

FRIENDS OF THE RIDEAU

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FRIENDS OF THE RIDEAU ANNUAL REPORT 2018

Delivered to the annual general meeting May 25, 2019

This report covers the 12-month period since the last annual general meeting, May 10, 2018. It is to be read with the 2018 financial statement.

Summary:

Friends of the Rideau in 2018 continued its work as a volunteer, non-profit organization working to enhance and conserve the heritage and charm of the Rideau Canal. We introduced more visitors with our messages about the history of the Rideau Canal National Historic Site/UNESCO World Heritage Site and continued with our advocacy for the protection and presentation of the Rideau Canal. Friends plays a unique role in the Rideau Canal system in combining education and information as well as advocacy for preservation and presentation.

Advocacy:

Through regular meetings with Parks Canada staff, members of the Friends' board of directors continued to advocate for the preparation, with a complete public consultation component, of the Rideau Canal management plan. For the second year the completion of the draft management plan was delayed, following a preliminary meeting with a select group of stakeholders in early 2018. Directors Ken Watson and Hunter McGill attended the day-long focus session hosted by Parks Canada to identify issues to be covered in the plan. Friends continues to have a number of concerns that should be reflected in the management plan, including commemorative integrity of the site, and better presentation of the history of the Rideau Canal through improved education and interpretive programming.

Two directors of Friends, Ken Watson and Hunter McGill, took part in a workshop launching a three-year study to examine the Rideau as a complex social-ecological system, a project being undertaken by researchers from the University of Ottawa and Carleton University. The study could potentially lead to important recommendations to governments for improvements in the management of land and water resources along the Rideau Canal system.

Communications:

Friends continues to publish spring and fall issues of its newsletter, Rideau Reflections, providing information and knowledge about the history of the Rideau Canal, as well as news about Friends' activities and a report from Parks Canada. As well, through the efforts of Friends' director Ken W Watson, we maintain the website www.rideaufriends.com with an important range of information on the Rideau Canal for visitors and residents.

Outreach:

The primary vehicle for Friends' outreach is The Depot, the visitor and interpretation centre in Blockhouse park in Merrickville, which we operate mid-June to Labour Day under the supervision of Cheryl Gulseth and Gillian Organ.. In 2018 over 8,400 visitors came through the door and received

information on the Rideau Canal and on the village of Merrickville, as well as purchasing Rideau Canal-themed books and clothing. In the absence of interpretation staff at the Merrickville lock station, the service provided by Friends is an important element in ensuring visitor enjoyment and an understanding of the heritage of the Rideau Canal.

During the year Friends also takes part in shows and exhibitions to extend our outreach. In 2018 Friends had a booth at the Ottawa Boat Show (in part distributing Parks Canada materials), the Rideau Paddlefest in Smiths Falls, Col. By Day at the Ottawa Lock Station, and the Manotick Classic Boat Show in Westport. While no formal record of the contacts made could be taken, it is estimated that Friends' representatives spoke with as many as 1,500 people during the four events listed.

Thanks:

Friends of the Rideau is grateful for the support provided for various aspects of its activities from different levels of government. Parks Canada has been a partner of Friends for many years, and by allowing use of The Depot building in Merrickville, makes possible the operation of the Rideau Canal and Merrickville visitor and interpretation centre. Parks also kindly allows the use of meeting rooms at its headquarters building (Woods Mill) in Smiths Falls.

Through the federal ministry of Employment and Social Development, Friends was able to obtain a grant from the Canada Summer Jobs program which enabled the hiring of students to run the visitor centre in Merrickville in the summer months. The Ontario government provided a Heritage Organizations Development Grant which helps meet the costs of the web site and newsletter. The Village of Merrickville-Wolford has allowed Friends the use of a storage room at no cost, for supplies and inventory for The Depot, and gave a community organizations grant which was used to extend the length of The Depot operating season.

Submitted on behalf of the board of Friends of the Rideau by
Hunter McGill
Chairman

Directors:
Cheryl Gulseth (Treasurer)
Ken Watson
Chris Biber
Marcus Létourneau
Gillian Organ
Bruce Kemp