

CCOA - Our Beginnings

The Lakefront Owners Association is one of the longest running groups in Chestermere. The Association was incorporated in 1959 and was known as the CCOA, or Chestermere Cabin Owners Association. It was primarily a social club at first and for years hosted dances at the old hall where the CRRC now stands. The hall had tires under the floor and made for hilarious dancing! During the winter months regular social events were held in Calgary. The cabin owners leased lots from the Western Irrigation District from approximately 1944 until the late 1970s. Boat parades, dances, and the waterski club with their slalom course and plywood jump were some of the highlights of that time. (see also Growing Through Time, Editor Elaine Peake, 1982 Summer Village of Chestermere Lake, page 15 to p 25)

Lot Leases and Land Sale

Around 1976, while Chestermere was still a hamlet, the varying length lot leases were about to expire; they were between one and five-year leases, with annual fees. After many meetings with the WID, the MD and the Provincial Government board member Vaughan Smith discovered that the WID had offered to sell the lands to the Government of Alberta. He then made the motion to offer the WID one million dollars for the lands. This motion was finally passed by one vote after much discussion and argument! The offer was increased to 1.5 million dollars and was accepted by the WID. The Association then became the Chestermere Cabin Owners Co-Operative, gathered deposits, arranged financing, and finally sold the lots to each member for around \$3500.00, depending on the size of the lot. The Summer Village of Chestermere soon grew out of this transaction and our first Council was made up entirely of lakefront residents.

Irrigation Fees?

The WID started to charge the people around the lake for irrigation in the 1980s. They sent out utility bills, and some of the amounts reported were in excess of \$800.00. When the lakefront residents refused to pay, the WID started lowering the lake level, which resulted in injuries, large fish kills, and excessive weed growth. The Lakefront Owners Association was formed in 1990; the members rallied in support of the Association by contributing funds, hiring a lawyer, and eventually resolving that dispute in court.

Another Land Sale!

In 2004 the WID attended the Annual General Meeting of the Chestermere Lakefront Owners Association and explained that they had withheld a floodplain around the lake when the lots were purchased from them. Their infrastructure was much improved and they felt that they no longer wanted to be involved in neighbor disputes or liability. Supplying irrigation water to farmers was their focus, so they proposed to sell the remainder of the lots to each lakefront owner.

They had set an asking price of \$18.00 per square foot, and because of the irregular shoreline some people would not be required to purchase any land, and others would have to spend more than \$80,000.00! Not many people were even aware that they didn't own the land to water's edge, so this came as a huge shock to many people. That meeting ended in a near riot!

Once again, the residents around the lake rallied with funds and support for the Board of Directors. The Lakefront Owners Association worked very hard researching and negotiating for several years; we hired an appraiser and a lawyer and approached Town Council before our MLA, Rob Anderson, finally became involved and brokered a deal between the Association, the Town, and the WID.

The WID was very creative during these meetings; suggesting that they could add a row of homes in the middle of the lake or drain most of the lake, and their asking price escalated to almost \$40.00 per square foot among other things!

Finally, it was decided that the Town of Chestermere would purchase the land around the lake for approximately six million dollars, subdivide it, sell each portion to the respective lot owner, amalgamate it with each lot, and create a set of bylaws to govern the area, as it is rather unique, known as a Special Recreation District attached to R1 properties.

Each lot owner also purchased the land under water running down the side boundaries of each lot and ending about five feet past the end of the docks. Costs to each property owner were \$7.50 per square foot for the land above the shoreline, and \$3500.00 for each lot for the portion under water. The Town was also able to purchase some lakefront land for public use. Now each Chestermere property owner pays a WID recreation fee which is added to their tax bill and the amounts vary, depending on off lake or on lake locations.

Many people on the Board at that time donated countless hours canvassing Lakefront Owners, attending meetings, researching any and all things that might be helpful to the cause, and keeping residents informed. A huge thank you goes out to everyone who involved themselves in protecting the lake and attached properties!

Use of Works Agreement

Prior to the land transaction resident and board member Mel Werner could see that Chestermere needed something more concrete; an agreement regarding the lake. He should be credited with the idea and so much hard work that resulted in the Use of Works Agreement that protects the lake from large fluctuations in water levels and detailed which entity would be responsible for things such as weed cutting, safety, etc. He was instrumental in ensuring that the lakefront owners would be protected from further issues with the WID. We are lucky to have someone so tenacious and willing to donate so much of his time and energy to his community.

New Rules

In 2010 several board members served on an ad hoc committee with the Mayor and worked to hammer out the bylaws that would govern the newly purchased lands. Again, countless meetings were attended until the new bylaws were in place. These bylaws replaced the seldom observed or enforced WID rules previously in place.

The Aggravating Issue that Continually Annoys You and Your Board of Directors – WEEDS!!

After a near accident, the harvesters were no longer used to collect the gathered weeds from the ends of the docks. Lakefront residents collected and moved the cut weeds from the shoreline to the roadside using wheel barrows where they were loaded on to trailers by Town of Chestermere employees. Eventually, all lakefront residents received large green bins to contain the weeds and they are picked up weekly in the summer months.

The Lakefront Owners Board is working very hard with the City of Chestermere to stop this practice using the motto “Lakeside Not Curbside”. We feel that any cut weeds should be collected by the City while still in the water and have provided suggestions (and will continue to do so) to the City to help them achieve that goal.

Safety Initiatives and Preserving the Lake

In 2017 we heard from our Fire Department that rescues were difficult to perform as multiple calls would come in but locations were difficult to pinpoint. The Lakefront Owners were happy to discover that we have a member who is a sign maker and we sold 125 reflective address signs to members for the ends of their docks.

Board members also meet regularly with City officials with regard to the boat launch and to date, many of our recommendations are being implemented.

We have attended numerous City of Chestermere events such as “Make Chestermere Great” (2018) and more recently (February 2019) the Lake Safety Solutions Workshop.

The latest threat comes in the form of invasive species, and we have a dedicated sub-committee hard at work, co-operating with the City of Chestermere and the Provincial Government. Education and prevention where possible and removal methods are their mandate.

Over the years many shoreline cleanups have been organized and these efforts will continue in the future.

What's Next?

What would you like to see your Board of Directors work on in the future? Please email your comments to us as we endeavor to work for the greater good of all lakefront residents!

brandymacdonald@outlook.com

kathy@chestermere.com