

# BBLA Newsletter

Winter 2020



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## Chairman's Letter

Welcome to the Big Basswood Lake Association's Winter 2020 newsletter.

This has been a summer like no other on Basswood Lake and we sincerely hope that all of our members and their families are safe and well. I don't think that any of us would have predicted when we published the spring newsletter that the borders would remain closed for the whole summer. I know from talking to many of our American friends how much you have missed Basswood this year and we certainly have missed seeing you. We can only hope and pray that this pandemic will be behind us in the very near future and life can return to normal as soon as possible.

However, in spite of the restrictions of the pandemic emergency, the board has continued to work hard on your behalf.

We held our two regular board meetings on schedule, both conducted virtually via Zoom. Both meetings had a full agenda, evidence of our ongoing commitment to the stewardship of Big Basswood Lake. In addition, we held our annual general meeting in August (delayed from July on the hope that the borders would reopen by then). The only regular activity that did not get held this year was the Sweet Sowerby Social as events at the 12 sided barn and all other non essential group gatherings just didn't make sense this summer.

We have continued activities on all of the following files:

- Septic Inspection Program
- Water Levels/Dam Operating Plan
- Lake Partner Program
- Thessalon First Nations Land Claim
- FOCA
- Roads Donation Program
- Web Site Updates
- Loon Survey
- Basswood History

Please see articles on all of these topics in this newsletter.

Unfortunately, we also had some incidents of vandalism on the lake this summer, first reported in spring newsletter. There is an update on these unfortunate incidents included in the newsletter.

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# Membership

Dear members,

2020 has been a very unique year, and we hope everyone is safe and well.

Your BBLA board has continued to work on various initiatives, despite the challenges presented by the pandemic. Our aim, as always, is to grow and care for our lake community. Two of the most meaningful projects this year were a redesign of the association website, and the development of a lake stewardship program honouring our past president, Mike Hunting. Please take a look at [bigbasswood.ca](http://bigbasswood.ca) and share your feedback. We're always happy to hear from you.

Now, we have a request. In order to carry on with our efforts, we must have the support of our members. Simply put, we need your help.

To those who were able to renew their memberships this year, thank you very much. For those who were unable to be at the lake or did not have a chance to renew, we have several renewal options for you. They are listed below.

Unfortunately, we fell short of our membership goal, with less than half of last year's members renewing, but we can and will persevere with your assistance.

As a reminder, your annual membership in the Big Basswood Lake Association provides several benefits:

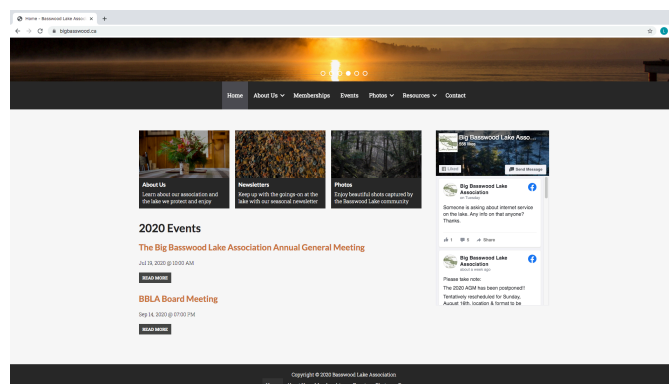
- Attendance at events focused on
  - Lake stewardship
  - Area history
  - Ongoing education
- Participation at the Annual General Meeting
  - Providing input on issues that affect property owners and the preservation of Basswood's pristine waters
  - Electing directors to represent your interests
- Savings on your cottage insurance through FOCA – the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations

The annual membership fee remains at \$25 per year. Friends and family who don't own property, but visit regularly, are also welcome to join as non-voting associate members for the same great price.

Payment options:

- Use Paypal on our fabulous, newly re-designed website, [bigbasswood.ca/memberships](http://bigbasswood.ca/memberships)
- Send a cheque to Big Basswood Lake Association, P.O. Box 377  
Thessalon, ON P0R 1L0
- E-transfer from a Canadian bank account to our treasurer, Cynthia Wood, at [cince48@gmail.com](mailto:cince48@gmail.com)

# Revised Web Site

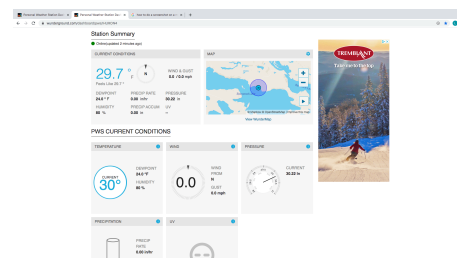


I hope that you are enjoying the new website format and using it to keep informed, and updated on news from the lake.

As we informed you in the summer edition of the newsletter, the Board of the Big Basswood Lake Association has taken steps to provide a new and improved upgrade to our website. As promised, we have launched our new website with an updated and new look, with hopes of attracting interest in our site, and increase membership interaction. Please take some time to navigate through the many informative and interesting areas of the site.

Since our membership fees are a very important aspect of serving our members and other stakeholders in our beautiful lake, we hope that you will make use of the new and easy membership payment option. The Board also invites interested local businesses to advertise on our website. The only requirement for this service is payment of the Associate Membership fee of \$25.00. Note that this would be an additional fee for those who are members and have a business or service to advertise. Once the fee is paid, please send a request to Joanne Falk to have your business added to our website. We would like to thank Radiant and in particular, Andrew VanderPloeg, for the excellent job on the BBLA website redesign.

One new addition is the webcam/real time weather page that you can access from a new weather station set up by Jim Falconer. Special thanks again goes to Spencer Kellum who has been so kind to update some of these new features on our new website. Please check this out regularly as it will give you up to the minute weather on our beautiful lake.



We are hoping to continue to add and improve to our web site so keep the suggestions coming if you have any suggested changes/additions. Please submit them to the association email at: [cleanwater@bigbasswood.ca](mailto:cleanwater@bigbasswood.ca)

Submitted by Phil Conley

# Chairman's Letter

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And finally, please pay careful attention to Joanne Falk's article on membership. We normally sign up the bulk of our members at the start of the AGM and this year that wasn't possible because the meeting was held virtually. Consequently, as Joanne reports, our numbers are way down for 2020. It's not too late to sign up online for this year, so we would ask for your help in signing up for 2020.

We hope that everyone has an enjoyable winter and we look forward to the day, hopefully soon, when we are all together on the lake again.

Stay safe .... Larry

Larry Allcorn

Chairman

## AGM and Sweet Sowerby Social

We did proceed with our Annual General Meeting on Sunday morning, August 16th. This meeting was deferred from its original scheduled date in July in the hope that many of the restrictions imposed by the Pandemic emergency would be lifted and we could have an "in person" meeting. Unfortunately, as we now know, that wasn't realistic so we proceeded with a virtual meeting.

The meeting was held using "Zoom" technology and was attended by around 28 property owners. We had a full agenda of reports from our board members and we were also joined by Jane Thomas and Susand Schauss of the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and Georges Bilodeau, Mayor of Huron Shores.

Please see the individual articles in this newsletter for an update on topics covered and also reference the minutes of the meeting that are published on our website.

Please note that the Sweet Sowerby Social was cancelled for this year because of the Covid pandemic. Group gatherings didn't make any sense this year so the decision was made to defer for a year. Our intent is to resume this very popular event in 2021.

### Mark These Dates for 2021

Spring Board Meeting	June 21st, 2021
Annual General Meeting	July 18th, 2021
Sweet Sowerby Social	TBD
Fall Board Meeting	September 13th, 2021



# Septic Inspection Program

## A Summary of What We Learned Last Summer FROM THE Big Basswood Lake Septic Report

In the summer of 2019, many of you took advantage of the chance to review your property's septic system and surface water drainage. These assessments were done by Tulloch Engineering, with funding from an Ontario Trillium Grant and administrative assistance from the Municipality of Huron Shore. One hundred and eighteen residential lake properties were inspected last summer.

The majority of properties inspected were seasonal residences (104). Well over half of the properties had a septic tank and field bed. Some properties had multiple types of systems (e.g. privy, holding tank). Over 40% of the systems were 30+ years old.\*\* Sixteen minor deficiencies were noted (e.g. not enough setback, parking on a field bed, never been pumped out). These were discussed with the property owner on site. No major deficiencies were noted.

The full report can be found on BBLA web site and the Huron Shores website

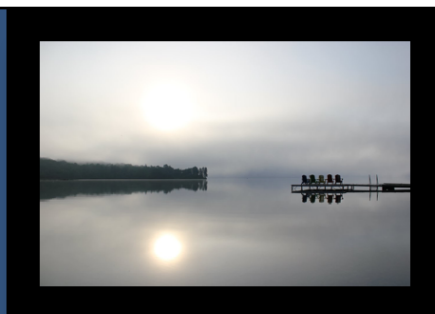
**\*\*Of note:** Three quarters of major deficiencies were found in systems over 30 years old Regular pump-outs (3-5 years) can prevent system problems

(Source: Septic Re-Inspection Programs in Ontario-A Guide for Lake Associations, FOCA, 2019)

### Summer 2020 Septic Re-Inspections.

As we announced in the last newsletter and at the 2020 AGM, our Trillium grant has been extended to the end of this year and we were offering septic inspections to those that had not had them done in 2019. Unfortunately, because of the unusual circumstances this year, only 2 additional inspections were booked.

At this time, we do not anticipate any further extension to the program but will update the report with the additional findings from this year's inspections.



# Vandalism Incident on Big Basswood Lake

As we reported in the spring newsletter, there was an unfortunate incident of vandalism on Big Basswood Lake sometime this spring. There were a number of spray painted figures discovered on the rocks in the forties as pictured below.

We were never able to discover who did this spray painting but the good news is that it never recurred that we are aware of.

Thanks to Mathew Aho and Ken Shaw who climbed the rocks and were able to remove the spray paintings by using a pressure washer - a difficult climb to be sure! Luckily, they did not have to use any detergents - just pure water pressure.

Let's continue to be diligent next spring to ensure that this doesn't happen again .....



# Photo Contest 2019 - 2020

## *"Life at the Cottage"*

This summer's pandemic is unfortunately responsible for the cancellation of the annual photo contest! But we are encouraging everyone to submit photos of Basswood adventures to the Big Basswood Lake Association at [www.bigbasswood.ca](http://www.bigbasswood.ca) and to the Face Book page at [www.facebook.com/bigbasswood](https://www.facebook.com/bigbasswood) so that everyone can enjoy the view virtually.

2018  
Winning  
Entry



## Ice On—Ice Out

This year, BBLA has enlisted the help of an ice observer. This is yet another way to monitor the lake. Thank you to Bobby Swain for volunteering to record this data.

### ICE DATES:

Ice on: January 17, 2020

Ice Out: April 22, 2020



# 2020 Loon Survey

## Citizen Scientists at Basswood Lake

The Basswood Lake Loon Team has worked with the Bird Studies Canada Loon Survey for the past 3 summers as loon watchers for various sections of the lake. This summer the survey was suspended early in the summer due to the Covid-19 pandemic. There were several team members who could not reach their cottages for the summer.



Leigh and Marilyn have been in contact with Kathy Jones, coordinator of volunteer reporters of the nationwide Loon Survey. They find a decrease in loons and loon chicks especially in eastern Canada. Possible causes of the decrease could be: acid rain, mercury in fish, climate change, boating activity, water level fluctuation, contaminants, or habitat loss due to shoreline development.

Although we had no “official” survey of Big Basswood this year, we do continue to watch the lake and talk about what we see. Loon chicks have hatched in the western end of the lake as reported by Maeve Coccimiglio and Scott Lawrence. This fall a large group of loons were rafting up, prior to migration, as reported by Erik Nowak in the vicinity of Melwel Lodge. Throughout the year, loons are seen around the lake. Lynda Trivers, observing Coles Bay, said there was not much activity in early summer but in September she saw 7 -15 loons at a time, at least weekly plus in October loons there every day. Maeve Coccimiglio, also reporting from the Coles Bay area, said September staging was “phenomenal” and continued into October, most loons being off by Thanksgiving weekend. All of this is a good sign, as Big Basswood is not considered as a prime lake for loons!

Bird Studies Canada hopes to continue their loon survey in 2021 and we do, too.

For more information contact Leigh Olmstead (Photo Credit Jill Glaser)



# Local Water Levels

As reported on our fall 2019 newsletter we received a copy of the dam operating plan from the MNRF for Basswood Lake last summer. This plan outlines the targeted operating levels for the lake that the MNRF normally works toward and how those levels were determined.

It outlines the following key considerations for determining the best target levels for the lake:

- A stabilized lake level for Lake Trout fall spawning in October/November
- Adequate water being supplied to Bright Lake from the end of April to the first week of June to support Walleye spring time spawning
- Water levels stabilized for the summer by early June to support shore infrastructure for the seasonal and full time residents of Basswood Lake

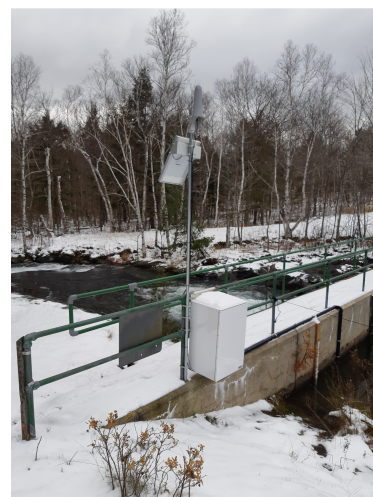
Therefore, it has been determined that the following are optimum levels for the lake.

- Not more than 20 cm over wall – ideal is 5-10 cm over – March to June
- Water level with the top of the wing wall on July 1<sup>st</sup> with gates closed.
- Water dropping to 12 cm below the wing wall through natural evaporation by the end of the summer
- Water returning to 5 cm below the wing wall by first of December

Because of the wet late summer and early fall that we had, there were no issues noted with the water levels during the summer of 2020. However, there are still concerns being expressed by residents of both Basswood and Bright Lake about some of the water levels that were noted in the spring time, particularly as they pertained to various species of fish spawning.

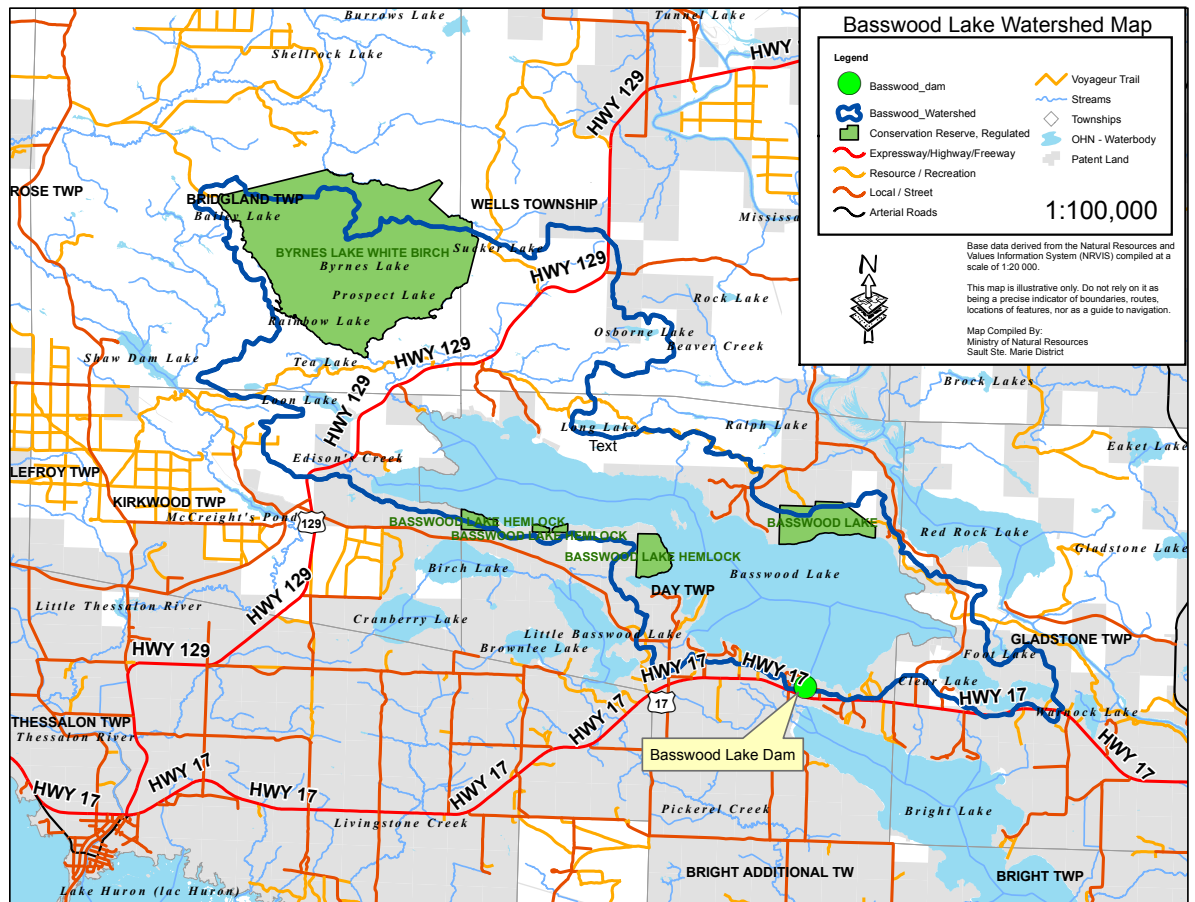
Therefore, to make sure that all are on the same page and to facilitate better communication, the lake association has asked the MNRF to host a meeting for representatives from both Bright and Basswood to review the strategy employed this spring, contrast with the parameters of the dam operating plan and review approach for future fall seasons and spring freshets. This meeting has been agreed to by the MNRF but no dates have been set yet.

If you have questions on lake levels and the operating plans, please contact Larry Allcorn and we will get the response from the MNRF. We encourage lake residents to contact the lake association first if they have questions – we may already know the answer or can get it quickly from the MNRF.



# Local Water Levels (cont'd)

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Big Basswood Watershed Map

## Mike Hunting Award for Lake Stewardship

As many of you know, in 2019 we announced the establishment of the Mike Hunting Award for Lake Stewardship. The board committed to developing the criteria and timing of the award and had planned to launch the program at this year's annual meeting.

With the current travel restrictions in place, and so many of our members unable to be at Basswood this summer, we had to adapt some of our plans. We have decided to hold off launching the program until everyone can be here and participate in stewardship activities. We have formed a sub committee of the board which will meet over the winter to begin to discuss criteria for the award and confirm a schedule for launching the award in 2021



# Changes to Huron Shores Road Donation Program

As we reported in the spring newsletter, for the past 18 years, volunteer road committees have partnered with the municipality to maintain and upgrade the many private roads that typically serve residential clusters on area lakes. By most any measure, the Roads Donation Program (RDP) has been a success.

Annual reporting insures accountability and the money spent benefits the local economy. The maintenance, safety and liability issues that inherently bedevil private roads are all addressed. Higher standards for private roads support property values which in turn generate tax revenue. Underlying it all are neighbors working with neighbors in partnership with the municipality.

However, the Huron Shores Council has been wrestling with municipal finances, looking for money to cut here so it could be spent there and apparently the RDP is considered discretionary. Changes to the RDP approved by council in January 2020 limit the amount of money road committees can carry over from one year to the next and a flat starting rate was discontinued in favor of a flat minimum payment.

In reaction to these changes, four of us formed an ad hoc Huron Shores Private Roads Association (Bob Kellum- Clubhouse Road Association, Big Basswood Lake; David Ratz- Hopkins Bay Road Association, Clear Lake; Jim Falconer- Oak Ridge Trail Road Association, Big Basswood Lake, Larry Allcorn- Big Basswood Lake Association). We polled the road committees that agreed to talk with us, researched council minutes and written two letters to council seeking a meeting.

The Ad Hoc Private Roads association did meet with Huron Shores on August 14<sup>th</sup>. Attending in person or virtually were all 4 members of the Ad Hoc Private Roads Committee, Mayor Bilodeau, councillors Nancy Jones-Scissons and Dale Wedgewood and Treasurer Stengera. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the history of the program, the benefits to residents and Huron Shores and to try to understand why the changes were made. The private roads association agreed to author a document that proposed some changes to the reporting structure which would make the use of the funds and, in particular, the source of the funds in reserves more transparent which we did

Unfortunately, we were never granted a follow up meeting and instead, at the council meeting of October 14th, a motion was moved and approved.

This motion does do away with the limitations on reserves and re-instates and road donations that were refused in 2020 as a result of reserves.

However, it also phases out the road donation program based on the following schedule:

- ☐ *In 2021, the per km contribution will be lowered to \$325.*
- ☐ *In 2022, the per km contribution will be lowered to \$150.*
- ☐ *In 2023, cessation of the program*

We are obviously very disappointed at this result and we would hope that each of the individual committees make their voices heard to their councillors.

# Changes to Board Election Process

It was noted at the Virtual AGM this summer that 2020 was a Board Election year. Under the COVID emergency act the election was postponed and the current Board of Directors will continue to serve. The election procedure, as spelled out in the BBLA By-Laws, requires a nominating committee to present a slate of candidates for the board election at the AGM on even-numbered years. The Board of Directors should be comprised of at least seven members and no greater than 11 members. Terms are for two years.

With the postponing of the 2020 election the question was raised about staggering board terms. This would require an amendment to the association By-Laws by the majority of association members. The BBLA board is considering this change and would welcome input. Please contact Joanne Falk at joanne.falk@gmail.com or Marilyn Kellum at mkellum@umich.edu with your ideas and questions.

Also, please note that the BBLA Board of Directors can be up to 11 members. The Board can fill these vacancies in between terms. **SO—If there is a member who is interested in being part of the BBLA Board—-PLEASE LET US KNOW!!**

Contact Larry Allcorn at lallcorn@bell.net

## Lake Partner Program



This has been a very different year as we all know. The Lake Partner Program was put on hold for 2020 so water testing kits were not distributed. Fortunately missing one year of data submission will not affect the long-term trend dataset.

Secchi disk readings were done in August and September of 2020 and ranged from 10.1 meters to 12.5 meters. These water clarity measurements are consistent with late summer readings taken in the past. These readings will be submitted to the Lake Partner Program for 2020.

The 2019 Lake Partner Program results and more information can be found at:

<https://foca.on.ca/lake-partner-program-sampling-assistance/>



A reminder to all of our members that a membership in the Big Basswood Lake Association includes a membership in the Federation of Ontario Cottagers Association.

The association is currently some 500+ members strong representing over 50,000 waterfront land owners in the province. They provide us with a number of valuable services:

1. Ongoing participation in their lake partner program. We submit our lake test results for clarity and phosphorous levels to the lake partner data base every year. This continues to show Basswood as one of the clearest lakes in Ontario
2. FOCA holds a spring and a fall meeting every year, both of which usually feature valuable information. This fall's meeting will be held on Nov 21<sup>st</sup> and will be hosted virtually. This means that any of our members can attend. Larry Allcorn will attend on behalf of the Big Basswood Lake Association but any of our members can sign up by going to the FOCA web site:

[www.foca.on.ca](http://www.foca.on.ca)

3. Also, the FOCA web site contains a large amount of valuable information on lake stewardship and the ongoing initiatives that FOCA is working on. Please visit the website listed above for access to this information

We encourage our members to take advantage of this powerful tool as there is a lot of excellent information and reference material found there.

4. FOCA also offers ongoing discounts on a number of products and services. These are also listed in the website above.

# Thessalon First Nations

## Boundary Land Claim

Summary of the Boundary Land Claim negotiation basis as printed in previous newsletters ...

The Thessalon First Nation has filed a boundary land claim with the federal and provincial governments. In this land claim, Thessalon First Nation asserts that there was a miscommunication in the drawing of the boundaries during the negotiation and signing of the Robinson Huron Treaty of 1850 and that the boundaries of the reserve should have been expressed in leagues (3 miles) instead of miles so that the total area covered in the treaty was one ninth of the area ie. The asserted area for the new boundaries encompasses Big Basswood Lake in its entirety. Note that just because this falls within the asserted area, the actual candidate lands for transfer to the First Nations will be determined during the negotiation.

Status of the Negotiation ...

Our Ontario Ministry contact is Jane Thomas, taking over from the original negotiator Mark Richard.

Jane was good enough to join us for our AGM on August 16<sup>th</sup>. At that time she reported that the two parties were continuing ongoing negotiations but there was no additional news that could be publicly shared.

She also continued to assure us that no private properties or access to private properties will be impacted by the settlement.

During the AGM, she did walk us in some detail through the process and why we could expect it to take some time yet to complete negotiations and share the result. She did reassure us that there would be public consultations on the proposed settlements before it is finalized.

We appreciate Jane's ongoing commitment to communication with the lake association. If you have any specific questions for here, please submit them to me (Larry Allcorn) and I will forward them on.

We would continue to draw your attention to these important documents for your review:

1. Fact Sheet #1 – Published by Ontario MIRR dated September, 2017
2. Pamphlet Published by Thessalon First Nations in November, 2017
3. Article Published in the Sentinel Newspaper June 30, 2017 Edition on Tom Isaacs presentation
4. Minutes of Huron Shores June 30, 2018 Council Meeting accessible from their web site
5. Soo Today article on Garden River negotiation: <https://www.sootoday.com/local-news/steps-taken-to-right-170-year-old-wrong-says-garden-river-chief-1552903>

## **DIRECTORS OF BBLA**

**Larry Allcorn, Chairman, 416-407-2158**

**Phil Conley, Vice Chairman, 519-670-4551**

**Cynthia Wood, Treasurer, 705-946-0623**

**Marilyn Kellum, Secretary and Lake Stewardship, 734-717-1290**

**Joanne Falk, Membership, 705-987-6225**

**Leigh Olmstead, Lake Stewardship, 651-271-6558**

**Nancy Bakemeier, History, 705-842-5385 (June - Sept)**

