

For Immediate Release

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Saddle Up! New business offers horseback trail riding around beautiful Oxtongue Lake

Local resident steers 'off the grid' to create an eco-friendly wilderness experience

August 18, 2008 (Oxtongue Lake, Ontario) There are many ways to enjoy the rustic beauty of the Algonquin area, and now residents and visitors can add horseback trail riding to their sightseeing 'to-do' list. *Algonquin Highlands Trail Riding* opened this July, making horseback riding the newest outdoor activity around Oxtongue Lake, the gateway community to Algonquin Park's western entrance.

With all the resorts, tourist activities and visitors in such close proximity, owner Tracie Parrott felt that wilderness horseback riding was a perfect fit. "It's a fun, healthy recreational activity that anyone can enjoy," she explained. "With access to 100s of kilometers of crown land, we have a variety of trails to explore the local surroundings and wildlife."

The first group of riders hit the trails on July 02, 2008. Parrott indicated that after a month in business the public response has been great. Small groups of up to 6 riders enjoy a 1.5-hour ride through countryside that offers magnificent views. All rides start with a mandatory mini-lesson that includes a brief overview of horse riding basics and trail riding etiquette. Rides cost \$45 per person and are open to novice and experienced trail riders, age 11 and up.

In addition to regular trail rides, once a week, *Algonquin Highlands Trail Riding* offers a 3-hour trail ride, complete with a picnic lunch from Henrietta's Bakery. "The views are amazing," said Parrott. "There is always a chance to see some of the local wildlife, especially white tailed deer and moose."

Preserving the natural charm of trail riding was an important part of Parrott's business plan. She decided at the outset to keep the centre off the grid. "The nearest utilities are far enough way that it would have cost a lot to get service. So, instead of spending the money on utilities, I've decided to spend the money and time to become energy self-sufficient." Parrott explained. She continues to explore all feasible options from small-scale wind turbines to solar panels.

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Parrott's ambition for *Algonquin Highlands Trail Riding* is to offer everyone the chance to experience Oxtongue's natural beauty on horseback. "There is no better way to spend a summer's day than on horseback, enjoying the sunshine and scenic wilderness views around Oxtongue," Parrott said. "And with the fall colours just around the corner, what a perfect time to be on the trails."

This business venture was a natural blend of horses and heritage. Tracie, with her husband Greg and two children, Charisse and Korby, spent many years in Alberta and British Columbia, most of it around horses. On the outskirts of Calgary, Parrott worked on a 300 head cattle ranch, as well as managed a boarding stable of 22 horses. In addition, she volunteered for several years on the chuckwagon circuit tour for the World Professional Chuckwagon Association (WPCA).

Parrot inherited her love of horses from her grandfather. An important fact, especially to Parrott, is that she is the only and youngest of 23 grandchildren to follow in her grandfather's footsteps as a horse trainer. As she described, "I have this amazing old picture of my grandfather training a horse. There's even buffalo in the background."

Her family's roots run deep in the area. Parrott grew up on Oxtongue Lake and her family has been an active part of the community for more than 50 years. Her parents once owned the General Store and the Oxtongue Lake Cottages, and most recently, Tapawingo Place, operated by mother, Fran Gower. When Parrott returned home to Oxtongue several years ago, starting a horseback riding business was a natural decision. After a lot of planning, trail blazing and general hard work, this year her dream came to fruition much to the benefit of the local community and visitors alike.

About Algonquin Highlands Trail Riding

Algonquin Highlands Trail Riding offers guided horseback riding from mid-June to Thanksgiving. The centre is located on 1099 Blue Spruce Road, just off Highway 60. Algonquin Park, Dwight, Huntsville and Dorset are all within a 10-30 minute drive.

Helmets are recommended and are mandatory for anyone age 17 and younger. Heeled footwear is also recommended. Sandals are not permitted. No prior riding experience is necessary, but riders must be at least 11 years of age.

Trail riding occurs Monday to Saturday with 3 rides daily. Call 24 hours in advance to book a ride. Rates are \$45.00 per person for 1.5 hour trail rides and \$150 for a 3-hour trail ride and picnic lunch. Being off the grid means they cannot accept credit cards or Interac, so riders are asked to please bring cash only.

For more information contact:

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