

Watershed

The voice of the Ottawa River | La voix de la rivière des Outaouais



Ottawa RIVERKEEPER®
GARDE-RIVIÈRE des Outaouais

► **Honorary Riverkeepers**
Sharon and David Johnston

► **Investing in**
Flood Protection

► **10 joyaux sur**
l'eau à découvrir

OTTAWA RIVERKEEPER

GALA

DECONSTRUCTED

Fall 2020
ISSUE 1



Kwey! Hello!

Welcome to Gala 2020, which is happening right here on the unceded, unsundered territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe people.

This gala is very different from galas past. This year we are presenting “Gala: Deconstructed.” Goodies. Adventures. Libations. Auction.

L'idée est née de notre amour et de notre engagement, ceux de l'équipe de Garde-rivière et de nos supporters, envers le bassin versant et les gens qui y vivent; du désir collectif de rester en contact tout en privilégiant la sécurité de tous et de toutes. L'édition 2020 du Gala est une combinaison de livraisons spéciales, de produits soigneusement choisis, de conseils privilégiés sur des endroits à découvrir cet été et bien davantage!

I love the water and I love this territory. I love what happens when great people come together with a common purpose, and I love the work we do at Ottawa Riverkeeper. My connection to this place runs deep and strong. I grew up here paddling, swimming and gathering rocks, and I've really never stopped. In 2019, I attended my first Riverkeeper Gala and felt immediately at home.

Non seulement j'y ai rencontré des ami(e)s d'enfance et d'ancien(ne)s collègues du gouvernement, mais aussi des dirigeant(e)s des Premières Nations avec qui j'avais déjà travaillé, et des aîné(e)s et des enseignant(e)s du territoire algonquin anishinabe, d'où vient la famille de mon père. J'avais très hâte d'être l'hôtesse de mon premier Gala en tant que Garde-rivière.

I couldn't wait to connect with you in person, but as all canoers know, sometimes we need to do a cross bow draw and find new directions. Necessity is the mother of invention and Gala: Deconstructed is the innovative result!

Migwech — thank you — to all our sponsors and supporters who continue to support our important work caring for the Ottawa River watershed. Enjoy the stories, research and photos in the pages that follow, all of which show our connection to water that sustains us.



► **Elizabeth Logue**

Ottawa Riverkeeper



Photo: Fangliang Xu

“As all canoers know, sometimes we need to do a cross bow draw and find new directions.”

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On the cover: Canoeists enjoying the Ottawa River near Shirleys Bay in the west end of the National Capital Region. Photographed by Mark Bernards on June 28, 2020. Back cover: photograph by Martin Lipman.

Ottawa Riverkeeper, a registered charitable organization, is a champion and collective voice for the Ottawa River watershed, providing leadership and inspiration to protect, promote and improve its ecological health and future.

See something fishy?

Call the Pollution Hotline at 1-888-9KEEPER or submit our electronic form. We can help you report the problem and put a stop to the harm.

Garde-rivière des Outaouais est un organisme sans but lucratif qui agit comme champion et une voix collective pour la protection du bassin versant de la rivière des Outaouais, offrant le leadership et l'inspiration en vue de protéger et de promouvoir sa santé écologique et son avenir.

Vous voyez de la pollution?

Composez le 1-888-953-3737, ou utilisez un formulaire de déclaration en ligne. Nous vous aiderons à faire ce qu'il faut pour voir au problème.

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Photo: Greg Marshall, Aerialphotographs.ca

PROTECTION PARTNERS

The Insurance Bureau of Canada addresses the emotional and financial costs of flooding

When flood waters flowed through the streets of Ottawa and Gatineau in May 2017, the volume of the Ottawa River's spring runoff was the highest ever recorded.

That spring, there was a heavier than normal snowpack and exceptionally heavy rains throughout the watershed, which accelerated snowmelt and swamped low-lying communities and neighbourhoods. "That flood really taught us that the Ottawa River demands respect," says Craig Stewart, Vice-President of Federal Affairs for the Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC), which has calculated that flooding now costs Canadians more than any other climate issue.

"We promote nature-based solutions — protecting nature where it can protect us," says Stewart. "A lot of our work focuses on riparian forests and wetlands, and if deforestation upstream is contributing to flooding, then replanting trees could help keep snow on the landscape longer and reduce the chance of flooding. We realized that our aims are aligned with Ottawa Riverkeeper's goals, and when we had the opportunity to become the presenting sponsor for the Riverkeeper Gala, we jumped on it."

In Canada, flooding is jurisdictionally complex — Stewart compares it to a jigsaw puzzle. Municipal governments are often on the front lines, but every level of government is involved in the response. Civil society organizations and the private sector also have significant roles to play.

For insurance companies, flooding presents a unique challenge. They can predict where floods will occur but can't know the exact timing or severity. For people living in high-risk areas, insurance is often unaffordable and might not even be available. This leaves governments to cover the costs at the expense of the Canadian taxpayer. As climate change causes more frequent and intense flooding, this becomes less tenable.

"IBC recommends a whole-of-society solution," says Stewart. "For the past three years, we have co-chaired a national council on flooding with Public Safety Canada. Our working group consists of representatives from banks, municipalities, civil society organizations, every provincial and territorial government and five different federal departments. This approach led to our National Action Plan on Flooding (see sidebar) and commitments in the mandate letters of five different federal ministers."

According to this action plan, people living in the most flood-prone areas should be strongly encouraged — with incentives — to move. The Government of Quebec began doing this in 2019 when it offered homeowners in flood-affected areas up to \$250,000 to purchase their homes. Disaster assistance arrangements should be amended to discourage development in flood plains, according to the plan, and communities deemed to have a high but acceptable level of risk should be incentivized to reduce that risk by constructing and maintaining flood defences such as retention ponds or dams. This would allow for the creation of a high-risk insurance pool for some of those homeowners currently unable to obtain flood insurance.

Asking people to move is the most difficult part of the plan. "But it's possible to strategically pinpoint areas where home

“We promote nature-based solutions — protecting nature where it can protect us.”

► **Craig Stewart,**
Vice-President of Federal Affairs,
Insurance Bureau of Canada

buyouts can occur and the land can be returned to the river,” says Stewart. “This can help protect homes in adjacent areas. This process is called ‘strategic retreat,’ and it can help make decisions about where money should be spent to move people out of harm’s way versus where people should be left in place but defended with investments in infrastructure. And you need to have robust flood mapping to support the process.” (In a survey of 800 Ontarians and Quebecers who live near the Ottawa River conducted for Ottawa Riverkeeper by Abacus Data in July — see story on page eight — virtually all respondents supported government efforts to mitigate flooding while opposing homes being rebuilt in the floodplains.)

There are already some strategic retreat programs in place, and they can help return habitats to their former glory. “After major floods in High River, Alberta, in 2013, the worst hit area was given back to nature as a park,” says Stewart. “Another project near Truro, Nova Scotia, is acquiring land where water can be diverted and coastal salt marshes will be rehabilitated. We need to do a better job of land-use planning so we keep people safe.”

► **Opposite page:** Flooded homes on the Gatineau side of the Ottawa River in May 2017. **Above:** Craig Stewart, IBC’s VP of Federal Affairs, at the 2019 Riverkeeper Gala.



Photo: Paul Couvrette

ACTION PLAN

The IBC’s Recommendations for a National Action Plan on Flooding calls for 1) education, 2) relocation and 3) protection.

1

► Governments and the private sector should use flood maps to educate and empower consumers to reduce their own risks, and the federal government should invest to improve the terrain data that underlies all flood mapping.

2

► Governments must move homes away from areas that repeatedly flood and develop a high-risk insurance pool in partnership with provinces and the insurance industry to protect Canadians unable to move from high-risk zones.

3

► Invest in an expanded Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund to defend those at highest risk. Operationalize a plan to make Canadian homes more climate resilient as well as more energy efficient.

JOYAUX CACHES

Des adeptes révèlent leur coin secret du bassin versant de la rivière des Outaouais

Water lovers share their secret spots in the Ottawa River watershed





1 Katy Alambo, Biologiste,
Garde-Rivière des Outaouais
Lac du Poisson Blanc, Île Verte

Envie de faire du canoë-camping? Découvrez le lac du Poisson Blanc! Il y a plusieurs îles sur lesquelles vous pouvez camper, mais ma préférée est l'île Verte. L'île forme un canal qui se transforme en un "lac" d'eau calme, et pagayer le canal à l'automne est à couper le souffle!



2 Frederic Boulanger, PDG de Macadamian
Parc des chutes Coulonge

Nous avons visité ce parc à quelques reprises. Le sentier pédestre nous fait voir la beauté du coin, et revivre l'héritage de l'exploitation forestière. De beaux points de vues pour les photos! Il y a aussi la zipline qui est remplie d'émotions fortes. Du plaisir pour toute la famille chez nous.



3 Isabelle Des Chênes, Executive VP of the
Chemistry Industry Association of Canada
Morris Island Conservation Area

This oasis of forested woodland and wetlands is transformative for the soul! Its beautiful landscape and nooks and crannies make you feel like you've been transported to another place. A great little respite from the city.



4 Tammy Cote, Algonquin Anishinabekwe from
Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg
Kinew Zibi (Eagle River)

This is the *zibi* (river) that taught me how to paddle in my *chiman* (canoe) and about various *kignonz* (fish) species, including the *namé* (sturgeon), which was released safely back into the *zibi*. I have so much respect for this beautiful place.



5 Isabelle Croteau, directrice du
parc national de Plaisance
Parc national de Plaisance, Sépaq

Le pays des jardins flottants! Le parc national de Plaisance est une zone de conservation permettant la protection et la découverte de milieux humides riches de vie évoluant tout au long de l'année. Marcher à la Zizanie-des-marais, le trottoir flottant, est une expérience fascinante. Tortues, poissons, oiseaux et bien d'autres surprises au quotidien!



6 Greg Fergus, député fédéral de Hull-Aylmer
Parc des Rapides-Deschênes

Quelle belle conjoncture : la rivière des Outaouais, le bruit éternel des rapides, les ruines de l'ancienne turbine hydroélectrique, une magnifique diversité d'oiseaux à observer. C'est hypnotisant et détendant. Accessible à pied, à vélo — par tous les moyens sauf l'eau (ironiquement)!



7 Stig Larsson, CEO of Level Six
Petite-Nation River

There is a section of the river that we held National Slalom Team spring training camps on called the canyon section. I always loved how you would drive into a farmer's field and dirtbag it by the river and hear the power of the water through the forest and then a short walk upstream you would be immersed in some of the fastest moving whitewater around.



8 Melissa Mascarenhas, Youth Water Leader
Constance Bay Beach

I remember the first time I saw the beach. The brilliant colours of the evening painted across the sky, the cool summer breeze and crystal-clear water — it took no time to become my favourite getaway outside the city.



9 Fiona McKean, Co-Founder ThistleDown Foundation
Chaffey's Lock

I love this lock station in the middle of the world heritage Rideau Canal system because of the bucolic beauty, cottages nestled up along the shores, the group of swans that call it home year round, and all the friendly faces. The fact that the Opinicon resort is a short walk up from the locks is a bonus!



10 Patrick Nadeau, Directeur général
de Garde-rivière des Outaouais
Réserve faunique de Papineau-Labelle

On n'en aurait pas assez d'une vie pour découvrir la pêche sur tous les plans d'eau de cette réserve faunique, la plus au sud du Québec. Plusieurs activités et formules d'hébergement y sont proposés, tout ça facilité par l'excellente gestion de la SÉPAQ. Il n'est pas rare d'avoir un magnifique lac pour soi ou presque!

Lac du Poisson Blanc: Courtesy Parc régional du Poisson Blanc
Chutes Coulonge: Frédéric Boulanger
Plaisance: D. Bouchard
Rapides-Deschenes: Ottawa Riverkeeper
Constance Bay: Melissa Mascarenhas
Chaffey's Lock: Parks Canada

A RIVER RUNS THROUGH US

The Ottawa River plays a vital role in the lives of locals, comprehensive survey shows

Ontario and Quebec residents who live on or near the Ottawa River say the waterway is central to their lives — culturally, ecologically, economically and recreationally — according to the first full-scale scientific survey of attitudes toward the river. Eighty-two per cent of respondents, both urban and rural, consider it important to their quality of life. But a large number are also concerned about the health of the river, specifically the impacts of sewage and pollutants such as pesticides and fertilizers — worries that make some think the river is unsafe for swimming or fishing.

The survey, conducted by Ottawa Riverkeeper sponsor Abacus Data in early July, polled residents who live within 30 kilometres of the river on a wide range of topics related to its status and importance. The numbers show that a majority of people regularly or occasionally visit parks along the river and more than half run or walk along it. Slightly fewer bike beside the river and visit its beaches.

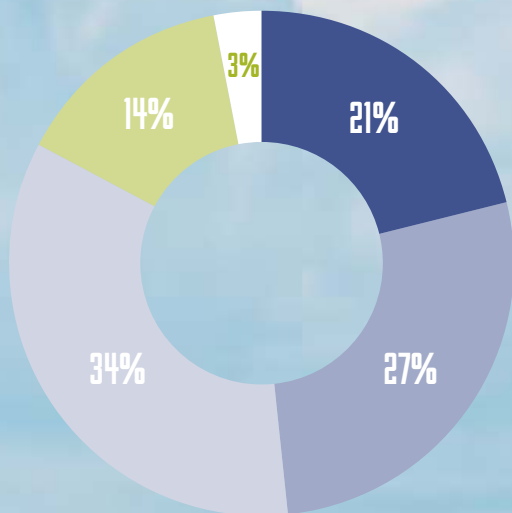
While Canadians in general have always felt protective of clean air, land and water, Abacus CEO David Coletto says that those feelings were

probably amplified by the past few months of isolation and self-distancing, which may have influenced their survey responses. “This survey was done in the midst of a global pandemic when one of the only things we could actually do was go out and enjoy nature,” he says. “If anything, the pandemic is going to reinforce the value of conserving the natural assets that we have.”

Since the health of the river impacts the health of the ecosystem, it’s perhaps no surprise that 93 per cent of respondents, regardless of their partisan beliefs, think governments need to invest more to protect and restore the Ottawa River. “If people believe that most or all of their drinking water comes from the river, that the health of that river is tied to their ecosystem and biodiversity of the region, then they’re going to want governments to protect it,” says Coletto. “Clean air and water are things that people, regardless of their politics, take very personally.”

As for recreation, many respondents said they don’t use watercraft on the river because they don’t have the right equipment. But roughly 65 per cent said they would at least consider using watercraft (kayaks, canoes, paddleboards and so forth) if there was a place to rent and learn to use them on the Ottawa River — important information for Ottawa Riverkeeper and potential rental agencies.

Of those who don’t swim in the river, three quarters say it’s because the water is not clean enough. In fact,



82%

SAY THE OTTAWA RIVER IS IMPORTANT TO THEIR OVERALL QUALITY OF LIFE.

93% BELIEVE GOVERNMENTS SHOULD INVEST MORE INTO THE OTTAWA RIVER TO FURTHER PROTECT AND RESTORE IT.

● Extremely important ● Very important ● Important ● Not that important ● Not important at all

“If anything, the pandemic is going to reinforce the value of conserving the natural assets that we have.”

► **David Coletto, CEO, Abacus Data**

► **The Abacus Ottawa River Valley Residents Survey polled 800 people from July 2 to 6 and is considered accurate to within +/- 3.45 per cent, 19 times out of 20. To read the full report, go to ottawariverkeeper.ca/2020survey.**

59 per cent of residents say the water is dirty or very dirty and half say that the conditions are worse than they were 20 years ago — perceptions that don't always reflect reality, according to Ottawa Riverkeeper Elizabeth Logue. Among peoples' concerns, diluted sewage ranks the highest, yet “although sewage remains a problem, tremendous progress has been made,” says Logue. “Thanks to investments in recent years, the City of Ottawa has significantly reduced the volume of untreated sewage entering the river.”

While Ottawa Riverkeeper will continue pushing for improvements and educating the public and decision-makers around threats to the watershed, at the same time it wants to reassure members of the public that the waterway is safe. “We want people connecting with the water, because when you love and use something, you want to protect it,” says Logue. “Many people are still reluctant to use it for recreational activities but in reality, it's much cleaner than we think.”

The Abacus survey report includes a demographic breakdown which shows that youth use the river a lot and consider it important but rank highest when asked if they think the water is dirty or very dirty. This suggests that Ottawa Riverkeeper should continue engaging with young people through educational and outreach programs.

FUTURE BEARING

Ottawa Riverkeeper sets its sights on the next generation and a new riverside home

- The historic boathouse that could soon become home to Ottawa Riverkeeper programs, such as Youth Water Leaders (opposite top and bottom).

Genevieve Donin is a certified rescue diver but, typical of many National Capital Region residents, she had never been on the Ottawa River let alone considered diving there. But after participating in Ottawa Riverkeeper's Youth Water Leaders Program (YWLP), she's looking at her own backyard with open eyes.



Photo: Roger Hiscocks

Donin, 24, is a University of Ottawa master's student in environmental sustainability and was part of 2019-2020's second cohort of the YWLP. Her experiences in the program included an overnight whitewater rafting trip on the Gatineau River, an exchange with First Nations youth from Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg and the Algonquins of Barriere Lake, and a webinar on the diversity of local freshwater mussels. "Becoming more connected with your natural surroundings really grounds you to a place," says Donin, who is originally from Toronto. "It starts to feel like home. Instead of just, 'Oh, I live by the river,' you develop a relationship with the water and become aware of the challenges it faces. It becomes special to you."

This is exactly what Naomi Sarazin was hoping for. The Senior Manager of Ottawa Riverkeeper's Youth and Education Programs and an Anishinabe from the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation, Sarazin knows that environmental organizations must engage with youth in order to thrive. Her job is to conjure meaningful ways to do that.

The YWLP supports the leadership development of youth aged 17 to 25 and educates them about issues impacting the Ottawa River watershed in the hopes that participants become advocates and community leaders around water ecology, health and sustainability. That's done through expert mentorship, experiences

on the river and co-designed projects. One youth, for example, received a prestigious Young Leader grant to create and host virtual nature journaling sessions, encouraging youth participants to undertake solitary time observing nature and deepen their understanding of the plants and wildlife in the watershed. Other youth are developing educational materials that can be used in classrooms and added to Ottawa Riverkeeper's Learning Library.

But the organization wants to do more to get youth on, in and excited about the Ottawa River watershed, which is why Sarazin is planning for and taking steps toward the creation of a River School — a learning hub where young people can get hands-on experience about the watershed and the flora and fauna within it. Sarazin is still figuring out community needs and what the school might entail but is excited about the myriad possibilities. "Land and water have a lot to teach us — not just about our natural surroundings, but also about who we are," she says. "When you go out and connect to nature, it allows you to grow and get a sense of your place in the world."

Now, imagine if these programs, the Learning Library and other projects could be offered right on the banks of the Ottawa River. If Ottawa Riverkeeper Elizabeth Logue gets her wish, that might become a reality in a historic boathouse that the organization would like to help transform into River House. The century-old, three-storey, gable-roofed pavilion perched over the water on stilts in the east end of Ottawa had fallen into disrepair. In 2010, it received federal heritage status and the National Capital Commission is currently overseeing extensive repairs and upgrades.

"When you go out and connect to nature, it allows you to grow and get a sense of your place in the world."

► **Naomi Sarazin, Senior Manager, Youth and Education Programs, Ottawa Riverkeeper**

While those renovations are under way, Ottawa Riverkeeper is in discussions about establishing a new head office, resource centre, the River School and revenue generating activities that would support the organization's work while providing unique opportunities to enjoy the beautiful waterfront location. It's early days, cautions Logue, and nothing is official yet, but it's difficult to contain enthusiasm when the stars appear to be aligning.

"The dream was always to be on the water, and water connects us to the whole territory, it's our common bond," she says. "From there, we started thinking, 'What if it was a water embassy? What if it was a convening place for talking about water health, gathering all generations, community leaders, scientists, youth and elders?' So we're dreaming big and putting behind it a work plan to make it happen."

A new home, and a place for budding and experienced water leaders to come together and learn from one another — and to inspire others to see the watershed in a fresh way.



Photos: Martin Lipman



Watershed Wisdom

Meet the newest Honorary
Riverkeepers, former Governor
General the Right Honourable
David Johnston and
Mrs. Sharon Johnston

Photo: Martin Lipman



► Honorary Riverkeepers the Right Honourable David Johnston and Mrs. Sharon Johnston are presented a unique handcrafted canoe paddle by Geoff Green, Chair of Ottawa Riverkeeper's Board of Directors.

The St. Marys River is short but mighty. Flowing for only 120 kilometres from Lake Superior to Lake Huron, at its widest point the St. Marys is more than seven kilometres across. With abundant fish and ample game in the surrounding forests, the river — like many in the Ottawa River watershed — was a traditional gathering place for trade and meetings among Anishinaabe peoples.

It was home to a rich fishery of *adikameg* — a species that European settlers called whitefish. Early accounts tell of Indigenous fishers dipping their nets into the rapids while adroitly standing upright in birchbark canoes and pulling out six or seven large *adikameg* at a time. By the 20th century, however, the river's bounty had largely disappeared.

The Right Honourable David Johnston — who served as the Governor General of Canada from 2010 to 2017 — and his wife Mrs. Sharon Johnston grew up along the banks of the St. Marys in Sault Ste. Marie, Ont. But the high school sweethearts, who married in 1964, weren't able to fully enjoy the waterway during their youth. Industrial development and sewage dumping had polluted the river, and it was all but unusable for recreational purposes.

"When we were growing up, we were prohibited from even swimming in the river," says Mrs. Johnston. "The water was contaminated then, but thanks to good sewage disposal and a recovery effort, our grandchildren were able to learn to water ski on that river."

For Mr. and Mrs. Johnston, the decimation of the St. Marys — and subsequent efforts to restore the river to its former glory — emphasize the importance of good stewardship. This is the perspective and wisdom that they bring to their new role as Honorary Riverkeepers for the Ottawa River.

"Just as the river gives to us, so too must we give back. Living in harmony with the splendor of nature is a duty we all must fulfill."

► **The Right Honourable David Johnston,
the former Governor General of Canada**

In more typical times, Honorary Riverkeepers are introduced at Ottawa Riverkeeper's annual gala. In the midst of a pandemic, of course, large gatherings aren't possible. So as part of this year's innovative Gala: Deconstructed, the newest Honorary Riverkeepers were recognized at an outdoor ceremony on the banks of the Tenagadino Zibi (Gatineau



River) in mid-July. The Chair of Ottawa Riverkeeper's Board of Directors, Students On Ice Foundation Founder and President Geoff Green, presented Mr. and Mrs. Johnston with a unique canoe paddle that was handcrafted from wood and composite materials by Echo Paddles of Wakefield, Que.

Though their role is symbolic, the Johnstons take it seriously. Since Mr. Johnston was appointed Governor General — he was a law professor, Principal of McGill University and President of the University of Waterloo beforehand — the couple has lived in the Ottawa River watershed. Mr. Johnston's Scottish-Irish ancestors emigrated here in 1848 before moving "up river" to Sault Ste. Marie at the beginning of the 20th century, and three of the couple's five daughters and eight of their 14 grandchildren now call it home. "We have decided to make Ottawa our last home, the place where we want to enjoy the rest of our life," says Mrs. Johnston, who worked as a physical and occupational therapist, and has published two novels and is working on the third in a trilogy based on her family history. "The river is one of its great draws. It's important in terms of its beauty and also for recreation. And it's nice to know that we will actually be working on it as Riverkeepers."



As Honorary Riverkeepers, Mr. and Mrs. Johnston will contribute to the conservation of the Ottawa River watershed for future generations, but the former Governor General is also captivated by its past. Rivers have played a central role in Canadian history. Both the Ottawa and St. Marys rivers have been used for transportation and sustenance by countless generations of Indigenous peoples, and both were part of the fur trading routes travelled by European voyageurs. “It was a very poignant experience to live in Rideau Hall, where you have two rivers, the Rideau and the Gatineau, flowing into the Ottawa River,” recalls Mr. Johnston. “Looking westward, you can see the statue of Samuel de Champlain on the lookout near Parliament Hill.

“As Governor General, people often asked me if I had a favourite Governor General. You’re not supposed to, but if I did, my choice would be Champlain. He was the first Governor of New France and was a Governor General in all but name. He is a much-misunderstood man. In English-language history, I learned that he was a kind of conquistador. But in fact, as I learned more about him, I realized he was a believer in inclusivity — in building strong communities and establishing friendly relations with all. That was his dream for Canada, as Pulitzer Prize winning author David Hackett Fisher describes in *Champlain’s Dream*.”

Every year, Ottawa Riverkeeper recognizes outstanding citizens with the Honorary Riverkeeper distinction. Mr. and Mrs. Johnston join an eminent group: the Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, the former Chief Justice of Canada; Senator Murray Sinclair, who was Chief Commissioner of Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission; children’s and women’s rights

advocate Sophie Gregoire Trudeau, the wife of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau; two former Bank of Canada Governors, Mark Carney and Stephen Poloz; former Sergeant-at-Arms Kevin Vickers; and former Canadian Football League star Henry Burris.

“Honorary Riverkeepers are people who inspire us, not only for their many achievements, but also with their vision, integrity and leadership,” says Green. “It is a title that is retained for life, and Riverkeepers serve as ambassadors and champions for Ottawa Riverkeeper and our watershed. Our 2020 Honorary Riverkeepers are truly extraordinary people who have helped to make Canada and everyone around them better. We are so thrilled to have the Right Honourable David Johnston and Mrs. Sharon Johnston join our Riverkeeper family. I know they will be great ambassadors for Ottawa Riverkeeper’s mission, vision and work.”

“Honorary Riverkeepers are people who inspire us, not only for their many achievements, but also with their vision, integrity and leadership.”

► **Geoff Green, C.M., C.Q., Chair of Ottawa Riverkeeper’s Board of Directors**

For their part, the Johnstons view the role as an opportunity to further deepen their connection with the watershed. “We want to be active as Riverkeepers,” says Mrs. Johnston. “To learn about our waterways and to use them recreationally. We want to know everything about the watershed, the Ottawa River and what is being done to preserve fish life. Our grandchildren and our grandchildren’s grandchildren will grow up here.”

Caring for our natural heritage, says Mr. Johnston, is a shared duty for all Canadians. “It is remarkable that we can enjoy a metropolitan centre as active and busy as the National Capital Region and have this beautiful nature here,” he says, admiring the rolling Outaouais hills that provide the backdrop for the Honorary Riverkeeper ceremony. “To live alongside a river like this is a gift and a privilege, but it comes with responsibility. Just as the river gives to us, so too must we give back. Living in harmony with the splendor of nature is a duty we all must fulfill. We are so lucky as Canadians to inhabit this geography — to have the longest coastline in the world and the most freshwater lakes and rivers. What a responsibility it is, and we thank Ottawa Riverkeeper for their continued leadership, inspiration and expertise.”

► **Opposite page bottom:** Ottawa Riverkeeper Elizabeth Logue. **This page:** The ceremonial Honorary Riverkeeper paddle, handcrafted by Echo Paddles.

Photos: Martin Lipman





AUCTION CATALOGUE DE L'ENCAN

Our awesome annual auction goes online!

Join us in a fun online silent auction this year! Our wildly popular Riverkeeper Gala auction has always featured unique and exclusive items, and this year is no exception. Bid on an impressive array of high-end items, from experience packages to gorgeous artwork and one-of-a-kind items. All proceeds go towards keeping our watershed swimmable, drinkable and fishable for everyone.

Hurry! The auction will officially end at 8 p.m. EDT on Tuesday, August 31. Text "bid" to 613-651-1734 or use this link ottawariverkeeper.ca/auction2020 to access our auction.

You'll be prompted to enter your cell number or email address and then you can participate in this super exciting experience. If you have any questions or need assistance with the auction please email gala@dottawariverkeeper.ca.

Notre formidable encan annuel passe au virtuel!

Cette année, participez à un encan silencieux en ligne palpitant! Il y a toujours eu des articles uniques et exclusifs à notre légendaire encan du Gala Garde-rivière, et cette année ne fait pas exception. Faites vos offres parmi un éventail impressionnant d'articles exceptionnels : forfaits-expériences, œuvres d'art magnifiques et produits uniques. Tous les profits serviront à la protection de notre bassin versant, pour que son eau demeure potable et propice à la pêche et à la baignade pour tous.

Faites vite! L'encan prendra officiellement fin à 20 h 00 HAE, le mardi 31 août. Textez « bid » au 613-651-1734 ou utilisez le lien suivant ottawariverkeeper.ca/encan2020 pour accéder à l'encan.

On vous demandera d'entrer votre numéro de cellulaire ou votre adresse courriel afin de participer à cette expérience électrisante. Si vous avez des questions ou avez besoin d'assistance en ce qui concerne l'encan, veuillez écrire à gala@dottawariverkeeper.ca.





HERE'S A SNEAK PEEK OF SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS

Exclusive Fogo Island Pottery Retreat

A four-night, three-day stay for up to six people on Newfoundland's Fogo Island. This lucky group will be among the very first to experience the new Fogo Clay Studio, opening this summer! Courtesy of Sarah Fulford and Ottawa Riverkeeper board member Tracey Clark.

Exclusive Miramichi Fly Fishing Trip

Two-day fly fishing experience for four at the Sutter Club, one of the top salmon clubs on New Brunswick's Miramichi River. Salmon fishing, hiking and biking trails, and water sports such as kayaking and canoeing are available at this 50-acre waterfront property. Courtesy of long-time Riverkeeper supporter Gary Zed.

Chester Yawl Rowboat

From Boatworks Ottawa, this handmade wooden boat — modelled on the 19th-century harbour "taxis" — keeps the traditional good looks and efficient form but is constructed with modern materials.

Mont Ste Marie Ski Weekend Getaway

A weekend at Mont Ste Marie, one hour north of Ottawa. Includes four downhill ski day passes. Outside your front door an outdoor playground awaits.

Ottawa Kayarafting Adventure

From Boreal River Adventures, an experience for up to 10 people. Paddle and swim whitewater in a beginner-friendly setting. Learn safety concepts and how to read rapids, and connect with the river on an adventure in the city.

"Reflection" Handmade Wooden Paddle

From Echo Paddles, "Reflection" is a flatwater handmade paddle with a remarkably smooth entry and exit and feathering action.

Artwork: Imaginary Grace

This beautiful painting by Nicole Allen — acrylic on canvas, 36 inches by 36 inches — comes with a \$250 gift certificate for custom framing at Ottawa's Wall Space Gallery + Framing.

Thirty Pounds of Snow Crab

From Premium Seafoods, enjoy 30 pounds of MSC-certified frozen snow crab, caught in the cold waters of the Canadian North Atlantic.

Atlantic Lobster Meal

Treat yourself to 25 pounds of MSC-certified lobster. The lobster is caught in the Atlantic waters off the southeastern coast of Cape Breton Island by a father-daughter crew.

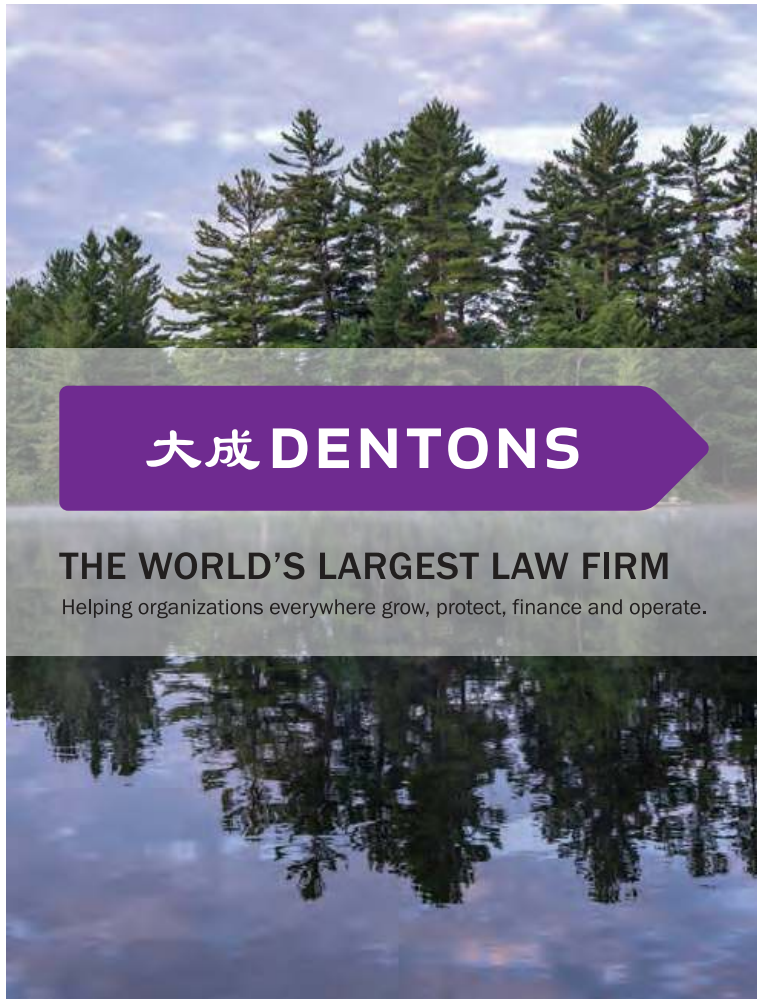
Car Detailing Package

From Star Motors, a \$500 credit at their collision centre, good on any make and model and can even be applied towards cosmetic repairs.

Shoreline Clean-up With Ottawa Riverkeeper

A fantastic corporate team building activity for up to 50 people. You tell us the preferred time and date, and we'll pick a location, bring the equipment, a camera for photos and, of course, snacks.

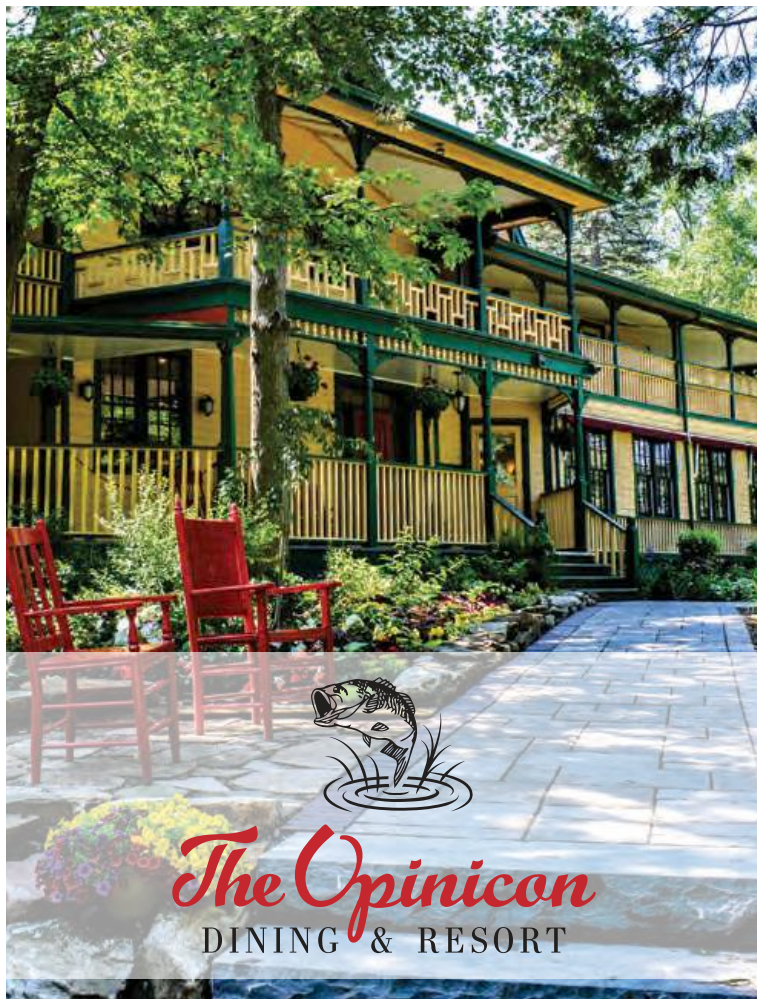




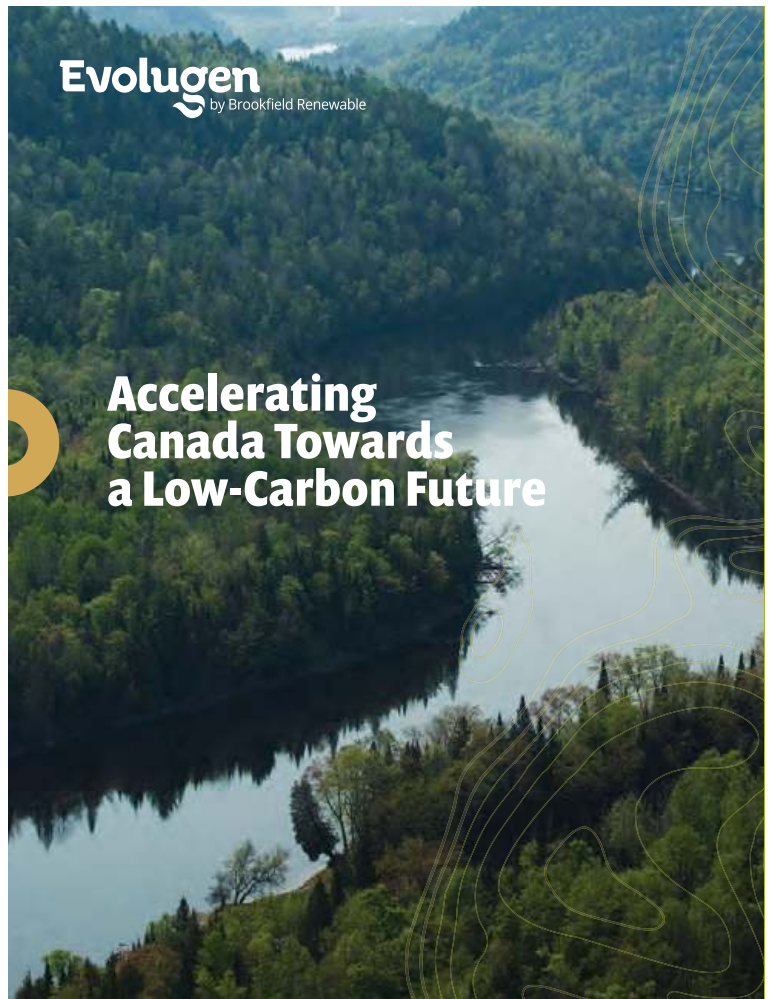
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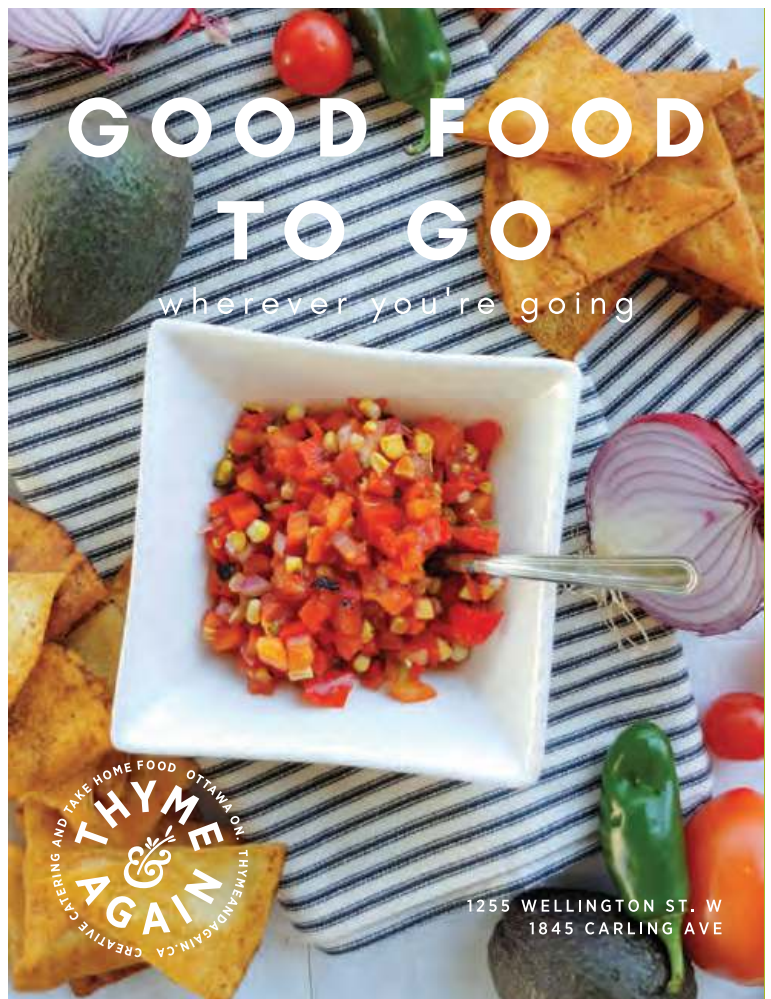


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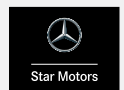
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THE BIG PICTURE

Ottawa Riverkeeper's Watershed Health Assessment and Monitoring project takes the pulse of the whole system

► **Clockwise from top left:** Ottawa Riverkeeper team assessing water quality; Nagadjitòdjig Aki, the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg guardians; RBC employees helping to keep our river clean; Marjolaine Hudon, Regional President for Ontario North and East at RBC, at the RBC WHAM funding announcement.

Photos, clockwise from top left: Matthew Brocklehurst, Martin Lipman, Martin Lipman, Ryan Seyeau/Rubicon Photography



The Ottawa River watershed is a complex aquatic tapestry twice the size of New Brunswick. At its heart flows the 1,271 kilometre-long Ottawa River, which is fed by scores of other rivers, creeks, ponds and lakes.

The watershed is used for recreation, fishing, agriculture, hydro power, urban development and more. But until Ottawa Riverkeeper and its partners started a major project to examine the watershed's overall ecological health, nobody had done a comprehensive scientific study of the entire system. "And how do you protect something," asks Larissa Holman, the organization's Director of Science and Policy, "you know very little about?"

Even though the watershed supports and connects some two million people — including First Nations in Ontario and Quebec, Ottawans turning on the tap to quench their thirst and farmers growing crops — there have been no integrated efforts to examine its vital signs. So in 2018, Ottawa Riverkeeper launched the Watershed Health Assessment and Monitoring (WHAM) project. "The goal of WHAM is to provide the best possible information to the public and decision-makers on our watershed's health so fact-based decisions can be taken to improve its condition," explains Holman. "We do this by collecting whatever data exists and gathering new data through community-based monitoring on different rivers and creeks." When these pieces are combined, the picture that emerges will serve not only as a snapshot of the ecological integrity of the system but also as a baseline for assessing future changes and informing conservation efforts and policies.

With initial support from Environment and Climate Change Canada and subsequent funding from the RBC Foundation, the Echo Foundation and the Mosaic Company, the multiyear project has been informed since its inception by a broad range of experts convened by Ottawa Riverkeeper, including representatives from academic institutions, environmental NGOs, First Nations and municipalities. These experts came to a consensus on a list of 14 indicators to measure — such as flow, temperature, phosphorus and dissolved oxygen — to track water quality over time. "These measures will reveal the physical aspects as well as the chemical composition of the main river and its tributaries," says biologist Jérôme Marty, one of the scientific advisors to WHAM. "With these, we can identify areas in good health and come up with a conservation plan to protect them, and areas in poor health that need help."

Because many pulp and paper mills that operated in the watershed have closed over the past couple decades and sewage goes through modernized treatment plants, water quality has improved in many places. Sawdust no longer clogs the riverbanks, and there are more stringent caps on the release of chemicals and isotopes (the latter from the Chalk River nuclear research facility). But issues still remain near urban areas or as the result of past and ongoing land use activities. So WHAM collaborates with community members and First Nations to gather data by doing field measurements.

One of the co-developers of WHAM, the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation near Maniwaki, Que., recently launched its own guardian program, Nagadjitòdjig Aki, which also collects data on fish health, water quality and invasive species in its territory. "The health of the community is tied to the land, *aki*, and to the water, *zibi*," says Linda Dwyer-Commando, a forester and head of Nagadjitòdjig Aki. One of the main concerns for Kitigan Zibi is environmental contamination, including mercury in fish. "We still fish and hunt for subsistence," says Dwyer-Commando. "The Nagadjitòdjig Aki are working with Ottawa Riverkeeper to fill in the knowledge gaps on the health of the watershed, guided by both Indigenous knowledge and western science."

The need to know in order to protect the watershed led Ottawa's Gwen Frankton to become involved with WHAM as a citizen scientist — one of dozens of passionate volunteers throughout the watershed, convened and trained by Ottawa Riverkeeper, who provide valuable data. Some of the indicators being studied, such as algal blooms, lend themselves well to citizen science, and leveraging the work of volunteers not only helps add data to the overall effort but also brings awareness to their local communities.

"We are working with Ottawa Riverkeeper to fill in the knowledge gaps on the health of the watershed, guided by both Indigenous knowledge and western science."

► **Linda Dwyer-Commando, head of Nagadjitòdjig Aki, the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg guardians**

Frankton collects water samples to determine the amount of road salt in a creek in her west-end Ottawa neighbourhood. This past winter, she headed out after major snowfalls carrying collecting jars and conductivity meters. Passersby were curious and asked questions. "That's good for building awareness," says Frankton, "and gets the word out about the watershed." Like churning tributaries, community monitors, Indigenous guardians and scientists involved in WHAM help stir up and funnel the knowledge needed to protect the Ottawa River system. The project, then, is a mirror of the watershed itself — individual actions that flow toward a common goal.



Une saucette... bien informée!

L'importance d'analyser la qualité de l'eau de baignade

À la plage, il y a deux sortes de personnes. Celles qui crient "1-2-3-go" et qui plongent allègrement, et celles qui s'avancent, un petit millimètre à la fois, pour se convaincre que le froid en vaut la peine!

Une fois cette étape stratégique franchie... nous ne sommes plus qu'un seul groupe. Un groupe qui adore la baignade et qui se compte chanceux de pouvoir s'y adonner dans nos lacs et rivières.

Un excellent outil pour découvrir des sites de baignade est le Swim Guide (theswimguide.org), un site web et appli. Garde-rivière des Outaouais y maintient de l'information sur des centaines de plages dans notre région, y compris leur qualité de l'eau.

S'informer sur la qualité de l'eau de baignade, c'est faire oeuvre utile à plusieurs niveaux. D'abord, c'est une question de santé, puisque les pathogènes présents en trop grandes quantités peuvent provoquer des complications gastro-intestinales et des infections cutanées, respiratoires, et oculaires. Mais s'informer sur la qualité de l'eau, c'est aussi poser un geste pour la protéger. Ainsi, vous apprendrez à mieux connaître "votre" plage: à quelle fréquence les autorités prennent-elles des échantillons? Peuvent-elles expliquer pourquoi la qualité de l'eau se détériore, le cas échéant?

Garde-rivière des Outaouais a récemment fait l'acquisition d'équipement de laboratoire afin de pouvoir mener ses propres analyses de qualité de l'eau. Grâce à un réseau de bénévoles formées par nos professionnelles, nous parvenons à fournir des données scientifiques au public en temps réel, en particulier pour des sites peu ou pas échantillonnés par les autorités. Ces données nous

permettent par ailleurs de militer pour une meilleure surveillance. Par exemple, nous demandons à ce que les plages de Gatineau, dont la qualité de l'eau peut fluctuer relativement rapidement, soient testées par la Ville à tous les jours. Nos données ont démontré que le régime actuel (de deux tests par semaine tout au plus) "manque" parfois des niveaux préoccupants de pathogènes, ou à l'inverse maintient une fermeture de plage trop longtemps alors que la qualité de l'eau s'y est pourtant rétablie.

Alors que vous soyez du type 1-2-3-go ou du type tout-en-douceur, n'oubliez pas de vérifier la qualité de l'eau avant votre prochain plongeon - vos proches et votre plan d'eau vous en remercieront!



- ▶ **À gauche:** Les citoyens profitant de la plage du parc des Cèdres.
- ▶ **À droite:** Sauveteuse au parc des Cèdres.

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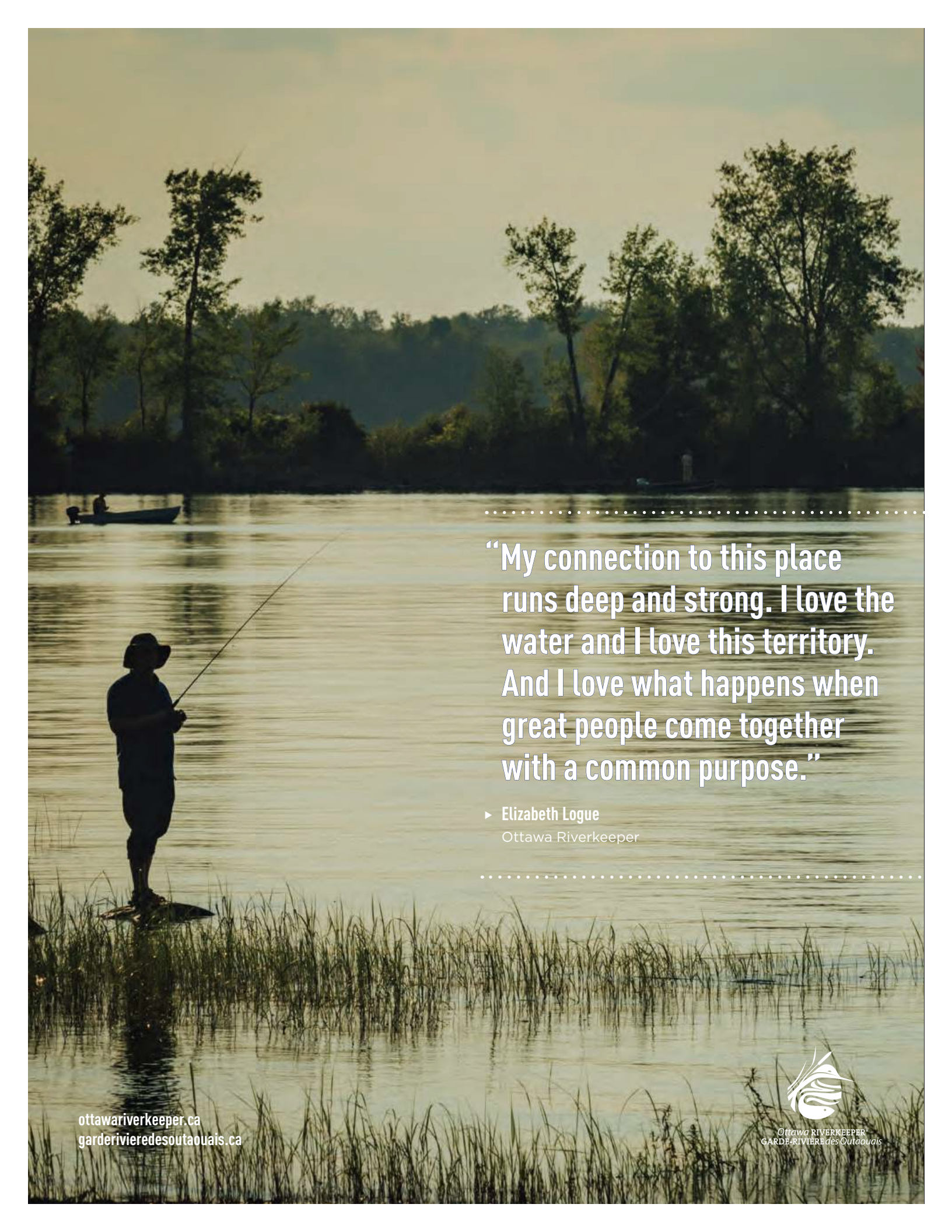
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Over the past 100 years, we're happy to have made a significant difference to thousands of non-profit organizations, and to the people who count on their support.

In this tradition, CN is proud to support the *Ottawa Riverkeeper*.

cn.ca/community



A person is silhouetted against a sunset sky, standing in a river and fishing with a long rod. The river is calm, reflecting the warm light of the setting sun. In the background, there are dense trees and a small boat with another person on the water.

“My connection to this place runs deep and strong. I love the water and I love this territory. And I love what happens when great people come together with a common purpose.”

► Elizabeth Logue
Ottawa Riverkeeper