

WHITEWATER ONTARIO

PRESIDENT'S REPORT Annual General Meeting November 19, 2016

With last year's paddling season focused primarily on the Pan Am Games, 2016 has provided Whitewater Ontario time to re-set as an organization. Our 2016 board contained a number of new faces from both the competitive and recreational disciplines. While the board had numerous issues to address over the course of the year, nothing came close to the size and complexity of the Pan Am Games.

Here are Whitewater Ontario's 2016 highlights:

- WO athletes Cameron Smedley (C1) and Michael Tayler (K1) represented Canada in Rio in the canoe slalom event. While both paddlers narrowly missed the semi-finals they paddled well on the world stage and were great ambassadors of the sport. Both were participants in the recent celebration in the House of Commons for our Olympic and Paralympic teams.
- Anthony Colin (France), WO's first full time coach, began work on February 1. Based out of Ottawa, Anthony is working with groups of athletes at both the development and high performance levels. He has made connections with the summer camp programs that are run by the Ottawa River Runners as well as collaborating with CKC Head Coach Michal Staniszewski.
- The Minden Wild Water Preserve remains an important WO asset. Although no major competitive races were held at the Gull this year it was heavily used by recreational paddlers. The annual Gull River Open Canoe race was held in early September.
- A new building was constructed at the Preserve as part of Pan Am legacy with funds allocated by the Trillium Foundation. The building will serve as storage for the considerable amount of equipment and tools required for competitive and recreational races.
- A Fix-the-Gull project began in 2016 under the leadership of WO VP Dave Gillespie and the kick-started through the generous financial donation of long time member Victor Ettl. The goal of the project is to help return the Gull River to its' pre-flood condition. It is a three year project that will aim to raise \$50,000 to make necessary repairs on the river.
- Algonquin Outfitters continued to run paddling programs at the Gull this year and maintain a presence on the Preserve.

- With new WO coach Anthony Colin a strong and visible presence in Ottawa, the Pumphouse was a very busy site throughout the year. In addition to high performance training and summer programs, ORR/WO co-hosted an Open House to celebrate the accomplishments of our Olympians and to promote upcoming club programs and activities. On October 11, ORR had a ground breaking ceremony for the new clubhouse. The ceremony was attended by Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson, MPP Yasir Naqvi, and MP Catherine McKenna as well as representatives from the NCC and other project leaders.
- WO's membership stands at 466 full members and 113 day members. Our membership dropped from just over 500 full members the previous year.
- WO's Advocacy Committee remained active this year with a particular focus on paddler access on the Ottawa River. The annual Hell or High Water event donated \$ 2750.00 to WO specifically for river advocacy use.
- WO ended the year on a sad note with the death of whitewater pioneer Heinz Poenn. Heinz was a highly regarded paddler and coach who made significant contributions to the development of whitewater paddling in Ontario and Canada. He was part of the group of visionaries who first developed the Gull River and the MWWP. Heinz attended last year's Pan Am Games and was presented with an honorary bib. Heinz was a long lasting influence on the many athletes he worked with over the years.

The new WO Board will have many exciting opportunities in 2017. In addition to having Coach Anthony Colin for a second year, WO will be hosting the Canadian National Whitewater Championships at the Pumphouse on the August long weekend. Improvements will continue to be made at the Preserve and on the Gull River. The board will also be examining its membership fees and categories and re-assess the current fee structure.

Overall 2016 was a successful year albeit much quieter than 2015. While 2017 will have its challenges, WO remains poised to continue growing its programs, events, and activities.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Tayler