



YMCA JOHN ISLAND

Fall 2017

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER



The Newsletter of the Alumni of YMCA John Island Camp is published semi-annually to help keep alumni connected and involved with the camp.

What's New at Camp?

It is always exciting to learn of new developments at camp and this fall a number of new and exciting changes are being planned. We are highlighting some of these changes in this newsletter, but stay tuned as John Island Camp continues to improve and provide top notch camping experiences for youth!

Upgrading Continues

Thanks the continuing work done each spring by the students from Lasalle Secondary School in Sudbury, the Forest Greenway cabin will be renovated to bring it up to the standard of all other John Island cabins. The building was originally brought over from another YMCA camp located on Galliard Island in Lake Ramsey in Sudbury. Camp Y'Land closed in the early 1970's and a few of their buildings were brought over to John Island at that time. Two other buildings that were originally part of the Camp Y'Land campus are the John Island Health Centre and the Outtripping Food Building.

New Quad Added to Fleet

Not too many years ago, most heavy things such as luggage and food orders were brought to the campsite from our dock by one of several tractors in the camp's evolution of vehicles. They were noisy, slow and not particularly good for the environment. Around the turn of the century, two slightly used quads were donated to the camp and what a change.! After several years of very heavy usage, they were starting to show signs of wear and tear, but were still doing the jobs demanded of them. However, thanks to benevolent alumni, a brand new quad has been added to our small fleet of vehicles at camp.

Thanks to the continuing generosity of our alumni, items such as the new quad help keep our camp in good operating condition.



Gagaball—Simple, Economical and Extremely Popular

Close to 10 years ago a gagaball pit was built and added to the programs available to campers at John Island. It took 16 pieces of 2" by 8" board, a few scraps of 2" by 4" and screw . Gagaball quickly became one of the most popular activities at the camp and continues to grow in popularity across the country today.

Gagaball is an adaptation of dodgeball. Virtually any number of kids can get inside the octagonal court, throw a soft rubber ball the size of a volleyball into the air to bounce in the centre of the court and the game is on. Players can only touch the ball once and then throw it to hit another player below the knees. Once you are hit, you are out and the game continues until only one player is left. Games seldom last more than 4 to 5 minutes and then a new game starts. Players police the game themselves and often add a new rule or two themselves to suit their group.

At John Island, the original pit was build near the dining hall and campers can jump in and play just about anytime they are free to participate in a game. In Sudbury, Alexander Public School had a fundraising event and the students voted on where the money would go and 80% voted for a Gagaball pit. They had enough money to have 2 pits built.

Our own court has been well used and is starting to show signs of wear and tear and will be replaced this year with a new court. This is another example of how contributions from alumni to the John Island Capital Fund keep the camp current and in good shape.

One of two new Gagaball courts at a local Sudbury school.



John Island Loses a Great Friend



For several years, Murray Low (fondly known as “Mur-dog” by camp staff) was lead carpenter in the reconstruction of John Island. When you picture a John Island building, Murray most likely worked on it. Murray was involved in the rebuilding of most of our camper cabins, the dining hall, composting toilets, and docks. He was well known for his teasing, sense of humour and positivity. For many years Murray worked with Peter Lucano and students from LaSalle Secondary School to build most of the new camper cabins, helping teach them excellence in carpentry.

Murray was one of the best at his trade. He was fair, hard working and a master problem solver. He cared about the camp not only in the calibre of his work but he strongly believed in what the camp was built for and what it meant to the thousands of youth who benefited from the camp experience. John Island Camp was important to Murray and it showed in his work and in his life. He will be dearly missed but his work will be of incredible value to the camp for years to come. Murray’s wife and children – Maureen, Maggie, Nick and Doug – would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all who generously donated to John Island Camp in Murray’s memory.

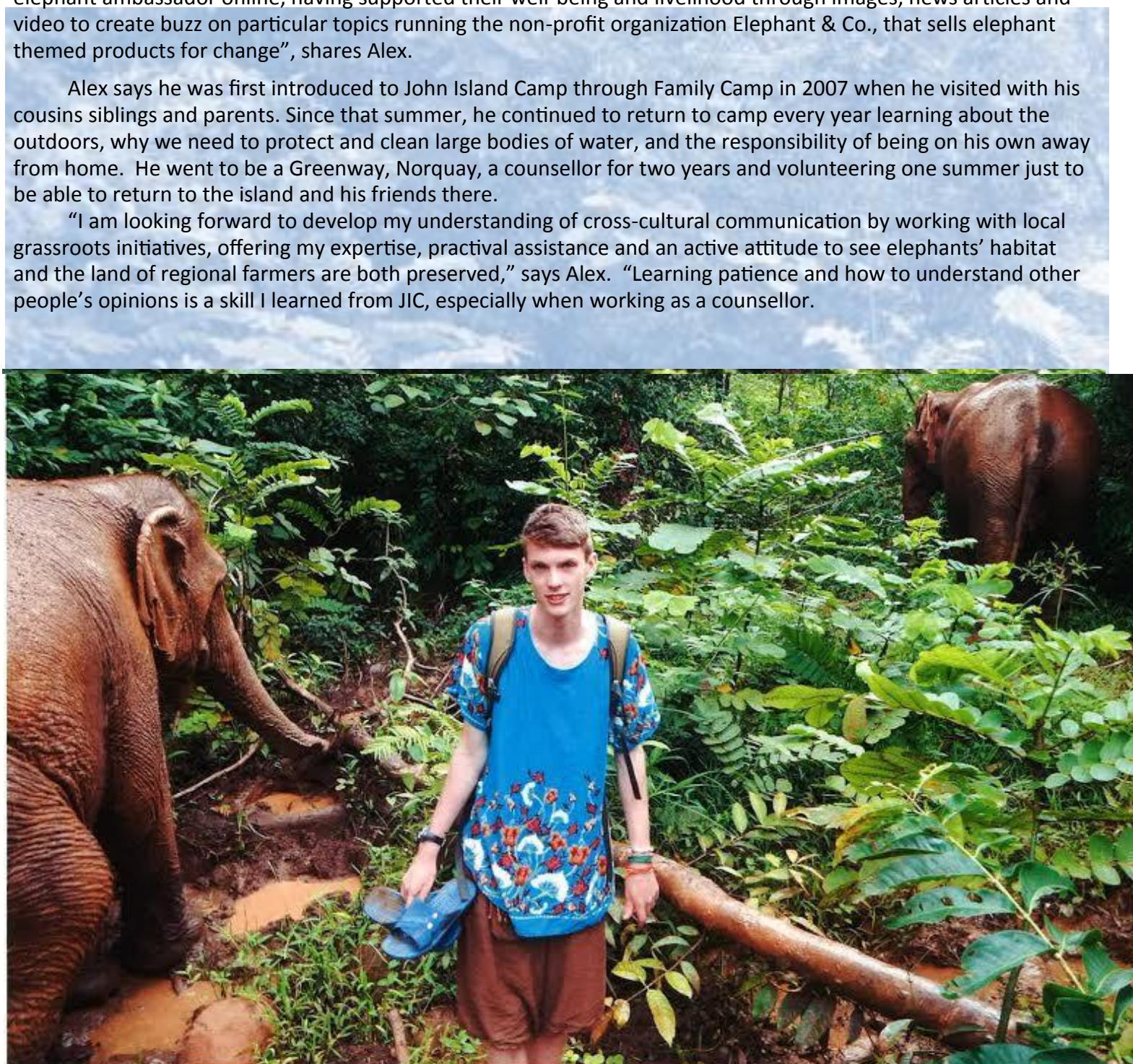
Alex Leonard Goes to Sri Lanka on Scholarship

The winner of a Conservation and Wildlife Volunteer Abroad Scholarship, JIC Alumni, Alex Leonard will be heading to Sri Lanka in April and will be immersed in the wild to assist elephants in danger from human conflict. His trip will be supported by the World Nomads and Global Travel Academy.

Alex has become an environmental journalist and “Elephant Ambassador” with a passion for protecting our planet’s wildlife and ecosystem. “Throughout my studies at Concordia University, I focused on ethics toward the environment which motivates my daily living practices and habits to be more ecological”, says Alex. “I am an active elephant ambassador online, having supported their well-being and livelihood through images, news articles and video to create buzz on particular topics running the non-profit organization Elephant & Co., that sells elephant themed products for change”, shares Alex.

Alex says he was first introduced to John Island Camp through Family Camp in 2007 when he visited with his cousins siblings and parents. Since that summer, he continued to return to camp every year learning about the outdoors, why we need to protect and clean large bodies of water, and the responsibility of being on his own away from home. He went to be a Greenway, Norquay, a counsellor for two years and volunteering one summer just to be able to return to the island and his friends there.

“I am looking forward to develop my understanding of cross-cultural communication by working with local grassroots initiatives, offering my expertise, practical assistance and an active attitude to see elephants’ habitat and the land of regional farmers are both preserved,” says Alex. “Learning patience and how to understand other people’s opinions is a skill I learned from JIC, especially when working as a counsellor.



Alex Leonard (cont'd)

Since his time at JIC, Alex has been able to continue exploring the world, having spent time studying in the U.K. and having volunteered at an orphanage in Cambodia. He says a lot of his independence and intuition to help others stems from his time immersed in the world of John Island Camp where he learned about himself and how to care for others equally. "I will always carry with me the lessons of endurance and compassion that I learned at JIC which help guide my values today in looking for new adventures", says Alex.

Alex is the social manager of Elephant & Co., a non-profit NGO that sells elephant themed products and accessories, sending all proceeds to the International Elephant Foundation. He is an artist and activist that has helped raise awareness about elephants through a variety of media, primarily being collage, paint and print. His work has been featured in multiple galleries and cafes in Montreal. His canvasses have also been included in "The Scribe", a student published Zine from Leeds, England when he was studying in the U.K. in 2016.

We would like to hear from you. If you have any comments about the newsletter or would like to write an article, contact Gary Gray at:

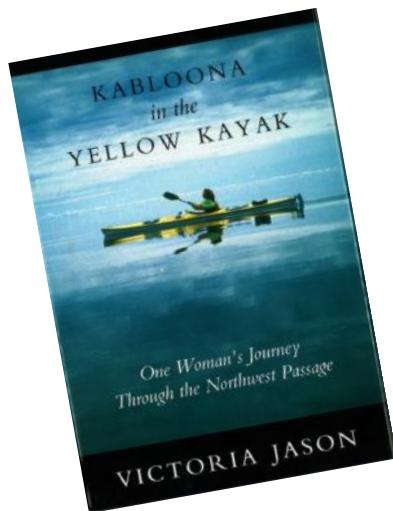
gary.gray@ymcaneo.ca

20 Years Ago at JIC!

Northwest Passage Kayaker at John Island

It was in 1997 when internationally known Victoria Jason was teaching kayaking at John Island Camp. Victoria was the first woman to paddle a kayak through the Northwest Passage. At the time she was a grandmother and had suffered 2 heart attacks, convincing her that she needed a lifestyle change from her desk job with CNR.

She started out in 1991 and completed her trek in 1994 after several setbacks along the way. Victoria was an honoured guest at the 1997 Women's Wellness Weekend, teaching kayaking and talking about her journey. Her book entitled "Kabloona in the Yellow Kayak" is available in book stores. She passed away 3 years after her JIC visit 20 years ago.



20 Years Ago at JIC!

Japanese Project at JIC

It was also in 1997 when the National Space and Aeronautical Assoc. of Japan sent 20 youth to John Island Camp for a session of camping. They wanted the youth of Japan to understand that there is more to science than technology. Taizo Miyake was the motivation and key person involved in making this exchange possible and very successful. Taizo was not only a resident of Sudbury at the time but a key designer of the program in the setting up of Science North, the Ontario Science Centre in Toronto and several other institutions focusing on the education of youth.

Each Japanese youth was paired with a student from Alexander School in Sudbury. The program was repeated for a second year at John Island. After the second year, the group from Japan brought a few John Island staff and alumni to Japan to help establish a camp for youth near Ogaki. The names of the Japanese students are on a plaque on the JIC dining hall wall.



Taizo Miyake making a presentation at a campfire program which featured a drumming presentation by the Japanese students

Construction Begins on New High Water Dock

100 years ago, the lumber mill on John Island burned to the ground, leaving close to 300 residents of the island without a reason to stay. About all that was left years later was a few pieces of weather worn lumber from a few of the buildings that were not removed and taken elsewhere and the cribs from some of the docks the lumbermen used. About 32 years later in 1948 new activities began on the site as members of the Sudbury YMCA Y's Men's Club began constructing new cribs in a new location to build a dock for a children's camp. Those cribs lasted 69 years, supporting the main dock of the camp. The planking and runners have been replaced a few times, but the original cribs were finally upgraded this fall and reconstructed for the new dock that will serve the camp in 2018. The cribs and runners are made from used shaft guides (Douglas Fir) and the planking on the



top will be specially milled tamarack. The new dock has been made possible thanks to the generosity of John Island Alumni.



Local Y's Join to form YMCA of Northeastern Ontario

In an effort to streamline services, maximize resources and improve quality of programs, the YMCA's of Sudbury and North Bay have officially joined to become the YMCA of Northeastern Ontario. This joining together has allowed both the Sudbury and North Bay branches to benefit from the expertise and resources of both locations. Kim Kanmacher has been the CEO of both Y's for the past several years and there has been a sharing of senior staff as the official joining together happened this year.

For John Island Camp, the change has opened the door to a greater depth of resource staff with Rob Groccia the Regional Manager of Camping Services for the YMCA of Northeastern Ontario. Camp Tillicum of the North Bay Y now becomes part of the greater camping consortium together with John Island Camp. This division of the Y is part of the responsibility of Nicole Beattie, V.P. of Health, Fitness, Aquatics, Facilities Management and Camping for the YMCA of Northeastern Ontario. Nicole has been a frequent visitor to the camp and has a genuine interest in its future development.

While the North Bay and Sudbury Y's have officially joined together, they will both be identified locally as the Sudbury YMCA and the North Bay YMCA as parts of the YMCA of Northeastern Ontario. The joining together of Y's in other areas of the province has already happened in attempts to share skilled staff, control rising costs and allow all Y facilities to be able to access highly trained and knowledgeable staff.

In regard to camping, however, John Island Camp will still be operated out of the Sudbury YMCA but with access to the larger market area and specialized staff of the combined YMCA of Northeastern Ontario.

A New Staff Talks About JIC man

By Karlie Dolder-

I can distinctly remember the very first time that I drove down the seven kilometre Walkhouse Bay Road towards John Island YMCA summer camp. As my car bounced over numerous potholes, momentarily regretted doing something spontaneous for the summer of 2017. I had finished my third year of nursing at McMaster University and was determined to do something independent and adventurous for my summer. My expectations were open-ended; I was imagining the typical summer camp experience- a splattering of cabins, a central dining hall, and of course, a campfire. Being an outdoor enthusiast, I was also anticipating some northern landscapes and escaping some of the modernized blur of Southwestern Ontario. As I climbed aboard the boat and headed off toward the island, my nervousness was quickly replaced with anticipation. As we manoeuvred onto the docks, I stepped onto the island and became one of the few lucky Canadians who have the absolute pleasure of being stranded on the beautiful John Island. Very quickly, I began treasuring the unique nature of the Island. Morning circle became a wonderful way to start the day. Initially, faces around the circle were unfamiliar, slowly they became the faces of friends and companions. I was definitely startled that campers sang-yes would you believe it!-actually sang the national anthem. Although a trained musical ear may have cringed at the sound, something about the chorusing voices and the northern location made the song beautiful. Gary's familiar phrase, "And the oatmeal flavour of the day is..." would complete morning circle. Little things made the Island my home for the summer:

- the coffee pot that never stopped brewing,
- the overwhelming amount of Nalgenes,
- the camp dogs (Bandit and Rocky) always looking for a cuddle,
- the Adirondack chair circle which was the central location for both serious and completely absurd discussion,
- the campfires and 'hey, jump shake your booty!'.

I quickly realized that John Island camp allowed all inhabitants to dial into a wild side not experienced in the 'outside world.' I gladly joined into the fray, painted my face, and raced into the wild roaring craziness of the color wars. What about the car washes? Staff and campers racing around barefoot, leaping into the freezing water, and just enjoying being completely and wonderfully crazy. Also memorable were those dance parties in which staff and campers swirled, stomped, and danced to the backdrop of a sunset. Now sitting here on a wet October day, I long for the mystical experience of our Island. Campers who felt connected to nature, to each other, and to their summer of freedom. Somehow in a few short months, we all became family. The island gave things to those who were blessed to walk its' shores. To us as senior staff members, the island gifted memories, lasting friendships, and a respect for the beauty of nature. To leadership campers, the island gave confidence, a new sense of personhood and experience. For younger campers, the island gifted smiles, giggles, and first time experiences with outdoor activities.

As for me? The island gave me exactly what I came for; independence, adventure, and a community. I can distinctly remember the last time I drove down the seven kilometre Walkhouse Bay Road away from John Island YMCA summer camp. As my car bounced over numerous potholes, I could not imagine any other way to have spent my summer.



How to Stay Involved as Alumni

It may have been 5 years since you were last involved as a staff member at John Island Camp. Or, perhaps, 10, 25 or even 50 years. But, more and more alumni have been getting connected again in many ways to ensure the quality of the camp keeps improving so new generations can enjoy the benefits of a camping experience. Here are a few ways that you can get involved to stay connected to your camp.

Annual Spring Work Party

Here is an opportunity to grab your sleeping bag and work clothes and come out to camp to help with some projects and get the camp ready for the next camping season. The 2018 work weekend will be May 11 - 13, 2018. Activities usually include painting, construction, cleaning, etc. Bring the family and enjoy the camp while working - there will be jobs for all ages and abilities. Contract the Regional Manager of Camping Services for the YMCA of Northeastern Ontario - Rob Groccia - at rob.groccia@ymcaneo.ca for more information on how to get involved.

Write for the Alumni Newsletter

We are always looking for interesting and historical articles and other information for the newsletter. For more information or to contribute a personal update, article or any comments, contact gary.gray@ymcaneo.ca

Bring Your Family to Family Camp - Spring or Summer

You can choose between an early summer weekend camping experience with your family or a full week in mid-summer and enjoy all the benefits and features of John Island Camp. A number of camp alumni are currently part of the family camp sessions and tend to return year after year. Families find it is an excellent opportunity to renew friendships, keep involved with their family members and to share the camp experience with their children during a busy summer and before starting to plan for a busy fall.

Contribute to the John Island Camp Capital Fund

Alumni were responsible for us reaching our recent capital campaign goal and are now instrumental in helping us keep the camp in top shape and up to date with program equipment. Many alumni have contributed to help with annual donations and some with monthly contributions. These funds have made possible the capital projects you read about in our newsletter. To contribute to the JIC Capital Fund, contact Gary Gray at gary.gray@ymcaceo.ca

Sponsor a Camper in 2018

John Island has a rich and respected history of not turning away campers because of an inability to pay the fees. The John Island Camp experience is one that all youth can benefit from and by helping sponsor a camper, you can assist many more youth have that experience. To help sponsor a camper, contact the camp registrar, Summer Brooks, at summer.brooks@ymcaneo.ca

Be a John Island Camp Ambassador

Nothing is as effective in the promotion of a camp than word of mouth. As someone who understands the unsurpassed value of the camp experience at John Island, you can tell your family, your friends and co-workers about the many values in the life of a child. Information about the camp is on line on the camp website at www.johnisland.ymca.ca