



### **North American Beaver**

### **Castor d'Amérique du Nord**

### **Nipissing Ojibway: Amik**

Today the North American Beaver is widespread across Canada and some live in Laurier Woods Conservation Area. There are currently four known active beaver lodges in Laurier Woods C.A.

Before WW II the main pond in Laurier Woods was a grassy meadow. Local residents created gardens or grazed cows in the meadow. During WW II Mrs. Robertson, one of the residents who had a house near the sand pit, moved into the city proper. With little human activity except for children playing in the Woods, beavers moved into the main pond and set up their home. Beavers inhabit areas that have water and are surrounded by sufficient poplar and willow trees, their preferred food.

Beavers are well adapted to life in water and adults can defend themselves well against predation in the water. To reduce risk, beavers try to limit their time on land. They mostly travel for food and building material at night within 60 m of the water's edge. One reason that beavers elevate their dams is to raise water levels. Increased water levels enable the beaver to access more of the surrounding land for their need's safe from enemies on the land. Beaver ponds are not permanent, they usually last around 25 years. Over time beavers diminish the supply of their preferred food and then abandon the pond.

In 2020 the beavers at the main pond had a baby. This kit could be seen swimming around close to the dipping platform. In the fall of 2021, the baby beaver started to build its own lodge near the dipping platform, let us hope it survives the winter. All of the beaver ponds in Laurier are over 25 years old. We see the older beaver lodges being abandoned and dams breaking. Without the influence of beavers, these ponds will eventually become meadows.

Beaver lodges are abandoned for various reasons. A few years ago, students from Nipissing University conducted a study to determine why the beaver lodge at the main pond in Laurier Woods had been abandoned. Their study suggested that there was very little remaining poplar and willow as well as a heavy footprint by domestic dogs around the pond. The natural predators of beavers are wolves and coyotes. Domestic dogs are domesticated wolves that beavers sense as their archenemy. We hope to do all we can to support the beavers in Laurier Woods for as long as there is food and safety from predators.