

2020 Annual Report  
*Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation*



**MALLARD ISLAND IN RAINY LAKE**

Participants and their guests from the Stewards of the Wilderness Week, 2019

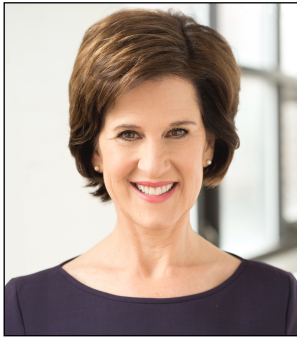
IMAGE CAPTURED BY KEL SASSI

Organization incorporated in 1964, a 501(c)3 nonprofit and a private operating foundation

Employer ID # 41-6042619

**The Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation fosters and maintains Ober's legacy  
and north woods island home as a source of inspiration, renewal, and connection  
to Indigenous Peoples, kindred spirits, and the natural world.**

**Gi-bezhig-oomin**



**Dear Friends,**

I want to start by thanking Beth Waterhouse, our now retired Executive Director, for all of the time and attention she gave to ensuring a smooth transition of leadership between her and myself. The contents of this annual report reflect her final year. Many of the foundation's accomplishments over the last 13 years required Beth's steady hand at the helm. We plan to celebrate Beth and her legacy in person at our fall gathering October 30 in the afternoon in the Metro Area – stay tuned!

In my new role, I have learned that a great strength of this organization is the dedicated and passionate support of our volunteers who generously give of their time, talent and treasure. Thank you to all of you who have made this foundation what it is today.

Currently, we are going through a transition; starting in fiscal year 2021, we are maintaining our financial records on accounting software and future financial reports will be updated to current reporting and accounting standards. We've added a payment gateway to our website for making donations and paying summer program fees. We are adopting a constituent relationship management system so that we can better stay in touch with our supporters in the ways that they choose. This will allow for more timely communications by email in between newsletters– like announcing work weeks or identifying special needs that arise on Mallard. I plan on surveying all of you to better understand how you would like to keep in touch. Finally, the board and I will be revisiting our vision/mission/goals and developing measures/impacts of our work. Please feel free to reach out by phone or email if you would be willing to participate.

We will be resuming summer programming on Mallard at a reduced capacity. I have marveled at the excitement and joy conveyed through emails by registered attendees for program weeks; getting the time and space to work on a novel that you hope to finish, or to be able to go through the archives to inform your research on history up north for your non-fiction work, or to get the chance to transcribe Ojibway recordings of interviews conducted by Ober. And, we are excited to be hosting another Stewards of the Wilderness week, which is made up of college-age students who are environmental studies majors and are interested in a multicultural perspective.

Our Inaakonigewin Committee has been hard at work. We are starting out the season with a Reflection, Fasting and Ceremony week. Then, Pebaamamines, a board member, will oversee the prep for building of a traditional sweat lodge on Crow Island. He will have campers come over from Camp Koochiching to clear the site. We will need to fund and build a dock and an outhouse. Then next spring, we plan to build the lodge and hold sweats led by Pebaam throughout the summer.

Please join us for our October 30 fall gathering!

Miigwech!

*Rebecca Otto*, Executive Director

## Accomplished in 2020

- ❖ Cedarbark House structure was stabilized, underpinning now cribbed
- ❖ New water treatment system installed as planned
- ❖ All chimneys were cleaned
- ❖ Anishinaabe educational offerings were modified, expanded
- ❖ Search committee succeeded in hiring just the right new leader
- ❖ *Stewards of the Wilderness* program strengthened
- ❖ Oberholtzer archival items were returned to Mallard post 2019 exhibit
- ❖ Program Committee lowered 2021 carrying capacity to eight
- ❖ Our website at [www.eober.org](http://www.eober.org) just got better and better
- ❖ Planning began for rebuilding the tool shed in 2021

## A Word from Board President, Bob Norbie

*Ice out!* These words signal a migration, not only of waterfowl, but for the Oberholtzer Foundation trustees, staff and volunteers who ready the Review Islands, and particularly Mallard Island, for the upcoming program season. It also signals the time of year when we share our annual report, highlighting the impact Ober's philosophy and the Review Islands have had on our lives.

Sharing with curious learners what lessons Mallard Island and her sister islands – Gull, Hawk, and Crow – can reveal, the year of the coronavirus pandemic certainly challenged our ability to engage all of us as students of the wilderness to become better stewards of the wilderness. However, with intentional plans to navigate uncharted waters presented by COVID-19, we found alternate travel routes that expanded our own view and understanding of how we can shepherd the future of our mission. Indeed, COVID-19 became an opportunity.

Among the most significant 2020 happenings included a shift in thinking about how we bring Ober's message to more people in the absence of the Review Islands being that gathering place for what will always be a sliver of land that accommodates few. Through the efforts of Michael Reid and crew, we saved the Cedarbark House from sliding into Rainy Lake after its foundation finally gave way. We became better students of indigenous ways through the *Sky Teachings* of Foundation trustee, Pebaamibines (Dennis) Jones. We more deeply embraced Ober's understanding that "our young people will be the final answer" and examined more thoughtfully how we produce the next generation of stewards. And, perhaps, our most important function as a Board of Trustees was to conduct a deliberate search that rewarded us with a new full-time executive director, Rebecca Otto, on the wings of Beth Waterhouse's storied tenure.

**Bob Norbie** *(continued on page five)*

**Statement of Operating Revenue and Expenses – Unaudited  
Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation - Calendar Year 2020**

| <b>REVENUE</b> (rounded to nearest dollar)               |                   | <u>% of total</u> |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| Earnings on Endowments, interest from donor designations | 24,000            | 22%               |
| Grants from Foundations                                  | 14,450            | 13%               |
| Education Funds, Released from Restricted Gift           | 1,050             | 1%                |
| Dividends and Interest from Investments                  | 21,000            | 19%               |
| Revenue from Oil & Gas Royalties (and leases)            | 6,500             | 6%                |
| Donations from Individuals this year                     | 28,769            | 26%               |
| Program Fees   | 2,450             | 2%                |
| Sales  | 1,100             | 1%                |
| Federal PPP Loan, Forgiven                               | <u>10,200</u>     | 9%                |
| <b>Total for Year.....</b>                               | <b>\$ 109,519</b> |                   |

| <b>EXPENSES</b> (rounded to nearest dollar)                 |                   |  |
|---|-------------------|--|
| Staff Salary/Wages and benefits                             | 61,393            |  |
| Island Utilities/Organizational Storage                     | 3,082             |  |
| Administration and Fundraising                              | 13,259            |  |
| Board Meeting Expenses and Travel                           | 5,764             |  |
| Outreach and Education                                      | 4,903             |  |
| Archives and Collections Management                         | 1,470             |  |
| Direct Summer Program Expenses                              | 4,227             |  |
| Capital Improvements & Repairs                              | 7,632             |  |
| Equipment Replacement                                       | 3,345             |  |
| Book and Archival Projects                                  | 1,000             |  |
| Contingency/Gifts/Uncollectible endowment pledges write off | <u>10,687</u>     |  |
| Total Expenses.....   | \$ 116,762        |  |
| Transfer to emergency fund*                                 | <u>5,000</u>      |  |
| <b>Total for Year.....</b>                                  | <b>\$ 121,762</b> |  |
| Deficit   | (12,243)          |  |

Foundation salaries supported the executive director at 65% time plus 2 summer staff people working 3 weeks each, and a website designer plus Executive Director transition costs. The pandemic greatly reduced program fee revenue - it was only 2% of total revenues rather than the normal 20%. The PPP loan helped fill this gap along with generous individual donations. We were also able to reduce summer program expenses. We repaired the under girding of the Cedarbark House, a critical project.

\*Each year, the board designates \$5,000 to a self-insurance/emergency fund. The fund total by year-end 2020 was \$75,000.

**Portfolio of Investments with Raymond James & Associates Chicago, Illinois**

*The Foundation manages a portfolio of investments with the help of our investment advisor Rosa Ebling. Total organizational investments as of 12-31-20 were valued at \$1,388,338.67. Special thanks to Antoinette Hickey of Chapman & Cutler LLP, Chicago, for her assistance in the completion of our 990PF tax filings. We could not accomplish all that we do without our friends in Chicago.*

## Recognition of Volunteers

### Island Opening and Closing Volunteers

Pam and Darrell Rundell  
Eric Rundell  
Lucy Schneeman  
Amy and Al Boelk  
Erica and Nick Zubich  
Matthew Rundell  
Elaine and Steve Thruene  
Bill Thruene  
Gerry Thruene

### Work Week Volunteers

Michael Reid  
Craig Fernholz  
Doug Kelley

### Archives Week Volunteers

George Glazier  
David Duggan  
Tom McCann  
Nancy Haarmeyer  
David Rolloff  
Danielle Sosin  
Paula DeMars

### Mallard Island Caretakers

Mairi Doerr\*  
Prudence Johnson\*  
Jennie Ross  
Nance Kunkel  
Jane Lund  
Barb Draper  
Mary Swalla Holmes  
Kel Sassi  
Mark Granlund  
Clay Gustafson

### Gifts Made in Memory of or in Honor of:

\* Frances Elizabeth Andrews  
\* Lucy Bruntjen  
\* Dr. Mary Ghostley  
\* Tim Heinle  
\* David Jackson

Daniel Andersen  
Danielle Sosin  
(\* ) summer program directors

### Special Thanks to our Newsletter Layout Editor

Nance Kunkel

### Zhaa-bo-da-waan Our Teaching Lodge

“The name ‘teaching lodge’ explains its use: people come to this space to learn the universal truths of life— to learn about life.” (Pebaamibines)

Special thanks to Pebaam for his extra time and talents and for teaching guests about traditional ways. Our continued thanks to Don Jones for his leadership with traditional Anishinaabe ceremonies.

### Stewards of the Wilderness, a Year of Transition/Reflection

Daniel Laurence Andersen brought together the recruiting and design help of three university professors:

- Christie Manning, Macalester College
- Erika Bailey Johnson, Bemidji State
- Alan Brew, Northland College

Special thanks to a few of the Stewards for volunteering and sharing their perspectives and new ideas.

This program is in its infancy and will continue to grow. It is a way to develop the next generation of environmental leaders through a cohort experience on Mallard.



### Special Thanks to the Executive Search Committee

Bob Norbie, Chair  
Peggy Anne Smith  
Michael Reid  
Nance Kunkel  
Pebaamibines  
Beth Waterhouse

**George Boyum and Ryan Bloom of International Falls strengthen the supports of Cedarbark House. They built a sturdy crib under the NE end of the lakeside structure. Special thanks to George Glazier and Mark Granlund for project support!**

\* Harry and Ginny Sweatt  
\* Beth Waterhouse  
\* Kate Weyrens  
\* Henry and Katherine Doerr

## Oberholtzer Foundation Board of Trustees

- Bill Forsyth Minneapolis, Minnesota
- George Glazier Devens, Massachusetts
- Mary Swalla Holmes Polk City, Iowa
- Pebaamibines (Dennis) Jones Minneapolis, MN and Ontario
- Shannon King Fort Frances, Ontario
- Nance Kunkel Hines, Minnesota
- Ward Merrill International Falls, Minnesota
- Bob Norbie Great Falls, Montana
- Michael Reid St. Paul, Minnesota
- Dave Rolloff Sacramento, California
- Margaret (Peggy) Anne Smith Thunder Bay, Ontario
- Diane Crawford Tessari Excelsior, Minnesota

## Board President's Letter, continued



As challenging as 2020 was, we found our way. With an important and powerful mission, inspiring programs, strong financials, and dedicated volunteers and stewards of the wilderness like you, we are positioned to carry on Ober's legacy for decades to come.

Miigwech!

**Bob Norbie**

## 2020 Gifts

Richard Adams  
Rolf Anderson  
Michael L. Anderson  
Audrey Arner  
Sheldon A. Baker  
Barb and Tom Balcom  
Peter & Catherine Beckstrand  
Tom Bell  
Ashley and Emmanuel Benites  
Darcy Berglund  
Tom Blum  
Lucy W. Bruntjen  
Bruna Bucciarelli  
Garry Buckles  
Julie Buckles  
Jane Bultman  
Phyllis and Dale Callaghan  
E. Tim Carl  
Andrea S. Carlson  
Susan M. Carver  
Ann Cathcart  
Dan Chouinard  
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Joseph Conrad  
Mya Coursey  
Jerry and Lynn Cox  
Patricia Cummings  
Frederic G. Dalldorf  
Thomas K. Dean  
Emily Deaver  
Bernard Derr  
Mairi Campbell Doerr  
David and Alice Duggan  
Darwin Dyce  
Rosa M. Ebling  
James and Janet Edlund  
Katherine & Jeffrey Eisele  
Charlene Erickson  
Jon Erickson  
Kathryn Fernholz  
Bill and Karla (McGray) Forsyth  
Adam Free  
Jean Garbarini  
Connie Ghostley  
Katharine Grant  
John and Toni Grate  
Janet Green  
Richard & Janet Green  
Lee and Carol Grim  
Carl and Carol Haag  
Nancy Haarmeyer  
Christopher Hale, Miranda Stone  
Lois Hall  
Mary Harrelson  
Joan K. Heinle  
Pat Henderson

Trish Herbert  
Lawrence and Ida Heuchert  
Perry & Mary Hickerson  
Bob Hilke & Eddy Blaha  
Ronald Hilke  
Mary Swalla Holmes  
William C. Howard  
Jennifer Huebscher  
Elizabeth Hutchins  
William H. Jennings  
E. Heidi Jerome  
Wendy Kay Jerome  
Nellie Jerome  
Janis and Larry Johnson  
Dennis Jones (Pebaamibines)  
Catherine Jordan  
Mary and Allan Juers  
Larry and Jo Kallemeyn  
Jim and Patricia Kallsen  
Brenda Kayzar  
Esther Kellogg  
Jean E. & Charles A. Kelly  
Athena Kildegaard  
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Kevin Kling  
Delton Krueger  
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Barbara LaValleur  
Myron Lowe  
Mary E. Ludington  
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Jeanne Lutz  
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Ward and Linda Merrill  
Carolyn Munson-Benson  
Lynn Naeckel  
Richard Niemi  
Bob and Mary Lou Norbie  
Dean and Jeri Nordaune  
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Gary and Gaila Olsen  
Kathleen A. Olson  
Joe and Nancy Paddock  
Brian Palmer  
Richard Paper  
Thomas J. Paper  
John Pastor  
Christine T. Patten  
Carol and Richard Pohl Jr.

Roger A. Powell  
Randy Pozniak  
Leslie Rapp  
Dan Ray  
Karen and Roger Reede  
Michael and Anne Reid  
Eric and Lynn Replinger  
Roselyn Rezac  
Sid Robinson  
Nancy Rognerud  
David Rolloff  
Tony and Lorrie Rongstad  
Jennie Ross  
Eric Rundell  
Pam Rundell  
Catherine Sandell  
William and Ann Sargant  
Jane Scallen  
LaVonne Schildt  
John Schuerman  
Rick and Cindy Schultz  
Jeffrey and Susan Sieve  
George M. & Ruthie Simmons  
G. Barton Slepser  
Ruth Solie  
David Sproat  
Jerome Stanley  
Walton Stanley  
Sam and Cindy Stenson  
Jill Stoltenberg  
John Sularz  
Margaret Mary Sulentic-Dowell  
Barton Sutter  
Margaret Telfer  
Diane Crawford Tessari  
Elaine and Steve Thrune  
Ted & Kristen Eide Tollefson  
Ronnelle J. Trulson  
Paul Van Gorp  
Joseph Van Wie  
Jean Velleu  
James and Dawn Voegeli  
Dennis Vohler  
Talleiv or Karen Vollen  
Ann Marie Waterhouse  
Beth Waterhouse  
Janice Whitney  
Jerry Williams  
Michael and Mary Williams  
Maralee Thomson Yood  
Marianne Zarzana

## Foundation Gifts:

Anonymous (2)  
Longview Foundation  
Grand Casino Mille Lacs  
Winter Wheat Foundation