

# The Glengarry News

## **Full Speed Ahead for Cornwall Rowing Club**

**June 12 2019 BY TARA MACDONALD News Staff**

With summer finally rearing its head after a long winter and a challenging spring, outdoor and water-sports enthusiasts were keen to take advantage of this weekend's near 30 degree weather.

The Glengarry News traveled to Cornwall to check out Cornwall's new rowing club to interview Club President Kevin Donnelly and their first official member, South Glengarry native Angus McRae.

### **Rowing Against the Current**

Setting up a new club can be a challenge, particularly when public waterways and land access are involved. This was a lesson Mr. Donnelly learned first-hand since first attempting to build a local rowing club back in 2012.

While the Club hoped to set-up shop along the canal on the former Synagri plant property along Frontenac Street, the federally-owned land is currently tied up a divestiture process which is temporarily blocking the Club's ability to lease the land.

According to the city's website, redevelopment of Canal Lands are top priority issues in regards to the Waterfront Plan. Improvements being proposed include obtaining City ownership of the land, redevelopment of non-industrial uses in the former tank truck area, protection of waterfront views from Second Street West, and improved access via Riverdale residential community.

### **Historic Cornwall Canal is the 'Perfect Spot'**

Originally built to bypass the Long Sault rapids, the historic Cornwall Canal is the perfect spot for rowers. A local paradise the canal boasts wildlife, bike paths running along waterway, bridge crossings, and a convenient parking lot and boat launch located at the end of Frontenac Street.

Roughly two kilometers long, the canal mimics the typical race distance and it is sheltered from the St. Lawrence, meaning there are hardly any waves or rough water which can be a challenge for rowers, explained Mr. Donnelly. "Typically anywhere with a good amount of distance, deep enough water but not rocky - which can put a hole in the boat - and calm waters are ideal conditions for rowers," continued Mr. Donnelly.

### **Guidon Park welcomes Rowing Club**

While the Club's long-term plans are to find a permanent location along the canal, the City has welcomed the Club to set up a temporary facility along the western section of Guindon Park.

"We already have a lease with the City of Cornwall to use some property there," said Mr. Donnelly who hopes to have the new location ready by mid-June. The three-year lease runs from May 1<sup>st</sup> 2019 to May 1<sup>st</sup> 2022 and will cost the club a symbolic \$1 per year. "It's a good site off Trillium Drive by the bathrooms and the City is going to prep the foundation on the site so that we can put two shipping containers there to store our boats," added Mr. Donnelly.

### **Full Steam Ahead for Cornwall Rowing Club**

Now that a location has been secured, it's full steam ahead for the Cornwall Rowing Club. A board has been made up with Mr. Donnelly at the helm as Club President supported by Club Secretary and City Counselor Glen Grant, Treasurer Mr. Alex Pilon, along with members Mr. Mat Despatie and Mrs. Sarah Despatie.

"The Club has received a lot of interest and support from the community," said Mr. Donnelly who offers his time and donated a coaching and safety boat to the cause. "We have received \$3,000 from the Rotary Club, money to incorporate and a container from Sarah Despatie of Cardinal Wellness. The Burnstown Rowing Club near Arnprior has also offered us a boat and some oars," he explained. The Lachine Rowing Club has also offered two boats (a four-oared sweep boat and a double scull.

Eager to foster regional interest in the sport, the Lachine club has been particularly supportive of the Cornwall Rowing Club. According to Mr. Donnelly, Club members are invited to get coaching at the Lachine club until the Cornwall location is up and running. "When we do get set up," continued Mr. Donnelly, "they would like to come up, row with us, and do some coaching with us. The Lachine Rowing Club has been really encouraging and wants to help make our club a success."

The Cornwall Rowing Club plans to apply for additional grants and is currently on the look-out for corporate sponsors to help cover costs although membership fees will also help support the organization moving forward.

### **South Glengarry Rower Becomes First Official Club Member**

Williamstown native and McMaster University student Angus McRae became the first official Cornwall Rowing Club member. "He contacted me last year," said Mr. Donnelly who was thrilled to have young Mr. McRae join the club and participate in The Lachine Regatta.

"We had a regatta in Lachine a few weeks ago," boasted Mr. Donnelly. "I let him use my boats and we practiced together. Angus was awesome during the race, he needed a little coaching and encouragement but he was fantastic."

Recently accepted into the Men's Varsity Lightweight 8 Boat team, Mr. McRae fell in love with the sport during his first year of university. "I had always been a very active individual throughout high school and when I went into my first year at McMaster University, I was looking for a new sport to try out," said Mr. McRae. "I had an idea about how competitive and intense of a sport rowing was and fortunately there was a Novice team at school - which is there for individuals who have never rowed before and wanted to get into the sport. I ended up making the team and I've loved it ever since."

### **Rowing in Unison**

Mr. McRae is excited to be a member of the Cornwall Rowing Club and share his love of the sport with new members. "It's something new and exciting that practically anyone can get into," explained Mr. McRae. "You get to spend time on the water - which everyone loves in the summer - and you get great exercise from it."

While single scull boats exist, rowing is very much a team sport wherein collaboration and teamwork is crucial. "Rowing requires an immense amount of mental toughness as you must be 100% focused on your own boat and moving with the person sitting in front of you," said the young rower.

When asked what he enjoys most about the sport, Mr. McRae said: “Never in my life have I participated a sport that is so physically taxing yet so serene and peaceful. To be able to make the boat cut through the water as efficiently as possible, it requires every person in the boat to move in complete unison, moving as one, entering their blades into the water at the exact same time, taking them out of the water at the exact same time. It is extremely individual yet extremely team driven all at the same time. There is a beauty to it that’s hard to describe.”

Mr. McRae also highlighted how rowing has helped him focus, succeed at school, and become a more responsible adult. “Rowing has definitely brought a large amount of discipline and commitment to my life,” explained Mr. McRae. “During our season at school, we practice six days a week and are on the water at 5 am each morning. It has really helped me prioritize what's going on in my school life and makes sure everything is finished on time because there is no working until midnight or later when you have to be up at 4 am! In addition, if someone in your boat doesn't show up for practice, you can't go on the water so you're extremely committed to every person in the boat and we all hold each other accountable to be on time and bring the best they can to boat.”

### **Calling all Rowers**

The Cornwall Rowing Club is now accepting new members and has started its own Facebook page. Membership costs are \$250 per person which includes use of the boats and access to coaching. While new members must be 14 years and older, the Club hopes to launch a youth component in 2020.

To become a member or obtain more information, contact Kevin Donnelly at 613-936-9191.

### **CAPTIONS:**

“It’s a beautiful feeling to be out in the water; be it on one’s on in single scull or with a crew trying to perfect the art of rowing and get the boat to go as fast as you can without wasting energy,” said Cornwall Rowing Club President Kevin Donnelly. – TARA MACDONALD

“You can’t be worried about other things going on, either around you or what’s happening in your life - which in itself is a great aspect to it because you can take a break from reality and just row for an hour or two and get that mental break,” said South Glengarry native and member of the Cornwall Rowing Club Angus McRae. – TARA MACDONALD

“It is an amazing sport and I never would have guessed that I would have enjoyed it as much as I have in these past two years,” said South Glengarry native and member of the Cornwall Rowing Club Angus McRae. “It will definitely be a large part of my life from now on, of that I am sure.” – TARA MACDONALD