



Pond Oreille Rowing & Paddling Association

PORPA 10th Anniversary

PORPA will be celebrating the club's 10th Anniversary on July 13th, 2024. The day's events start at the Mudhole with an early morning recreational row on the 8+ followed by 1x, 2x, 4x or 4+ fun races. After rowing, we will have a BBQ/potluck then naming and dedication of the new boats:

Quad **Pond Oreille** | **n̄txwetkw** | **in-twet-q**

HW Double **Priest River** | **n̄pišlpm** | **in-peesh-lh-pm**

LW Double **The Bard**

The “Maiden” Voyage

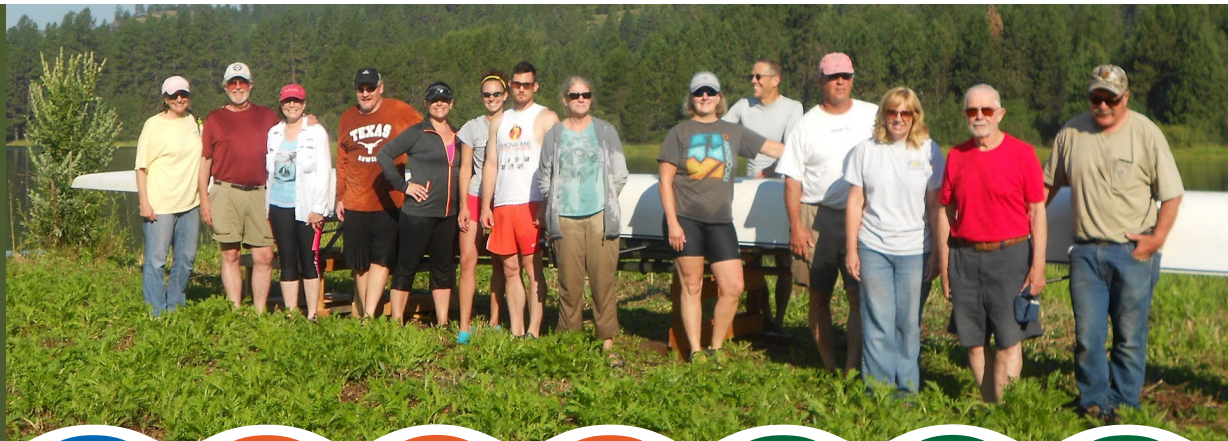
July 13, 2014 was a day of pleasant weather and excited anticipation as team members gathered to transport the newly acquired Arthur Ericsson 8+. The first and only boat in the PORPA fleet (on permanent loan from WSU Men's Rowing, negotiated by Patricia de Blaquiére-Sudick) was to be relocated from Thama Shores, to its new home at Riley Creek. With oars donated by a Sacramento CA club (also negotiated by Patricia), the PORPA journey began. PORPA's first rowing shell had been delivered in February and stored at Aerocet. Later it was moved to Gary De Blaquiére's property in Thama Shores.

Brad Bardwell, Lisa Larson, Mary Pepping, Jenny Smith, Gayne Sears, Erwin Muller, Ashley & Chris Irvin along with coxswain, Joseph Barber launched the Arthur Ericsson 8+ at Thama Shores. Several of these rowers had little to no sweep rowing experience, but were game to try. Guy Thomas, Todd Sudick, Patricia de Blaquiére-Sudick and coach, Jim Russell, followed the eight in two trailing boats. Curt Palmer and Carol Chassy also assisted in the inaugural launch. After Jim's patient coaching, and about halfway into the 6000 meters between Thama Shores and Riley Creek, coach Russell raised his hands indicating a TOUCH DOWN, when the safety boats could see all 8 rowers rowing in sync! Founder Patricia de Blaquiére-Sudick said, “That is when PORPA became a reality.”

Current members from the first PORPA season include Okju Cha, Elisa Jakeman, Gayne Sears and Erwin Muller. Jim Russell handled coaching duties throughout the first season. Rowers; Quinn Barnwell (Mary Leaff's son), Ben Jakeman (Elisa Jakeman's son), Jerry Persson, Lisa Larson, Jeff Vogel and Jeff Bell rounded out the first years participants. Patricia and husband Todd Sudick were constantly engaged in both rowing and organizing of the Board of Directors.



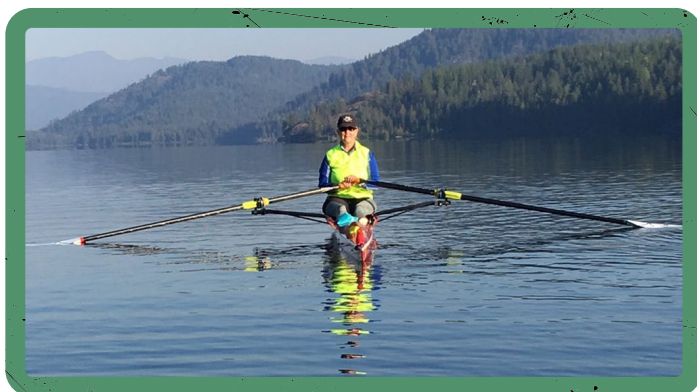
Patricia de Blaquiére-Sudick
Joseph Barber
Mary Pepping
Erwin Muller
Jenny Smith
Ashley Irvin
Chris Irvin
Lisa Larson
Gayne Sears
Brad Bardwell
Jim Russell
Carol Chassy
Guy Thomas
Curt Palmer



Early Member Reflections

Gayne Sears

"After two seasons of collegiate rowing in the mid 1980's, I didn't touch an oar for over 20 years," said Sears, "I had made some of my best friends while on crew in college, I excelled as an athlete (one of my favorite things about college), and I absolutely loved the rhythm and synchronicity of rowing. We even nicknamed our novice eight, 'Synchronicity' after the popular Police song." Fast forward 20 years, and Gayne still didn't live in a place close to a rowing club, so she drove to Sacramento, CA to take a weekend learn-to-scul class. "OMG, it was so good!" said Sears. "I was hooked again!"



It wasn't until she and her husband Curt, moved to Newport, WA in 2011 that she had an opportunity to get involved with a rowing club once again. "I vividly remember attending the Head of the Pend Oreille Regatta at the Mudhole in Priest River, ID on a beautiful September day," said Gayne. "I think I was drooling just looking at all the racing shells on the lawn!" I remember previously asking a couple of local rowers, "Where is the closest recreational rowing club?" Their answer was Spokane. I was confused, how could there be a well-organized and well-attended rowing regatta on the Pend Oreille River in Priest River, ID and no closer rowing club? "My answer came after calling the organizer of the Head of the Pend Oreille (HOP) regatta, Patricia de Blaquiére-Sudick," recalled Gayne.

As it turns out, Patricia and her friend Gail, loved the sport of rowing and thought the Pend Oreille River should have rowing on it. In 2011, energetic and organized and motivated, Patricia and Gail set out to establish this celebration of rowing from the ground up. They provided a quality, community racing event for recreational and collegiate rowers each September.

"Sometime in 2013, a group of us came together to explore the idea of starting a recreational rowing club in Priest River," said Gayne. "I specifically remember attending an organizing meeting held at the lovely Infinity Cafe conference room in Priest River, ID. Our group decided to move forward with establishing a rowing and paddling club for youth and masters, calling it the Pend Oreille Rowing and Paddling Association, or PORPA. I love how the acronym PORPA rolls off your tongue and, serendipitously, it is unique enough that when you type PORPA into an Internet search, the PORPA website comes right up!"

By early 2014, PORPA applied for non-profit status and requested space to store their used, newly acquired, eight-person shell at the Riley Creekcampground (managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers). The club also began sponsoring boating safety classes for the community, signing up new members, paying for liability and equipment insurance (with financial assistance from the Head of the Pend Oreille regatta), and rowing the eight whenever possible, "We had become the rowing club I was hoping to find!" said Gayne.

Brad Bardwell

"Attending the movie 'The River Wild' with friends, I remember watching Meryl Streep rowing a single in the opening credits. Watching her rowing seemed almost magical. It then became a goal for me," recalls Brad. "Years later, I made a cold call to Gonzaga, got some lessons on a single, and was hooked. The assistant coaches at Gonzaga were very encouraging. Later after joining PORPA, Gayne, Erwin, Guy, and Patricia along with many other members also offered encouragement and support for my new passion," added Bardwell.



Brad became a member of PORPA shortly after attending a local meeting that shared their intent to form a new rowing club. A handful of people attended at the original location of the Infinity Café in Priest

Read Tuddenham
Greg Miller
Warren Foersch
Erwin Muller



River. "It's fun looking back to the beginning and maneuvering that first boat - the Arthur Ericsson 8+ - it was very tricky," said Brad. "It was stored at the Aerocet facility in Priest River so weaving it into the crowded space was a bit challenging since some of us had never touched a big boat before. Everyone cooperated well and the move was successful."

After PORPA put its first shell in the water, Brad was one of the joyful eight assigned the task of rowing the Arthur Ericsson from Thama Shores to its new summer home at Riley Creek. "It was my first time in a team boat or sweep and it felt great!" said Brad.

Guy Thomas

"While I was growing up in New England we spent many summers on the water," said Guy. "You could say my family has always been 'water' kind of people."

As a young boy, Guy started in a small rowboat, eventually advanced to a canoe and then later became a kayaker. As a young man, he began open water (ocean) competitive swimming and worked for several years as a charter for the National Parks and raced sailboats. "I really enjoyed sailboats but longed for a more personal experience," recalls Guy. "In my 50's, canoeing seemed to fit the bill, then one day as I was paddling near Long Beach, CA. I was invited to participate with an outrigger team. They were very impressed with my skills, especially after I passed them in my canoe! What a great experience."



Guy's history with PORPA started while he was volunteering with the Coast Guard auxiliary. He manned the Safety boat during the regatta held on Lake Pend Oreille. "I remember conversations with the local regatta coordinator Patricia de Blaquiére-Sudick," recalls Guy, "And being introduced to rowers Brad Bardwell and Gayne Sears. Then, suddenly the idea of a club was pursued and PORPA was born!"

Erwin Muller

One early morning new PORPA members gathered at Rick de Blaquiére's place. Erwin had mentioned to Patricia de Blaquiére-Sudick that he could help out the club, but did NOT want to be stroke. Erwin recalls that Jim, who, with no coaching background, graciously agreed to coach, began asking the group as to his or her level of rowing experience and ability. Eventually he proceeded to ask the group, "So who will be stroke?" "It seemed everyone then pointed to ME!" said Erwin, since he had rowed since childhood all the way through college.



Erwin remembers launching the eight and rowing in pairs, then fours and finally sixes. "We were almost to Riley Creek when we got some real strokes in," said Erwin. "For me, it had been almost 30 years since I enjoyed rowing with a group and it felt wonderful, just like riding a bicycle PORPA's Maiden row was a blast!"

That first season, they put together a crew of seven rookies, Patricia as cox and Erwin, stroke. That crew went out about a dozen times on Saturdays and Sundays throughout August and September. After one session (about 2 hours on the water) Erwin was asked how do you feel and what do you think? His response, "I am very proud of everyone and that we had gotten THREE good Stroke in during that session."

So when the HOP came around, a few of the eight members really wanted to compete. "Patricia and I considered it and decided that it would not be safe yet," said Erwin. "So on Friday evening just before the welcome barbeque, we got together for a row-by in front of the Yacht Club instead. We all wore custom printed shirts and funky hats which added to the fun."



PORPA hosts the Spokane River Rowing Association for a row on the Priest River.

Okju Cha

"How did I get started in PORPA?" asks Okju. "It all goes back to the day I told Patricia de Blaquiére-Sudick (HOP Regatta Coordinator) that Erwin Muller, my husband, was a rower. Erwin agreed to join but only if I joined as well. It was either swim-or-sink! I remember having no idea what I was doing, but boarded the 8 anyway and did the best I could. It was a difficult first experience followed by many more. I had never been part of a sport team, and enjoyed the camaraderie and the challenge of learning to row. Eventually I took Learn To Row classes in Spokane and met some wonderful people along the way who helped influence me to stay with it," she said.



Seasonal Highlights

2014 Season opened with a row from Thama Shores to Riley Creek on July 13th. Every weekend with a few weekdays mixed in, many novice-coached sessions of rowing took place. Teams participated in the Head of the Pend Oreille (HOP) Regatta held in September.

2015 PORPA's First full rowing season. The club purchased a boat trailer and members donned the "coolest" uniforms as they prepared to join the Palouse Rowing Club at the Head of the Spokane Regatta. Unfortunately, the HOP Regatta was cancelled due to wind.

2016 Started with acquiring new used oars from WSU. Members participated in the Snake River Sprints with women and men 4+. PORPA moved boat setup activities to the "Mudhole" due to milfoil at Riley Creek.

2017 Included the first use of Yam Pah Pa, GB-3 from Oregon and first use of Trimline Patricia. The Neher, our show and tell shell, was received

as a donation from Dr. Richard Nether of Sandpoint. His daughter rowed at U of Oregon, and since he enjoyed working with wood, thought it would be cool to build a rowboat (a Firefly kit). After 15 years of handcrafting, the boat was used twice then stored. When he heard about PORPA, he contacted us to offer this fine vessel as a donation. It is a beauty that's great for a casual afternoon spin but requires tender love and care when taken out. Also acquired that year was a safety boat with trailer at a bargain price from the mudhole camp host who had no use for their aluminum fishing boat when relocating to another campground.

2018 Activity was a strong focus on dedicated teams. PORPA hosted their first HOP Regatta on the Priest River at the "Mudhole". 8+ stake race won by PORPA against SRRA (Foot-Stretcher Award initiated)

2019 Included a new "Ladies" row on Wednesday afternoons. Three 4+ teams and one 2x along with a few singles participated and endured a snowstorm that occurred during the HOP Regatta. A mixed 8 group sat idle with teeth chattering, while snow piled on their heads as they waited for a stretcher malfunction to be corrected.

2020 Rowing continued with special US Rowing COVID guidelines (singles or same household crews only). Thanks to 4 singles on loan from members and 3 singles owned by PORPA many members continued to row independently and in family groups. The first Warren Foersch Award was presented and no HOP Regatta was possible due to COVID restrictions.

2021 Special COVID guidelines continued. Fortunately it helped improve overall technique for everyone who rowed. The first Priest River Sprints was cancelled due to inclement weather.

2022 COVID restrictions were lifted and the non-motorized boat launch at the "Mudhole" officially opened. New boats included the Sea Shell 2x, and the Roman single. PORPA hosted the first and very successful "Sprints" event on the Priest River, a celebration of non-motorized watercraft. With over 50 participants enjoying fun races, a presentation by Kalispel Tribe members on the importance of these waterways to indigenous peoples, and the opportunity to paddle the Kalispel Tribe's dug-out canoe.

2023 PORPA club retired and donated both Trimline singles to the Boy Scouts. New to the fleet, a QUAD and a HW double with dedicated oars will be named and dedicated at the 10th anniversary celebration. PORPA SPRINTS on the Priest River doubled the number of race entries and sponsors provided free t-shirts to all youth participants. PORPA also partnered with the Sandpoint Long Bridge Swim Association to bring free swim lessons back to the Mudhole for local youth. Fifty kids ages 1-15 became more water safe in 2023!



Teams and clubs attending our races:

Since the first Head of the Pend Oreille regatta over ten years ago until the most recent PORPA Sprints on the Priest River, many teams, clubs and individuals from all over the Northwest of the US and Western Canada have participated. Collegiate rowing teams, Washington State University from Pullman and Gonzaga from Spokane have joined us for several HOP regattas. Many clubs from the region have participated; Coeur D'Alene Rowing, Spokane River Rowing, Palouse Rowing(Pullman WA), Port Angeles Rowing, Rockies Rowing(Cranbrook, BC) and Nelson Rowing. Individual rowers traveled from Montana, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, Alberta and British Columbia to join us to compete.

PORPA really appreciates all our fellow rowers that over the years have joined us for our competitive and fund events, especially all the youth participants that demonstrated a very strong future of our sport.



Social Events:

PORPA, besides being a rowing and paddling association, has a very active social side. Over the years we have had what are now traditional activities as well as many special events. The PORPA rowing season starts off with boat/equipment maintenance. A volunteer appreciation gathering is also customary after special events like the HOP regatta and Sprints on the Priest River. The most anticipated event is the Year-End celebration that goes together with a now-famous gift exchange of something that is self-made. Many creative ideas have included items such as bread, jams, salad tossers, a hand made game, or activities such as a very desired flight in a bi-plane or cooking lessons.

Many special events come to mind, from sleigh rides at the Western Pleasure Guest Ranch, participating in the Priest River Timber Days Parade, Priest River Oktoberfest after the HOP and an end of season Shrimp Boil. We have also hosted a traditional Oktoberfest and another one with a slight twist, an Oktober-Fiesta that had a lot of people confused...Sauerkraut tacos??

Supporters:

Thank you sponsors!!! PORPA, the HOP, and the PORPA SPRINTS have benefitted from amazing community support these ten years:

Sandpoint Community Assistance League
Sandpoint Rotary Clubs
Priest River/Newport Rotary Club
White Cross Pharmacy Inc.
Priest River Ace Hardware
Aerocet Inc.
Mitchells Market
Country Lane Inc.
Priest River Lioness
Unicep
Gateway Partners
Priest River Development Corporation
Dover Bay Marina
Lighthouse
Concept 2
Ranch Club
James Sewell and Assoc.
Edward Jones
Dee Miller Massage Therapy
Mac's
Priest River Lions
Floors & More
Riverdwell Studio
Bonner Saw
Klondyke
Seebers Drug
La Clede Community Center
Kalispel Tribe Charitable Fund
Synergy Design Studio, Inc.
Selkirk Ace Hardware
Miller's
Columbia Bank
Wells Fargo Bank
Eagle's Nest Motel
Priest River Gardens

Mary's Feed
Expect-A-Lot Signs
Two Rivers Storage
Timbertown Brewery
Ivory Dental
Jean and Ford Elsaesser
Judy and Dennis Napier
Melissa Young & Brad Bardwell
Linda Kingery
David Dahike
Linda Andis
John Packard
Margie and Jim Stevens
Wendy and Richard de Blaquiere
Gary de Blaquiere
Patricia de Blaquiere-Sudick, Todd Sudick
Rochelle and Paul McHugh
Carol and Bruce Chassey
Mary Beck
Quint Meland
Cheryl and Doug Eddy-Moromarcos
Ethel and Ken Perry

Publications/Media:

Newport Miner, The Beacon, Sandpoint Magazine, Out There Outdoors, Spokesman Review, KXLY

Special Thanks to:

Albeni Falls Corps of Engineers
West Pend Oreille Fire District
Bonner County Emergency Services
Bonner County Sheriff's Office Marine Patrol
Priest River Honor Guard
Boy Scout Troops 604 & 696





Congratulations
PORPA!

