

2022 Tourism Champion Award Recipient

Betty McGie



This award is presented to an individual who has shown themselves to be a dedicated ambassador for tourism in Northern Ontario.

The recipient of this award has been one of the resource-based tourism industry's strongest ambassadors for almost 75 years. This year's Tourism Champion, Betty McGie has been in the tourism industry since she was a young teenage girl working at her family's lodge, Pine Portage Lodge. Her passion began when she worked as a chambermaid and waitress. She carried that passion with her as she grew up and moved away to attend school and settle into another career, but she was driven to return to the lodge and work alongside her parents and her 4 siblings.

Eventually Betty became the CEO of Pine Portage Lodge with the goal of continuing the legacy of her father Richard Watson Sr. In addition to being a pioneer in the remote fly-in full-service lodge business, her father was a fierce advocate for the importance of remoteness and the experiences that are dependent on pristine wilderness. Betty carries that same devotion and has been advocating for a strong resource-based tourism sector as a whole.

Betty followed in her father's footsteps and became involved with NOTO where she made her first steps into advocacy. She has held several seats on the NOTO Board and most notably became the first female President of NOTO in 2000. She was a strong leader for NOTO during a very challenging time. In addition to her volunteer efforts on the NOTO Board, Betty held seats on several committees and working groups including the Ontario Moose and Bear Allocation Advisory Committee, and the Crown Land Use Atlas Harmonization Pilot Working Group to name a few. She took these opportunities to defend and advocate for protections and growth for the outdoor tourism sector as a whole. Her voice has been and continues to be strong and professional for the tourism industry.

She has always believed that industries in Northern Ontario that use the land base must work together to ensure all can thrive. One industry should not be permitted to grow at the expense of another. Betty has been instrumental in bringing tourism operators together for years in her region to present a united front and ensure individual operators needs and concerns are heard when it comes to forestry in the area.

She has always been open to assisting other tourism operators and organizations with a goal of having a strong tourism industry. She wants to see everyone succeed. Her guidance and support to NOTO has been invaluable.

Betty recently sold Pine Portage Lodge which just celebrated its 75th year in operation, but remains involved through NOTO as a valued Past President and continues to have a seat on Destination Northern Ontario's Board. Her knowledge, experience and passion for the tourism sector will continue to be sought out by many people and organizations.

We thank Betty for her tireless efforts on behalf of the tourism industry and are pleased to acknowledge her today as Tourism Champion.