

Dianne Gowland: Acton's New BIA Manager

By: Vivien Fleisher

Acton's new BIA manager, Dianne Gowland is eager to take on the challenge. Her biography reveals a well-rounded person: parent, volunteer, fundraiser, coach, outdoor enthusiast, third generation Bell employee, and enthusiastic supporter of all things local. The fourth manager in less than three years, Gowland's first major event will be the annual Winter Carnival on January 28.

She's lived in town for 30 years, and her career outside it makes her typical of Acton's demographic. She retired from Bell last November after 37 years; being one of the older employees, parting ways was a "very mutual agreement." She worked with "fantastic teams as a developer of internet products, responsible for revenue, the business of a product, reporting up the ranks to executives", but says she's a technician by trade and started

as a telephone operator. Her 23-year-old son Jake worked for Bell-owned The Source recently, so she sees a lot of legacy in her life. Another son, Walt, is 14.

Gowland said she came to town when the "Old Hide House" and businesses like the "Aviator Shop" were in their heyday; the last real vestiges of the industry that put Acton on the map. She refers to "opportunities" that lie ahead in Acton, instead of "challenges" which has a negative spin. She sees "synergies between the businesses downtown", having arrived in town when Acton was at one of its high points, and untapped opportunities, thanks to her business background. She wants to bring forward the pride she knows is there and "make it pop". While away on business, when she'd tell people she was from Acton, they always asked, "Is it worth the drive?"

"That was a really vis-



BIA Manager Dianne Gowland outside of the BIA Office at 45 Mill St. E.

ceral marketing tool, and I'm not really in a hurry to throw any of that away." Because she takes her respon-

sibilities seriously, she doesn't want to come in with all the answers. She needs to listen and ask, "What do we want for Acton?" She knows everyone will have a different answer, so the key initially will be finding out what they're thinking to identify the next legacy. She's currently in training for coaching, a skill congruent to the job.

Asked what it's like on the other side of the desk after being a resident for years, witnessing a steady loss of stores downtown while managers came and went, Gowland says a lot of passion and hard work was put into the strategic plan, and she plans

to carry through with it. "I reached out to every predecessor...had coffee with them... they're not gone. People leave jobs for two reasons: to repel away from a problem, or to the light. In all cases everyone was moving forward." Gowland added, "This is not a teardown. We're building on what's already there." The vibrancy of the natural resources all around Acton and the easy commuting distance to Toronto are its major strengths. She noticed a lot of new faces at Leathertown Festival this year and sees the festivals as key to the town's future. She doesn't want to make any assumptions about

empty storefronts, saying, "Part of my recent training is to investigate things with people to get a true understanding of it."

Dianne feels her biggest strength is her passion for Acton. The skills she learned in her career and community involvement puts her in good stead for effective collaboration and listening. A first priority is the revamped website since it's the link between her and the community. She'll be at the BIA office Monday to Friday, though evening meetings make it a bit fluid. She welcomes visitors, especially if there's something they want to discuss.

ACTON MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION UNITY SERVICE 2018



*Your right hand, O Lord,
glorious in power*

Exodus 15:6

Sun. Jan. 21

10:30am

This year at **Bethel Church**
365 Queen St, Across from Home Hardware

A celebration of our unity in Christ with all the churches of Acton sharing in this worship event.

Children's Program for ages 4-10
Nursery Care for ages 0-3

Everyone is Welcome!

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