



# CANADIAN OUTRIGGER HALL OF FAME

## Wendy Rae-Perkins



### Summary

"Auntie" Wendy Rae-Perkins is a builder / pioneer / activist who has dedicated a lifetime to the paddling community and countless noble causes. Her 1st time in a canoe was with Burloak Canoe Club in 1992, [01] and has since raced canoe / kayak, dragon boat, swan boat, and outrigger canoe world-wide. She has been with the 1st outrigger canoe club in Ontario since its inception and has worked continuously to grow participation in every paddlesport for youths, seniors, and adaptive paddlers. Her contributions to support outrigger canoeing in have been recognized by clubs and paddlers all across Eastern Canada.

### Early Career

Most of the background on Wendy prior to her meeting Karen Simpson & Nancy Botting at Mississauga OCC, had been shared by Val Simmons of Haunani via research on Eastern Canada outrigger canoe history. Wendy grew up in Calgary Alberta, without an athletic childhood. Wendy graduated with a Bachelors in Education from University of Alberta. [02] She moved around for 20 years following her husband's career. In 1992, she arrived in Oakville Ontario and studied photography at Sheridan College. Wendy suddenly found herself a single mom with an uncertain future. Wendy's 12-year-old daughter convinced her to join a counselling program for divorcees. At a meeting, the group leader urged participants to think about new possibilities ahead in life, and asked Wendy where she wanted to be at the start of the new millennium. Wendy was searching for a new identity and was unsure what to answer, but the image of being in a kayak in turquoise waters in a tropical paradise came to mind, so that is what she shared. As luck would have it, Brent Steel, a masters coach at Burloak Canoe Club was at the same meeting. He told Wendy to come to the club the next day. Wendy showed up at 7AM, and Brent put her in a war canoe for her very 1st paddling experience. Wendy quickly embraced paddling, competing from 1992-2002 in sprint canoe / kayak, dragon boat, swan boat, and outrigger canoe world-wide. Wendy took novice kayak master Gold with Burloak Canoe Club In 1992, [03] took multiple sprint canoe / kayak medals annually at CANMAS from 1992-2004, [04] took Womens Gold at Swan Boat 2000 International World Championships in Ayutthaya as a guest of the Queen of Thailand, [05] took Gold / Silver with Canadian Dragon Boat National Team at International Dragon Boat Federation (IDBF) 2001 World Championships in Philadelphia, [06] and took Gold at 2002 Canoe Kayak Canada Canadian Masters Sprint K1 500M. [07]

### Outrigger Canoeing Achievements

Outrigger canoeing in Eastern North America was years behind outrigger canoeing in Western North America. Western Canada had acquired various OC6s by the mid-1990s. East Coast Outrigger Racing Association (ECORA) clubs had acquired various OC6s by the mid-1990s. Prior to the mid-1990s, the only OC6s in Eastern Canada were 2 Canadian Malias transported by Alwyn Morris to Onake Canoe Club in the late 1980s. Nancy Botting brought the 1st OC6 to Ontario circa 1996 & founded Mississauga OCC. [08] Wendy saw new adventures with the introduction of outrigger canoes to Eastern Canada. Wendy went to the 1998 Portland World Masters Games & took 4 medals for canoe / kayak / outrigger canoe. [09] Wendy did her 1st Molokai Na Wahine crossing in 2003 with a NCAWPCA crew. [10] Wai Nui with Wendy would place Top 3 at the 2004 Blackburn Challenge. [11] Wendy went to the 2005 Edmonton World Masters Games where she took 4 medals for canoe / kayak / outrigger canoe, teaming up with fellow Wai Nui paddlers Rama Gilverson, Nancy Botting, Kathy Clarke, Rich Carson, and Sheila Kuyper. [12] Wai Nui & Wendy took Silver in CORA 2014 Distance Championships Masters Women at Howe Sound. [13] Although Wai Nui & Wendy went to many International events including the Cook Islands 2012 Vaka Eiva as well as the follow-up Moto 2 Motu event [14], it is the participation by Wai Nui in many Eastern Canada events including Liberty Challenge, [15] Blackburn Challenge, [16] Toronto International Outrigger Challenge, [17] Greater Montreal Outrigger Challenge [18], and Eastern Canada Waterway Series [19] that has been the Wai Nui & Wendy legacy.

### Coach-Builder Achievements

Nancy Botting brought the 1st OC6 to Ontario circa 1996 and founded Mississauga OCC. Wai Nui O Kanaka was established in 2004 when founders Nancy Botting, Karen Simpson, Sheila Kuyper, and Wendy decided to change the club name to honour the Pacific Islander groups of this particular canoe. [20] Wai Nui has maintained 2 venues with the Mississauga location at Lakefront

Promenade Park compound near the Mississauga Sailing Club, while the Oakville base is at the Water Street compound. [21] By 2020, Wai Nui had grown to be the largest outrigger canoe club in Eastern Canada with 1 Mirage, 2 Malia, 2 Force Five, 2 Bradley Lightning, and 2 Unlimited OC6s. As far back as 2003, Wendy was involved with coaching at Burloak Canoe Club. The Oakville Beaver article on "Burloak Canoe Club has a vibrant masters program" mentions Wendy as coach for sprint canoe / kayak, war canoe, and dragon boat "Masters paddlers". [22] Wai Nui & Wendy have continually placed high in the ECORA Series standings each year and have used assistance from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to develop coaching expertise. [23] Wendy has represented Wai Nui for many years as Member At Large [24] with OMCKRA [25] and as Club Representative with CKC [26] Wendy volunteered to lead a session for students of the Sheridan College Aboriginal Initiatives Office in support of Aboriginal community cultural awareness in late 2015. [27] Wai Nui & Wendy have supported the participation of youths in paddling programs for many years by offering Dearthcroft Montessori School students discounts for registering for summer paddling camps. [28]

## **Pioneering Achievements**

Wendy has been with Mississauga OCC since its inception in 1996 as the 1st outrigger canoe club in Ontario, [29] thru the club becoming Wai Nui in 2004, and continuously thru 2022, serving as Commodore for most of those years. [30] In 2006, Wai Nui expanded from Mississauga to their location in Oakville. Wendy lobbied to protect the right to paddle in the club's new location and her work resulted in having paddling being declared a heritage sport in order to recognize the past and preserve the future for paddling in the Oakville Harbour. [31] The Paddle All program was introduced at Wai Nui in 2006 by Rich Carson & Wendy, in conjunction with their partners Charterability. [32] [33] Wai Nui introduced a seating system that enables people with disabilities to participate. [34] The Wai Nui Why Not inaugural event was started by Wai Nui and Wendy, 1st taking place in 1999 starting / finishing at the mouth of 16 Mile Creek just outside Oakville Harbour, [35] with 2019 marking the 21st Anniversary. [36] The Wai Nui Why Not was the 1st and the longest running outrigger canoe race in Eastern Canada. [37] Wai Nui & Wendy have supported Eastern OC clubs for many years in many ways. Wai Nui has trailered OC6s to Eastern US / Canada racing events, not only for their own paddlers, but for paddlers from other clubs as well. Wai Nui has supported local events in Toronto / Ottawa / Montreal such as GMOC and TIOC and Waterway Series by hosting events and promoting these events, by bringing OC6s and paddlers to these events. [38] Wai Nui gifted a pay-it-forward boat they had picked up in Florida when they were 1st organizing, to Wiki Wiki Wa'a to get them started in Toronto. Wai Nui sold a Mirage to Haunani to get them started in Montreal. [39] More so than anything else, Wendy looks out for the welfare of everyone in the paddling community (children; seniors; adaptive paddlers) in anyway that she can. Sheila Kuyper & Wendy recorded an interview in July 2021, where they discuss the pioneering achievements by Wai Nui such as advocating for inclusion for women-in-canoe at the Olympics, [40] and showcasing the adaptive seat and outrigger canoe racing possibilities at the 2009 Halifax world canoe / kayak championships, which led to Canadian Canoe Association responding with a new outrigger category for adaptive people in canoe racing. [41] Wai Nui & Wendy were awarded 2 grants by Ontario Trillium Foundation in early 2022 totalling \$150k+ to expand recreational boating facilities at Oakville's 16 Mile Creek. This investment doubles the current operating capacity for club members, for the club's partner accessible-boating charity organization, and for the public. [42]

## **Exemplary Achievements**

Wendy has made considerable contributions thru her advocacy, her volunteerism, and selfless contributions to worthwhile causes. In Spring of 2002, Sue Humphries, Adrian Lee, and Wendy Perkins organized and convened a weekend conference which served as the 1st general meeting of what would become DBC. [43] There were 8 nominees in 2005 for the ninth annual ATHENA Oakville Awards. [44] [45] Sheila Kuyper would be 1 of the recipients of this award by virtue of a nomination by Wendy. [46] Home Suite Hope (HSH), [47] is an Oakville based organization that unites a network of vital support services for single parents and their children. [48] Wendy has been executive director at Home Suite Hope Shared since 2004. [49] Canadians for Safe Technology, based out of Oakville, is a national, not-for-profit, whose mission is to educate and inform Canadians about the dangers of the exposures to unsafe levels of radiation from technology. [50] Wendy has been a Founding Board Member [50] since 2011. [51] Shark Fin Free, based out of Oakville, has a mission is to decrease the world-wide demand for shark fin products. [52] Wendy has been a Founding Board Member since 2011. [53] Street Soccer Canada reaches out to homeless people thru sport as a social inclusion activity. [56] Wendy has been Director of Development since 2010. [57] Wendy, as Commodore of Wai Nui, delivered a communique to the City of Toronto in Autumn of 2013, voicing opposition to the expansion of jet traffic at the Billy Bishop Airport. [58] In Spring of 2017, Wendy attended a "Paddling Summit" to support the development of a championship flatwater racing course, [59] protected by a habitat-friendly breakwater, stretching from the south of the Credit west to Richards Memorial Park in Toronto. [60] [61] Wendy published an article for Paddles Up Canoe Kayak Canada in honour of Sheila Kuyper who ignited a vision for women to paddle Canoe in the Olympics, with the inclusion of canoeing events at the upcoming Tokyo Summer Olympics. [62] The Paul Harris Fellow program recognizes individuals who contribute, or who have contributions made in their name, of \$1,000 to The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International. [63] Wendy, a long-time Rotary Oakville Trafalgar member was recognized via ZOOM by the Oakville Community Foundation with a virtual ceremony in January 2021 of the Pandemic. [64] [65] Wendy wrote a testimonial in December 2021 on behalf of Sport Oakville for providing funding assistance to enhance paddlesports experiences for all ages. [66]

## References

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[03]	1998 Burloak Canoe Club	<a href="http://cfly.ca/canoe/1998.htm">http://cfly.ca/canoe/1998.htm</a>
[04]	1992-1004 Canoe Kayak Canada Canadian Masters Sprint	<a href="https://canoekayak.ca/canmas/">https://canoekayak.ca/canmas/</a>
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