



CLLS NEWSLETTER

Preserving Local Lighthouses

Giants Icon part of the Seaway Story

Thunder Bay Main Lighthouse is the first lighthouse on the St. Lawrence Seaway System. Through our strong nautical history, Thunder Bay Main Lighthouse has a few stories to share.

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Ours to Preserve

It was not long-ago that lighthouse keepers and their families faced insurmountable challenges to maintain the whale-oil lanterns, while keeping sailors safe from the rocky shores.

Today, from kayakers and sailors, to campers and hikers, exploring our heritage is somewhat challenged as history becomes buried in the wilderness, as was experienced last season on Porphyry Island.

Lighthouse Director, Senator Bob McKay, identified a cemetery of five lost souls on the Island, apparently laid there due to: children borne weakly, sickness or by accidental death.

For the last one hundred and ten-years the brush had overtaken the graves. Once the brush was cleared, markers re-established, a better understand of CLLS's role to preserve history became apparent. What the lighthouse organization didn't realize at the time was how people's interest would be piqued by the discovery.

As Canadian Lighthouses works towards preserving more lighthouses and providing more interpretive experiences for visitors, it becomes even more apparent that we must work harder and faster to preserve our past before it is too late.

Recognizing we all play a part in helping future generations share the wealth of our history, it is key to recognize that through membership, sponsorship and hard work we can continue to preserve local lighthouses and share in the discovery of their history.

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“...the work and dedication that volunteers put into preserving this stunning place is an inspiration...” *Magda & Peter Lighthouse Visitors 2015*

In the News

As springtime is upon us many exciting projects and work are being planned to increase the Porphyry lighthouses experience.

Volunteers have been working to bring an **Artist in Residence** to Porphyry this summer, which aims to: provide studio space for a winning artist who can take advantage of the setting and Lake Superior views, to develop their art.

Our **Annual Fundraising Dinner** will again take place at the Prince Arthur Hotel, on May 6th bringing together friends, families, sailors, boaters, and a few people from the port. It includes: a six-course meal, a guest speaker Lee Radzak, from Spilt Rock Lighthouse, and an art auction with light entertainment.

The Porphyry Lighthouse will also undergo some changes with: more on-site staff, a **Gallery Exhibition**, more **Interpretation Signage**, **WiFi** and better docking facilities for our members.

Membership renewals are taking place now (go to our website cls.ca). Our **Annual General Meeting** is slated for May 18th.

A lot is happening. We are thankful for the support from our volunteers and our sponsors that help us carry on the adventure.



Pie Island Light

The Pie Island Light was decommissioned sometime ago as an operation lighthouse. Now a fixed solar light appears in the channel that guides ships between Pie Island and the mainland. The Federal Government is working with the Fort William First Nations and has done some restoration work on the exterior.



At Porphyry Cove, on the north side of the island, several kayakers take advantage of the boat yard to put up their tents.

Porphyry Island Updates

On the Porphyry Island site this summer there are many plans to enhance the visitor experience through several small project involving the lighthouse groups' partner organizations. Work is gearing up for the season to consider further work on the dock area, boat yard, and interpretive displays. Some work will be taking place to adjust the outhouses at the boatyard site, while also providing specific camping areas for traveling kayakers and boaters. The dock will see an extension added to the southern dock with further cladding and adjustments made. It is hoped that the facility will be able to handle boats with deeper drafts.

Thunder Bay Main Lighthouse

Situated in the harbour as an icon associated with the Sleeping Giant, Thunder Bay Main Lighthouse has seen better days.

Paint now peels from the 39ft. high structure situated on the break wall; the lighthouse has lost much of its previous luster. Deemed surplus by the federal government in 2012, activities are currently underway to reverse the ravages of time.

Back in the early 1900's the Canadian National Railway established the first lighthouse on the old break wall, which was at the time, located several hundred feet from the shoreline. Made of wood, the CNR lighthouse was considered the starting point or end point of a nautical journey to and from the Lakehead. (See: photo upper right)

Plans were drawn up to build a new lighthouse prior to World War II but Thunder Bay Main was not completed until after the conflict.

The 8-sided Iron lantern room houses a red light that flashes every 7.5 seconds and can be seen 360 degrees. Below the lantern sits a 30 by 30 ft. 3 story dwelling with a bedroom on the top level, accommodations in the middle, and a mechanical room below.

Sitting atop four concrete pillars, the lighthouse and dwelling perches high above the dock and landing area. This enables people to walk under the lighthouse and explore a spectacular view of the surroundings. To the east, an unfettered view of the Giant, and to the west the City's waterfront and industrial port.



The main light is a juxtaposition between the port infrastructure and our expansive superior views.

Viewed from the land, and with its powerful light reaching as far the Giant, it's no wonder people are attracted to this magical place.

So far but oh, so near! The possibility of one day being able to hop on a charter-boat to visit and explore the area further has already ignited people's imaginations and appetite for more.

CLLS is looking to finalize a lease agreement for this property in the near future from the Department of Fisheries & Oceans, Canada. If this happens then registered visitors to the site could enjoy interpretive tours and access to the magnificent views this place offers.

From previous experience, from the thousands of volunteer hours the group has done, painting something has a huge effect. When Porphyry and Shaganash lighthouses received a coat of paint, it increased visitors substantially.

Stay tuned, as there should be an announcement from the lighthouse group on TBay Main soon.

If you like to paint, and would like to volunteer, please let us know by connecting to our [website](#) and sending us an [email](#).

WHAT CAN BE MORE DRAMATIC THAN A BIG STORM ON THE BIG LAKE?

By Gordon Graham

Spring! Early enough in the season that the ice sheet is still intact. The silence is astounding. So quiet I feel like I've gone deaf. I don't even hear myself breathe because the vast emptiness is absorbing the sound. I have to deliberately make a distinct noise to assure myself I can still hear.



Lake Superior is an unknowable vastness, so empty of sound at this time of year; it is like I imagine the complete silence of outer space to be. It is alien and eerie but at the same time is soothing to the mind and soul. It is recharging me. It's an old friend. It's giving me new life, after a busy, people filled winter on the mainland. The breath of fresh, cold air lifting off of the ice into my face is chilling but refreshing. Solitude; not loneliness. The vastness, invigorating, energizing. Like I've just stepped onto another world, or into Heaven, but no one knows I'm there yet. I'm free to just stand and absorb. My life is not important; just experiencing this moment that I don't want to have disturbed by thoughts of past or future; only now. I want it to last. I want to take it with me when I have to leave.

Soon the ice will break up and the sound of ice pans crunching and grinding together will pervade and then, later, the tinkling music of the remaining, smaller, ice bits rubbing together. Then the sound of the ever-moving water, that will not cease until the ice sheet has reformed again next winter. Wind, waves and gulls will overpower this peace, but will create its own version of tranquility.

The sound of the wind and sea is almost as invigorating as the earlier silence. Pervades the mind and seeps right into the pores. I can almost feel it circulating through my veins. I have to ask myself: was this life made for me or was I made for it?

Gordon Graham is now a retired lighthouse keeper (*Porphyry Lighthouse 1979-91*). He's also an award-winning photographer and lives in Thunder Bay with his wife, Eve. In 2016 his photographic work will be shown at the Porphyry Lighthouse in the new gallery space. In this article you can see a couple of his images.



The effects of wind and wave action, sheets objects in a ribbons of ice. (left)

Angus Island Lighthouse located just east of Pie Island in late 1980's is covered in ice. (Upper right)

Membership

The idiom ‘many hands make light work’ is true of being part of any group, more people makes it easier for everyone.

On June 11th the annual lighthouse clean up with volunteers busy painting and preparing the site for summer visitors. Being a member is more than paying for something and getting a card in the mail, it’s about being part of something that going somewhere.

As the lighthouse group expands its footprint and builds the lighthouse trail eastward from the city of Thunder Bay, memberships help keep interested people informed, while providing a little revenue for CLLS to for example: help pay monthly insurance installments, or assisting in the hiring of more summer students. Every little bit helps.

Living in the vastness of Northwestern Ontario you could take it for granted that these lighthouse sites should be operated by grants from big business or by governments, but the opposite is true.

Big business and governments do help a little, but purchasing a membership really helps build our resources. When you arrive at one of our lighthouse sites you will want: the trails to be clear, someone to show you around, have someone introduce you to the interpretive sites, and to travel safely on the site. To do these things, not only are volunteers necessary, but also financial resources are required. Our sites are accessible to any visitor.

This year will see some extra services provided on Porphyry Island, increasing the value to our members and visitors. Recently Outdoor Recreation students from Lakehead University did several research projects, one of which was on introducing WiFi as a trial to see how ‘social media’ might help to share visitor stories. The National Marine Conservation Area is also enhancing the site with more interpretive signs on the history and wildlife of the island.

This work has a strong group of volunteers committed to providing visitors with an experience to remember. Without the seed money that memberships brings to the organization the value of a visit would be lessened. Please consider purchasing a single or family membership this year, and be part of something bigger.

Go to clls.ca to purchase your membership, online.



Connections

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*CLLS is a member in good standing with the Ontario Historical Society and is a not-for profit registered charity organization.



CANADIAN
of lighthouses
LAKE SUPERIOR

*Lighthouse
Fundraising
Dinner*

Guest Speaker: Lee Radzak
- Split Rock Lighthouse

- Auction • Door Prizes
- Refreshments

Friday May 6th
Prince Arthur Hotel
Symposium: 6 pm

\$50.00 Per Ticket

ALL PROCEEDS GO TOWARDS RESTORING
OUR LIGHTHOUSE LAND MARKS

Tickets available online at cls.ca or
front desk at the Prince Arthur hotel

Port of Thunder Bay
Parks Canada
City of Thunder Bay
Waterfront district
Prince Arthur Hotel
Port Huron



Situated on the tip of Porphyry Island the lighthouse station can be seen after a light dusting of snow.

Calling all Artists

The Artist in Residence (AIR) program will operate for 1-2 weeks at Porphyry Island Lighthouse located 15km east of Silver Islet, on Black Bay. The AIR program allows a sponsored artist to; practice their art, share their art with visitors, sell their work, and donate a piece of art to be used for future lighthouse fundraising. The chosen artist will be provided with: transportation to and from the island, living accommodations and studio/gallery space. Check out our website cls.ca for further information. An online application form is available.

If you know of a corporate sponsor that's interested, tell us!