RAMBLER

OCTOBER 2025

VOL. 68 ISSUE 2

NEWSLETTER OF THE OTTAWA VALLEY MOBILE RADIO CLUB INCORPORATED (OVMRC.CA)

WHAT'S INSIDE:

OCTOBER MEETING:
WEDNESDAY OCT 15, 2025
RAC HQ OFFICES, 720 BELFAST RD, OTTAWA ON, 7:00 PM IN PERSON AND 7:15 PM VIA ZOOM

MEMBERS AND INVITED GUESTS WILL BE SENT AN EMAIL INVITATION SEVERAL DAYS BEFORE MEETING DATE WITH LOGIN AND PASSWORD.

OTHERS NOT ON OUR MAILING LIST PLEASE CONTACT
RUSS PASTUCH, VE3FSN/VE3YOW, VICEPRESIDENT@OVMRC.CA FOR AN INVITATION.

OVMRC AFFILIATIONS

OVMRC EXECUTIVE AND OFFICERS 2025-2026

DIRECTORS

President:
Rob Haddow, VE3RXH,
president@ovmrc.ca

Vice-President:
Russ Pastuch, VE3FSN/
VE3YOW
vicepresident@ovmrc.ca

Treasurer & Membership Records:
Nicole Boivin, VE3GIQ
ve3giq@myrac.ca

Corporate Secretary:
Donald, VA3ZZI,
secretary@ovmrc.ca

Director-at-Large:
Patrick Brewer, VE3KJQ
patbrewer@sympatico.ca

STANDING COMMITTEES

Club Projects & Bulk Orders: Harrie Jones,
VE3HYS,harriej59@gmail.com

Radio Course & Accredited Examiner:
Norm Rashleigh, VE3LC
ve3lc@myrac.ca

Meeting Reception:
John McGowan, VA3JYK
john.mcgowan1314@gmail.com

Nets & Radio Operations: Hugo Kneve, VE3KTN,
ve3ktn@myrac.ca

Newsletter Editor: Alan Hotte, VA3IAH,
editor@ovmrc.ca

Webmaster & Social Media: Adam Bird,
VA3IRD, web@ovmrc.ca

Keeper of Club Call Signs: Norm Rashleigh,
VE3LC ve3lc@myrac.ca

Special Events:
John McGowan, VA3JYK,
john.mcgowan1314@gmail.com
****
OVMRC Groups.io Ongoing discussion Group at: https://ovmrc.groups.io/g/main; All radio amateur members and non-members are welcome
Groups.io Moderator:
Michael Babineau, VE3WMB.

Ottawa Valley Mobile Radio Club Inc.,
PO Box 41145 Ottawa, ON K1G 5K9

OVMRC Life Members

Ralph Cameron, VE3BBM
Bill Hall, VA3WMH
Ernie Jury, VE3EJJ
Doreen Morgan, VE3CGO
Bryan Rawlings, VE3QN
Maurice-André Vigneault, VE3VIG

OVMRC Repeaters

- **VE3RAM** Limited coverage to Orleans and East Ottawa 443.700 MHz (+) DMR CC1 & D-Star Network connected to Brandmeister

- **VE3TWO** Limited coverage to East and South Ottawa 147.300 MHz. +, PL 100.0 Hz. Analogue FM and C4FM

Special Event & Field Day Call Sign VE3JW

LOCAL NETS (ALL WELCOME)

- **Rubber Boot Net:** VE3OCE 146.880 MHz (-)136.5 Hz tone *weekday mornings at 7:30 AM* conducted by Roger, VE3NPO
- **Champlain STP Net:** VE3STP 147.060 MHz +, (114.8 Hz tone), held *Monday through Saturday at 7:00 PM.*

MONDAY

- **Former QCWA Chapter 70 VHF Net:** VE3OCE 146.880 MHz (-) 136.5 Hz tone, 7:30 PM conducted by Bryan, VE3QN.
- **Capital City FM Net:** VE2CRA 146.940 MHz -, (100 Hz tone), 8:00 PM.

TUESDAY

- **Phoenix Net:** VE3OCE 146.880 MHz (-) 136.5 Hz tone, 7:30 PM, Pete, VE3XEM.
- **Kemptville Amateur Radio Group (KARG) Net:** VE3NGR 145.250 MHz (-) CTCSS tone 110.9 Hz. 7:30 PM.
- **New Hams Ottawa Net:** VE2CRA 146.940 MHz -, (100 Hz tone), 8:00 PM.
- **Almonte ARC's D-Star XLX197b Net:** Tuesday evenings at 8:40 pm, Dale VE3XZT.
- **Upper Frequency Net:** Simplex 144.250 MHz using USB, 9:00 PM, Glenn, VE3XRA.

THURSDAY

- **OVMRC 2-Metre Net:** *Thursday* Evenings, 8:00 PM, Club Net on FM will be held through VE3OCE 146.880 MHz (-)136.5 Hz tone conducted by Hugo, VE3KTN.

FRIDAY

- **Friday night C4FM Net:** 7:30 PM, VE3TWO, 147.300(+).
- **PACNET:** 7:30PM on VE3OCE Packet 145.030 with Ante VA2BBW.

SUNDAY

- **Sunday Morning Social:** 10:00AM, XLX197, with Rick, VE3RVV
- **Pot Hole SSB Net:** 10:00AM, 3760 kHz, with Ernie, VE3EJJ.
- **Pot Lid Slow Speed CW Net:** Sunday night, 7:30 PM, 50.090 MHz., horizontal polarization.

INFORMAL AMATEUR RADIO RESTAURANT GATHERINGS

Former QCWA Chapter 70 Breakfast gathering every Tuesday morning at 7:30 to 10:00 AM, Summerhays Grill, 1972 Baseline Rd., Nepean

Orleans Coffee gathering every Friday morning at 9:00 AM, McDonald's 1890 Innes Rd., Ottawa, K1B 3K5

QRP Group Luncheon and Dinner meetings at Newport Restaurant are on again. See "OttawaValleyQRP" groups.io for details.

Phoenix Net Breakfast, 2nd Saturday of each month at Connors in Orleans, hosted by Pete VE3XEM

President's Ramblings - Rob VE3RXH

Here we are at the start of another month, Fall has fully arrived, but there has been some great weather for outdoor operating. I was happy to get my first meeting as the newbie President behind me, last month. Thanks to a great team effort it all went well.

As always the monthly meetings are a great opportunity to meet up with new and old Club members and I would encourage all of you that are able, to come out to the Club meetings and enjoy the social side of ham radio. Of course we plan to continue to stream the meetings live with Zoom.

The Club meeting was also an opportunity for all to see the new Icom and Flex radios in the RAC HQ radio station. If you didn't get the chance to see them, RAC HQ is open for visitors so contact them and go take a look at the great station that was partly funded by a donation from our Club. Included in this issue is a short write up with photos from the official opening of the RAC HQ station.

At our last Executive meeting we briefly discussed finding an opportunity for the Club to 'sponsor' an operating event at the RAC station, with the aim of giving those new radios and antennas a workout. If you have any suggestions for an event that we could use, such as the RAC Winter Contest or perhaps Winter Field Day, please let us know.

It's been a busy couple of weeks for ham radio in the area. Of note was that RAC's Community Services Officer, Jason Tremblay (VE3JXT), presented the new Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS) course, which I have written up later in this issue. Also held last weekend was the Eastern Ontario Hamfest, organised by the Prescott-Russell and Seaway Valley ARC. Given the popularity of this event the OVMRC tagged on a road trip POTA activation, immediately after the Hamfest, at Park CA-6209, High Falls Conservation Area in Casselman about 10 km away. I see five logs uploaded

from the activation, so I'm glad that worked out well.

While the <u>October</u> club meeting will be held at RAC HQ, 720 Belfast Rd, we expect that for the <u>November</u> monthly meeting and beyond, we will be moving back to the upstairs meeting room at IBEW Local 586, 1178 Rainbow Street, Ottawa, ON.

Look out for the meeting invite that will be sent by email a few days before the meeting date, and if you are not a member please contact me at president@ovmrc.ca to get the invite details.

I will be out of town for the October and November meetings, so our Vice-President, Russ (VE3FSN) will be chairing.

73, Rob, VE3RXH

WEDNESDAY 15, OCTOBER, 2025

Hello to the Membership and Guests of the OVMRC:

The October 2025 meeting of the OVMRC will be held at RAC HQ offices, 720 Belfast Rd, Ottawa at 7 pm on Wednesday 15th October. To get to the RAC office, go to the south/west entrance door and take the stairs to the 2nd floor then proceed along the hallway to the 2nd door on your left, suite 217. Park anywhere in the vacant parking spots around the building. Time and Date: Wednesday 15th October 2025 at 6:45 PM Eastern Time.

The meeting will be called to order at 7:15 PM by Russ Pastuch, VE3FSN. Zoom details to follow by email. Non members are welcome to attend or join by Zoom. Please contact president@ovmrc.ca

AGENDA:

1. Greetings and welcoming guests, new hams and new members of the Club.
2. Approval of the September meeting minutes as published in the October Rambler.
3. News and Happenings & Club Coming Events Schedule.
   a. Saturday 18th October - Club POTA activation. Details to follow.
4. 2025/2026 Budget presentation and approval.
5. Full report from MS Bike event.
6. Packet radio - breathing new life into an old technology.
7. Other business as may arise.
8. Meeting adjournment followed by social hour. Coffee and donuts will be available.

OVMRC AGM Meeting Minutes - Sept 17, 2025

LOCATION: RAC Headquarters

PRESENT: 46 participants (26 live and 20 online)

CALL TO ORDER: 19:16 (meeting start delayed due to ZOOM problems)

1. GREETINGS: GUESTS AND NEW MEMBERS: Guests.--None **New Members.**-- Brenda VA3HNB and online Stephan VA3SJL, John VE3ACI

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Moved: Norm VE3LC, **Seconded:** Marcel VE3MNO **Carried**.

3.NEWS AND HAPPENINGS

A: Official opening of the VE3RAC RAC headquarters ham shack was held on September 5. The setup is great with a new FLEX 8600 and a new ICOM IC-7760. Some of the antennas are still being worked on and should be done soon.

B: On September 27 there will be a POTA event for the club to be held in Casselman after the hamfest wraps up there at 12:30. The POTA start time will be 13:30 and finish at 15:00. The location is the High Falls Conservation Area on the west side of the river.

C: On September 27 and 28 there will be RAC AUX COMM. Registration is on the oarc.net web site. Also on the web site are details on the prerequisite course for the Ontario Volunteer Corps. The course may take 2 hours to complete.

4. FIELD DAY 2025

Presented by Norm VE3LC. The Field Day took place on June 27 to 29 at the Cumberland Heritage Village Museum (same place as last year). ARRL rules were followed for this event, and VE3JW was the event call sign. The classification was 2AB and we used the HF bands and 6 and 2 meters. All radios were run from batteries at QRP power levels with modes of FT4/FT8 and CW for 10X multiplier bonus points. There was a lone voice contact on 2 meters that received no multiplier. The contact score was 4930 from 494 contacts, with 1200 bonus points for various things that were done for a total score of 6130 points. This is better than last year where we had 4140 total points. This year there were 9 entities in Canada and the US that submitted scores to the ARRL in our 2AB class. Our ranking is not yet known but will be published in the December QST. For coverage there were 86 possible sections and we managed to contact 62 of them.

Norm's electric car provided power to the auxiliary equipment for 24 hours, and used up 7% of the car's battery capacity. Solar panels were used to power the FT4/FT8 radio. One voice call was made to satellite SO-124 for a bonus of 100 points. The antenna was pointed at the satellite using the phone app "look4sat".

5. Committee Chair Reports:

A: Financial summary by Nicole VE3GIQ. The bank balance is $5165.99 cash with an additional $15,645 in a GIC. 47 membership renewals have come in so far with more coming in slowly. There were around 150 members last year so we should expect about the same this time.

B: MS BIKE event presented by Nicole VE3GIQ. MS Canada raised $305,000 from this event. They were assisted by 22 amateur radio volunteers, with 4 mobile stations and 2 unmanned beacons on mobile vehicles. There were no major incidents and the event went well. Lots of photos are posted on groups.io and there is an article on the OARC web site. More technical details will be presented at the October meeting.

C: Summer POTA activations presented by John VA3JYK. We did 2 POTA events this summer. First was at Bate Island on July 19 with 21 members attending. Second was at Rockliffe And The Rockeries on August 30 with 24 members attending.

6: OVMRC Meeting Location: The wonderful new facilities at the IBEW were visited by Rob and next month we may be meeting there. Watch for the official invite though as there could be construction delays.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting ended at 20:15, moved by Bill VA3HWA and seconded by Timothy VE3TXB.

Minutes prepared by Donald, VA3ZZI, secretary@ovmrc.ca

OVMRC 2025-2026 Budget Forecast

You will find below the budget forecast worksheet used by your executive to determine figures for this year's budget. It includes background and historic figures which assisted your executive in planning the FY 25/26 budget.

This note explains how to interpret the table. First there are 4 major sections. The first and last sections are **Assets** and **Liabilities**. These figures are accurate to Sep 29th, the day before the planning meeting. Their sum is at the bottom of the worksheet, $23,014 and represents the club's <u>net worth</u>. This provides a background for deliberations. The sections **Income** and **Expenses** contain the actual <u>budgetary forecast</u>, in the last two columns labelled **Credit** and **Debit**. They are summed at the bottom of the worksheet separately, and totalled to show a Surplus of $89.

The first two numeric columns represent last year's forecast and actual values at year's end in each category. The **Actuals** 25/26 are figures "to date" this year. Together these three columns inform the executive on numbers to expect this year.

I hope this clarifies how to interpret the proposed budget. We will discuss at the October meeting and answer your questions.

Nicole

VE3GIQ / Treasurer

Budget Forecast for FY 25/26

		2024 / 2025		2025 / 2026		
		Forecast	Actuals	Actuals 09-29	Forecast (Credit)	Forecast (Debit)
1) Assets						
	1.1 Bank & Cash		$4,733.50	$5,299.14		
	1.2 GIC (principal) – Note A			$15,645.00		
	1.3 Bulk Inventory – Note B			$2,145.48		
	1.4 Equipment – Note C		$1,359.36			
2) Income						
	2.1 GIC Interest	$675.00	$675.00		$532.00	
	2.2 Memberships	$3,145.00	$3,245.00	$1,465.00	$3,245.00	
	2.3 Bulk Sales – Note D	$1,500.00	$1,010.27	$29.39	$1,000.00	
	2.4 Donations to Club – Note E	$500.00	$125.00			
3) Expenses						
	3.1 Bank Charges – Note F	-$72.00	-$72.34	-$6.05		$73.00
	3.2 Bulk Purchase – Note G	-$1,500.00	-$2,165.17			$1,000.00
	3.3 Post Box Rental – Note H	-$235.00	$236.17			$240.00
	3.4 RAC Insurance – Note I	-$800.00	-$679.32			$700.00
	3.5 RAC Affiliation	-$27.95	-$27.95			$27.95
	3.6 Zoom Leasing – Note J	-$291.00	-$296.46	-$121.42		$121.42
	3.7 Shipping – Note K		-$45.81			$50.00
	3.8 ARISS – Note L	-$140.00	-$144.49			$150.00
	3.9 AMSAT – Note M	-$140.00	-$144.49			$150.00
	3.10 DARF	-$200.00	-$200.00			$300.00
	3.11 RAC Foundation	-$200.00	-$200.00			$200.00
	3.12 RAC HQ Donation – Note N	-$500.00	-$100.00			$100.00
	3.13 Food & Drink	-$400.00	-$119.53	-$7.41		$200.00
	3.14 Yr. end Mbr Prizes	-$700.00	-$683.67			$800.00
	3.15 Christmas Door Prizes					$50.00
	3.16 Awards Program					$100.00
	3.17 Repeaters & Networking	-$100.00				$100.00
	3.18 Domain Hosting / Registr	-$456.00	-$277.77	-$227.26		$250.00
	3.19 Software Tools	-$140.00				
4) Liabilities						
	4.1 Accounts Payable			-$75.40		$75.40
	4.2 Prepaid Memberships					
	Assets & Liabilities	$23,014.22		**Forecast Totals**	$4,777.00	$4,687.77
	Surplus/Deficit	$89.23				

NOTES:

A - re-invested the interest. Matures Jan 8th @ 3.4%

B - effective Aug 31, 2025 correction -$174.25 on Sep 25?

C - only assets being tracked since Sept 2017

D - sales are diminishing

E - radio repair / member donation

F - charges for cash deposit

G - shipping not included.

H - should be due soon

I - FY 24/25 less than forecast. Likely to go up

J - paid to Sept 2026

K - on bulk items

L - $100 USD

M - $100 USD

N - Was food for Winter Contest

RAC Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS) Course: Rob, VE3RXH

On the weekend of Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th September Jason Tremblay (VE3JXT), the Community Services Officer from Radio Amateurs of Canada presented the new Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS) course to 20 local amateur radio operators who are willing to volunteer their time as an AUXCOMM operator, many of them are OVMRC and/or OARC members. It was great to see the commitment from local hams to serve our communities in this way.

Course material covered the structure and organisation of different types of disaster or community support responses and how amateur radio and AUXCOMM radio operators might be used to support the response, as well as how to create an Incident Radio Communications Plan with appropriate radios and frequency/mode allocations.

The attendees conducted some very relevant practical exercises on the second day to look at responses for a variety of public service and emergency situations, culminating with setting up an HF station and making contacts using the RAC/ Ontario Volunteer Corps fly-away communication packs.

These packs include a comprehensive set of Icom HF and VHF radios, antennas, feedline and portable power. There is also a satellite terminal and the kit contains many other features not listed here.

Photo 1: RAC/Ontario Volunteer Corps fly-away communication packs seen at the OARC Hamfest in September 2025 (full kit not shown). On the left is a Dakota lithium power pack with inverter. The middle Pelican case would contain both Icom IC-7300 HF and Icom IC-9700 VHF/UHF radios. A Chameleon multiband vertical antenna is shown on top of the Pelican case and other antennas are included. A portable pack (front, centre) contains an Icom IC-705 QRP portable radio. Icom handhelds, ID-52s with spare batteries are included along with a portable satellite terminal and other communications equipment.

Photo 2 – Course attendee, Chris (VA3CJO) makes an HF contact after the class set up a Chameleon vertical antenna, coax, Icom IC-7300 with LDG AT-200 external automatic antenna tuner and portable power from a Dakota Lithium power pack – all from the fly-away kit.

Future courses are expected to be run in the area and RAC are looking for additional instructors. Contact Jason (VE3JXT) on community@rac.ca and keep a watchful eye on the website at https://www.rac.ca/rac-auxiliary-communications-communicator-course.

Rob

VE3RXH

Official Opening of VE3RHQ: Rob, VE3RXH

On the evening of Friday September 5th certificates of appreciation were presented by Allan Boyd (VE3AJB/VE3EM), the President of Radio Amateurs of Canada to Craig Delmage (VE3OP) (unable to attend) and Mike Kelly (VE3FFK) for their contribution to raising funds, acquiring equipment and installing the radios, feedline and antennas to get VE3RHQ operational. Following this presentation Allan Boyd (VE3AJB/VE3EM) officially opened the new RAC HQ operating station, VE3RHQ. Roger Egan (VA3EGY), President of OARC and I also had the opportunity to say a few words.

Also of note was the gathering of Allan Boyd (VE3AJB/VE3EM) and RAC Regional Directors from across Canada for the RAC Annual General Meeting held on September 6 at the Carp Fairground immediately after the OARC Hamfest. The event was live streamed on Zoom and is now available to view on the RAC YouTube channel:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5-MIDZzA3k

Some photos of the presentation and station are included below.

Rob, VE3RXH

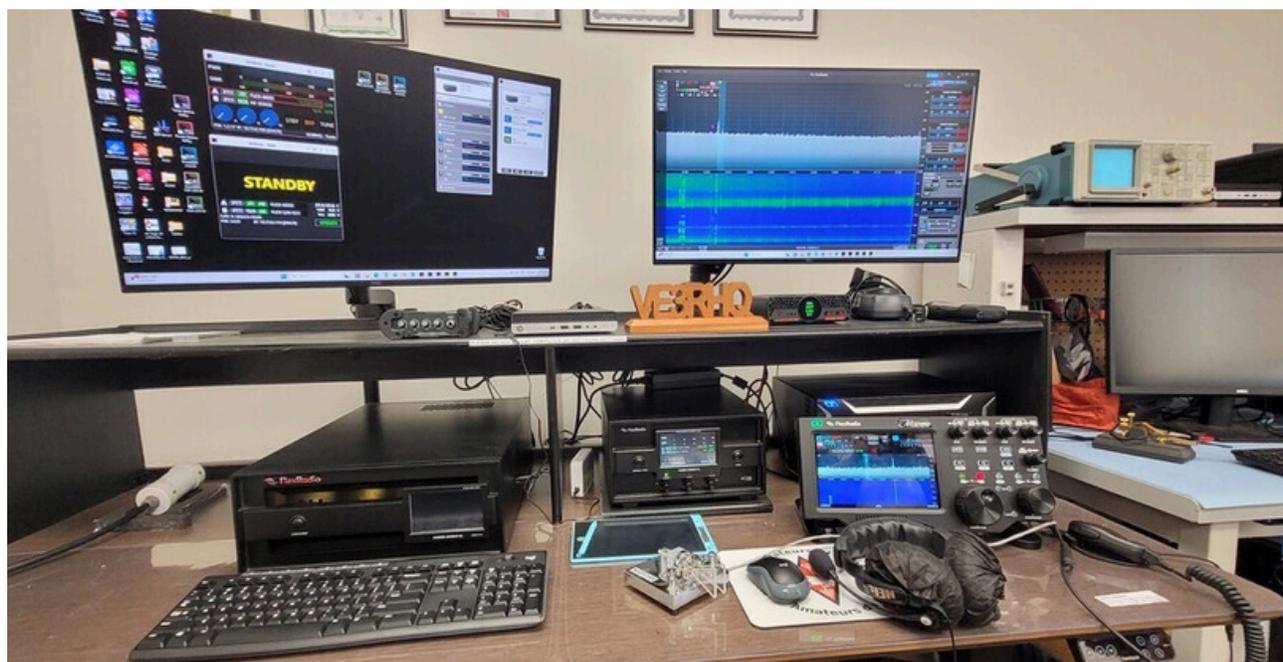**PHOTO 1:** PRESENTATION OF THE CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION TO MIKE KELLY (VE3FFK).

PHOTO 2: FLEX RADIO STATION.

PHOTO 3: FLEX RADIO MAESTRO CONTROL HEAD.

PHOTO 4: FLEX RADIO 8600 BODY.

PHOTO 5: FLEX RADIO TUNER.

PHOTO 6: FLEX RADIO AMP.

PHOTO 7: ICOM IC-7760 STATION.

PHOTO 8: ICOM IC-7760 CONTROL HEAD.

PHOTO 9: ICOM IC-7760 BODY

PLEASE NOTE: ICOM AMPLIFIER SHOWN IN DETAIL

VE3RHQ IS A CALL SIGN MAINTAINED BY RADIO AMATEURS OF CANADA (RAC) FOR USE IN CONTESTS AND SPECIAL EVENTS HOSTED AT THE RAC HEADQUARTERS IN OTTAWA, ONTARIO, CANADA.

RADIO AMATEURS OF CANADA SPONSORS TWO RADIO SPORT CONTESTS EACH YEAR. THE RAC CANADA DAY CONTEST CELEBRATING CANADA'S BIRTHDAY ON CONFEDERATION DAY, JULY 1, 2025 - 00:00:00 UTC TO 23:59:59 UTC, AND A CELEBRATION OF THE WINTER HOLIDAY SEASON WITH THE CANADA WINTER CONTEST, DECEMBER 20, 2025 – 00:00:00 UTC TO 23:59:59 UTC.

AMATEURS ALL OVER THE WORLD ARE INVITED TO JOIN US IN THESE CELEBRATIONS.

Summer POTA Camping Trips: Don VA3ZZI

This summer I went POTA camping to two campgrounds, Upper Canada Migratory Bird Sanctuary Campground (CA-0419) and Silver Lake Provincial Park (CA-0391). This article reflects my experiences at both campgrounds. I recommend both places as ideal for POTA camping expeditions.

For POTA and for good camping it is very important to pick the right camping site. Both of these campgrounds have a web site with maps and photos of each site. I would recommend that you always check out the site you may be booking in advance as some of the sites are not suitable. An appropriate site will be of a proper size for your gear, trees for shade and antennas, are reasonably flat while being unlikely to flood.

It is a good idea to choose a site without electrical services nearby!! Campers with air conditioners usually go for sites with electricity to run the A/C. I have observed that air conditioners can be run 24 hours a day, even when the temperature outside goes below 10 degrees! These units may generate electrical noise that will interfere with your radios, as well as being just plain noisy and unpleasant to be around.

The photo above is my home made arborist's throwing bag tied to a bucket of electrician's pull string for setting up my long wire antenna. The bucket will dispense the string as fast as the bag can be thrown, and with minimal resistance to limit the bag's flight. The bag uses a loop of university swag webbing for tying the string to, and a tail for gripping the bag for throwing. This is great for getting the antenna wire high up in the trees.

Another important item is a 16 foot mast that straps to the side of my camper as seen in the picture below. The mast works well with my 41 foot end fed wire antenna. The mast is made from four sections of four foot army surplus tent poles sold by Princess Auto for around $7 each. The second section has two guy ropes attached to the trailer tongue and the rear bumper. There is also foam padding used to prevent mast damage to the trailer body. The topmost section has a pulley for hoisting up the coax and matching transformer and three guy ropes going to tent pegs in the ground keep the mast going straight up.

Upper Canada Migratory Bird Sanctuary (CA-0419) has a nice beach, good hiking trails, excellent bike paths nearby, and plenty of geese that wander around like they own the place. The picture above is site 115 at the campground. Sites 101 through 115 in this campground have no electrical services nearby, and have great water front views of the St Lawrence River. These sites are all generously sized with suitable antenna holding trees. I recommend these sites over all the others in the campground.

I was able to set up my radio on the kitchen table where I had a nice view of the St Lawrence River. However atmospheric conditions were poor and I was not able to make enough contacts for an activation on the first day. A different issue occurred on the second day my adult children showed up and thus I was unable to get back on the radio. Lesson learned, do not bring non-hams on a POTA trip…..

Silver Lake Provincial Campground (CA-0391) sits on Highway seven past Perth. The photo below is a view of the lake in the morning. It is large and great for fishing, swimming, snorkelling and paddling.

For picking a camp site here I can only recommend sites in the "Algonquin Campground section" as the other two sections are too close to the highway. Trucks and heavy traffic on Highway seven never stop and neither does the very loud road noise. Also there is no electrical service in the "Algonquin Campground section" to cause electrical noise. This particular site below (#145) is long and ideally suited for a long wire antenna.

I had much better luck getting contacts at Silver Lake Provincial Campground (CA-0391), making 99 contacts, mostly in the US and Canada, and including Argentina, Venezuela, and Germany. I was averaging around one contact every three minutes. I made most of the contacts on 40 m and 15 m.

I definitely plan to return to both of these campgrounds next year. This time I only stayed a couple of days at each place, but next year I hope to stay 4 or 5 days in each park.

Until camping starts again next summer

73…..Donald VA3ZZI

Ottawa-Gatineau PACNET: How a Simple Conversation Sparked a Local Packet Revival

Ante Laurijssen, VA2BBW <va2bbw@gmail.com>

Do you remember vinyl records? I'm a little bit too young to have been there in their heyday, but growing up they were still around. They weren't cool though. CDs were just taking off and cassette tapes, though still the norm, were starting their decline. Being a staunch non-conformist and a classic rock enthusiast, I was more than happy to take over my mom's old LPs, and spent a couple of Great Glebe Garage Sales rummaging through old milk crates, looking for albums to add to my collection.

Thirty years later, vinyls are a thing. They are cool. My twelve year old son asked for a record player for his birthday, along with LPs of his favourite rappers. Showing him how this all worked was a trip down memory lane for me, and a brand new exciting experience for him.

Well, it looks like the same phenomenon is happening here locally on our 2-meter band. Except we aren't talking about vinyl records here, but packet radio.

A seed gets planted

"I'm also on packet." said Louis. "There isn't much going on, but there are still a couple of BBS nodes with some activity."

I met Louis, VA3LUI, at one of the Friday McDonald's meet-ups during my summer holidays. How we got to the subject of packet radio, I don't remember. But what's certain is that his comment struck a chord. There was something about using radio to check into a bulletin board system that sounded fun. Not having a computer at home until I was about fourteen years old, I had completely missed the computer BBS era. But I had friends who were on them, and I always envied them. Maybe this was my chance to recapture that feeling, a mix of nostalgia and newness.

The seed sprouts

Getting onto packet radio was not that difficult, but it did require a bit of research and getting familiar with some concepts. But once that was done the hardest part was getting the hardware and software setup. Really, all you need is an FM VHF transceiver and a way to pipe audio into it. If it has VOX capabilities, you don't really need to worry about anything else. If it doesn't, then you need to figure out a way to trigger the PTT. But if you are setup to do FT8 or any other digital mode, it's really not any different.

Once that was done, I was able to start exploring. Although internet resources are badly outdated when it comes to what's going on on packet radio locally, I was able to find a couple of BBSs: VE3OCE-1 on 145.030 MHz and VA3OFS-1 on 145.010 MHz. This was so cool I just had to share it with others!

The seed spreads

Some of you may not know, but Ken VA2TXZ runs a very active Discord server for local radio amateurs. It is THE place to share ideas and discuss everything radio-related. So naturally, I posted a few things about what I was doing on packet, and how fun it was. All I expected were a few polite replies of "Cool!" or "Sounds like fun Ante." But people seemed genuinely interested! They started asking questions, building interfaces for their radios, and actually getting on the air via packet. BBSs started to see increased traffic and posts, and people were digipeating all the way to Deep River and back.

This also caught the ears and eyes of the original packeteers, those that had been on packet during its prime in the eighties and nineties. Some dusted off their old TNCs and computers (yes, old computers, just ask Dave VE3KMV) and started exploring again. Some jumped back in but with the modern software TNCs. This was the start of a local packet revival.

A flower emerges

With all of this renewed interest, I had to do something to bring all of these people together. I wanted to find a way to have everyone converge on packet and chat. Well, we have nets on voice, why couldn't we do it on packet? And so the Ottawa-Gatineau PACNET was born.

Nets on packet are not that different than voice nets, especially when going through a digipeater. They both have a net control station (NCS) who calls for check-ins. NCS then goes through the list, everyone has a turn, and then the net ends. It's that easy, really. I mean, we usually don't type as fast as we talk, so we have to be a little more patient. But that's about it.

OK, there are a few concepts you need to wrap your head around first though. So let me address the two biggest sticking points: Unproto/unconnected/converse mode, and sending your packet via the digipeater.

Unconnected/Unproto/Converse mode

In order to understand "unconnected" mode, we first have to understand the usual packet mode which is "connected". Packet works in a similar way to the way we connect to a website. We send a packet to another station, it sends us an acknowledgement packet, and we are connected. The packets that are sent will be flowing back and forth between these nodes, with a similar handshake each time.

In "unconnected" mode, the handshake is completely done away with and the packets are just sent into the aether as is, with no specific recipient. This is how one would call "CQ" on packet, and it's also what we use for the packet net. This way everyone can see/hear the packets going around without having to establish a connection with every other net participant. The downside to this is that there is no handshake and thus no retransmit if there is collision with another packet. It's the same as when two stations transmit at the same time on a voice net. Sometimes we hear only one of them, other times we hear neither.

Sending via a digipeater

Those of you who have started to play around with packet are probably connecting to local BBSs and maybe even connecting with other amateurs directly. If you have tried to hop around on 145.010 MHz to get all the way to Deep River, you will have had to use at least one digipeater hop. Well, sending an unproto packet via a digipeater is not any different. You just have to make sure that the node is part of the "destination" field in your settings. The way to enter it in is different from one piece of software to the other, but if you consult the manual you should be able to find out how to do it.

Once you have figured everything out, you will be ready to join the Ottawa-Gatineau PACNET every Friday evening at 19h30 local time on 145.030 MHz, via the VE3OCE digipeater.

A garden of packets

I promise, that's my last plant-based title! But it is apropos. With everyone now getting on this old-school mode and spreading the word, we have a real packet garden growing around the area. With all this cross-pollination going on with different groups and interests, it has the potential of turning into a beautifully landscaped community garden.

Back in the heyday of packet radio, one could hop from node to node across the country, or easily send a message halfway around the world. More than a garden, it was a forest of packet nodes covering the globe. Since then, the birth and growth of this thing we call the internet has caused pretty significant packet deforestation. Our packet ecosystem is but a shell of what it once was. However, with renewed interest in emergency communications and Winlink email, we have the opportunity to plant some more seeds and saplings and replenish that once grandiose packet forest.

A few useful links

So you are interested in getting on packet too? That's wonderful! Here are a few links for those of you who need a little hand setting things up.

Windows

- **Soundmodem and Easyterm Download**
  https://uz7.ho.ua/packetradio.htm
- **Quick guide to installing and configuring Soundmodem and Easyterm**
  http://rickmega.com/NBEMS/UZ7HO_Setup.pdf
- **Another Easyterm tutorial**
  https://www.qsl.net/nf4rc/EasyTermTutorial.pdf
- **Groups.io Soundmodem and Easyterm with some simple tutorials**
  https://groups.io/g/UZ7HO-Easyterm-Soundmodem-Software/messages?start=1:2025:240

Linux

- **Direwolf** https://github.com/wb2osz/direwolf
- **Direwolf configuration** https://themodernham.com/ultimate-direwolf-tnc-installation-guide-for-windows-and-linux/
- **Linpac terminal** https://sourceforge.net/projects/linpac/
- **Linpac configuration** https://groups.io/g/network105/topic/linpac_guide_first_draft/81304642
- **Paracon terminal** https://github.com/mfncooper/paracon
- **Paracon guide** https://paracon.readthedocs.io/en/latest/

MacOS

I'm sorry, but you're a little bit on your own for this one. I don't have a Mac, have rarely used a Mac, and don't have access to a Mac.

That being said, you can probably follow the same, or similar steps you would if you were running Linux.
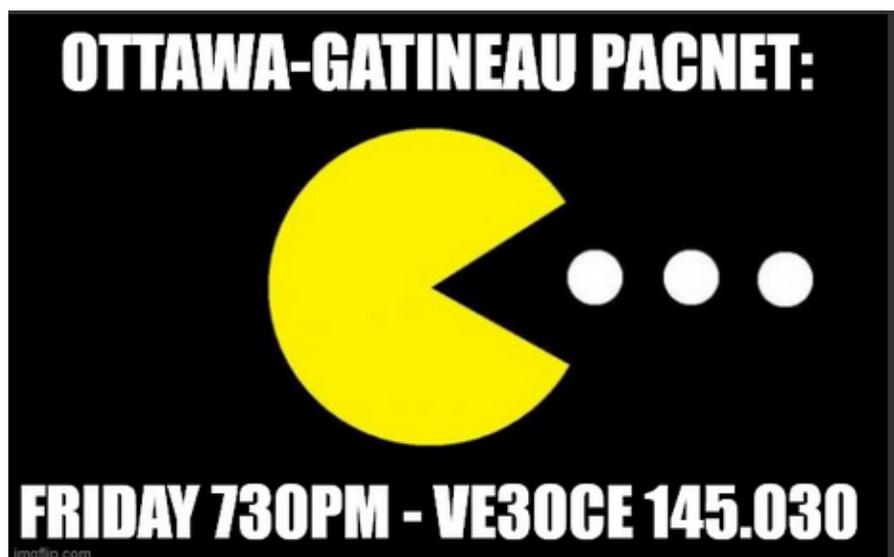
Disconnect/Bye

I know, packet is old and slow. It has its limitations. But it also has lots going for it and its tons of fun. And thanks to the previous work and effort of local emergency groups we still have a pretty robust packet network with decent coverage. We also had a new node recently spring up with the appearance of VE3AVP. And don't forget about Winlink too! Sure, you can use VARA for that, but that's a closed source protocol and runs on software that requires you to pay for the full set of features. Packet is open, and doesn't cost a thing.

Just like the vinyl revival of the last fifteen years, this local packet revival could have some staying power. And I hope the Ottawa-Gatineau PACNET can help keep the momentum going.

Have fun fellow packeteers!

POTA X to Z or How NOT To Do POTA
(POTA   Misadventures) Russ VE3FSN/VE3YOW

So, after being off the air for more years than I want to say, I decided it was time to get back into the hobby. No problem. I could put up the old Dentron 4V vertical, haul out the RG-213 and the venerable Yaesu FT-101E. I hooked everything up and tuned to 20 metres. S9 noise?? What the heck? So, onto plan B. I went outside with a hank of wire, put up a long wire, attached it to the MFJ tuner and went back to 20 metres. S9 noise?? Sigh! I decided the old 101E must be long past its prime.

I then inquired of SWMBO (she who must be obeyed), may I buy a radio. Sure, she says, go for it. I then researched, read, inquired…..the Yaesu FT-991A seemed to be the best base/mobile choice. How much can that….HOLEY FREHOLES….THAT much? Gulp, back to the missus. OK, go for it.

Pretty radio! I hooked it up, went to 20. S9 noise !^%&&* What the??? OK, don't panic. I had heard about people operating something called POTA in parks. I first had to find out what POTA was. I chatted with Earnest VA3EWV, a former church member, and great POTAist. He explained and said I should buy the M750-JNCRadio antenna for POTA work. OK. Jeepers Creepers, seriously! I went back to her, and the antenna was ordered.

Now, I asked myself, how are you going to power this thing? I was getting in too far now to back out; 12 volt battery, charger and Anderson Powerpoles showed up next.

Now I headed off to the wilds of the backyard, set everything up, still S9 noise, but this FT8 thing seemed to work like a charm.

Tuesday Sept 16 broke warm and clear. I grabbed the radio, cables, computer, battery, log sheets and off to P18 I went. Set it all up. Nadda. Zip. Arghhh! It's an old laptop and it must have slipped enough on the time setting that the software wouldn't decode anything. I had meant to resync the time before leaving but….. I tore it all down, luckily, it's was only 5 minutes from home. I set it up at home, resynced the time, it decoded perfectly, went back, hooked it up again. SUCCESS! I reached for the log…...sheets are on my desk at home. Oh well, there was paper in the truck. I grabbed a pen, dry. Grabbed another, dry. I went through 6 pens, finally settling on a pencil. Oh well, in the end I made 10 contacts on 20 using FT8 and chatted with a passerby.

Wednesday Sept 17 (Mer Bleue Bog Conservation Reserve #1) was again warm and clear. THIS time I made sure I had log sheets, pencils, mouse pad and even a blurb in case anyone asks what I am up to. 40 metres was good, 14 contacts, but running out of contacts. Time to QSY to 20 metres. I dropped the vertical, removed the loading coil, raised antenna and tuned up the transmitter. Odd, the computer screen was blank, it had never gone to sleep before. Battery was DEAD. Arghhh. Oh well, had a great time, back to it next day.

Thursday September 18 (Mer Bleue Bog Conservation Reserve #2) and another great day. 20 contacts on 20 metres, chatted with a few people who wondered what the bird chirping was, handed out three POTA brochures and was still getting called when I decided to call it a day.

I can say that I had a lot of fun. The first time out I was nervous, very disorganized and slightly dyslexic; hitting the wrong radio button and sending the wrong messages. I was expecting a hoard of people with pitch forks ready to accuse me of being a spy and running me out of the park. The second time was really fun up until the computer battery died. Oh well, at least a second battery won't cost that much and SWMBO won't know.

In closing, POTA is a hoot and certainly the way to go if you live in the burbs and have a high noise level.

Russ
VE3FSN/VE3YOW

Quick Tip: SOTA/POTA/WFF self-spotting via APRS, Michael VE3WMB

If you have an APRS compatible radio and find yourself with poor or non-existent cell data service you can potentially spot yourself via APRS using APSPOT.

The syntax for a spot, sent to callsign "APSPOT" is:
"!<Activity> <Ref> <Frequency In MHz> <Mode> <Comment(Optional)>"

Here is an example:
To: APSPOT
Message Body: !pota ca-5095 7.032 cw qrp rocks

This will self-spot you on POTA using your APRS callsign (set in your radio) on CW at 7.032 Mhz from CA-5095 (Central Experimental Farm) with the comment "qrp rocks"

Note that APSPOT is case insensitive, which simplifies message input. Lots of other features are available including the ability to query spots as well (see attached photos). Note that APSPOT also supports both WFF and SOTA.

More details available at: https://apspot.radio/

Cheers, Michael VE3WMB

OVMRC Net Activity, Check-ins for September, 2025

Prepared by: Hugo Kneve VE3KTN

OVMRC 2 Metre Net: VE3OCE 146.880- 136.5 Hz. tone, Thursdays 8 p.m. local.

September 4	September 11	September 18	September 25
VE3KTN - NCS	VE3KTN - NCS	VE3KTN - NCS	VE3KTN - NCS
New & Visitors	**New & Visitors**	**New & Visitors**	**New & Visitors**
Xavier - VA2XRS	Arthur – K4PEI Steve – WV2Z		Josh - VE3EAM Al - VE2JT
Check-ins	**Check-ins**	**Check-ins**	**Check-ins**
VE3RUU VE3RXH VE3FSN VE3KJQ VA3IAH VE3LC VE3CWM[1] VA2OJD VA3CMG VE3NA VA3PSI VA3ODW VE3RRB VA3CJO VE3KAE VA3LMA VE3ZZU VE3OTW VE3LAF	VA3FCQ VE3OTW VE3RUU VE3RXH VE3FSN VE3KJQ VA3IAH VE3VIG VE3LC VE3OKD VE3NPO VA3WEX VA3UAC VE3NA VA3ODW VE3KAE VE3CWM[1] VA3CJO VE3KNU VE3LAF	VE3RUU VE3RXH VE3FSN VE3KJQ VA3IAH VE3LC VE3CWM[1] VA2OJD VA3CMG VE3NA VA3PSI VA3ODW VE3RRB VA2XRS VA3CJO VE3KAE VA3LMA VE3ZZU VE3OTW VE3LAF	VE3RUU VE3OTW VE3FSN VE3LC VA3ZZI VA3CJO VE3KAE VE3NA VE3NPO VE3ZZU VE3RRB VE3TXB VA3BVO VE3CWM[1] VA3ODW VE3RXN VE3KJQ VE3RXH VA2BBW VE3VIG VE3LAF VA3HBL

Notes:

VE3CWM is the "Diefenbunker" Cold War Museum station operated by volunteer radio amateurs of the National Capital Region.

1 -   Norman, VE3NPP at the mic

OVMRC Pothole Net: 3760 kHz. LSB Sunday mornings at 10 a.m. local.

September 7 SFI:146 A:26	September 14 SFI:118 A:6	September 21 SFI:166 A:5	September 28 SFI:164 A:6
VE3EJJ - NCS	VE3EJJ - NCS	VE3EJJ - NCS	VE3EJJ - NCS
New & Visitors	**New & Visitors**	**New & Visitors**	**New & Visitors**
Check-ins	**Check-ins**	**Check-ins**	**Check-ins**
VA3EO VE3RHQ[1] VE3KTN	VA2TXZ VE3KTN VA2IAH	VA2TXZ VE3LC VE3SYZ VE3KTN	VE3KTN

The "SFI" and "A" values are the Solar Flux Index and Geomagnetic A-Index respectively as reported on the N0NBH Space Weather web site: https://www.hamqsl.com/solar.html. Values are taken within 30 minutes prior to net start time.

Notes:

VE3RHQ is the Radio Amateurs of Canada HQ station operated by volunteer radio amateurs of the National Capital Region.

1 -   Fred, VE3LAF at the mic

OVMRC Pot Lid CW Net: 50.090 MHz. Sunday evenings at 7:30 p.m. Ottawa local.

September 7	September 14	September 21	September 28
VE3KTN - NCS	VE3LC - NCS	VA2BBW - NCS	VE3FFK - NCS
New & Visitors	**New & Visitors**	**New & Visitors**	**New & Visitors**
Check-ins	**Check-ins**	**Check-ins**	**Check-ins**
VA2BBW VE3RHQ[1] VE3LC	VE3KTN VA2BBW VE3QO VE3FFK	VE3KTN VE3LC VE3FFK VE3QO VA2OJD	VA2BBW VE3KTN VE3LC

Notes:

VE3RHQ is the Radio Amateurs of Canada HQ station operated by volunteer radio amateurs of the National Capital Region.

1 -   Mike, VE3FFK at the key

General Links of Interest:

ARDF Ottawa

Go t-hunting with ARDF
(Amateur Radio Direction
Finding) Ottawa

RCJ

Volunteer radio ops help
scouts on the Rideau
Challenge Journey

New Hams Ottawa

Information for new hams with
an Ottawa focus

Editor's Note:

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73, Alan VA3IAH