

Touching story of Larry the Loon turned into a children's book with proceeds going to the Canadian Wildlife Federation

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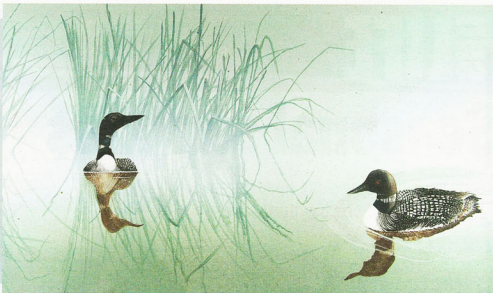
It takes an art village to save a loon.

Larry the loon, who had the misfortune of being severely injured by a careless boater — and the exceptional luck of having a group of Canadian artists come to his aid.

His story has the happy ending everyone wants — or the true ending that reflects the realities of life and death. The choice is yours to make in the hauntingly beautiful children's book *Larry the Loon*, based on the real-life injured loon who lived for several weeks late last summer near the docks while neighbours tried vainly to keep him alive.

The group? The talented artists from the Tobin Island School of Fine Art. This is the same team who created, along with celebrated children's book author Judith McMurray, the beautifully detailed *Chuckie the Lonely Inukshuk* (Bryler Publications), where each page was a celebration of the different artist's tribute to a real Inukshuk. Proceeds from that book went to a charitable cause.

In *Larry's* case, it was a true labour of love for all involved — from the moment the wee feathered friend was discovered drifting listlessly in the waters to the day he was driven to wildlife veterinarian services where everyone thought he'd survive the wounds to his webbed foot and wing.



"Unfortunately, he didn't make it," says well-known Canadian physician Dr. Bernard Gosevitz, whose oldest daughter, Sarah, found the bird and whose wife, Susan, is one of the artists who immortalized Larry.

"His injuries were too profound ... euthanasia was the only answer."

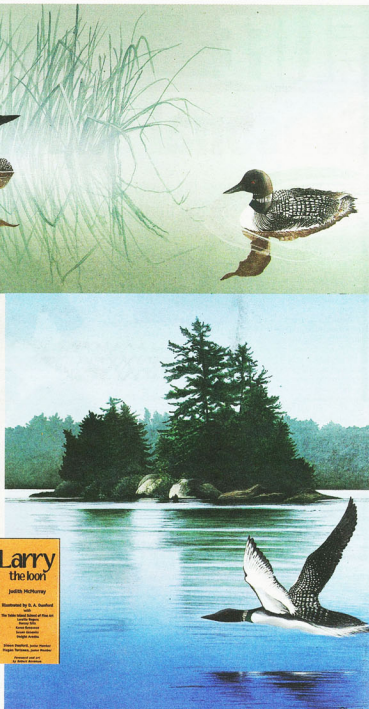
Something about Larry touched everyone's heart, said Gosevitz, and the last few weeks of his life could only be described as heaven-sent: Lovingly hand-fed a steady diet of Pusateri smoked salmon, fresh-caught rock bass and even herring, Larry seemed to rally and gain strength.



Everyone cheered him on, said Gosevitz, and he became the main topic of conversation in the little art community up north. It appeared he had found a place in everyone's heart.

"Loons are wild, a part of our heritage and this little guy really touched all of us ... we couldn't let him down."

Even that fateful trip to the vet clinic saw Larry go in, black — delivered in a sleek, black



Mercedes SUV.

During the weeks before Larry's demise and almost by instinct, the artists in the community started capturing Larry in his natural habitat. Each artist took a specific stance — Susan Gosevitz captured Larry in an

almost mournful yet noble pose quietly looking out over the waters, Doug Dunford captured the magnificence of the bird rising up to meet the sun, while Darcy Sills' piece is a heart-tugging portrait of wounded wildlife.

Loretta Rogers' Larry is

one of bravery and defiance, while Karen Gosenewicz shows the profound loneliness of a bird cast adrift from his world.

There's even a hilarious cartoon by SUN Media's famed cartoonist Andy Donato showing Dr. Gose-



vitz tending to the wounded bird. Other artists in the book paid similar tribute, with Larry's story woven together by McMurray in an inspiring read perfect for children and the children in all of us.

McMurray said it was a joint decision by everyone to offer an alternative ending to the book. "We felt it was appropriate given to what happened to Larry," says McMurray. "There was something so special about that bird."

Susan Gosevitz calls the book "important as it really educates the public about conservation ... loons are normally so wild. But it was

like this bird knew — that we cared for him."

Loretta Rogers found the loon "inspiring. When he was first found we asked ourselves — how could this happen? And yet it was so obvious he wanted to survive."

His tale certainly is a message about triumphing over adversity, added Gosevitz. "The fact the group created all the pieces and had the book written and ready for print in under a year is a testament to the generosity of spirit they brought to the table — there's even a forward by famed Canadian artist Robert Bateman. "If you think about the best sym-

bol for the Canadian wild, it would be the common loon," writes Bateman. "This book captures the beauty of loons and the poignancy of their relationship with humans."

It certainly does. *Larry the Loon* (Bryler Publications) will be available starting July 25 at Chapters Indigo as well as all Rogers Stores. All profits from the book will be donated to the Canadian Wildlife Federation (CWF).

There will also be a special event open to the public on Aug. 14 from noon until 3 p.m., at Rebecca's Casual Fine Dining on 3842 Hwy. 118 in Port Carling (705-765-0244/

Illustrations from the book *Larry the Loon*: Clockwise from far left, Loons in the mist, Susan Gosevitz, Loon rising, Loretta Rogers; Kids feeding Larry, Darcy Sills; Loon doctor, Andy Donato; Loon taking flight, Susan Gosevitz, and Larry the Loon book cover.



rebeccaefinedining.com). It's a glorious century home and your chance to meet the artists, see their works and talk fondly of *Larry the Loon*. Who knows? His spirit cer-

tainly lives on through the artwork and the inspiration he brought to a group of dedicated professionals who just wanted to help a wounded bird one late summer day in

Muskoka. Websites to look for: Larry-the-loon.com; [Canadian Wildlife Federation \(cwf-fc.org\)](http://CanadianWildlifeFederation.org). rita.demontis@summedia.ca