



Dear New PLRA Sweep Rowers,

Welcome to the Portage Lakes Rowing Association! We are so glad that you have taken an interest in sweep rowing. Attached is a terminology manual that will be a great deal of help to you, so please read it.

The primary crew member teaching you how to row is Ric Walter who has been working with newbies (that's you) for several years. Ric will not only make you feel comfortable on the water, but fall in love with rowing as well!

As our club is an all volunteer organization with a board of directors overseeing club policies, we rely on each crew member to contribute time and energy to our club. If you choose to join the club, we have several work crews (committees is a bad word) from which you can choose to assist us – no experience necessary!

If you have any questions, feel free to ask Ric or any of the club directors or officers. Out mug shots are on the bulletin board in the boathouse so you know who to look for, but anyone who has been here before will gladly help you out.

Here are some frequently asked questions by newbies:

1. What is a sweep rower? There are two types of rowing. Sweep rowing is when each rower has only one oar, these oars are over 12 feet long. Sculling is when each rower has two oars, these oars are over 9 feet long. PLRA currently only has sweep oared boats, but several members have their own sculling boats.
2. How long are the boats? An eight person shell is about 57' long and made of fiberglass, kevlar and carbon fiber, and weighs about 220-250 pounds. A four person shell is about 43' long and weighs about 120-140 pounds. A single scull measures 27' long and weighs only 31 pounds.
3. How expensive is the sport? A new 8+ shell costs \$23,000-33,000. A 4+ shell is \$14,000-20,000. PLRA doesn't buy any of our boats new, most of them are actually third hand from college rowing programs and they're still pretty expensive. The oar you will row with cost \$300 each, that's almost a full year a of membership dues. The entire speaker and wiring system along with the cox box with microphone used by the coxswain to communicate with the rowers costs about \$900. As you can see, rowing is an expensive sport.
4. How did the club begin? Our founder is Barak Kraus who lives on Mud Lake. He learned to row in at the Western Reserve Rowing Association in Cleveland and then figured he had a much nicer body of water in his backyard than the Cuyahoga River and decided to start a rowing club on the Portage Lakes in 2005. In the beginning years the club had no boathouse or dock. Now we lease the boathouse space from Craftsman Park at a very reasonable cost of about \$2,000 a year and the club invested \$12,000 to buy the dock that we launch our boats from.
5. When will I no longer be called a "newbie"? Everyone picks up the sport at a different pace. If you have a knack for rowing and are very fit, it could be within a couple of weeks that you can row with in the experienced boat. Usually by the end of the 15 week session everyone has dropped the newbie title. But remember, if you're not a newbie anymore, that means you have to answers questions from the new newbies ... after all we're a club of volunteers.
6. How is my membership fee used? In addition to the equipment, dock and lease already mentioned, replacement parts are expensive as are liability and equipment insurance. We've also recently made the decision to purchase a wakeless launch which is a boat that can keep up with the rowing shells without creating a wake. The lakes we row on are almost entirely a no wake zone, and a coach can't coach if they're not beside the rowing shell to watch.

We welcome you to join us as the Portage Lakes Rowing Association continues to grow one happy rower at a time!

May the water always be flat,

The PLRA Board of Directors

ROWING FUNDAMENTALS

Welcome to the Portage Lakes Rowing Association! Included in this packet are the basics of terminology, body position, technique, and safety guidelines to make your first experience safe and enjoyable.

The Basics

Clothing: Loose clothing can get caught on the seat, track, oar, etc and should not be worn. Remember you will warm up after rowing for a brief period so dress in layers. Don't wear any jewelry. Bring a water bottle, hat or sun visor and sunglasses.

To get in the boat: Wait for the command to enter the boat. Always step on the rectangular wood piece while holding onto the wooden sides. Sit on the sliding seat, then place your feet into the forms on the foot stretcher. You will be shown how to adjust the foot stretcher for your height and comfort. Tighten the toe straps by pulling the end of the straps until they are snug against your shoes.

Quick exit: In the event that you have to quickly exit the boat – pull the red cord on the foot stretcher to release your feet. In the rare event that you are ejected of the boat capsizes – remain with the boat until the safety boat arrives.

Oars: Hold onto your oar at all times to keep the boat steady. If you need to adjust your foot stretcher, remove a jacket, or take a drink you can lean forward, holding the oar steady between your upper body and knees. Watch that the blade end of your oar doesn't hit the rower's oar in front or behind you, the rocks near the shore, the docks, buoys, of the safety boat.

Seats: Occasionally the seat may come off the track while power rowing or if not properly fitted for your height. If this happens – call out to the coxswain and you'll be assisted to correct the problem.

Setting the boat: Always keep your oar blade flat on the top of the water when not rowing. If the boat tips down on the left (starboard), those on the left should lift the oar handle up while everyone pushes their right toes down. If the boat tips down on the right (port), those on the right should lift the oar handle up while everyone pushes their left toes down.

Emergency stop: The "hold water" command will be given. Everyone should square their oar in the water (vertical) and hold tightly on the oar handle to quickly stop the boat.

To exit the boat: Always wait until you are level with the dock. The cox always exits first, then gives the commands for the rowers to exit. Ex: "starboards hold the dock for ports. Ports one foot up and out". Check to be sure that you have your "land legs" before attempting to walk. After everyone is out – remove your oar, water bottle, etc. and prepare to carry the shell to the rack.

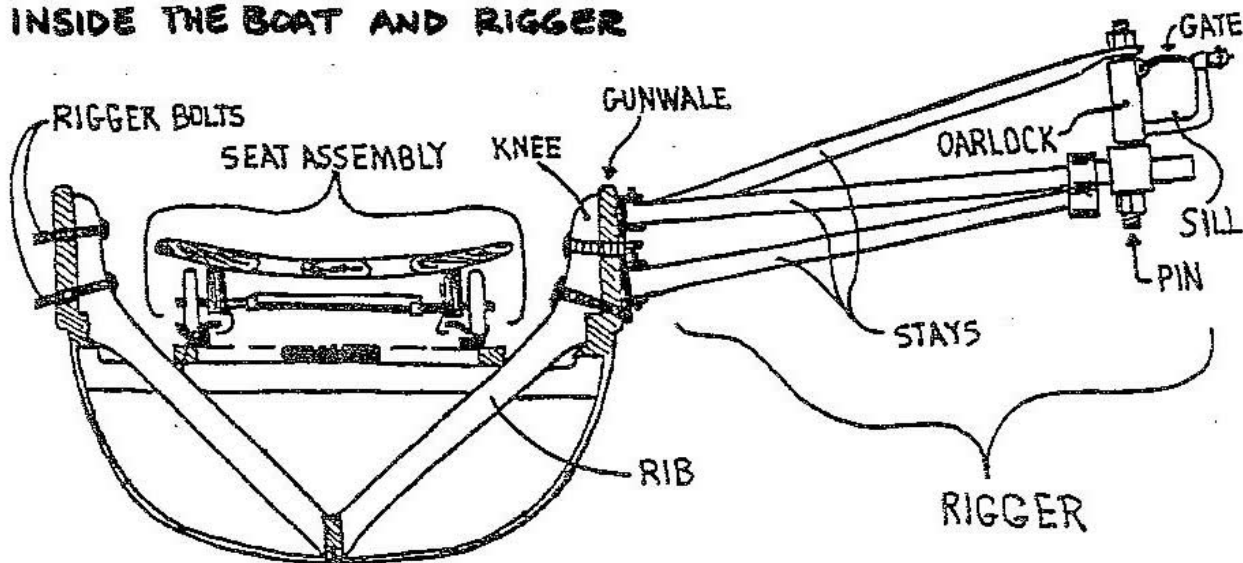
Boat Parts and Equipment

Shell	the fiberglass boat. Never lift the shell by either end. Hold onto the foot stretchers or wood slides to prevent breakage.
Bow	the front or forward end of the shell.
Stern	the rear end of the shell.
Plugs	caps that seal the bow and stern compartments of the boat to make them water tight, these must be but in at start of each session and removed at the end.
Port	the right side of the boat when facing the stern. Port oars will have a red band on the shaft just above the handle.
Starboard	the left side of the boat when facing the stern. Starboard oars will have a green band on the shaft just above the handle.
Rigger	metal device bolted onto the shell to hold the oarlock.
Oarlock	a u-shaped swivel on the outrigger which holds the oar in place.
Oar	Green for starboard; Red for port

Collar	a ring on the oar which keeps it from slipping through the oarlock. These have a flat side which will connect into the oarlock, securing the oar for rowing.
Oar Spacers	small horseshoe disks to raise or lower the oar for your height.
Blade	The wide, flat section of the oar. Spoon is a blade shape.
Foot Stretcher	the adjustable bracket mounted to the shell to secure the feet. They are equipped with a quick-release safety cord.
Seat	refers both to the rowers place in the boat and the sliding seat that the rower sits on.
Slide	the metal tracks on which the seat moves. They can stain the back of your pants and/or legs.
Slings	Collapsible portable frames to temporarily hold the shell while the foot stretchers are being adjusted.



INSIDE THE BOAT AND RIGGER



Seating

Seats are numbered 1-8, starting at the bow or the front of the boat.

The 1 seat is referred to as the "bow".

The 1 seat and 2 seat are collectively referred to as the "bow pair". These seats often assist the coxswain with turning.

The 8 seat is referred to as the "stroke". This position sets the pace for all the other rowers. In a four person boat, the 4 seat is referred to as the stroke.

The 7 and 8 seat are collectively referred to as the "stern pair".

The even numbered seats 2, 4, 6, 8 are usually the port rowers. This can be changed by bolting the riggers on the boat in a different sequence, but isn't frequently done.

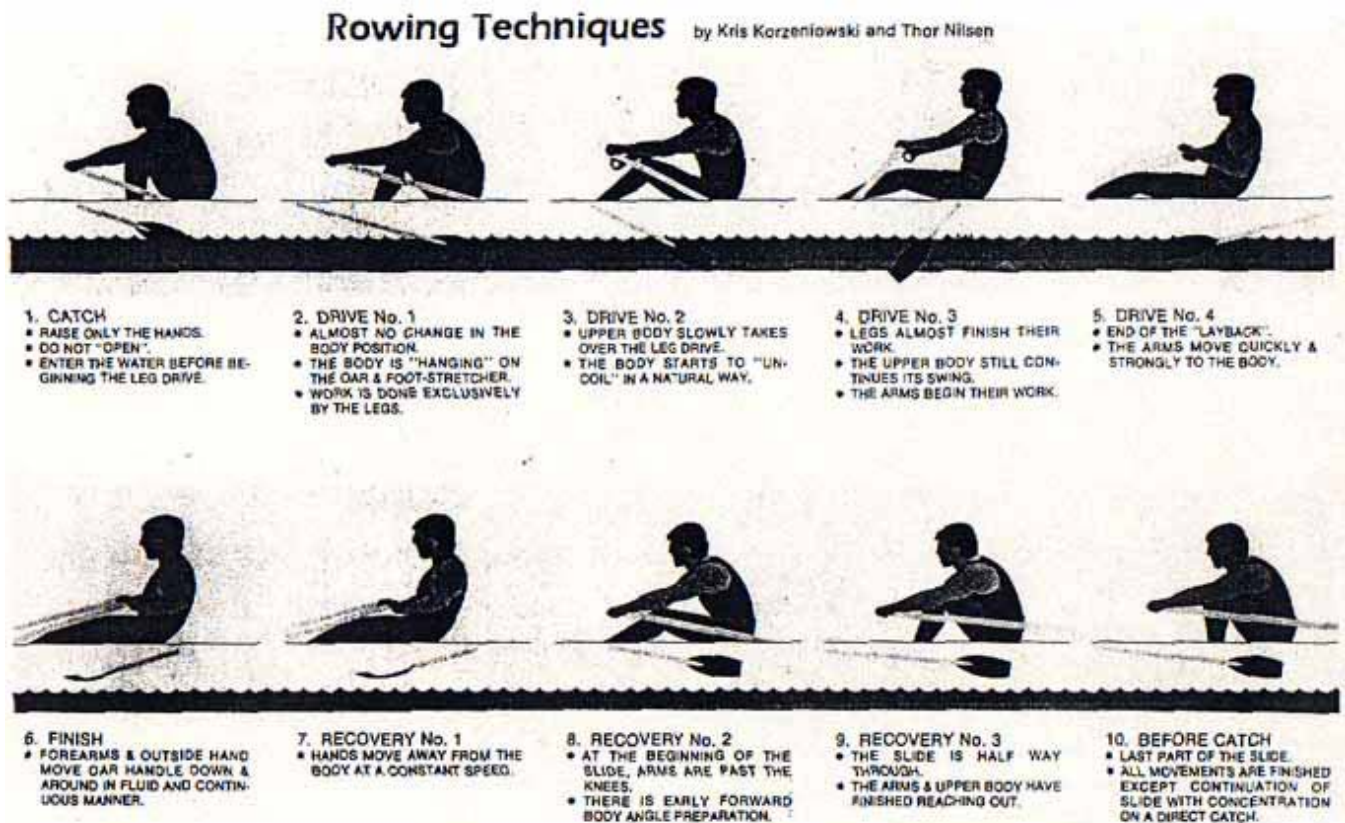
The odd numbered seats 1, 3, 5, 7 are usually the starboard rowers.

Rowers can be addressed by the number of their seat, or in groups such as bow pair, stern pair, bow four, stern four, starboards, ports, or sometimes the coxswain will be polite and address you by your proper name.

The coxswain (cox) is the only person looking in the direction the boat is moving. This person steers the boat using a rudder while giving the rowers instructions and encouragement. Rowers should always listen to the coxswain's commands and should not shout out their own commands with one exception. If the boat is ever in imminent danger of an accident or other problems, anyone can shout out "weigh enough, hold water".

Rowing Cycle

Catch	The squared blade enters the water with a slight upward motion of the hands and arms. All rowers should be in sync with #8 the Stroke.
Drive	Power applied to the oar first by the legs, then the back, and finally the arms to pull it thru the water. The legs create the majority of the power.
Layback	The amount of backward lean on a rower's body.
Finish	The end of the drive where the last 20% of the power comes from the back, arms and leaning back. Then the Release.
Release	Sharp downward and away motion of the hands which removes the blade from the water and starts the rowing cycle.
Recovery	Your time to rest while you bend your legs, slide forward, and return to the ready position.
Squaring	Turning the oar to a perpendicular (vertical) position, you will feel a flat spot on the oar collar.
Feathering	Turning the blade into a position parallel (horizontal) to the water. Performed with the release. You will feel a flat spot on the oar collar.



Rowing Terms

Crab	“Catching a crab” is a problem experienced when a rower doesn’t properly square or feather the oar. This causes the oar to get stuck in the water and the handle will forcefully jerk back toward the rower. If this happens – lay back on the seat and allow the oar handle to pass over you. The rower behind you will assist. If the rower in front of you catches a crab you should stop rowing and assist them to regain control of their oar.
Jump the Slide	When the seat becomes derailed off the track.
Set	This is the position of the boat in the water. A good set is a stable, level shell. The set is affected by the posture of the rowers, hand positions, timing of the catch, wind, waves, and steering.
Ratio	Ratio of drive time to recovery time should be 1:2 - with a longer recovery time. This is where you get to rest. It can be described as ROW, rest, rest: repeat.
Stroke rating	This counts the number of strokes per minute in the rowing cycle. It is measured by the cox box.

Body Position and Technique

Hands shoulder width apart with outside hand on the end of the oar. Grip the oar lightly.

Rotate wrist closest to the oar blade to get the blade cleanly in and out of the water. The oar rotates in the outside hand.

Back is straight at all times to prevent lower back strain. You should pivot at the hips.

Keep head held high and facing forward to prevent shell from leaning or tipping.

Watch the oarlock of the “stroke” to set the cadence and keep in rhythm.

The ready position will be either at the catch or the finish. The finish is usually preferred, especially when the boat is moving, but the coxswain will tell the rowers the starting position and the command will then be “Ready all, Row”.

Don’t “yank” or pull the blade through the water. This disrupts the smoothness of the stroke. Power should be applied in a controlled way to balance the rowing sequence.

Don’t “zoom” back up the slide on recovery. When you do this, you are sending your body weight in the direction opposite which you are trying to move the boat, this is called “checking” the boat. Use the time on the recovery to breathe, and if you don’t check the boat, the coxswain won’t have bruises on their back at the end of practice.

Breathe out during your drive and breathe in during the recovery. If you find yourself getting winded during power strokes or racing drills, you can try taking 2 breaths with each half of the stroke.

Stroke Sequences

Racing Start is usually “ $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, full.” For the first stroke, you site ready only halfway up the slide with the blade squared and buried. On the second stroke you again only go halfway up the slide. On the third stroke you go three quarters of the way up the slide, and then to full slide on the fourth stroke. A fully loaded boat weight almost 2,000 pounds, and these abbreviated strokes help the boat get moving quickly. This is like a car shifting gears as it accelerates.

High Ten is ten strokes at full slide, but arms are kept straight, not pulled into the chest. This quickly builds speed and is often called for by the coxswain following a racing start.

Power Ten is ten strokes at maximum power and is usually count out by the coxswain. A power ten does not mean the stroke rating should increase, just more power at the rate the boat was rowing at.

Silent Ten is the same as a power ten, but in a race, a coxswain may not call out the strokes so the other boat isn’t aware the your boat is pulling extra hard.

Weigh enough means to stop rowing. Rest the blade on the water (feathered) to steady the boat. Keep hands steady in mid chest position.

What Happens Next

After you complete a two-day Learn to Row Class, we hope that you decide to join the club. The dues for the Spring or Fall Sweep Session are \$225 and if you join both, the second session is discounted to \$175. The \$30 fee you paid for the LTR Class is credited towards your initial dues.

Practices are held on Sunday mornings at 7:00 AM, and Tuesday and Thursday nights at 6:00 PM. The Thursday night practice is only open to experienced rowers.

What to do at Practice

It is best if you show up 10-15 minutes before each practice so that we can launch the first boat at the scheduled starting time. All experienced rowers who have completed both coxswain and safety boat training have a key to the boathouse and the first person with a key will open things up.

If you arrive before the boathouse is open, you can begin removing all the goose fences from the dock and placing them on the shore away from the boat racks. Once the boathouse is open you'll want to sign in to get a seat in the boat.

After the lineup for a boat has been selected, you will be instructed by your coxswain to get oars down to the dock and then to unstrap the boat you'll be rowing and get ready to carry it to the water. Be careful when carrying oars, they're over 12 feet long and it's easy to knock someone in the head.

When moving the boat the boat, be quiet and listen to the coxswains commands. Do not move unless instructed to. If the boat is ever in imminent danger of being damaged, anyone can shout out "weigh enough" and everyone should stop moving immediately.

On the water, always be attentive and listen to the coxswain and the coach.

After rowing, everyone helps carry the shell from the water to the rack, clean and secure it. Oars are returned to the boathouse and the goose fences are put back on the dock.

Please be ready to get into the boat. If you are rowing in the first hour you will be assigned a seat. Prepare your foot stretchers, put the correct oar in the oarlock, put your water in the boat, etc. If you are rowing in the second hour – be ready to assist the person you are replacing out of the boat and adjust your foot stretchers.

Feel free to ask questions or voice concerns to any of our members. Everyone is more than willing to teach or help out.

You will participate in several drills to improve your rowing skills and comfort level. It takes a few times out in the boat before you begin to establish confidence and a smooth rhythm. It takes lots of practice to achieve a smooth, balanced motion.

Rowing should look effortless and not cause any strain.

Talking should be kept to a minimum while in the boat so everyone is able to hear the coxswain's commands.

Moonlight Rowing

Anyone at any skill level can participate. Moonlight Rowing is scheduled within one day of the full moon, and rowing times are scheduled approximately one hour after moonrise and always after the end of civil twilight. These rows will only take place if weather conditions will provide for a safe rowing experience. Sign up sheets with dates and times are posted inside the boathouse. You have to try it at least once. This is the most peaceful time on the Portage Lakes!

Racing

There are two different levels of racing within the club. The Competitive Squad is a group of experienced members who train together regularly and have several regattas they plan to compete in and goals they would like to achieve. Aside from being an experienced rower, the only requirement is that you are able to make a regular commitment to attending practice. Because it is a competitive group, not everyone is guaranteed a seat in the boat for the races and the lineup decisions will be made by Sam Malusky Bacon who is the coach. Efforts will be made to enter multiple events at regattas so that everyone who puts in the training will get a chance to race.

The other racing group within the club is the Recreational Racers. The primary regattas for this group is the Summer Rowing League run by the Western Reserve Rowing Association. This year the two regattas will be held on Saturday, July 18 and Saturday, August 22. These races are mixed 8+ boats, meaning four men and four women. There are divisions of novice, experienced and mixed, so everyone can participate and compete against similar competition. Newbies are encouraged to participate the Summer Rowing League, it's a lot of fun.

Races are usually a full day event. We take a canopy, and everyone brings chairs, drinks, snacks, etc. For the Recreation Racers, sign up sheets with dates and locations for races are posted on the bulletin board just inside the boathouse doors. If you don't want to race you can always come cheer on your team!

About the Club

PLRA rowed for the first time on August 7, 2005. That first year, the club was based out of the Turkeyfoot Island Club just short row away from the current boathouse at Craftsmen Park. With no dock at the Island Club, rowers loaded into the boat using an aluminum loading ramp supported on milk crates. Despite less than ideal facilities and older equipment, a rowing club was born and was soon to grow.

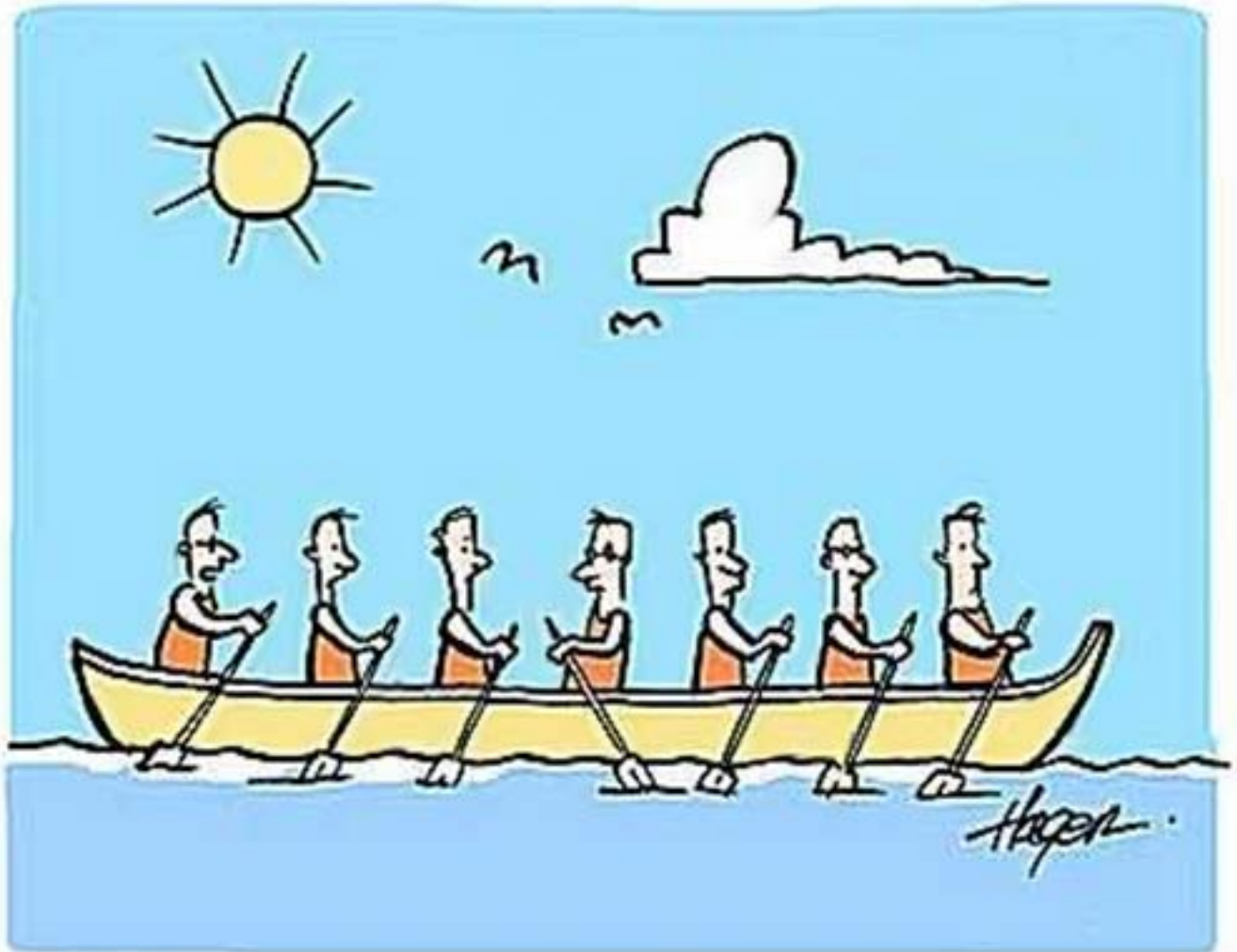
In 2006, the club moved Craftsmen Park on Rex Lake where the lower level of the old dining hall was renovated to serve as the boathouse to store oars and other equipment. The club rowed only on Sunday mornings as was the case the year before, and this year they entered their first competition participating in the Western Reserve Rowing Association's three Summer Rowing League Regattas.

With a comfortable home at Craftsmen Park the club continued to build its membership base in 2007. With the growth in membership revenue, the PLRA was able to buy their own pontoon boat rather than needing to rely on the use of the one owned by founder Barak Kraus. Also in the summer of 2007, PLRA placed 2nd out of 31 crews at the WRRRA Summer Rowing League Championship Regatta.

Thanks to word of mouth from happy members and good coverage in local newspapers, the membership for both the spring and fall sessions in 2008 was just short of 40 members. Rowing expanded to include Tuesday evening rows in addition to Sunday mornings. The racing team improved to capture first place out 26 crews in the Summer Rowing League, and PLRA teams and individual competitors raced in six head races during the fall season. As a fundraiser, PLRA also introduced the first Portage Lakes Calendar which was well received by the community.

At the beginning of 2009, the club added two four person shells and one eight person shell to bring the total to four eights and five fours, so the club is well prepared for continued growth in the membership. The purchase of a wakeless launch has also been approved to allow coaches to keep up with the shells while not creating a wake as is required by the boating regulations.

WELCOME TO THE PORTAGE LAKES ROWING ASSOCIATION!



WHO'S THE NEW GUY?