



ERNEST C. OBERHOLTZER FOUNDATION

MALLARD ISLAND

DRAINY LAKE MINNESOTA

Artwork by Gene Monahan

## WINTER NEWSLETTER 2022

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### Contact Info

Oberholtzer Foundation  
c/o Rebecca Otto  
12697 177<sup>th</sup> St N  
Marine on St Croix MN  
651-867-4649  
[info@eober.org](mailto:info@eober.org)  
[www.eober.org](http://www.eober.org)

### Mission

*We foster Ober's legacy and north woods home as a source of inspiration, renewal, and connection to Indigenous Peoples, kindred spirits, and the natural world. Gi-bezhig-oomin*

“People want simplicity, the healing peace, the imaginative stimulus of the wilderness. They want it now more than ever.”

Oberholtzer (ca 1934)

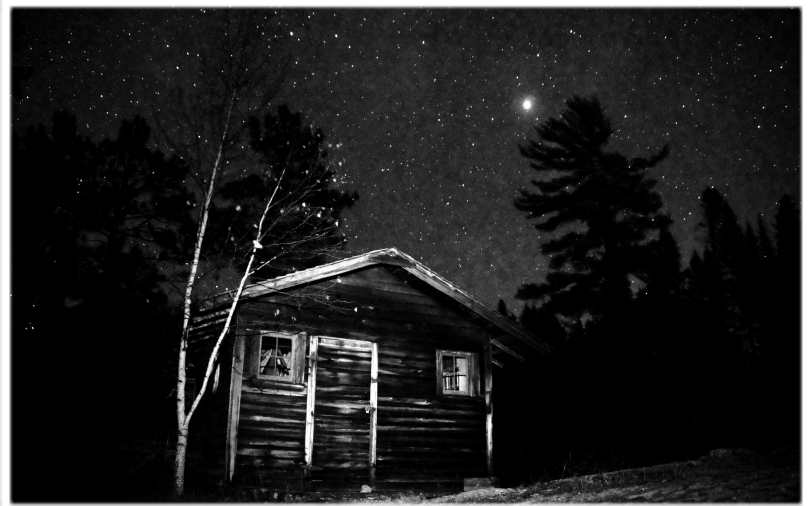


Photo above by Craig Fernholz

### Stars Over Mallard

My favorite word in *Anishinaabemowin* is *anangokaa*, which means “there are many stars.” During my first night on Mallard, I woke up suddenly around midnight and stumbled out of Bird House as if in a dream. The sky was crisp and clear and studded with more stars than I had ever seen. I searched for, and found, the constellation that Pebaamibines Jones had advised us to find: *Madoodiswan*, the Sweat Lodge, a half-circle of seven stars. Then I spun around in a circle, trying to map as many constellations as I could. By the time I returned to Bird House, the only word in my head was *anangokaa*.

Other memories of my week on Mallard play in my mind like film reels: an early morning sighting of a wood duck paddling towards Gull Island, a line of ducklings trailing in her wake; a painted turtle

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## Dear Readers,

Happy New Year! If you are like me, in the dead of winter you daydream about Mallard Island in her summer's best; cool mornings, warm afternoons, a Rainy Lake that is warm enough to swim in for more than five minutes, wind swirling through the leaves of the trees, waves lapping around Mallard's smoothed edges, and enough birdsong to fill the soul for months on end. Well, she lives in winter time too – a more peaceful, reflective time on Rainy Lake.



We wanted to thank everyone for making our fall gathering/fundraiser and our first online silent auction a success! Thanks to all who donated something including the artists, authors and small businesses from International Falls who donated some amazing packages that were very popular.

Our gathering was held at a nature center just outside the Metro Area. We flung the doors wide open for fresh air and used the patio space to mingle with old friends and new. Masks were worn by almost every attendee and, we were able to offer a virtual option for all that wanted it.

We enjoyed a wonderful musical performance by Prudence Johnson and Dan Chouinard, and were treated to mesmerizing storytelling by Kevin Kling. After having experienced a drought of live performances, it was heartwarming to be able to see these three doing what they do so masterfully. And, thanks to Jake Otto for providing a stage and sound system to enhance our artist's performances and Shawn Otto for running the silent auction.

We were finally able to fete Beth Waterhouse. A board commissioned painting was presented by Mark Granlund, one of our caretakers, and a very accomplished artist. The painting is a birds-eye view of Cooks House.

When we return to Mallard in the spring, we should have two new roofs –for Cedar Bark House and Winter House. The roofs were ready for replacement and we secured a contract with a great local business. Speaking of roofs – we plan to tackle replacing the Caboose roof with volunteers this summer. Sounds like a hat trick on the roof front for 2022!

Thanks for all of your support!

Rebecca Otto  
Executive Director

*Wannigan photo by David Harrington, painting photo by Barbara LaValleur*



digging a hole behind the library with her strong back feet, building a vault for her clutch of eggs; the warm sun on Ober's wooden deck, illuminating a page of Pebaam's workbook *Daga Anishinaabemodaa*. But when I think of Mallard Island, my first thought is of the stars.

My second thought is of *Nookomis*, *Minisinaanakwadook*, who gave me advice that I must work hard to remember since I've left Mallard: Drink when you're thirsty, eat when you're hungry, she told me. When I first came to Mallard, I wasn't looking for that kind of wisdom. I study Comparative Literature at the University of Chicago, and Ober's archives have several rare books that our library does not, including *Daga Anishinaabemodaa*. I particularly wanted to read the complete publications of the Smithsonian Bureau of American Ethnology, one of Ober's rarer collections. I spent hours reading outdoors on Mallard, soaking up the sun and the words in equal measure. But what I learned from Ober's books was supplementary to the knowledge I learned from natural observation. I think Ober understood that: the books are valuable, but it is the life of their home, the life of Turtle Island, that gives them meaning. I remember the words of Anishinaabe that I learned on Mallard more clearly than any word I learned in a library.

As a PhD student, I spend most of my time squinting at my screen or hunting down a particular passage in an obscure book. It's hard to maintain the mindset I had on Mallard when I'm caught up in the grime and hustle of city life. My posture has definitely deteriorated. It takes effort to do what *Nookomis*' name suggests and look up at the clouds. But as soon as I tilt my head back and take a deep breath, I remember why I study what I do.

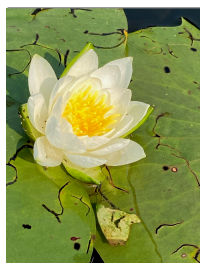
On Chicago's rare clear nights, I like to sit out on my fire escape and look for the stars. Sometimes I sing to myself, the only song I know in *Anishinaabemowin*:

<i>Naangoodinong</i>	Every now and then
<i>Ninbabaazhawendaan niyaw</i>	I go around feeling sorry for myself
<i>Babaamaashiyaan giizhigong</i>	And all the while the wind carries me across the sky

This song was recorded by a man named Ga'gandac from White Earth, Minnesota, in 1908. As I sing it, I hear the great tradition of mystics all over the world; such a song might have been sung by William Blake, or Matsuo Basho, or Rabindranath Tagore. In my scholarship I try to make such comparisons, for the benefit of people who aren't familiar with the beauty of *Anishinaabemowin*. And whenever I go around feeling sorry for myself, I think of Mallard, and I begin to feel the great wind that carries us all.

For the people who love Mallard like we do, the wind is always blowing towards Rainy Lake. It is my privilege to be able to return this summer, to help preserve Ober's vast archives. It is also my dream to be trained as a caretaker, to share this place that is so dear to my heart with future visitors. I hope someday to wake someone else up at midnight, push them outside, point to the stars and whisper, *anangokaa*.

Miigwech,  
Julia Marsan



*Julia is a graduate student of native/indigenous literatures of North America. Her dissertation focuses on Indigenous literatures collected by anthropologists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. She was a 2021 Mallard Island Individual Projects participant.*

*Photo by Prudence Johnson*

## Mallard Island Schedule

Dates	Summary of Program Week
May 22 - 28	<i>Reflection, Fasting and Ceremony</i>
May 29 - June 4	<i>Carpentry/Repairs Work</i> - focus on Caboose roof and misc repairs
June 5 - 10	<i>Gardening Work</i>
June 10 - 12	<i>Foundation Board Meeting</i>
June 12 - 18	<i>Water is Life</i> - Focus on Anishinaabe inaaakonigewin (law) and giikendaasowin (knowledge) relating to lands and waters.
June 19 - 25	<i>Sustainable Psychology</i> - Complete a curricular unit on Ober for Sustainability & Psychology courses at the college & high school levels
June 26 - July 1	<i>Rest Week</i>
July 1 - 9	<i>Carpentry/Repairs Work</i> - focus on Caboose roof and Big House deck rebuild
July 10 - 16	<i>Transcriptions and Cultural Retreat</i> - Ojibwe Language Transcription and Cultural Immersion
July 17 - 23	<i>Anishinaabe/Indigenous Wellness + Creative Art Pathways</i> - A collaborative week with female & non-binary identifying members of the MacRostie Art Center & KAXE Strong Women group
July 24 - 30	<i>Rest Week</i>
July 31 - Aug 6	<i>Environmental Organization's Leadership Retreat</i> - A retreat that will be restorative for the staff and useful for the organization and its overall goals and strategies to protect Minnesota's environment and the health of its people
Aug 7 - 13	<i>Ober Presents!</i> A week-long art show in the gallery at Backus, a free-to-the-public live concert with storytelling and music. To be broadcast on KCC-tv.
Aug 14 - 20	<i>Stewards of the Wilderness</i> - Develop the next generation of environmental advocates with a multi-cultural perspective
Aug 21 - 27	<i>Individual Projects</i>
Aug 28 - Sept 3	<i>Archive Work</i> - book care and map work
Sept 4 - 10	<i>Boreal Travels</i> - Read the Greene Journals & record the history of this group's annual treks to the wilderness to share with the next generation
Sept 15 - 18	<i>Foundation Board Meeting &amp; Retreat</i>

## Songs for Every Day

*Lynn Naeckel*

Father, Creator, I sing this song of thanksgiving  
For the gift of this new day,  
For the splendor of the yellow sunrise,  
For the hope of a new beginning,  
For the sun that lights my way,  
And for its warmth upon my back.  
I sing thanks for the life-giving waters of the earth,  
For the solace of lakes and streams,  
For the majesty of the ocean,  
For the swimmers who come to our nets  
That we may have life and health;  
For the power of Whale  
And the companionship of Dolphin.  
Be with those who travel on the water.  
Bless little children everywhere.  
Guide and guard those who seek your way.  
Give me a strong heart for the journey.



*Photo by Tanya Piatz-Sandberg*

Daughter, Spirit, I sing this song of thanksgiving  
For the gifts of a blazing sunset,  
For the transition to calm evening,  
For the time of reaping,  
For the gathering together of strands of our lives,  
For the gathering of friends around the red camp fire,  
For this time of contemplation and quiet passion.  
I sing thanks for the company of all the creatures of this earth,  
From bellowing Moose to buzzing Mosquito,  
For the healing wisdom of Bear,  
For the quick cunning of Fox,  
For the infectious hilarity of Loon,  
The strength and endurance of Wolf,  
The power and persistence of Beaver.  
Be present to those who are lost and confused.  
Give healing power to those who are sick.  
Show us new ways to make peace.



Grant me a loving spirit to live each day in harmony.

*A prayer sequence Lynn wrote on Mallard Island.  
These are two parts of the sequence; morning and evening.*

## Letter from the President

Boo-Zhoo, Bonjour, Hej, Hallo, and Hello! As I look out over the 15” of newfallen snow, I am reminded of the vision of warm weather on Mallard Island sent by our Executive Director Rebecca Otto recently to those who subscribe to Foundation updates; the latest being the January update which made me long for summer days and calm mornings watching the sun rise from the rocky point beyond Front House (aka the “honeymoon cabin”) – but I do not long for the mosquitos.



Some have wondered what the Foundation does in the winter. After a great Fall Gathering in October, the board, staff and committees began busily working through next summer’s program planning and preparation, overhauling our bylaws, examining our policies to ensure they are up to date, comprehensive and support our Mission, Vision and Strategic Plan. There are a number of new and exciting initiatives being worked on right now, including important work being accomplished by our Inaakonigewin Committee led by Board member Pebaamibines (Dennis) Jones based on our feedback assessments provided by program participants.

Last year the foundation board soon realized the bylaws, governing documents and policies were outdated, incomplete and did not meet the needs of increasing committee activity, board responsibilities, and the increased

work our volunteers and paid staff are doing in addition to the work and capabilities of our new full-time Executive Director. Seasoned board member and past Foundation President Peggy Smith leads the committee to perform this important work.

We plan to begin work soon on our next Strategic Plan supported and shaped by our governing documents. Part of our annual activities will include ensuring we have the right mix of planning, preparing, executing and assessing processes in place to make real progress achieving the goals outlined in our Strategic Plan.

These important “attention to detail” initiatives would not have been possible without a full-time Executive Director. My belief is we will reach a point soon where the Board can focus with more attention on strategic opportunities bringing to life the vision Ernest Carl Oberholtzer set out to accomplish in his life through the Foundation he established.

I could not end the column without a huge “Thank you so much!” to our volunteers, staff and supporters who have come through for us in so many ways for such a long time, in good times and through times like we’ve had in the last two years. We look forward to many returns from our old friends and to new friends interested in getting involved on our board, committees, volunteer parties and staff. I am optimistic this next year will be better than ever.

George Glazier

*Photo by Tanya Piatz-Sandberg*



## Letter from the Treasurer

These seasonal swings just seem to be getting bigger and more impactful every year. Hot cold, wet dry, loud quiet, light dark, life and death. These are just a few of the big transformations winter brings, which makes us all just that much more aware of our surroundings and each other. This is a precious moment to reflect and plan for longer days in the spring, to then be all too consumed with activity. Each season has its purpose and Winter should not be underrated.



Mallard is quiet now, it's sun low in the sky, crispy cold winds cracking through the trees with few visitors, outside of a nesting red squirrel or a white tail deer bedding down in the Day Lily patch. The night sky over a white expanse pulls your head upward to take in the depth of the stars or the brightness of a moon to guide you down a path where Minisinaanakwadook awaits footsteps and a voice or song from her visitors. This is a time where solitude and loneliness turn into heightened senses of wonderment and gratitude.

We at the Oberholtzer Foundation need this time to seek our path, collaborate with our supporters and listen to the outside world on how we can be better at what we do. So many of you have reached out to do just that, for it is just this that makes our melting pot so much richer. We still face our challenges as you might expect, having to limit our growth in visits as we all feel the constraints of a pandemic, but this next summer looks as exciting as ever despite this, as the new and existing programs lead the way.



We ended this last year in a good place financially, with so many more of you contributing. Thank you! Our investments grew during a very positive trending economy, but we all know that markets go up and they can and do go down.

We are fortunate to have the help of our talented and dedicated volunteers that assist in maintaining our unique buildings. Of course, there are times when we need to use local builders for the more difficult tasks and we are grateful to have the resources to do that this year. I say it every year, but we are so grateful for your support and amazed by your productivity.

The need is always there for times such as now, where we see more pressure on keeping operations moving ahead, and funding scholarships for those that don't have the means. We have the talent and a working board that is relentless in its mission, and your support is what makes it all come together.

Michael Reid

*Photo by David Harrington*

**Gifts in Memory of**

- Buster Eaves
- Tim Mudge Heinle
- Mary Hilke
- John L. Holden
- Charlie Kelly
- Don Maronde
- James P. Martineau
- Gladys Meade
- Linda Merrill
- Ernest C. Oberholtzer
- Robert K. Olson
- Janet Pearson
- James Samson Riddle
- Swede Sundberg
- Rich Thompson

**Foundation Gifts**

- \*Anonymous Family Foundation
- \*Grand Casino Mille Lacs
- \*Longview Foundation
- \*Lenfestey Family Foundation

- \*Pallorino Family Foundation
- \*Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community Fund
- \*Winter Wheat Foundation

**Gifts in Honor of**

- Charlie Kelly
- Nance Kunkel
- Julia Marsan
- John & Suzanne McKinney
- Walter Mondale
- Pebaamibines
- Jean Replinger
- Don Shelby
- Ian Slater
- Beth Waterhouse
- All the marvelous people who keep and care for Ober's island legacy
- The Women who helped pack Carolyn, Mary, Lisa, Lucy, Barbie
- Hudson Bay Canoe Team- Robin, Becky, George, John and Gayle

**In-kind Donations**

- \* Antoinette Hickey, Chapman & Cutler LLP - completion of 990 and tax filings
- \* Prudence Johnson - new queen mattress for Artists House
- \* Pebaamibines - cultural and educational services
- \* Michael Reid - nails, screws, and bolts for Tool Shed
- \* Pam and Darrell Rundell - wheel barrel tire
- \* Eric Rundell - screws/nails for Tool Shed
- \* Beth Waterhouse - canoe
- \* David Rolloff - 10 lightly used commercial BFDs
- \* Leo Karsnia - reduced price on lumber for Tool Shed



Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation  
c/o Rebecca Otto  
12697 177<sup>th</sup> St N  
Marine on St. Croix, MN 55047