

President's Report

Thank you for taking the time and driving the distance to join us for Ontario Adventure Rowing's annual general meeting.

The meeting will be called to order shortly, but first I would like to provide a update on our past year.

We've been busy! The 2023 rowing season was the first in 3 years with our usual number of tours and participants. Besides touring, our raison d'être, OAR has a new logo and a new website, has made a decision on equipment, and is offering a greater number of tours for 2024 – including four new ones.

Our website is now hosted on WIX and was completely redesigned to provide better navigation and categorization of information. It's a new, updated look and we have received several compliments since we launched this winter. Homam Michael, Shelagh Baker and I all administer the site. Between the three of us, we have had a few self-inflicted wounds, but we are learning!

Homam, with Shelagh's assistance, has been producing a newsletter ten times a year, which is delivered to our subscriber in-boxes at the beginning of the month. Each edition, starting with October 2023 is now available on our website under the NEWS tab.

Our website relates to another project – our new logo. Shawna Pereira, patiently worked with the Outreach Committee and a designer, and after many iterations, presented the logo we are now using on our documents and website. This summer we hope to have some merchandise and new decals for our equipment. We have also garnered compliments on the fresh, clean graphics.

The board gathered for a special meeting this February to decide on whether to keep the Euro Diffusion quads in our fleet. Though useful in 'heavy seas', the boats have proven heavy and awkward to manipulate off the water. There is concern about potential injury to participants. This, and not having many tours that required this type of boat, the board voted to dispose of them. The Euro Diffusion quad is more suited to life at a regular rowing club, moored at a dock, or on a trolley adjacent to the launch, than to our mode of operation.

We have 17 events on our calendar this season – and room for one more in August and another in late September. OAR is sponsoring four new tours.

- Bob's Lake, on May 27, is a new tour on a really beautiful lake, that somehow has been missed previously. This one is organized by Shelagh for OAR.
- Brockville RC is putting on a one-day tour, June 22, launching and landing from their club on the St. Lawrence.
- On a different section of the St. Lawrence, there is a new two-day tour out of Morrisburg, courtesy of Kevin Donnelly, from the Cornwall RC. That is on June 8 and 9.
- The French River – organized by Shelagh, in conjunction with the Sudbury Rowing Club – is 3 days of rowing in the western end of the French River delta.

Many of our other tours mix new water with established routes. A big thank you to our tour organizers for this year – Jules Poulin, Shelagh Baker, Liane Bell and the ONEC touring committee, Kevin Donnelly, John Easton, Jane MacDonald, Richard Vincent, Matt Gleben, and not least, Brian Howe, who also organized this facility for today.

I've mentioned a few of my fellow board members, but I want to take a moment to acknowledge the contributions of all the directors. Heather Palmer, Peter Jepson, and Shelagh for their work on the Outreach Committee, which is a challenging portfolio; Homam for Communications and as the Web Zen Master; Shawna for Special Projects and the bringing a certain elan to the Vice-president role; Arnold Vandermeer for Equipment – which is a small word for his work on logistics, trailering, repairs, storage, maintenance, and maintaining patience! Diana Watson, as always, has our financial reins firmly in hand; and Nancy Kielar, is filling the secretarial position with good grace and good cheer.

A big thank you to Elaine Bursztyn, who has been our registrar for the past five years. Elaine was a former board member. With great attention to detail and diligence, Elaine has made sure that all our rowers were registered with RCA. She retired from the role in the autumn, in order to spend more time traveling. Nancy, Shelagh, and I have all assumed the role and, yes, it takes three people to replace Elaine.

I, and everyone else on the board, extend a special thank you Richard Vincent. Richard was the president for 13 years, and was the constant factor in OAR's success. Richard has sat at the board this past year as past-president, a brand new role for him and for OAR.

Over the years, Richard has enthusiastically sought recognition of our rowing at our provincial and federal levels and has survived two World Rowing Tours. Richard has brought cheer and a can-do spirit to many, many tours, including being a driving force in the beloved Canadian Sculling Marathon.

His accomplishments, big and small, are too numerous to recount here, but suffice to say, that without Richard's dedication, hard work, and constancy, there would be no row touring organization in Canada. Thank you! We hope that we may still call on you in the future for your counsel and advice.