWF celebrated the success of our collective advocacy for improved sewage treatment, with the implementation of a new chemical phosphorus-reduction solution at Winnipeg's North End Water Pollution Control Centre. As an engineer, I love to see when simple but effective solutions are used to solve a problem – and it was all thanks to our united call for action.

We all know the saying: the squeaky wheel gets the grease! Let us continue to work together to be a squeaky wheel calling for smart solutions for Lake Winnipeg.

Thank you for your invaluable support,

– Kathryn Dompierre, Chair, LWF Board of Directors

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news

■ LWF's 20th anniversary

It's LWF's birthday and everyone's invited!

To celebrate our 20th anniversary, we're offering \$20 memberships! From June 1, 2025 to May 31, 2026, you can renew your membership – or sign up your friends and family – for just \$20.

LWF members provide vital financial support for our work and strengthen our collective advocacy for a healthy Lake Winnipeg. When many voices speak up together, our impact surges. That's why LWF has set the ambitious goal of growing to 10,000 members!

Your donation today – whether \$20 or \$200 – makes you an integral part of our community of lake-lovers, celebrating two decades of grassroots action and advocacy for Lake Winnipeg!

To renew your membership or join our community, visit lakewinnipegfoundation.org/donate.

■ Meet Mackenzie!

LWF is pleased to welcome Mackenzie Nicolle as our new Membership & Events Coordinator.

With a passion for community-building, a deep commitment to social justice, and a degree in social sciences and communications, Mackenzie is eager to bring her creativity and energy to the LWF team. She's not afraid to roll up her sleeves and jump in, and is excited to take on a role that fosters continuous learning. Originally from rural Saskatchewan, Mackenzie is looking forward to exploring all that Lake Winnipeg has to offer.

"I am really excited about this job because I love the idea of being able to connect with people, flex my communication skills, and travel around Manitoba all for a good cause," says Mackenzie.

Connect with Mackenzie at the lake this summer, or via email at mackenzie@lakewinnipegfoundation.org.

■ New appointments to Manitoba's Clean Environment Commission

On Feb. 4, 2025, the provincial government appointed a new chair and 14 new commissioners to the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission (CEC). An arms-length agency, the CEC was established through the Environment Act to enable meaningful public participation in environmental decision-making. The CEC may host public hearings on proposed projects or undertake investigations on environmental concerns, generating advice and recommendations for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

The CEC's new chair, Aimée Craft, is an Anishinaabe-Métis lawyer and Associate Professor in the Faculty of Law at the University of Ottawa. Internationally recognized for her expertise in Indigenous laws, treaties and water, Aimee is also the author of the book **Treaty Words** and a former LWF board director from 2014 to 2016.

Newly appointed commissioners include Dr. Nora Casson, a University of Winnipeg professor and LWF science advisor; and Deborah Smith, former chief of Brokenhead Ojibway Nation, a founding nation of the Lake Winnipeg Indigenous Collective.

To learn more about the CEC and the experience of its chair and commissioners, visit cecmanitoba.ca.



Mackenzie Nicolle; Photo: Natasha Neustaedter Barg

contact us

107 - 62 Hargrave St, Wpg, MB, R3C 1N1
Treaty 1 Territory & Home of the Red River Métis
info@lakewinnipegfoundation.org | 204-956-0436
lakewinnipegfoundation.org



supporter spotlight



Member and volunteer Jason Barnabe inspires others to get involved

Jason Barnabe has always been connected to Lake Winnipeg, having spent lots of time at family cottages in Matlock as a kid. Now, Jason's lifelong connection to water draws him to the Seine River, which flows not far from his home south of Winnipeg. In his free time, you can find him biking, running, or kayaking in the summer, and cross-country skiing or skating in the winter.

Through his rental service, Horned Owl Kayaks, Jason shares his love of paddling with others, offering his customers a chance to explore the Seine River by kayak.

But Jason's business is not about making money. He charges a minimum fee for rentals, and he doesn't take a profit. Instead, he asks his customers to donate to one of three environmental charities – including LWF.

"Anything I make, I would just donate anyway," he explains. "I want to get more people out there to experience the river, or nature in general. If they hear about something happening to the land, they'll care because they've been there," he says.

Even when things go sideways – like when someone falls into the river – Jason says the experience still resonates. And of course, he's always ready to jump in and help out.

"You would think that the people who had the worst time wouldn't leave good reviews," he laughs. "But they're just thankful for me helping them out. I'll get dirty if I have to, just to get them going."

Jason's commitment to the environment extends beyond his kayak rental service. As a volunteer for the Lake Winnipeg Community-Based Monitoring Network (LWCBMN), Jason collects water samples from the Seine River near Prairie Grove – another activity that helps him stay connected to water and to Lake Winnipeg. He's been volunteering with LWCBMN for the last two years and is gearing up for his third field season. Water sampling fits perfectly with Jason's love of nature and of being active in the outdoors. In fact, you'll often find him biking out to his sampling site.

Through everything he does, Jason is working to build a community of people who care about the environment. Whether through his volunteer water-sampling, his kayak rentals, or his lifelong love of the outdoors, he shows that small acts can add up to something bigger. Jason's not only making a difference himself but inspiring others to join in and do the same.

Book your Seine River adventure at hornedowlkayaks.com.

collaborative solutions

Updates from the Lake Winnipeg Community-Based Monitoring Network

In March, volunteers, partners and data-users of the Lake Winnipeg Community-Based Monitoring Network (LWCBMN) gathered together to learn about network activities, explore how LWCBMN data are being used, and understand the importance of focusing on phosphorus to address Lake Winnipeg's algal blooms.

Newly released 2023 data adds to a growing LWCBMN dataset that dates back to 2016. Every year tells a slightly different story, depending on the timing and magnitude of the spring snowmelt, weather events like rainstorms, and land-use changes. Despite this annual variability, persistent phosphorus hotspots recur from year to year – showing us where to focus our efforts.

For the first time in 2023, LWCBMN water samples were analyzed for both total and dissolved phosphorus concentration. With these two measurements, we can also calculate the particulate phosphorus in each sample. The different proportions of dissolved and particulate phosphorus in a water sample help us understand more about potential sources of phosphorus in each watershed. Dissolved phosphorus typically comes from sources like sewage, manure and fertilizers, while particulate phosphorus is more likely to come from soil erosion and plant material.

This year's LWCBMN gathering – the first since the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted monitoring activities in the spring of 2020 – was an uplifting opportunity to celebrate the network's impact and to honour the collaborative efforts of all who participate. Volunteers, watershed district partners, LWF staff, and science advisors greatly appreciated the chance to re-connect and learn from one another.

Going forward, we are excited to host annual LWCBMN gatherings every spring – just one step in our plan to return to a regular data-sharing schedule. By ensuring that previous years' results are released prior to the next field season, we reaffirm our commitment to providing timely, responsive and publicly accessible data to inform Lake Winnipeg solutions.

Read LWCBMN's 2023 regional reports online at lakewinnipegfoundation.org/lwcbmn-regional-reports.

Launching LWCBMN's tenth field season!

The 2025 field season marks LWCBMN's tenth! The network began in 2016 to address the need for high-resolution data that identifies phosphorus hotspots within Lake Winnipeg's larger watershed. Recognizing the opportunity for dedicated community volunteers to fill this gap, LWF science advisors Dr. Greg McCullough and Mike Stainton developed LWCBMN's rigorous field, lab and analysis protocols to generate data compatible with those collected by federal and provincial monitoring programs. In just ten years, LWCBMN has grown to be a critically important and trusted source of phosphorus data, enabling targeted action in phosphorus hotspots. Thanks to all the volunteers and partners that make this possible!



Kendi collects a water sample. Photo: Claire Harvey

from the archives

In the first-ever edition of LWF's newsletter, published in November 2005, Dr. Lyle Lockhart explained the science that guides our work to combat algal blooms on Lake Winnipeg.

LAKE WINNIPEG FOUNDATION

Each summer we see blooms of algae in Lake Winnipeg. Blooms of these tiny plants happen in many lakes worldwide and have been investigated many times. Usually the cause turns out to be ourselves, partly our numbers and partly the things we do. When we want to get rid of things, we often put them into our lakes. Unfortunately, some of the things we put into the lake include the very things that algae eat. We have been feeding the lake and its algae too much and now we shall have to cut back.

Most algae need to get their nitrogen and phosphorus in biologically available forms. However, the blue-green algae are like legume plants because they can take in nitrogen gas and transform it into the forms of nitrogen they need. There is plenty of nitrogen around because about 80% of the air is nitrogen. Consequently, we can't control the growth of blue-green algae by starving them for nitrogen. They just make the nitrogen compounds they need and continue to grow in spite of us.

That's where phosphorus comes in. In the 1970s an important experiment was done at a lake in northwestern Ontario. Scientists there were trying to understand whether algal blooms in a lake could be caused by nitrogen or phosphorus. They found a lake shaped like an hourglass and built

A Canadian experiment demonstrated the role of phosphorus in feeding algal blooms.



Photo: ISD Experimental Lakes Area, 1973

a barrier to separate it into two halves.

Then they added carbon and nitrogen to one half, and carbon, nitrogen and phosphorus to the other half. In a short time, the half that received the phosphorus produced a massive bloom of blue-green algae but the half that got no phosphorus did not. The phosphorus made the difference.

Since the 1970s, scientists have been telling us inputs of phosphorus to Lake Winnipeg are too high. However, their warnings have never resulted in the regulations necessary to reduce the supply. Similar warnings were given about 30 years ago regarding Lake Erie. The supply of phosphorus to Lake Erie was reduced from about 28,000 tonnes per year to less than half of that. The problem with excess algae out in the open water disappeared. That is not to say that all the problems have disappeared from Lake Erie but the problem we have here in Lake Winnipeg was controlled.

There is still much to learn but the experience from the science and from other lakes is definitive. Our phosphorus levels are too high, and we need not wait for all the research results before taking steps to reduce inputs.

– *Watershed Observer* Volume 1, Issue 1, Nov. 2005

summer events

Sunday, July 13 | Walk for Water – Victoria Beach & District

9:30 a.m. @ Village Green, Victoria Beach

Our signature family-friendly event brings together lake-lovers from the East Beaches in support of evidence-based freshwater solutions.

Get your pledge form online at lakewinnipegfoundation.org/walkforwater2025.

Friday, August 8 | Bike to the Beach

11:00 a.m. @ Village Green, Victoria Beach

Cheer on the intrepid cyclists as they arrive in Victoria Beach after their 133 km ride from Winnipeg.

Donate online at lakewinnipegfoundation.org/biketotheseach2025.

Sunday, August 24 | Walk for Water in Dunnottar

9:30 am @ Whytefold Park, Dunnottar

For LWF's 20th anniversary, Walk for Water returns to the community that started it all! Join us to celebrate another summer at the lake.

Get your pledge form online at lakewinnipegfoundation.org/walkforwater2025.



Walk for Water Dunnottar in 2015. Photo: Paul Mutch



Donate online at:
lakewinnipegfoundation.org/donate

OR



Mail your cheque and this form to:
Lake Winnipeg Foundation
107-62 Hargrave St, Winnipeg, MB, R3C 1N1

Please find a cheque attached for:

- \$1,000 \$500 \$100
 \$50 \$20* \$ _____ (specify amount)

* Your donation of \$50+ makes you an LWF member!

\$20 in celebration of our 20th anniversary!

Name: _____ Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____ Lake Community: _____

This donation is in honour of: **OR** in memory of: _____

Please send recognition on my behalf to:

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107-62 Hargrave St
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