WLLID AGM Native Aquatic Milfoil Report March 30th 2016

Hopefully residents and visiting lake users read the TRI VILLAGE BUZZ and the monthly WLLID reports and updates on the native milfoil situation in the lake.
The whole issue of interfering with native species can be controversial and some may question on the reasons to do so. Yes it is native aquatic milfoil not the Eurasian invasive milfoil and it does provide some fish habitat, it can also trap small invertebrates for fish food and some water fowl eat the flower seeds. If ignored, however and allowed to spread it can cause most of the same problems as does the invasive Eurasian milfoil.
Like so many native species, including plants, when they become too abundant in places that are considered unsuitable or are needed for other purposes, then being native and left untouched doesn't seem to be questioned. Of course, any suggestions for change should be justified.

In our case we have a very popular, small, shallow, Wasa Lake that has good quality water, is healthy, has good access to several excellent public beaches and many recreational water activities and limited fishing. Wasa Lake is the main reason why the community and the Wasa Lake Provincial Park and Campground exist and continue to develop, and why thousands come to enjoy the warm water and surroundings. As such, when the those attending the September 2015 public meeting on aquatic plant growth requested the WLLID trustees to look into the milfoil problem we felt justified to do so and seek permission to consider some control of an aquatic plant that if ignored has the potential to spread and change the main reason why we are here and why people come to visit. Maybe it would have been irresponsible not to at least take a look at the situation. So we did.

On Feb.17th this year a small committee met and discussed -- How to spread prevention and awareness information to residents and lake users, and – How, Where and When, do we try some kind of control measure
Creating awareness and prevention information is in the works. Check out the film loop on display. The WLLID website is currently sharing valuable information and more will follow Printed information will be available elsewhere.
Ideally a small group of interested, tech savvy, residents or visiting lake users could take this important job on and spread the word. Arrange visits by the MOE traveling boat inspection unit, promote voluntary boat inspections and get out the DRAIN CLEAN DRY message, collect and make available the value of aquatic plants and also the undesirable effects when they are too abundant and spreading rapidly, how it spreads, identification, how to remove it in shallow water. Make available, anything that creates an awareness and offers prevention measures.

Regarding control, and the how and where. We know that aquatic milfoil, be it Eurasian invasive or native can't be eradicated, only controlled, and we have acquired the necessary permits to try some control measures on the native milfoil we have. We also know that

manual hand pulling is the most effective method of control so it makes sense to find out if hand pulling is appropriate in our milfoil situation. As Cliff mentioned, we want to try some experimental hand pulling in the shallow pond at the south end of the lake where the milfoil was first discovered. If effective, voluntary groups will be organized to continue with that control method. Will hand pulling be possible in the deeper milfoil locations? We have contact with an experienced SCUBA diver willing to check the feasibility of hand pulling in a deep area at an appropriate time. There is some concern if this method will work in Wasa Lake because of the very muddy bottom and the extensive growth which will limit visibility. If ineffective we look at other options, and there are other options most not suitable for Wasa Lake ---cut, rake, collect and transport, mat like barriers on the bottom, drawing down the water level, chemical herbicides, biological control with milfoil weevils, mechanical harvesters.

When to start. March and April are waiting periods. Nothing can be done in the lake before plant growth has started and is visible, and growth occurs when water is around 15 C, 60 F . I was out on the lake yesterday and could see no sign of new growth. There were big patches of aquatic plants on the bottom in a winter dormant stage that I sampled but they don't look like milfoil. I will get them checked. Lake temperature yesterday was 7.0 C Past records indicate that lake temperatures in April were never above 12 C and in May all were between 12 and 18 C. May is a possibility but we just need to keep checking, get advice and decide when to start. Please read the WLLID write up in the April Tri Village Buzz, and check the WLLID web site. Those indicating a willingness to help will be contacted.

At this time the WLLID has a pretty good understanding of awareness, prevention and control methods. Permit applications have been approved. We have received messages from people willing to help in some way. Some WLLID funding has been budgeted, CBT community initiative funding has been applied for, application dates for CBT Environment Grants will be announce later this year, EKIPC is supportive, we have spoken to B.C. Parks, we will have equipment available when necessary

The WLLID has started the ball rolling as we said we would, but at some point there needs to be a community group taking over and forming something like a Wasa Lake Aquatic Plant Management Team, with of course the continued support and input of the WLLID. So get those thinking caps on, spread the word and find a couple of people to lead the charge. This is quite possibly going to be an ongoing activity. It is not a one shot deal.

A Final Important Message
Together we need to create a community of interest, to build and share collective knowledge and "Be the Eyes on the Lake"