

Spring/Summer 2021 Newsletter



The past 18 months have been quiet, to say the least. None of us could have imagined the amount of change we would experience in such a short period of time. As Quebec moves to re-opening (moved to level 1 “green” on June 25th) we hope to see more of the lake community coming together this summer.

It was a remarkable spring thaw, with the ice going out surprisingly fast, and our friend Bob went swimming much earlier than expected. Congratulations to the winners of the Bob Challenge (Adrian Vaillancourt, and Louise Hamilton and Chris Walsh). A donation of \$690 was made to La Moisson Food Bank in the name of *Kids on the Lake*.

Activities like this keep the *Lake Life* spirit alive through the winter months. BTW, Bob emerged from his chilly swim without clothing! Look for a fun activity this summer as we get Bob some new outfits for the coming season.

On to the business at hand, here is an update on the various initiatives and activities of Amis-du-lac and an announcement about our Annual General Meeting to be held on Thursday, July 15th, 2021 at 7:00pm. Details below.

Mini-Biofilia Environmental Project

The Biofilia Project completed in 2012 took a comprehensive environmental inventory of our lake, its watershed and Lac Laurel - essentially covering our entire municipality. What we are calling “the mini-Biofilia project” was commissioned and financed last summer by Friends/Amis with help from the municipality. Sylvain Miller, a biologist/teacher/scuba diver, and his life and dive partner Anne Letourneau, a biochemist, managed the study and coordinated a group of volunteer lake youth who collected data instrumental in the study. It focused on measurements from a small number of the key parameters from the original project to assess how our lake has either progressed or regressed environmentally. It also reconciled various environmental studies dating back to the early 1970s and yielded a 50-year progress report. We are pleased to present the report (available here).

It is important to note that last year was unusual for the lake environmentally due to the pandemic – less boat traffic, fewer people = less septic activity, etc. This may have resulted in lower levels of indicators of environmental degradation than previous measurements. One of the key takeaways from this exercise is not so much that the lake is quite healthy, and improving, but more significantly it confirms that humans have a significant impact on the lake and the data demonstrates the need for us to remain vigilant.

We will once again be partnering with the municipality to fund Anne and Sylvain this summer, collecting the data that will be used to monitor the health of the lake and identify trends.

We are pleased to announce that Dave Kerr, retired Professor of Animal Science at the University of Vermont, has graciously agreed to join Amis-du-lac as our Science Advisor (a new position). Dave will be working with Anne and Sylvain this summer to help coordinate the activities and assist in the data collection and interpretation.

Anne and Sylvain will be making a presentation, and taking questions, during the upcoming AGM - details below.

Bonus! Anne and Sylvain created a beautiful video about the "life" that exists in our lake. [Check it out here.](#)

Here is the main 2012 BioFilia report (in the French language only) [It can be found here.](#)

Jean-Louis Courteau, Le CIEL and the Pirogue Project (dugout canoe)

Our association will fund Jean-Louis Courteau's efforts on our lake again this year with a \$5,000 grant. This year his focus will be on Hammond's Bay. JL had a successful summer last year; he and another diver cleared all the mifoil from the entire shoal between Cunningham's Island and Blueberry Island. He also checked Big Bay Shoal for regrowth, as well as Prentice's Island, removing anything new.

Jean-Louis also received some grant money from the municipality to further his environmental work. Together, our grants to Jean-Louis make it possible for him to concentrate on the lake's priorities. We are very grateful.

Jean-Louis has gathered together a group of artisans to construct a pirogue using traditional First Nations methods. The group includes a woodworker, an archeologist, a potter (the canoe is hollowed with fire) and a filmmaker to record the process.

This is a first in Quebec. An experimental archeologist accompanied by specialists from two museums will build a dugout canoe, using only techniques and tools that were used in prehistoric times. This will be a major opportunity for scientists to study the making of such boats and our understanding of how they were built. The whole adventure will be documented in video by Richard Lahaie. The completed canoe along with the video and tools will then be the object of exhibitions in different history and archeology museums. After which the dugout canoe will come back to CIEL for permanent exhibition. Very exciting!

The original plans were to build the pirogue near the Municipal Hall and have a hands-on experience for the public but Covid changed all that! So the project is happening this summer but in a private location. The project is presently funded by the municipality, and various levels of government. They are looking for substantial funding - mostly to put together a professional film of the construction. The artisans will all work for no charge if necessary. Our association has offered \$1,000 as a token of our support.

There will be an official ceremony on August 15th at 13:30hrs. The Pirogue will be launched and the public will be invited to watch and meet the team. Currently the project is being documented on the [Projet Pirogue Facebook](#) page

Finally, another bit of exciting news, Jean-Louis is proud to announce that a book he has been writing (for a long time) will finally be published this summer, out in bookstores everywhere on August 12, 2021. It is titled "*Seize Îles*" and it's a collection of short stories about the lake, it's people and its treasures, be they archeological, biological or poetical. There will probably be a book launch, sometime in August (date to be determined) at the Municipal Hall or the former village church, organized by the publisher. We can't wait to get our hands on it.

Amis du lac is proud to support Jean-Louis in his environmental and cultural initiatives.

Loons, ducks and geese activities

Again this spring, as there were few people able to come to the lake, our friend Jean-Louis installed all three of our floating loon nests (head, middle and foot of the lake). The platforms do not appear to have been utilized and to date, no chicks have been spotted. All three pairs of loons have been seen, though. It is getting very late in the season, but there is still some slim hope they will be able to reproduce.

Catherine Wensley continues her role of reporting to the CANADIAN LAKES LOON SURVEY. We will be looking into data from a report that indicates Ontario's loon population has been declining over the last 20 years. Officials are analyzing the data to determine what is causing the decline. We will be following this research.

Earlier in the spring, a message was sent to the lake community, sensitizing folks to the negative effects that bad boat behaviour can have on the shoreline and the nesting waterfowl. Unfortunately, with the marker buoys still not installed, new residents and visitors are not fully aware of the no wake zones.

On a brighter note, there have been lots of mallard and merganser sightings, and we have word that a Canada geese pair has taken up lodging at Raymond's farm. Goslings have been seen.

Lake Life activities

Lake Life is a branding exercise, focusing on sustainability; how we can lessen our impact on the lake and what we can do to nurture it. *Kids on the Lake* is a juniors' initiative, inviting the next generation to build on the Lake Life sustainability concepts and to bring the spirit of Amis du lac into the future.

Last summer's activities with respect to *Lake Life* and *Kids on the Lake* were a bit limited because of the pandemic. We did have *Kids on the Lake* volunteers to assist with the mini-Biofilia data collection - everyone involved in that initiative received a limited production *Lake Life* t-shirt. Also, Bob (who has emerged as a sort of *Lake Life* ambassador) was very busy hosting music bingo events. We have some great activities planned for this year.

***Kids on the Lake* photo contest.** We will be hosting a photo competition, with the winner getting the honour of the cover of the Amis du lac calendar! There will also be 4 runner-up awards, each getting their photo featured on a full page inside the calendar. Those runner-up winners will be selected from 4 categories for the photos: best wildlife, best sunset, best landscape and best *having fun* photo. The cover will be selected from all submissions, regardless of category. T-shirts will also be awarded to each winner.

***Lake Life* branded initiatives.** In partnership with the Magasin general (formerly la Station) Amis du lac has identified which of the household cleaning products the store carries are environmentally friendly. Amis has supplied ECOLO signs that will be attached to products in the store that meet the criteria.



Nicole Baron, the manager, is happy to put up the signs on the products that are eco friendly, which is really only a first step. The second step is communicating to the membership and community about what “green” and “lake safe” mean and how important these standards are to the health of our lake environment.

Nicole is also considering a refill station for environmentally safe products. This would be an eight thousand dollar investment which the co-op will need to raise funds for. 4 Pôles have ideas on possible sources of funding and are committed to the initiative. Amis is pleased to do what we can to support them.

Note: This is a very complex issue, and in reality the safest products are no products. If it didn't come from the lake, it shouldn't go in the lake. So we must try and establish best practice guidelines. There is a sliding scale between harmful, biodegradable, septic safe and lake safe. We will work with concerned members and in consultation with expertise we have access to within our community, to establish guidelines and product recommendations..

Fundraising. We are looking at commissioning hand-painted glassware (an artist within our lake community) to auction off. We also have a list of other ideas that we will discuss over the coming weeks.

Municipal news

The municipality completed replacements of all the “floating fingers” on the centre wharf, bringing that initiative to an end. The parking lot received a sign this week, stating that only vehicles with vignettes (plastic parking permit) may park. There has been a significant number of visitors parking while using the aerobic corridor and launching kayaks/paddle boards. Time will tell how effective the signage and vignettes will be. Lake residents continue to be concerned about the parking area and the allocations. It will surely become a hot topic as the popular family and guest period (end of July, beginning of August) approaches.

The recent uproar surrounding vote-by-mail has been resolved and it will remain an option for all non-permanent residents (with the addition of permanent residents over the age of 70 and those in poor health). It was terrific to see such a large group of residents (permanent and non-permanent) come together to voice concerns over the motion to eliminate the vote by mail. The Amis du lac executive offered to support the ad-hoc group of concerned citizens, in whatever they needed. Elections are coming this fall (November, 2021) and the best way to make your priorities known is to get out and vote! The municipality is not that big, some of the results in the last election were as narrow as three votes. That truly means every vote counts!

Finally we are approaching the final months of the term of this council. Dave Estall and Corina Lupu (who represent most lake/seasonal residents) will have both been on council for 8 years at the election next fall. We thank them for their service to our community. We do need representation from the lake so if there is anyone who would step up to run for council please talk to either Dave or Corina.

Hammonds Bay buoys

We met with Simon Leclerc, municipal DG at the time (fall 2020), and discussed a number of possibilities with regard to the buoys in Hammonds Bay that direct traffic away from the milfoil area in the centre of the bay. It was agreed that a simpler, less

burdensome approach could be taken. The municipality has agreed to take full responsibility for signage and buoys in Hammond's bay.

Now, as we enter summer 2021, we are welcoming our third DG in less than nine months. We understand the municipality has ordered the signs for Hammond's Bay - based on our suggestions - but as a result of COVID, they are back ordered. We will continue to monitor this situation.

There was an official letter from Amis du lac sent to the DG (June 29, 2021), requesting all residents in the bay be reminded of the critical importance of navigating around the perimeter of the bay, to avoid cutting the milfoil and letting it spread to other areas of the lake. There are a number of new residents in that area that may not be aware of the situation, especially since there are no signs.

Reminder, Jean-Louis' milfoil removal efforts will be targeting the bay this summer!

Finally, there has been discussion about burlap and its effectiveness on milfoil. There is a long history with this topic, starting with the municipality purchasing a large quantity of burlap for this reason, only to have the company vanish (bankrupt?) and the burlap to disappear. There are numerous opinions about the effectiveness of burlap, but the consensus is that it is very expensive to install, requires authority from government environmental authorities, and must be removed after a few years as it decomposes and simply allows the milfoil to re-establish itself. There are also concerns about what it does to other marine life during the time it is in place. The Quebec Ministry for the Environment (Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques) suggests burlap may work but kills all other marine vegetation in the meantime and decomposes in roughly 3 years, allowing the milfoil to re-establish itself. For these reasons we will not be considering burlap further as a solution. We will, however, continue to look at emerging technologies. This issue affects many lakes and contacting other lake associations will allow us to stay on top of developments. Here [is a very good example of a lake near Gatineau](#) and their experience.

Buoys and boat behaviour

It has taken time for the municipality to re-install many of the navigation buoys. Unfortunately, some key markers ("No Wake" near the north end) were not put back. There has also been a big increase in visitor traffic during the pandemic period. These visitors are not familiar with the traffic patterns and safety is a growing concern. A letter from the President of Amis du lac was sent to the DG on June 29, 2021. A preliminary response has been received, confirming that the Hammond's Bay buoys are back ordered but hopefully arriving soon. They are revising the signage around the boat

launch, making it clearer that boat washing is mandatory. They will get back to us soon with a response to our query about the No Wake buoys.

Earlier a message went out to lake residents regarding the safety of the loons and their chicks, also reminding folks about the no wake areas in the marina (north end) and the impact of driving boats at half speed when near shore. According to Transport Canada, speed limits within 30 metres from all shorelines is 10 km/h (6 mph). No wake is generally considered to be speeds not exceeding 5 mph. That effectively makes the entire area from Rodger Island to the centre wharf a no wake zone, or a 10 km/h zone. This is a good thing, given the significant number of small and big boats, kayaks, paddle boards and wildlife all in that relatively small area.

Calendars

Amis du Lac calendar sales were a huge success last year. Thank you to Tim Boswell for once again creating a superb calendar with a beautiful and varied collection of photos. It is Tim's generosity and dedication that makes the calendar possible each year.

This year we plan to continue with the online sales approach, offering members of Amis du lac first crack at the inventory. A message will be coming from Elise Latour shortly. We have also created a special email account to focus on calendars and to make accounting much easier. It is all very clear on the online order form.

This year we will offer 250 calendars for sale @ \$20 each. Once the membership has had a chance to purchase we will expand the offering to the larger community. Nicole at the Magasin general is more than happy to sell them in the store.

We expect to follow a similar "pick-up" approach to the handing out of the calendars as it was tremendously successful last year.

A HUGE thank you to our calendar team, Elise Latour, Nan Laurenzio, Mary Campbell and Tim Boswell!

Membership

As we close out the summer of 2020, we have 108 members. It was a challenging year and we hope to have a more visible membership campaign next year, once events start happening again and we can interact with lakers and friends.

As you can see from the newsletter, Amis du lac is very active and has formalized two annual financial commitments, both of which are clearly representative of the Amis du lac mandate. Our membership fees are \$30 and have not changed since 2006.

After discussing the complexity of the 3-year membership and the fact that Amis is spending more than it is bringing in, the executive approved the proposal to move to a very simple, annual membership, focusing on the online process, and to increase the fees by \$10 per year. It was not an easy decision, but considering the work that is being done, we feel the value Amis du lac contributes to the community and environment more than justifies a small increase in membership fees.

The new fee structure and forms will be available July 15th. Our online membership process with Interac (e-transfer) payments has made the process much easier for everyone. However, we will continue to use the traditional mailing system for situations where the online system doesn't fit.

A big thank you to Mary Campbell who expertly handles membership.

Amis is always looking for new members. Our priorities and successes come from our membership. If you, or someone you know, would like to become a member, please visit our online membership page website.

AGM

Our AGM will go ahead on July 15th, 2021 @ 19:00 EST. We are scheduling 1 hour and it will be via Videoconference only. The first half will be regular AGB business, and the second half will be a presentation by Anne and Sylvain on the mini-Biofilia study and the benefits and challenges surrounding it. It will be a great opportunity to ask questions about the project and the findings.

Be safe - hope to see you soon.

Michael Hyde

President, Amis du lac/Friends of the Lake.