



Battlefords Scuba Community

Spring 2019 Newsletter # 24

*The Winter in Review!*



# The Prez Sez

There are times when someone will ask “Why do you dive in Saskatchewan?” with the inference that there is no point to diving in Saskatchewan, and by generalization, that there is no point in diving in fresh water. These are the minds that see the tropical oceans as the only place to dive.

There is more to see in the oceans, especially the tropical oceans for sure – and it is colourful and plentiful. But there are things to see in fresh water bodies as well, maybe not so obvious nor so colourful, and there are plenty of things to do (just maybe not quite so exciting). Each of us has different reasons to dive and different things to do when we dive. When we get together to dive as a buddy team of two or in a larger group the reasons and the things we do get blended together, and the result, most often, is fun.

Many of us start diving for the thrill of it – it would be neat and exciting. Some do it because friends and family do it. I started diving because a friend wanted me to try it – and I am still trying it. I find new sensations, I see new things or the same things a little differently. And it goes from there – new people, new places, and new ideas. It is thrilling to master an alien environment, but there is a peace in the underwater world that I find nowhere else – no phones ringing, no traffic sounds, no one talking – and I can focus on whatever I want. Each dive is a spiritual experience – insignificant me finding my place in the universe.

As I dive I have the opportunity to focus on my dive skills – my buoyancy control, my navigation, my air use, or my trim – endless possibilities. I can focus on the environment around me – the reef or the silty bottom, the flora and fauna or the dearth thereof, what is in the water that should not be (other than my buddy and I). I can focus on my buddy and what he or she is doing and how and what I can learn from him or her. I can focus on the new piece of equipment that I have added and learning how to use it optimally (or that my buddy has added and see how it works and rationalize to myself that I really should have it too). I can also use the dive to pick up some of the debris at the bottom of the lake or ocean – there is lots of that when we stop to take a look around.

The funny thing is that the more we dive, the more reason we find to dive. I watch some of the club members when they dive and I am inspired by their dedication to mastering the complex problem of buoyancy control – to the point of talking about adjusting their weights by one half pound. Or I watch as they work to fine tune their use of new equipment – full face mask or side-mount gear configurations. It is then I realize that this individual is well and truly hooked – they are going to try “it” forever.

So as the summer dive season rolls around, I invite you to join us in our quest for something to do while we are in the water. Come to relax. Come to challenge yourself. Come to dive. We do not improve out diving unless we dive. Join our voyage, please.

# BSC News

## SASKATCHEWAN PARKS & RECREATION CONFERENCE

October 16 through 19, 2019

In mid-October of this year, North Battleford will host the annual conference of the Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association, the members of which comprise the recreation boards and departments throughout the province as well as the representatives of Provincial and Regional Parks. In essence these are the people who control the lakes and pools where we swim and boat. It seems like an ideal forum to present scuba diving as a sport and as a program for the waterfronts.

The local hosting committee and the Executive of BSC had a mutually decided upon meeting where they asked us if we wanted to be involved and we asked if we could be involved – convoluted isn't it!! The local hosts felt that our Discover Scuba for Schools program would be a good example of local schools using local facilities to access a program being promoted by a provincial body. We felt it was important that the Saskatchewan Underwater Council be represented in promoting scuba across the province, and they agreed.

The long and the short of the story is that the SUC will be relying on the Battlefords Scuba Community to man its information booth during the conference with support from some of the Board Members of the SUC. We will have handouts on scuba diving in the province, the role of the SUC, dive clubs and shops within the province, and programs that are available to communities through the Council or its member clubs. We will be looking for volunteers to man the booth during the conference, likely in three or four hour blocks. We will provide an indoctrination session for the volunteers prior the conference.

On October 16<sup>th</sup> conference attendees have an opportunity to try some of new activities that may not be available in their home communities. We are going to offer a Discover Scuba experience to those who register to try it. The session will go from 1 pm through 4 pm. We will need some volunteers to help set up gear and get it onto the participants and then to get it off them, dismantled, rinsed and put away.

We are a long way from these dates, but if you could put them on your calendar and keep them in mind as the time approaches you might find your way clear to help with this project. This could be a significant outreach program for the club as we have already made our presence known in about 50 of the west central, northwestern and northern communities. It could be fun to meet these people.

Please keep it in mind. Thanks.

## WOMEN'S DIVE DAY



July 21 has been declared as Women's Dive Day, the day we celebrate women in diving. Special events are being held around the world to mark the day. We had planned to join other divers, but our hosts have a major conflict for that day, so we are changing the date and will announce the new date as soon as we have one set.

What we have done the past couple of years is combine the Women's Dive Day with an Underwater Beach Clean-up. This is not done because we feel women and cleaning go together. The reason is far more pragmatic – there are just too few weekends to fit in all the individual events around diving that we would like to. These are two very worthwhile events that we could combine to mark two important aspects of diving – the contribution of women to our sport, and the importance of the environment to all of us.

We were invited to Turtle Lake and the Watershed Authority has publicized the clean-up. We have had the use of a pontoon boat to dive from which means no long swims. It is also great to carry gear on out to the site and carry garbage back to shore. The bottom is coarser sand that does not stir up too much and settles more quickly than the silt many of us are accustomed to. The water is warmer than Atton's so many find the dives a little more enjoyable. The drop-off where we have done the clean-up is at about twenty-five feet so depth is not really a factor and the light is good. There is not much weed growth and what growth there is, is not very tall – no fear of entanglement. We have marker buoys for heavier items that we may find (last year three boat anchors were raised and we found a fourth but could not re-locate it when we went to mark it) and we go back with lift bags for them.

With the 10 am meeting, we have lots of time in the day for two or three dives before the potluck dinner. And as usual, there is no shortage of food at this event. The Rumpfs are great hosts and the day winds up with some visiting with friends, old and new, in their backyard.

Why not plan on joining us, even if you are not diving, for this mid-summer celebration. Let's celebrate life, at the lake.

# BSC News

## PROJECT AWARE



Project AWARE is an international non-profit organization focused on the marine environment. It receives support from most of the dive agencies and groups around the world all of whom encourage their membership to be involved with Project AWARE activities.

The organization originally sought to solve all the problems in all the world's water bodies, but came to realize this was a bit overwhelming. They narrowed their focus to two very important issues – protecting the sharks and garbage. In the inland waters where we are, there is not a lot we can do to protect the sharks – avoid shark fin soup when it is on the menu and educating others that sharks have gained a bad and undeserved reputation. We can promote good stewardship to protect the sharks.

However, the Dive Against Debris program can be done right here and right now by each and every one of us. It can be our program. We sometimes forget that the garbage we throw over the side of the boat or that accidentally falls into the water can make its way over long periods of time into the oceans to join that great garbage patch that the media has gotten wind of, one in each of the north and south Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Garbage in our ditches can get carried away in the spring run-off, into any one of numerous streams and thence to the North Saskatchewan River or one of its tributaries, and then into the Churchill River system and onto Hudson's Bay where the ocean currents take over and carry it onward and onward. If we can reduce this garbage highway we can reduce the amount of crud (and that is a very technical term) that winds up in the ocean. Little steps – stop throwing garbage from our vehicles – pick up the garbage item as we pass it – educate others – and do each and underwater clean-ups. If we all do a little, pretty soon a lot gets done.

And Project AWARE has come up with a couple of ways for us to see what is being accomplished. Every piece of garbage we take from the water can be registered on-line. The target for this year is one million pieces of garbage. It just takes a quick minute or two to record your garbage and then when you have time you can post it to the Project AWARE Dive Against Debris website.

Project AWARE also has an Adopt A Dive Site program where an individual or group adopts a dive site and makes monthly reports to the website (at their convenience of course). The Executive agreed to adopt Atton's Lake for a trial and encourages its membership to adopt a lake (there is no shortage of them in this area) and to see what difference we can make in our neck of the woods. Project AWARE will provide a set of survey tools (to survey the amount and type of debris) to help get started. An annual report is made and recognition tools are provided to share the stewardship of that dive site with the local community.

To support this drive, some of us have decided to carry mesh bags on each dive this year and to pick up whatever garbage we see, to record and report it and see at the end of the year what a difference we have made. Want to join us? Please feel free.

# BSC News

## Networking in the Scuba World by Tracy Wilson-Gerwing

Picture yourself walking into a room full of people. What's the first thing you do? Myself, I immediately start scanning the room for someone I know. I'm looking for my comfort zone. If I am attending an event with a group of people, I tend to stick pretty close to them at the outset. This is where I feel the most secure and at ease.

Some people prefer to stay within that safe haven of the familiar. Sometimes I prefer to stay there too. There's nothing wrong with that. Stepping outside my comfort zone in social settings can range from uncomfortable to intimidating depending on the size and type of event.

Fortunately, I have (in general) learned to embrace those feelings, move through them and start talking to people I have never met before. It's called networking. Networking has broadened my horizons and opened doors that I would have never dreamed of. For me, this is especially true within the dive community.

### ***"It's all about who you know, right?"***

So what exactly is "networking"? By definition, networking involves three processes: 1) interacting with others; 2) exchanging information; and 3) developing professional or social contacts. For many people, networking looks something like this: They sit in on a talk, introduce themselves to the speaker, ask a couple of questions for clarification and maybe hand off a business card. In another scenario, they will be in a social setting and see someone they really want to meet, so they go over, introduce themselves, engage in a bit of conversation and then move on.

Those are pretty much the two approaches I adopted when I first started into the so-called networking process. I met a lot of high-profile people during the first couple of years. Unfortunately, these contacts rarely amounted to anything more than me re-introducing myself at a subsequent meeting by saying "we met before at so-and-so".

Fast forward a number of years, throw in lessons learned from two careers, add scuba diving into the mix and networking has taken on a life of it's own. As with any other career or sport, the diving world has it's rock stars – those larger than life people you see on tv, in the news, or follow on social media that have careers or adventures you dream about. (*\*Just a side note that local dive communities generally have a few rock stars of their own, but that is another story for another time!*) Even though I've only been involved with the diving community for a relatively short time, effective networking has helped me to develop a fairly decent relationship with some phenomenal divers.

## BSC News *continued*

Without going into too much detail, and hopefully without sounding pretentious, the connections I have made have resulted in: 1) an invitation to participate in the start up a non-profit organization; 2) an invitation to put together some articles; 3) an invitation to dive: 4) the offer to make introductions for specialized dive courses; 5) professional introductions to a specialized network in diving research; 6) and invitations to attend special events. The outcomes of many of these remain to be seen, but when the time comes, they are stories that I will happily share.

### ***What now?***

So how does someone learn to network effectively and get to experience some of these incredible opportunities? Wouldn't it be great if there was a simple formula you could follow to be able to network effectively? Sometimes the connections we make or the opportunities that arise can only be chalked up to being in the right place at the right time with the right people.

I don't claim to be an expert at networking and I am not always as successful at it. I think I have just been incredibly lucky that the people I have connected with were interested in growing their own networks and felt that, in some small way, I had something to contribute to their world. I have also been incredibly lucky to have generally avoided the egos that can sometimes accompany "rock star" status!

### ***Tracy's Keys to Successful Networking***

- 1) Make the decision to step out of your comfort zone – there is usually a lot of internal dialogue going on in my brain while I wrestle with myself over this decision
- 2) Be confident – if I can't find the genuine confidence to pull this off, I just fake it
- 3) Have something to say – since I'm just a farm girl from Saskatchewan, "Hi, I'm Tracy" usually doesn't grind the universe to a halt or inspire the person I'm meeting to go on and on about how amazing I am
- 4) Get contact information – yes, there are all sorts of websites to find people and you can look to connect with them on social media, but if you have made an impression, people are more likely to give you a personal email rather than a corporate one
- 5) Follow up – when I meet rock stars, I usually get a photo with them, and I always like to share the photo with them (this is another reason I get contact information and also gives you an easy lead in when you are following up)
- 6) Be genuine and be authentic – put your best self forward, in networking and in life!

# BSC News

## LAKE INFORMATION PROJECT

One of the often asked questions amongst divers is “What is XXXX Lake like to dive?” And often the answer is “Dunno – never been there.” It can be frustrating because we will pass up a lake because no one is familiar with it, and we don’t want to waste a dive on a “bad” lake. How to get useful information is a big question, and efforts are being made to start a resource manual that will have information on many of the lakes in the province, commonly dived or not.

A number of years ago, the Battlefords Scuba Community started work on the Saskatchewan Lake Resource Inventory Project (can you make up a more awkward name than that?) or SLRIP for short. The idea was to provide some useful information about the many lakes within the province about location, access, conditions, what one might expect to encounter in the lake, points of interest, amenities, and where help would be coming from if needed. Maps and diagrams form an integral part of this project.

Part of the development of the idea was for divers to add information they came up with after diving a lake on a Data Collection Form which would be submitted to the Club to be added. A compass heading (from a specified starting point), a distance and some depth readings gives us a profile of the bottom. Add the bottom conditions and we have a good idea of what a diver can expect. If we can add what we saw along the way, we create a pretty good picture, and if we can add distances to what we saw, we have a working map. The first drafts will be imperfect, but with added information from different sources will start to fill in the blanks and give us some reasonable information upon which to plan a dive at that location.

We have the information on our website [www.battlefordsscubacommunity.ca](http://www.battlefordsscubacommunity.ca) along with the Data Collection Form. The only way the information is going to become more complete is if we divers fill in the blanks. What are we waiting for? It is unlikely to be completed by magic.

What is in it for us as divers? The end result could be a great guide to the lakes of Saskatchewan for all divers, and we would all be a small part of that creation. It is a good opportunity for us to practice our navigation and mapping skills.

And I hear a rumor that the Saskatchewan Underwater Council is looking at a similar project. Other provinces have such guide books for sale. With all the water we have in this province, why shouldn’t we?



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# BSC News

## UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

Again this fall the Battlefords Scuba Community will be holding its Annual Underwater Photography Contest, although I am not sure now that the Underwater part is entirely correct as last year we added a category we added a Surface category so that we could include those photos taken before and after a dive, times that are so much a part of diving.

There will be five categories for the photos – People, Plants, Critters, Waterscapes and Surface. The entries are to be submitted electronically and the Club will see to the printing and framing. Prizes will be awarded to the winners in each category and to the Best in the Show. There is no limit to the number of photos a person may enter. The deadline for entries is Friday, October 11<sup>th</sup> and the judging will take place on Wednesday, October 18<sup>th</sup> and the results will be announced later that evening at the Annual General Meeting of the club.

The Club decided, originally, to hold the contest to encourage divers to take photographs during their dives and to share those photos with others, to share ideas, experiences and techniques, and to share with the non-divers around us what a wonderful world we get to share when we dive.

To clarify the categories, a little –

- People includes photos of divers and swimmers in an underwater setting
- Plants include underwater vegetation in a variety of settings
- Animals include the fauna of the underwater world, and sometimes this can be tricky (remembering that coral is an animal)
- Waterscapes includes underwater scenery, wrecks, panoramic vistas and the like
- Surface includes scenes, people or equipment that is readily identifiable as related to diving.

So, how about going through your collection of memories from aquatic adventures and seeing if you have some special photo that tells you a story? And how about sharing it as part of the contest? We would love to see your photos, fresh water or salt, and to hear your story. You've got the entire summer and the early fall to find that memory you wish to share. How about giving it a try??



# BSC News

## DRIVE & DIVE

The Executive decided to add something new this year – something that might have appeal to the non-divers in our circle of acquaintances. We are going to try a fun day of golf and water sports at Atton's Lake Regional Park. The day will include nine holes of golf, a catered lunch, and then diving or other water sports at the boat launch.

On Sunday, August 4<sup>th</sup>, at 9:30 am we have booked tee-times for our Drive part of the day. We play nine holes of golf (watch for more details on how we will play) before breaking for lunch at the Golf Course Clubhouse. Then it will be off to the boat launch to unload gear and non-power water craft. We will have time for a couple of leisurely dives, a couple of spins around the lake, or just some relaxation in the sun before we wrap up the day.

We chose the Sunday of a long weekend so that people could travel to the park without having to rush, spend a day enjoying themselves, and then make their way home in a relaxed manner. It allows time for those who wish to dive on Saturday and/or on Monday.

And if you don't golf it will not matter as we plan to put some equalizers into the game – maybe using your putter as a pool cue on one hole. It will all be about meeting people and having fun in the great outdoors.

Watch for more advertising on this event please. We sure do hope you will come out and be part of the celebrations.

### DRIVE & DIVE With BATTLEFORDS SCUBA COMMUNITY

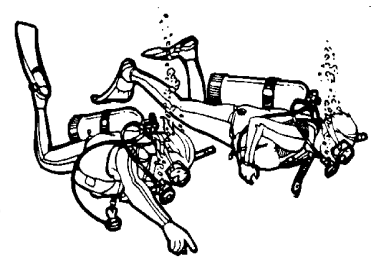
ATTON'S LAKE REGIONAL PARK

SUNDAY, AUGUST 4, 2019

\$50.00 per person



*9 Fun Holes of Golf, Cart Rental & Lunch*



**For More Information and To Register**

**Contact Dennis McCullough**

**306-937-7195**

## ICE DIVING 2019

In March of this year, the club certified its first Ice Divers. We have talked about ice diving for some length of time, but we finally did something about it with the very capable assistance of Sheldon Funk of Saskatoon. Sheldon was actually the catalyst that made it happen – he said he would love to help if we were doing an ice diving course – he had never dived in Atton's Lake (and he had all the equipment to run an ice dive). What could we say but YES?

The date was set for late February for a pool session where participants would fine tune their buoyancy control and learn to swim with lines attached and to deal with the potential entanglement. The following weekend was set for the actual ice dive – this timing would ensure that the ice would safely support divers, their equipment and the vehicles. If you remember this winter, we did get some cold snaps, and sure enough the weekend was a tad chilly (we actually saw a temperature of  $-36^{\circ}\text{C}$  plus wind chill on the way home from Wainwright that evening (we had gone there to commiserate with the divers there as they had cancelled their ice dive too). There are limits after all!!

As luck would have it, the week to which we rescheduled the event was sunny and warm, and the first day of diving held true to that pattern. Most of the snow had melted off the ice surface so marking the surface with circles and directional lines was only slightly less than futile. However, it did make it more pleasant to be on the ice surface that the previous dates would have been. The holes got drilled, the triangular opening appeared (not without some work on the part of the divers and instructor), and the game was afoot!

Ice diving has certain inherent risks and one of those is frozen regulators that free-flow. In spite of doing everything the right way, divers did have more than their fair share of free-flowing regulators which meant a number of false starts (in fact over the weekend, every diver except Sheldon had a regulator freeze, some at the surface as they started, others under the ice during the dive). In various combinations of Instructor and student or buddy teams the divers got the required dives completed and three new Ice Divers were certified.

Mother Nature has her quirks and this weekend was no exception. When we got the triangle opened up and the ice out of it, the water that welled up into the hole (the ice was two feet thick) was quite muddy – more so that Atton's usually is. When the divers submerged into the hole and began breathing the water cleared and we could see fifteen feet down. As the divers moved away from the hole, the muddy water returned. As the divers returned to the hole and bubbles began to appear, the water cleared again. As the divers rested in the hole, the muddiness returned. As a diver, the top five or six feet of water were quite muddy but below that point the water was clear and we had about 30 foot visibility. Of course, all being intrepid scientists and innately curious, we had to find an explanation.

Two favourites emerged. The first postulated that there was a layer of dust on the surface of the water when the ice crystallized and that layer was trapped under the ice and we disturbed that with our cutting. The second theory held that the warm weather had the ice melting along the edge of the lake and on the shore. The water was running down the slope of the oat launch and into the lake along the edge where the melt had occurred. This water was warmer and therefore less dense than the colder water under the ice. The warmer water with the mud held in suspension formed a layer right under the ice and it was that layer that welled up into the hole. The air bubbles, being lighter than the warm water, displace the muddy water while they came up through the hole. Take your choice – join the debate.

Because of the nice weather on the Saturday, we did have a number of spectators who made it their duty to record the event in images. But, they, too, were subject to learning. They learned that their friends and family had their “crazy” moments too. They learned that there is a lot of preparation for a fairly short time underwater (as if they did not already have an inkling of that). They learned that they could follow where the divers were under the ice but following the bubbles that came up through the ice and skittered across the surface. They learned, too, that those same bubbles make a noise akin to frying bacon as they come through the ice.

It seems that everyone had fun this year, and we have had some queries about a repeat. I think it is safe to say we will do it again next winter.

Congratulations to Tracy Wilson-Gerwing, Robert Turpin and Dennis McCullough on their certification as Ice Divers. Thanks to Ian Claughton for coming out for a dive and to help with the work, and to Joanne Turpin for the wonderful chili. And a really big thank you to Sheldon Funk for teaching the course and hauling all the equipment back and forth. It was a good weekend!



*Are these guys nuts or what?*

## Trails from Thailand by Leona Sharpe

David and I were very fortunate to escape the brutal 2019 Saskatchewan winter by spending two months in Thailand. We travelled some of the mainland, visited an old buddy from the Battlefords, and toured some pretty awesome sights.

While touring around Thailand we stopped in to three different dive resorts. Phuket is Thailand's largest island, located in the Andaman Sea. The water temperature was consistent at 28 degrees Celsius. With soft corals and pelagic fish species aplenty there was much to see. Manta and marble rays were frequently glimpsed in this area; but we did not spot a whale shark to our dismay.

One of our activities while on Phuket included a day tour that took us to Ao Phang Nga where we enjoyed kayaking and cave exploring. We were surrounded by breathtaking nature and wildlife. We paddled through the Nape Sea caves. There we saw some wildlife, such as kingfishers and sea eagles. Our kayak guide showed us Ao Phang-Nga's famed after-dark bioluminescence (light emitted by plankton organisms in the water after dark). So cool! Ao Phang Nga truly is one of the most beautiful spots in Thailand.

Koh Tao is a small paradise island somewhat isolated in the Gulf of Thailand. It is surrounded by large rock formations covered with stunning coral reefs with an abundance of marine life that starts just a few meters offshore. In the English language Koh Tao translates to Turtle Island. Koh Tao has a natural beauty both above and below the water (29 degrees Celsius). We did both snorkeling and diving and saw different species of colorful angelfish, butterflyfish, bannerfish and blue-spotted stingrays. Hard corals such as table coral, staghorn coral mosaic and mushroom corals are predominant in this area. Two fish in particular, the Yellow Boxfish and Clarke's Anemonefish was a highlight for us to see. One day we found a very interesting place to snorkel. There is a ship that wrecked in 1962 just meters off the Mae Haad Bay. There were lots of fish here including a huge school of fusiliers, a large trigger fish as well as a blue spotted ray. We spent about 2 weeks on Koh Tao.

Koh Chang, in English means Elephant Island, was our third dive destination. We had some excellent diving and snorkeling opportunities around Koh Chang. By far the most pristine diving and snorkeling in the area was around Koh Rang, an uninhabited island protected from fishing by its marine park status. We were in the marine park at various dive spots. The diving in this area was mainly at reasonable shallow depths with good reefs located at 5 to 25 meters. Visibility, as on the other two islands, had its fair share of good to not so good conditions, it all depended on the day. Here at Koh Chang we saw a variety of soft and hard corals including massive, columnar and staghorn corals. We saw a range of tropical reef life such as blue tipped rays, moray eels, trigger fish, grouper and batfish and more. We also experienced a wreck dive called the HTMS Chang. It lies in waters to the South-East of Koh Chang. The 100 meter long vessel, former Thai naval vessel, was purposely sunk in 2012 to form an artificial reef that now sits approximately 30 meters beneath the surface. It provided us with lots to see.

## BSC Travels - continued

Outside of diving on this trip, we had the opportunity to experience the two unique characteristics which are found in Thai people – consideration and hospitality. The Thai people are so friendly, generous and easy going. We experienced true genuine Thai culture, Thai food, Thai massages and their way of life. I truly wish each and every one of you who read my report will someday have the opportunity to visit this amazing country.



*See You All at the Lake !!*