



Short Ears, Long Tales

Courte Oreilles Lakes Association

Issue #13 August 1, 2016

Lac Courte Oreilles needs you! COLA needs you!

Please consider joining COLA's Board of Directors or one of COLA's committees. We have a lot to do but not enough people to get it all done.

4TH ANNUAL COLA CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT

Sponsored by: Lac Courte Oreilles Foundation and Courte Oreilles Lakes Association

September 17, 2016
More details to follow

IN THE NEWS

[COLA and LCO Tribe ask Judge to Review DNR Denial on Phosphorus](#)

Sawyer County Record
June 22, 2016

RECENT PRESS RELEASES

[Lake Association and LCO Tribe Proceed with Legal Action to Protect Lac Courte Oreilles](#)

HELP NEEDED

[Join the COLA Board!](#)

COLA's Treasurer, Steve Lillyblad, will be retiring soon. Are you willing to help out? Requirements: Basic computer skills, some familiarity with spreadsheet software, and a commitment to the well-being of LCO.

COLA is also recruiting two other board positions, one focusing on forestry practices and the other on watershed outreach.

Send inquires to [COLA](#).

SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS

We'd like to spread the news of COLA's good people and good works throughout the upper Couderay River watershed. If you have friends or family on nearby lakes who would enjoy Short Ears Long Tales, [let us know](#).

Help COLA by sharing this newsletter with friends.

Support COLA by contributing to the [Lac Courte Oreilles Foundation](#).

Are your neighbors and extended family members of COLA? If not, please ask them to [join](#).

ARCHIVED ISSUES OF SHORT EARS, LONG TALES

PLEASE HELP COLA!!

We need people on the Board of Directors. There are a number of projects that are funded, but we can't do them because we don't have the people to oversee them.

JOIN THE COLA BOARD!!

'Death by a thousand cuts,' Chairman Mic Isham's focus on water quality, environment

By Kathy Hanson
Contributing Writer

If Mic Isham has a defining philosophy it's this: "We want to manage the natural resources for the seventh generation, not for this year's harvest." His words. They derive, in part, from the *Anishinabeg* (original people) philosophy, which was that in every deliberation we make, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations. That's about 140 years into the future and Mic Isham is very, very comfortable with that.

Michael "Mic" Isham, Jr. is the Chairman of the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians. He is in his second term and has been on the Lac Courte Oreilles Tribal Governing Board since 1995.



Mic Isham - Chairman of the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians. Photo by Kathy Hanson.

Only 51, Mic was born in Duluth. When he was a child his father went to Vietnam and he and his mother moved in with grandma and grandpa in Milwaukee. His early years were split between Milwaukee, where he went to school, and here, where he spent summers hunting and fishing—his life centered around his big family on Lac Courte Oreilles.

At age 17 he moved here permanently where he attended LCO School, LCO Community College and then graduated from Northland College in Ashland.

For a man who disdains politics—and he is not embarrassed to say so—his life has become, "little by little, more political." Again, his words.

His cause however has never changed, nor has his course in advancing it. It is the environment.

Try to pick a fight with Mic Isham about the water, or the fish, or the cranberry marshes—or any of the coveted natural resources around here—and he'll educate you right out of it.

"As early as college I saw tribes fighting with each other. I saw people working in the natural resources area fighting with the tribe. I saw resort owners fighting with the tribe," Isham said.

"Why?," he asked.

"They were all fighting about the same thing—the water, the lakes, the natural resources we all share."

In 1986 Mic began working with the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission. That began a professional focus on the environment that would stay with him all his life.

Then, in 1991 Mic began working with UW-Madison to do baseline data studies of water resources.

Some years later, Mic started working with different lake associations, COLA being one of the first.

"Working with COLA has been a true partnership," Mic said. "We really came together on the issues and have written grants together, quality assurance plans, shoreland restoration plans and water quality proposals."

Mic said it's all about education, recalling the mid and late 1980s and the protests and fights over the issue of Ojibwe spearfishing.

"Instead of fighting, we educated them on treaty rights," said Isham, where the tribes retained the rights to hunt, fish and gather wild rice on land they ceded to the U.S.

"We're never gonna move—the Rez can't pick up and leave," Mic said.

"We have to look at what we have in common and that is what COLA has done," Isham said, adding that the tribe and COLA have worked on many projects together, including fish cribs, testing fish, maps and zoning.

When I hired Dan Tyrolt as environmental engineer at the LCO Conservation Department things really came together between the tribe and COLA, Isham said. "He took the department to new heights, making it what it is today." Isham said the partnership with COLA continues to grow, even in fundraising.

He said the water quality of Lac Courte Oreilles continues to be the big issue. "Lac Courte Oreilles is the number one lake we harvest from and for every feast, funeral and ceremony we have, we're required to serve walleye, venison, wild rice and berries." Isham said because the tribal members rely and subsist on the natural resources they are more susceptible to environmental contaminants than the general public.

But he also said, "I want to look at my own backyard first," saying that the tribe owns a cranberry marsh too, but they eliminated pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers and insecticides. They pull the weeds themselves.

Likewise, they took back beds and converted them to wild rice beds. "We're not opposed to cranberry marshes. We're not opposed to mining. We're opposed to pollution," Isham said.

Isham said he sees things holistically—everything matters and everything is connected.

"It's not just one marsh—it's a parking lot, a shoreline, a driveway, a bad septic. It's death by a thousand cuts," he said.

Still Isham is optimistic, saying "the water quality is not bad—it's trending bad."

Isham said COLA and the tribe have made great strides together. "We have mutual respect and that's what makes the partnership so effective," he said.

Kathy Hanson is a free-lance reporter for the Sawyer County Gazette, the Sawyer County Field Editor for Our Wisconsin magazine, and Copy Editor for the Bayfield County Journal. She has also served as Staff Reporter, Business Feature Writer, Columnist, and Copy Editor for the Sawyer County Record.

COLA Mission: 1) to protect, preserve and enhance the quality of Lac Courte Oreilles and Little Lac Courte Oreilles, their shorelands and surrounding areas, while respecting the interests of property owners and the rights of the general public; and 2) to consider, study, survey and respond to issues deemed relevant by COLA's membership.

The eNewsletter Editor can be reached at:

COLA
P.O. Box 702
Hayward, WI 54843
courte.oreilles.lakes.association@gmail.com