

The Freshwater Connection

Publication of the Central Algoma Freshwater Coalition - Winter 2020



The Community Edition

Annual General Meeting

Join us for our Annual General Meeting,
10:00 am Tuesday February 18, 2020
Sowerby Community Centre
Sowerby, Ontario

Sustain Algoma

Save the Date
Saturday June 6th 9 am to 2 pm
Johnson Township
Community Centre
<https://www.sustainalgomaexpo.com/>

Community Values
By Chuck Miller, CAFC President

I recently read an article suggesting that a small hunt camp at the edge of the water could be purchased and transformed into a large year round residence and because the municipality had setback requirements (to protect water quality in the lake) these could be avoided because of a loop hole that the camp was already at the water. A year round home has 5 times the impact on a lake as a year round residence.

Then we hear about algae blooms, climate change, and the rapid decline of song bird populations to name a few concerns. Natural resources in economic models are often considered to be limitless - but there are limits.

We live in a liberal democracy in a country that is ranked as one of the nicest places in the world to live. There is emphasis on individual rights with few limitations on freedom - and where limitations are agreed to be in the common good by the majority of the people - rules are often prescribed by laws - such as restrictions on impaired driving. I doubt that many people like government interference in their daily lives.

Most of us also find meaning in being part of a community - these communities may be geographic like a small town, a cottage association, or spread over a wide area like a business group, and professional organizations. These communities have values that are not laws that most of the community adheres to.

Just as our politics are often polarized and characterized as left or right, communities and individual rights are often considered opposites. One may say there are the things "they want to do" and the things "they ought to do". The ought to dos are often meeting community obligations - responsibilities.

In our global economic world - community responsibilities have been made weaker and individual rights highlighted. Communities are often portrayed as limiting. The old model is not working - it is too damaging to the natural world - we need a new model to replace mass consumerism to find meaningful lives - might that be revival of community - just something to think about.

Replacing a small hunt camp at the edge of the water with a large year round home maybe lawful - but and what we individually want to do but as a member of a community is it what we "ought to do".

Melwel Lodge: From Pioneering Days to State-of-the-Art Accommodation By Bob Kellum

In the summer of 1945, a young entrepreneur visiting the Thessalon area of the Algoma District was about to take his search elsewhere, when he checked one last property. In the pouring rain, Weldon Moore stumbled out of the bush onto a pristine, west-facing bay on a beautiful clear lake. The site exceeded his criteria for a tourist lodge: hardwoods to provide fall colours, highway access, a clear view of sunsets and a prevailing wind to control insects.



A decade earlier Weldon had serendipitously met his future bride, Melba Fleming, in the newly-created Algonquin Park where Weldon was helping his parents build rustic Killarney Lodge and where Melba was enjoying a cross-country ski with her sister. The couple married in 1938 and spent the intervening years managing large railroad hotels in northern Ontario, most notably the Kapuskasing Inn.



Melba and Weldon

In the fall of 1945, armed with a clear vision of an American Plan tourist lodge, the Moores founded Melwel Lodge (Melba + Weldon) on Big Basswood Lake. Having purchased the land, the determined couple, with one young child and expecting another, bought a house in nearby Thessalon.



In March of 1946, the couple stood on lake ice in three feet of snow facing the bush they now owned. From that vantage point, they plotted - what was still only a vision in their minds' eye. That same month three local farmers, employing a team of horses, cut 540 blocks of lake ice and piled it strategically where it would later be enclosed in an icehouse. With this foresighted act, an ambitious construction schedule ensued. In June of 1946, a scant three months after cutting the first blocks of lake ice, Melwel Lodge opened for business with

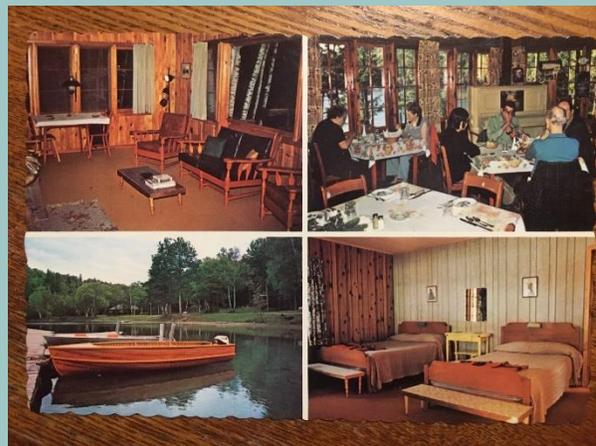
five rustic guest accommodations, complete with flush toilets and wood stoves to heat buckets of wash water. The Moores and lodge staff "camped" in tent cabins. Guests seemed to thrive on the lodge's pioneering spirit and demand soon required the addition of two tent cabins on the bluff above the beach. Construction continued on other buildings, most notably the kitchen-dining hall on a site that offered a commanding view of both arriving guests and unfolding sunsets.

The steeply-pitched hip roofs and eight-pane windows were characteristic of the dining hall and the numerous guest cabins that sprung up along the lake shore. The "American Plan" included three meals a day and were prepared by a well-regarded chef named Keith Lough, who had followed the Moores from the Kapuskasing Inn. By the 1948 season, the new dining hall was complete.

The years that followed saw the expansion and refinement of guest accommodations. Propane and reliable electricity were not available the first few years, so initially the lodge was lit with kerosene lanterns, food was stored in a "natural ice refrigerator" and meals were prepared on an oversized wood-fired range. Over time, the lodge grew to include 12 guest cabins, the main kitchen-dining hall with added office space and cold storage, the owners' residence, numerous staff cabins, a laundry building and a storage garage, not to mention a minnow tank, dog houses and a half dozen docks mooring a slew of wooden boats. The lodge became a dining destination and economic engine for the neighboring communities.

Always an advocate for northern hospitality, Weldon became active with the Northern Ontario Tourist Outfitters (NOTO). Local hunting and fishing guides were available to guests and fishing boats were strategically placed at area lakes and along the Mississagi River. In the early 1970s, as interest in hunting and fishing declined, tennis and shuffleboard courts were added.

Throughout the lodge's development and operation, guests could count on Weldon's unflappable good nature and Melba's keenly managed dining room, prompting many guests to return for decades. Melwel's trademarks were its expansive vision, thoughtful execution and gracious hospitality. The Moores retired in 1981 after 35 years hosting guests at their home on the shores of Big Basswood Lake.



The first owners to take over Melwel Lodge from the Moores were a young couple from Sudbury, Ken and Shelley Machum. In 1985, Melwel was then sold to Mike Swanger, an American enthusiastic to own an authentic Canadian lodge. For the next 22 years, Melwel continued much as before, with cabins for rent and an operational dining room, though eventually dining hours were cut back.

In 2007, just as infrastructure maintenance was becoming critical, two well-heeled investors (Dale Harrison and Mark Timmerman) saw the inherent value in the lodge's one-of-a-kind setting. Melwel was sold and an infusion of much-needed capital quickly ensued. While updating nearly

every aspect of lodge infrastructure, the new owners aimed to preserve the quaint setting and functional simplicity of its essential structures. In 2015, Dale, a Sault Ste. Marie native, bought out his partner and put his own stamp on the lodge's identity. In 2017, after nearly 70 years serving lodge guests, the old character-laden kitchen-dining hall was torn down and a new, state-of-the-art facility was built in its place. Going into its 75th season, today's Melwel Lodge is a seasonally thriving place, continuing much as the Moores had envisioned, but reflecting modern tastes in self-serve hospitality and recreation. (<https://www.melwellodge.ca/>)

- Bob Kellum (for a more detailed history, readers are invited to contact Bob directly at rfkellum52@yahoo.com)

Lake Partners Program

“Thank You” to those who monitor water conditions in your local lake through the Lake Partners Program. Lake Partner Program. There is great data online for most lakes on Central Algoma at www.ontario.ca/environment-and-energy/map-lake-partner. Some lakes have not been sampled in several years and your lake association may want to reorganize a sampling volunteer.

The Lake Partner Program is Ontario's volunteer-based, water-quality monitoring program. The Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks coordinates this program from the Dorset Environmental Science Centre (DESC) in partnership with the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations. Each year, more than 600 volunteers monitor water quality in almost 550 inland lakes at over 800 sampling locations. Volunteers collect water samples and return them, postage paid, to DESC. All analyses are performed in the DESC Water Chemistry Laboratory. The resulting data are used by members of the public, partner agencies, government and academic researchers and private consultants to assess and report on water quality in lakes across Ontario. Total phosphorus, calcium and water clarity data are published each January on the provincial Lake Partner Program webpage.

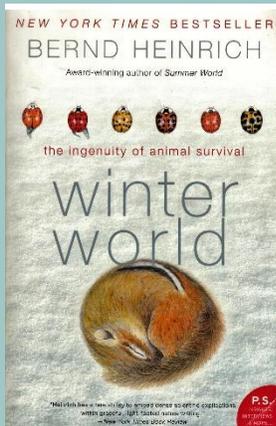


Become a Member



Your annual membership fee will provide a base budget for work of CAFC and demonstrate the commitment of local partners working towards a common goal. A strong diverse group is an essential component in meeting the goals of the Central Algoma Region. Support us at <https://www.centralalgomafreshwatercoalition.ca/>

Book Review



Winter World - the ingenuity of animal survival, by Bernd Heinrich, HarperCollins Publishers 2003

This is a book I did out every fall when the snow first starts to fall to remind myself of the wonders of nature in winter. It makes a winters snowshoe more interesting as you come to appreciate how animals survive winter. After reading the book again this year - we went looking for Golden-Crowned Kinglets, small birds that defy all survival odds, in the spruce in a river valley. Add some wonder to your winter excursions. As spring approaches there is also a companion book Summer World.

