



# turtle tracks

Friends of Misery Bay

400 Misery Bay Road  
Evansville ON, P0P1H0

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## In this issue...

- Our new Chair, Megan Bonenfant, speaks of the rewards and challenges that make it all worthwhile for the Friends of Misery Bay..... p. 1
- John Diebolt gives a detailed update on the trail posts, maps and markers and the people who made it happen .....p. 4
- Ken Mackenzie reports on this past season's volunteers at the Visitor Centre.....p. 7
- Marcel Bénéteau shines a spotlight on the Lily family at Misery Bay.....p. 9
- John Diebolt reports on a special FOMB outing at the Sifferd Cottage on the west side of Misery Bay and pays a tribute to the Sifferd family.....p. 13
- Friends of Misery Bay Board of Directors 2022.....p. 16

## Updates from the Chair for Friends of Misery Bay

Greetings fellow Friends of Misery!

November, the gloomiest of the months, is a time for cozy slippers, warm tea and reflecting on the year that has passed. I have a lot to reflect on.

It was a busy year at Misery Bay Provincial Park. We are still crunching the numbers from the Visitor's Centre, but with pandemic restrictions easing we saw new friends and old coming out to enjoy all that Misery has to offer. Our summer staff and volunteers were there to welcome

them with a smile and answer their questions. I can't thank our staff and volunteers enough – as weary of isolation as we all are, dealing with an increasingly impatient public after a global pandemic is not always a comfortable task. These folks showed up with their best selves and represented Misery wonderfully at the Visitor's Centre, out on the trails, on social media and out in the community at special events and the weekly Kagawong Market.

We also saw the completion of our trail marking project this fall. After a

few seasons of volunteer effort, all of the trails in the park are now well blazed with maps provided at critical junctures. It sounds like a simple thing (and it is), but the sheer number of positive comments relayed to our volunteers and staff at the Visitor's Centre after a day on the trails is proof that the simplest things can be some of the most impactful. A huge THANK YOU to everyone who has helped trim vegetation, paint markers, install markers, assemble posts, sponsor posts, shovel gravel or simply said, 'nice job!' If you haven't been to the park to see the new look for yourselves, get on out there!

This spring the Friends of Misery Bay were honoured to accept the responsibility of caretaking a remarkable collection: Marcel Beneteau and Sabine Huege's compendium of flowering plants of Manitoulin Island. When Marcel and Sabine first came to Manitoulin, they set out to find and photograph every species listed in Morton's *The Flora of Manitoulin Island*. They have come so very close with more than 800 stunning photographs of an astonishing variety of plant life. Check out the Manitoulin Expositor article if you haven't already, [Kagawong couple donates one-of-a-kind collection of Manitoulin wildflower photos to Friends of Misery Bay | The Manitoulin Expositor](#). I love this story. It is such a powerful and inspiring example of finding one's own way to connect with nature. Thank you to Marcel and Sabine for entrusting us with this

spectacular project. The collection is being stored for the winter but will be on display at the Visitor's Centre again next spring.

This June marked the beginning of the third and last year of my first elected term on the FOMB Board of Directors. I have never sat on a Board before and joined FOMB's because I was looking to connect with the Manitoulin community in a different way. I took on the Chair's seat this spring because I've been so inspired by the work that this group has accomplished since it's inception and I wanted to help see it continue. Misery Bay is a rarity, not just for its important ecology and geology, but for the community of people who have come together over the years to see it protected and to share it with the world. Thank you, for all that you have done and will do, to all of the Board members whose terms came to an end this spring as well as those who have newly joined us or stayed on. Thank you to John Diebolt, our past Chair, for his continuing dedication to this organization and to the Park. Thank you to Marcel Beneteau for continuing to edit this biannual newsletter from the wilds of Owen Sound. Thank you to all of our volunteers for the hours you share with us. And thank YOU, our membership community of more than 100(!), for being the company that Misery loves. Thank you is not enough, but it will have to do.

When I was debating whether or not to accept the Chair position, I had to

wrestle with some thoughts about the time and skills I had to share. Would it be enough? I still wrestle with this, to be honest, and I think we all do. I think this is what holds some people back from volunteering for or joining things, this notion that whatever time we may have to give might not be as much as the person standing beside us and is therefore worth less. It isn't. Whatever you have to share helps to build a more diverse, connected and resilient community. I urge all of you to consider how you might make a deeper connection with your community and nature with the time that you have.

Contributing to citizen science through iNaturalist or keeping a 'life list' of all the birds/plants/species you see are easy to do. Perhaps you have a day to join your local Christmas Bird Count this December or spend a few hours at the Misery Bay Visitor's Centre this summer. Or maybe you could lead a guided hike to share your passion about ferns/beetles/trees/pond scum, or simply give someone without vehicle access or a hiking buddy a lift out to the Park so they can enjoy it, too. How will you connect? The possibilities are only limited by your imagination.

Wishing you all a peaceful and restorative winter,

Megan Bonenfant, a Friend of Misery



## Trails and Special Projects Update

John Diebolt for our special projects and trail team: Megan Bonenfant, Mike Hobson, Dale Scott

**“Volunteerism is alive and well on Manitoulin Island and especially with Friends of Misery Bay (FOMB).”**

You have heard me make that statement many times when I speak of FOMB and all the projects that we start and finish at Misery Bay Provincial Park. **October 22 of this year was a prime example of that spirit**, as a group of intrepid volunteers and others met at the park for the culmination of a 3-year project to replace all of our trail intersection posts and an environmental upgrade to all of our plastic trail directional arrows.



Dale Scott installing post on west side alvar

Three years ago, our thoughts/plans were fixated on replacing the posts and markers. The existing ones were erected approximately 12 years prior to that, under

the direction of Lynda Olson and Mike Ewert (our then trail masters). They were to be temporary replacements for the existing ones that were in bad shape – temporary meaning 3-4 years – so that in the interim, Ontario Parks and FOMB could come up with new mapping including “hotspot interpretive locations” and other additions to the existing trail maps.

New post at Alvar “Arena”

These “temporary” trail intersection posts with maps and the plastic trail markers had deteriorated to a sorry state and were no longer providing adequate direction to hikers, (plastic markers and maps bleached out, wooden structures falling over and being patched up, etc.), potentially leading to people losing their way. Action was needed, and all I can say is it is truly amazing what can happen when a group of like-minded individuals get together and start planning something. Here’s how it all came together:

- a comment made by several of us: ***“I am sick of plastic – we cannot use it in our park”*** was followed by a comment made by Megan Bonenfant: *“A favorite trail where I used to live used painted wooden blocks attached to trees.”*
- next thought: *“Wonder who we could find that would be able to make us solid posts*

*with that special look, crafted from local products...* Turns out that Blake Bonenfant of Roundtree Company at Ice Lake is a very skilled woodworker who would be able to help us out.

- next thought and topic of several board meetings: “*Cheez- how do we pay for this?*” – which led to the following plan:

The installation of the posts and trail markers began in the spring of 2021, continued into 2022, culminating on Oct. 22, the final work day of the year. On that day we had five teams in action:

- Mike Hobson and Jim Cahill went to the west side of the park and put up the rest of the blue blocks on the Misery Bay Trail. (Dale and Rose had already put up some of them.)
- Megan, Rose, Amber and Charlene headed down the Coastal Alvar Trail, going all the way to Mac’s Bay and install orange marker blocks.
- Ken and Dave walked the entire Inland Alvar Trail doing some light pruning and checking for blowdowns.
- Ron Bailey with his tractor and shovelers Ken, Dave and Jim moved the gravel pile from the end of the 911 road back to the garage, allowing full use of the emergency road if it is needed. (We need the gravel for yearly trail maintenance.)
- a bunch of us headed, up by Dave Clark, did a major shutdown and clean-up of the Visitors Center, with all electronic components being stored in the off-season by Dave.

Final results for this project:

- 21 trail intersection posts installed – posts crafted up by Roundtree Company using

local cedar from Taylor Sawmill. Posts include a metal “you are here” trail maps made by Beacon Images of Tehkummah. All 21 posts were sponsored by members of Friends of Misery Bay for \$225. Each post has a small plaque acknowledging the sponsor’s contribution.

- over 350 wooden trail marker blocks were installed and painted with correct colour for each trail: red, yellow, blue, orange. Most of the blocks were cut from scrap wood and donated by Blake of Roundtree Company and other FOMB members. FOMB summer staff (Rachel, Cheyenne and Charly) and a few FOMB volunteers painted the blocks.
- most of the plastic markers were removed and recycled (some will have been missed and will be removed as we walk trails and see them).
- trails are once again in awesome hiking shape – as we walked the trails, we pruned back branches, removed light blowdowns and GPS’d all major blowdowns.



“You are here” at the start of the West Side trail



Left to right: Jim Cahill, Ron Bailey, David Kains moving the gravel pile (photo by Ken Mackenzie)

**Costing.** This project would have cost FOMB over \$6000, but with each post being sponsored, our cost was around \$1000 (paint, nails, maps etc.).

A big thanks goes out to all the members of FOMB. Those of you who directly sponsored a post, those of you who worked

on the project and all members who – by being our members – support all that we do. A big thanks also to Erika Poupore, our Park Superintendent, for giving us the go-ahead to do this and trusting us to do it right. Erika also approved and paid for The Manitoulin Tree Service team to come in and remove a lot of hazardous trees and blowdowns along our trails.

**Volunteerism is most definitely alive and well!**



# Visitor Centre Volunteer Report 2022

by Ken L. Mackenzie, Visitor Centre Volunteer coordinator

The 2022 Visitor Centre Volunteer season has wound down after a very successful summer and fall. I can summarize our efforts in numbers: of the 41 scheduled volunteer shifts (days) between May 21 and October 2<sup>nd</sup>, a full 87% were covered by volunteers. Three additional shifts were covered by staff and three others – one shift in August and two in September – went without coverage (only 7%). Those numbers are quite remarkable, as FOMB had only nine volunteer “units” to take all those shifts. Given that only three of these units are comprised of

couples, that works out to only 12 people carrying all that load. (And of those 12, two “units” are actually responsible for 44% of all shifts – kudos to Kathryn and Jan!)

Our Visitor Centre volunteers are the public face of Misery Bay Provincial Park and play an important role in meeting and greeting visitors, answering their questions and orienting them towards a rewarding and fulfilling experience in the park. We need more people to share the load!



Even before COVID, the number of Visitor Centre volunteers was a concern. In 2018, our summer weekends were covered by four shifts; in 2022 I was only able to schedule one shift for Saturday and one for Sunday. In 2018 FOMB Park Centre volunteers had 31 participants as compared to 12 in 2022.

Part of this decline was no doubt due to Ontario Parks dropping Covid-related protocols this past May, as some of our volunteers did not feel safe greeting unmasked visitors; some got creative and (weather permitting) greeted visitors outside on the deck. The FOMB board members are continuing ongoing

discussions to come up with various approaches to increase the number of volunteers.

Things have been done to simplify our volunteers' tasks. Our vice-chair and electronics guru Dave Clark arranged for the digital displays to respond to a two position remote. He also set up a system whereby the gift-shop purchases, donations and memberships, could be processed through the "Square" app. Square requires skills similar to using a chip scanner. (Of course, a few of us needed further tutelage: If the purchase is done electronically don't record it manually, and vice versa!) The electronic conundrums continued with visitor questions about the parking pay machine.

Other challenges included dealing with plumbing and electrical and mouse incidents and informing visitors that the west side trails remain closed. The importance and implications of First Aid certification and Occupational Health and Safety regulations were highlighted by an incident involving our experienced Park Centre volunteers, Midge and Phil, who witnessed a visitor's dog bite another guest. This led to much discussion at a Board meeting about First Aid kit minimum requirements and the liability of offering medical supplies/advice without the necessary level of medical/first aid training.

Early in the season we fielded a visitor's complaint about where to put dog waste which of course led to explain that Misery

Bay is a Provincial Nature Reserve and not an operating park, with the motto what you bring in you take out. Dog walkers continue to be frequent Park visitors. During one September shift, between 11 AM and 2 PM, 50% of visitors were accompanied by dogs.

I think this report from Phil and Midge sums up the personal connection to volunteering at the Visitor Centre: "Phil and I did 10 to 3, and got 70 people – nearly all of them new – and learning about us on line. The new people really seem to like being greeted." I think all the Visitor Centre volunteers would agree that first time visitors to Misery Bay are more likely to check in at the Visitor Centre. Most of them have come because Misery Bay Provincial Nature Reserve is highly rated on the social media sites that recommend outdoor and quieter recreational opportunities on Manitoulin. The final tally is not in yet, but an early snapshot indicates visitors from 25 different locations ranging from local to international. Manitoulin residents only make up about 12% of the total; the largest contingent (42%) is from the GTA and southwestern Ontario. The Sudbury Basin provides another 15% and the rest of the world provides the what's left. (A memorable encounter for me happened August 10<sup>th</sup>, when a father and son from northern France, who were on a hiking tour of Ontario, shared a video with me of a metre-long Massasauga rattlesnake that they filmed on the upper Bruce peninsula.)

Being at the Park Centre to 'meet and greet' is a satisfying experience, but it does not have the camaraderie of group volunteer events and so despite the individual rewards for volunteers and visitors, FOMB still needs a more robust volunteer pool. Please give this opportunity some thought.



## Consider the Lilies....

by Marcel Bénéteau

The Lily family constitutes an important group of flowers on Manitoulin Island. John Morton and Joan Venn's *The Flora of Manitoulin Island* lists thirty species under the *Liliaceae* heading. Several of them are garden escapes that have become naturalized to some extent, such as European Lily-of-the Valley, Snowdrops, Orange Day-lily and even Asparagus. But that still leaves a couple dozen native species that include our well-known provincial floral emblem, as well as many lesser-known plants that bloom on Manitoulin Island. Misery Bay Provincial Park can count at least thirteen of these species that flourish among its woodlands, alvars and shorelines.

A word on the nomenclature of these plants. True lilies are classed under the *Lilium* genus, but this is but one of the many genera included in the "*Liliaceae* family." All of them are commonly referred to as belonging to the Lily family and share some common characteristics, the main one being having flowering parts that are arranged in threes – three petals and three sepals (or six **tepals**, a word botanists use in cases where the petals and the sepals can't be easily told apart). This article will not differentiate between genus and family and will concern itself with members of the larger Lily family. Some of these are quite showy – like Trilliums and Wood Lilies – while others need a closer look to be fully appreciated. Most bloom in spring or early summer.

White Trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*) is Ontario's floral emblem and, as the Latin name suggests, has a large flower that measures up to 2 and half inches (6.5 cm) across (Fig. 1). It has the typical three petal/three sepal structure common to all lilies and also features three large elliptical leaves that end in a point. The petals are of the purest white but turn pinkish as the bloom begins to fade. This is a slow-growing plant: it can take these plants 7 to 10 years to reach its flowering stage.



**Fig. 1** White Trillium



**Fig. 2** White Trillium , "pink phase"

As a point of interest, there are two other species of trillium that grow elsewhere on Manitoulin – Red (*T. erectum*) and Nodding (*T. cernuum*) – but *grandiflorum* is the only one that can be found at Misery Bay. It is not overly common in the park, as it prefers rich deciduous habitats that are not abundant here, but it can readily be found along the wooded parts of the inland alvar trail throughout the month of May.

Another early bloomer is Blue-bead Lily (*Clintonia borealis*), (fig. 3 & 4), so named because of the dark blue fruit that develops later in the summer (mildly toxic, for the record) (fig. 5). The plant produces long-stalked, rather disheveled-looking flowers that have six long pale yellow tepals curling away from the very prominent pistil and stamens in the centre of the bloom. It grows in large clumps in damp, shady areas of the deciduous forest throughout the month of June. The dark green shiny leaves are striking in and of themselves, and wouldn't look out of place in a garden bed amongst the tulips and daffodils (also members of the Lily family).



**Fig. 3** Blue-bead Lily



**Fig. 4** Blue-bead Lily, closeup of flowers



**Fig. 5** Blue-bead Lily fruit

May is also the month for Wild or False Lily-of-the-Valley (*Maianthemum canadense*), AKA Canada Mayflower (Fig. 6, next page). The resemblance to its European namesake is rather superficial: the garden variety somewhat larger, with its drooping stem of bell-shaped flowers hidden amongst the tall leaves (fig. 7), while the native species has a crowded stem of spiky-looking flowers that rise well above the two basal leaves. It is common along mixed forest trails.



**Fig. 6** Wild Lily-of-the-valley or Canada Mayflower



**Fig. 7** European Lily-of-the-valley (*Convallaria majalis*) (not found at Misery Bay).

Woodlands are not the only habitat that is graced by the presence of the Lily family. Wild Chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*) add a dash of colour to Misery Bay's alvars. You will find Wild Chives in wetter parts of the alvar, often coming up as the vernal pools dry up and spring turns to summer. (fig. 8 & 9). The budding purple flowers at the tip of the hollow green stem are encased in a translucent sheath that bursts open to reveal a tightly packed



**Fig. 8** Wild Chives, unopened flowers



**Fig. 9** Wild Chive, closeup of flower

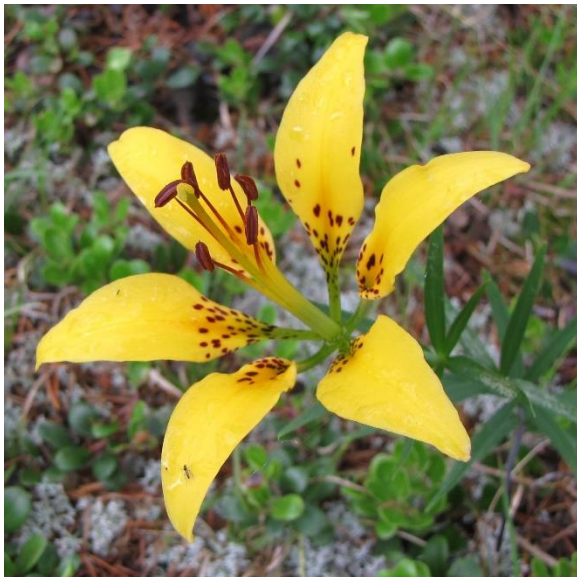
head of tiny six-petaled flowers. Closely related Wild Leek (*A. tricoccum*) – also known as “scapes” – are common in deciduous woods elsewhere on the island and, like the onions in your garden, are part of the Lily family.

In spite of the name, Wood Lily (*Lilium philadelphicum*) is seldom found in the woods, except perhaps in sun-lit clearings (Fig. 10, next page). They are common along Manitoulin's roadsides from mid-June to mid-July. At Misery Bay, they are



**Fig. 10** Wood Lily

more at home on the alvars than in the forest, at least on the grassland alvars and treed alvar edges. This true lily is one of our most beautiful wildflowers, growing up to two feet tall (60 cm), with a single (rarely double) large flower on each plant. The flowers, up to 2.5 inches (6.5 cm) across, typically range in colour from light orange to deep red, with six tepals narrowing to a point at the base where they clasp the stamens and pistil. Dark brown spots colour the sepals at this narrowest point.



**Fig. 11** Wood Lily, yellow form

Manitoulin Island does seem to be home to some interesting colour forms and variants. A rare yellow form (*forma flaviflorum*) was found on the west side of Misery Bay in 2010 (fig. 11). Even rarer than that is the **spotless** form (*forma immaculata*), photographed on the west side of the bay in 2001 by the late Margo Holt, a long-time Friend of Misery Bay. This was apparently the first sighting ever in Ontario. (You can see the photo in Margo's book *Alvar Specialty Plants of Central Ontario*).



**Fig. 12** Wood Lily, immaculate (spotless) form

No one else mentions this rare form. I assumed it to be a one-off, until Sabine and I came across two new specimens – one in 2010 and another one in 2012. Both were growing on the escarpment slope along highway 540 on the east side of West Bay on the M'Chigeeng First Nation (fig. 12). (An over-zealous brush-clearing exercise by the MTO the following year may be the reason we have never found any after that). Doubling down on the search for information (i. e. Google), I found that our flower was used as the logo of the Saskatchewan Conservation Data Center. A trip to their website revealed the following tidbit:

The SKCDC logo is the Yellow Immaculate Lily, (*Lilium philadelphicum*, var. *andinum forma immaculata*). This is a very rare form of the provincial emblem characterized by lemon-yellow flowers, devoid of the usual dark spots. It is known to occur at only a few locations in Manitoba and Alberta each and about 20 locations in Saskatchewan. There is some evidence that this form exists through some of the Plains and Midwest states as well... This particular form is considered critically imperiled globally.

Our photographs were subsequently confirmed to be of the Yellow Immaculate Lily by Jeff Keith, from the Saskatchewan Ministry of the Environment, who was quite surprised to get a report from so far afield. He indicated that it was not only a rare colour form, but actually a different variety from those found across Ontario. Manitoulin's flora is indeed full of surprises, and places like Misery Bay ensure that visitors and residents alike will continue to be thrilled and delighted by the incredible diversity of fauna and flora one can find here. Keep your eyes open – you'll be amazed at what you might find!

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## The Odyssey of the Sifferd, Moore and Kerr families

by John Diebolt, a Friend of Misery Bay

On August 17 of this year a group of FOMB members took part in a guided hike lead by FOMB board member Dale Scott. The walk started at the Sifferd Cottage on the west side of Misery Bay Provincial Park. This was a special occasion indeed, because Mindy Kerr was there to greet us. Mindy is the granddaughter of Eunice and Cal Sifferd, the couple who were most instrumental in Misery Bay becoming a Provincial Park. Their daughter Ellie and her husband Tom Moore (Mindy's parents) also had a lifetime association with Misery Bay: as board members, volunteer co-ordinators, gift shop operators, doing whatever was necessary to make MBPP a better place.



Mindy Kerr (centre, with a piece of paper in her hand); to her left is George Whyte of Murhpy Point, another person who had a large part in the establishment of Misery Bay Provincial Park.



FOMB members at Sifferd Cottage



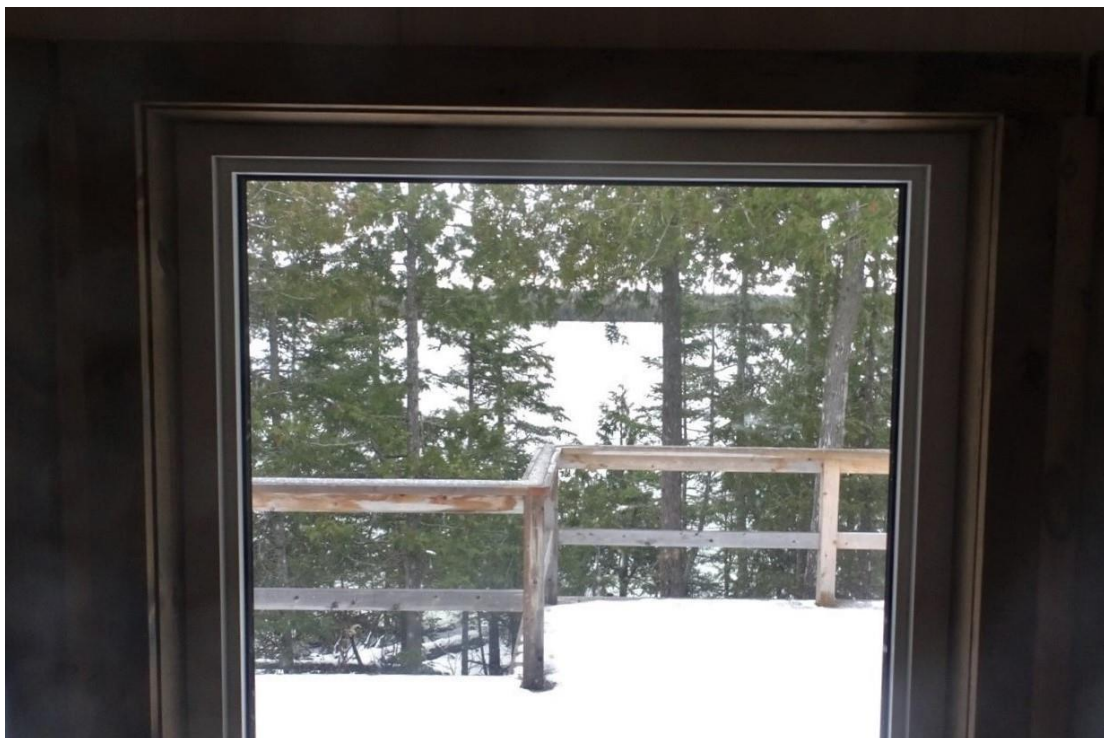
Stone fireplace and chimney made of Misery Bay rocks

Mindy gave us a brief, but extremely informative and most interesting (and at times emotional) account of her memories at the Sifferd Cottage with her parents and grandparents. She spent a large part of her summers there as a very young girl, continuing into her teenage years (and of course, almost every summer since then). She shared with us her memories of canoeing on Misery Bay, (under the watchful eyes of her grandparents), using the outhouse on spooky dark nights, getting in the way as the Cottage was being built and helping collect the rocks for the cottage's massive fireplace and chimney. In listening to her talk, one could feel the strong and continuing connection and commitment she has to Misery Bay and the Sifferd Cottage.

Kudos to the Sifferd family for what they started with their amazing odyssey from Michigan, to small beginnings on the shores of Misery Bay, to an Ontario Provincial Park of over 2000 acres that protects unique ecosystems and attracts thousands of visitors every year.

Mindy was in large part responsible for the donation of funds from her aunt's estate that have led to the extensive renovations/upgrades being carried out at the Sifferd Cottage under the direction of Ontario Parks. Their dream was to have the Sifferd Cottage become a research centre for visiting scientists and their research projects, a dream shared by Ontario Parks. It will be amazing when it comes to fruition.

Thanks Mindy and family!



Winter on Misery Bay from Sifferd Cottage

# Friends of Misery Bay Board of Directors

2022

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