

2019 OLTA Gathering
“A Place To Grow – Protection and Connection”

Speaker Biographies

Rick Beaver

Rick is an internationally recognized Mississauga Ojibway artist and ecologist from Alderville First Nation in Ontario. He has been painting and printmaking professionally for more than 35 years. His well-known designs are featured on fabric, paper, glass and ceramic products. His diverse involvements have included consultations in aboriginal tourism, the arts, cultural history and ecosystem restoration. He has been an ecology tour guide both in Canada and Mexico, and host for “Spirit Walks”, an aboriginal tourism initiative for First Nation communities. In past years, he was a member of the design team for The Canadian Canoe Museum in Peterborough, Ontario and served as the research and restoration coordinator for Alderville First Nation’s Black Oak Savanna for many years.

He has appeared as a personality on television and radio, illustrated several publications and was the recipient of the Governor General’s commemorative medal for community service in 1993. He received an honorary doctor of laws degree from Trent University in 2011. Currently, he lives and creates from his studio home on Alderville First Nation.

You can visit his website for more information about him - www.rickbeaver.com

Dick Bird, Vice President, Hastings Prince Edward Land Trust

Dick is a lifelong resident of the Quinte area with a history of involvement in local environmental issues. He has a MSc Chemistry from Queen’s University. Dick is now retired from teaching Chemistry. He remains active as a builder and restorer of cedar canvas canoes.

Karen Cooper, Drache Aptowitzer LLP

Karen Cooper practices charity and not-for-profit law with an emphasis on corporate and tax issues. In addition to her considerable legal experience, Ms. Cooper has extensive speaking and teaching experience and is a contributing author to The Management of Charitable and Not-for-Profit Organizations in Canada. She is currently serving on the Board of Directors of the Centre for Land Conservation and the Kemptville District Hospital, and on the Executive of the Charity and Not-for-Profit Law Sections of the Ontario Bar Association and the Canadian Bar Association.

Laura Kucey, Ontario Coordinator, Ecological Gifts Program, Environment and Climate Change Canada

Laura is the Ontario Regional Coordinator for the Ecological Gifts Program (Environment and Climate Change Canada). Her background in provincial biodiversity initiatives, Great Lakes protection, species at risk recovery consultations and love of nature have led her to this role. She enjoys working with others to enable land protection efforts.

Mhairi McFarlane, Director of Science and Stewardship, Ontario Region, The Nature Conservancy of Canada

Mhairi spent 6.5 years as a Conservation Biologist in Southwestern Ontario where she designed, implemented and managed field scale restoration of habitat in Norfolk County and on

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Pelee Island, and currently oversees stewardship work throughout Ontario as Director of Science and Stewardship for Ontario since September 2014. She holds an Honours Ecology degree from the University of Stirling, and a PhD in Ecology from the University of Exeter in Cornwall. Her thesis was on the behavioural ecology of Cape Sugarbirds in South Africa. She moved to Ontario in 2006, and had short contracts with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Bird Studies Canada before joining the Nature Conservancy of Canada in March 2008. She has been managing non-native invasive species and conducting field-scale restoration throughout southwestern Ontario both with NCC and as a volunteer with the Thames Talbot Land Trust.

Don and Marnie Ross, Thousand Islands Watershed Land Trust

Marnie is currently the President of Thousand Islands Watershed Land Trust and Don is a Director. Don and Marnie Ross were honoured to be recipients of the OLTA Vision Award 2010. Don was a founding member of the Thousand Islands Watershed Land Trust in 1993. He received the Latonnell Pioneer Award I 2010, the St Lawrence Islands National Park Environmental Leadership Award, the 1000 Islands Chamber of Commerce Keeper of the Islands Award 2011 and Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012. Marnie received the Teaching Innovation Award from UCDSB in 2001. Together they are dedicated conservationists who take great joy in their work and value the work of others who love the land. They have been working on land acquisition since 1993. That doesn't mean they are wise. It means they have found a lot of the mistakes and hope to pass that experience along to you.

April Wepler, Consultant

April is passionate about the nonprofit sector and the role of community groups. She brings over 15 years of experience in all aspects of nonprofit management including strategic planning, communications, fundraising, and project management. Her experience lies mainly in the environmental sphere, supporting land and water conservation work. A strong collaborator, she excels at bringing together diverse voices, building relationships across sectors, and focusing on impact.