

YMCA JOHN ISLAND CAMP ALUMNI NEWSLETTER



YMCA JOHN ISLAND

Dec. 2015

5-WEEK RIVER TRIPS STARTED IN 1995

NORQUAY RIVER PROGRAM CELEBRATES 22 YEARS

It all started in 1995 when a group of 16 year old campers in the Norquay leadership training program put their canoes in the Missinaibi River for a 5-week canoe trip. Since that time, over 300 16 year-old campers have completed the intense river program with a variety of Northern rivers exposed to the campers from John Island.

Rick Lee and Michelle Richard led the first trip with an excited group of Norquay campers. Although the Missinaibi River has been the main river used for the trip over the years, the Albany, Attawapiskat, and Winisk Rivers in Northern Ontario have been used as well as the Seal River in Northern Manitoba.

The effects of the Norquay River program have been, and continue to be, a major factor in the growth and development of the campers on the trip. Mark Jenkins, a camper on the first Norquay trip, says, "...I think we all learned that integrity and hard work are traits that one cannot possibly do without.....It was like a little microcosm of what we were all to face later in the real world. ...we were safe and appropriately trained, to the point where we could all push our own boundaries to lead what we were capable of."

Rick Lee says, "...we proved, quite decisively, that being out of camp on such an intense leadership experience can produce some amazingly skilled leaders that bring back confidence and a wide variety of very important life skills: risk management, leadership, planning and preparation, decision making, teamwork, peer responsibilities, trust, communication, empathy, dealing with adversity, and much more..." Rick goes on to say, "Camp doesn't create leaders, as much as it gives people the support, confidence and opportunity to become great leaders!"

This edition of the newsletter highlights reflections on the value of these programs to teens.



These Norquay campers show that even work can be a lot of fun.

MAY THE HOLIDAY SEASON BE A FAMILY SEASON

However you celebrate the upcoming Season, we hope that you, your family and close friends have an opportunity to share valuable time together. Regardless of your religious attachments, the spirit of family, sharing and healthy recreation together are celebrated at this time of year. At the YMCA, we believe strongly in the core values of honesty, caring, respect, responsibility and inclusiveness. May your personal values play a role in your holiday celebration and bring you closer to those you hold dear and beliefs that you respect.



Happy Holidays

WORK WEEKEND
May 13 - 15 (pg 7)

NORQUAY STORIES
(pg. 4 and 5)

JIC BALL FIELD
A historical place (pg.6)

MEET OUR CAMP DIRECTOR (pg. 2)

FULL TIME POSITION WILL ALLOW FOR FUTURE PLANNING**ALEX HAALBOOM APPOINTED J.I.C. DIRECTOR**

Rob Groccia, Sr. Manager, YMCA Camping Services, has announced that Alex Haalboom has been appointed the full-time Director of John Island Camp. The appointment takes effect on January 1, 2016.

Alex comes with John Island experience including being a camper, leadership participant, Program Norquay leader, counsellor, Norquay Trip leader and as Leadership Manager. However, Alex brings additional experience from both YMCA Camp Chief Hector in Calgary and YMCA Camp Pine Crest of the Toronto YMCA. Alex was Support Staff at YMCA Camp Chief Hector for their outdoor experiential schools and was leader of the popular 57 day leadership training and expedition program for older teens, Sac Dene. Alex also helped direct the camp's satellite site, Gray Jay, which is a remote site in the Rockies used as a base for several hiking and horseback trips. Alex has been an Assistant Outdoor Educator at YMCA Camp Pine Crest, facilitating and co-ordinating programs for school groups, college groups, and adults. This past year at Camp Pine Crest, Alex was presented with the "Golden Spruce" award which is a peer nominated award at the camp.

In addition to her camping experience with the YMCA, Alex spent 5 months in Ghana working with the National YMCA in Ghana as the Environmental Projects Officer. She worked with folks at the national and regional offices of the YMCA to develop, facilitate and train youth leaders to deliver a curriculum on waste management and sanitation for YMCA High School Clubs. Alex was highly recognized for her valuable contribution to this program.

This past year, Alex has also worked for a field school at the University of Victoria that uses hands-on, outdoor, interpersonal education settings to give undergrad students the skills they need to create positive change in their communities. "I would like to bring this same type of motivation to John Island this summer where every participant can leave camp a better, more positive, more confident citizen", says Alex.

Alex is thrilled to be returning home "to continue to work and live with this incredible community of people on what might be the world's most magical and beautiful island."

We all join in welcoming Alex back to John Island.



Alex Haalboom



Alex on a recent trip to New Zealand

IMPROVEMENTS CONTINUE**THANK YOU ALUMNI!**

John Island Camp has an amazing group of alumni and friends of the camp. Ten years ago we began a capital campaign to basically rebuild the camp. The entire job was completed and paid for with the assistance of alumni and friends of the camp.

Since the primary capital work has been completed, special needs have continued to arise. While these needs are quite expected and it is understood that they will continue as time marches on, the alumni have again continued to support the camp by meeting these needs.

Items such as a new generator for the camp, a new waterfront facility, new high ropes elements, waterfront equipment (ie: canoes and kayaks), a new 4-wheel vehicle for maintenance and a used truck for mainland use have all been made possible through continuing support by our alumni and camp friends. Beside financial support, alumni and friends of the camp have been volunteering time and energy to help with continuing upkeep of the camp facilities. Thanks goes to all of those who have been contributing their treasure, time and talent to keep John Island Camp a state of the art facility for the youth of not only today, but future years.

But there is more. In a recent review of our campers and how they heard about John Island camp, a full 20% of our 2015 campers were at camp because of the experience of their parents or other relatives with the camp. If you fall into this category, take note that registration for the leadership programs at John Island is currently underway. Registration for all other camp sessions begins on Tuesday, January 5th. All 2016 information is on line now on the John Island website (www.johnisland.ymca.ca). Gift certificates toward the cost of registration are available at the camp office until December 23rd and make a great Christmas gift.

COME LOW OR HIGH WATER, WE`LL HAVE A DOCK

Go back a few decades and you will remember the water level rose and fell on a regular and predictable cycle. Regardless of how low the low cycle was, we could still use the main camp dock (now referred to as the `high water` dock) in the summer. Then 20 years ago, the cycle appeared to stop and the high water levels never returned. Old low water levels became the new high water levels and the dock we had used since 1954 became unusable. A new dock was built a kilometre away from camp where the lumber mill had their dock at the turn of the 18th century. As the old `high water` dock was useable, it began to deteriorate. The area was not even suitable to use for canoeing and kayaking as it was basically a mud basin.

Then in 2014, a remarkable occurrence - the water rose again after close to 20 years. And then in 2015, it rose again, making the old `high water` dock area useable again. Unfortunately, with the deterioration to the dock itself over the years, the area was not readily suitable for camp use. However, with some modifications to the original dock and some major repair work, it is felt that the dock could be used again. Why would we bother when the water might go back down again within a year or more? The location of the "high water" dock is much superior for transporting campers, food supplies and other essentials used by the camp. Saving that extra kilometre drive or walk to the newer "Low Water" dock is both an economical and time consideration.

Plans have been put into action that will see the original camp dock rebuilt so it can be used for both transport and program - even if the water does go down within reasonable amounts. Required materials have been secured and a well qualified group of volunteers are ready to do the work in the spring. With the newer "Low Water" dock requiring a lesser amount of work it becomes necessary to use it again, come low or high water in 2016, we`ll have a dock!



The original "High Water" dock today being inspected by the camp "engineers".

LOOK WHAT 50 YEARS CAN DO

FROM SEEDLING TO FLAGPOLE

Back in the mid 1960's, a group of John Island staff led by George Koski and including Bill McCallum, Dave Hudson, Don Waddell, Bill Bavington and Gary Gray planted hundreds of red and white pine seedlings on the east side of the ball field and trail to the bridge. Beaver had taken out most of the aspen and poplar trees that existed in that area and left it barren.



The new flagpole

Now a full 50 years later, the majority of those seedlings are competing for sunlight as they reach higher and higher - some reaching heights of 70 feet. When the existing flagpole in camp in front of the dining hall became too dangerous to leave standing this past spring, we had our own "flagpole park" do draw from. Due to the need to reach higher to get sunlight amongst the closely planted pines, the trees grew amazingly straight and quite suitable for a flagpole.

Forestry experts have told us we should be thinning the trees out to allow those remaining to grow properly, so harvesting a few for things like flagpoles and dock cribs seems quite natural.



Bringing the new flagpole from the area where the old Kismet is beached

BREAKING NEWS!
As this newsletter was being prepared to be sent, we received news from a reliable source (Pete Kerigan) that former camp director Pete and his wife, former JIC Camper Care Manager, Amanda, are the proud parents of a new born son, Connor (9 lb 4 oz) who took a quick look at his new parents, accepted them happily, and looks forward to a fun life.

NOT WHAT WAS EXPECTED, BUT**THE BEST TIME OF MY LIFE**

By Darby Lynch, Norquay River Group, 2015

The first part of the best time of my life was spent hating every second. Going on a 35 day canoe trip with 11 other people sounded like a bunch of numbers that were impressive but terrifying. As we started off, I had many conversations with a guy on my trip about how many regrets we had about coming on trip. We complained about pretty much anything you could complain about, from the bugs to the food to the campsites to the long hours spent paddling. We fell into a routine decently fast, but it still wasn't what former River Norquays described it as, which was "the best summer ever" with the "best people you'll ever meet." I spent the first days quietly disappointed I was wasting my time when I could have been spending more time with family and friends that I only could do once a year on account of living in China, rather inconveniently. Not to say I was miserable, but I was let down by the anticlimactic events on the trip.

The halfway point of Mattice was a goal for all of us, and we had all talked for days about what we would buy once we were back to the "real world." We had fantasized about how many litres of root beer we would get, how much music we would listen to, and how amazing the outside world would be. Not only would all of these amazing luxuries become available to our deprived souls, but we also had the chance of meeting the other Norquay group there! Nothing could be better, and we sang songs about Mattice and all of the adventures we would have there. We would be able to interact with other people than the ones we were sick of talking to and living with for the past two weeks. Once we arrived, we jumped and ran around the freshly mown lawn and watched cars go by in awe of technology.



Darby's Norquay group in a group hug before Darby's return to China



Darby (far right) with Valerie and Callie

This feeling lasted for about two hours. We met the Norquay B's, and our group split up. We all grew quieter and started to gripe about not being with only our group on the river once again, surrounded by the comfort of nature. This small French town which we had all looked forward to because it provided a day or two of rest turned out to be mentally straining on all of us. It was nice to talk to families, but the rest of the day was spent wandering around unsure of what to do with ourselves if we weren't paddling for six hours a day. We didn't just reject the outside world mentally, but also physically. Food not only didn't taste

as good as we remembered, it also tasted even worse coming back up.

Once back on the river, people relaxed more. You could tell just being exposed to the outside world and all the issues it provided caused stress in people's actions. The second half of the trip was the best part. We all accepted how much of an amazing experience this was and were able to make the best of it. As the trip progressed on, it became clear to me how hard it was going to be to leave behind these people and this lifestyle.

As a person who is from many places, I had thought I had it all figured out. Leaving places was the hardest, and I associated happiness with specific locations in the world. For example, summer was the only happy time in life because that was when I got to spend time where I grew up. Places were constant and never changed even though people did. But on one of the last days of trip, I was reflecting by myself on an overlook, thinking about the events of trip when one of my trip leaders came stumbled on me. Without saying a word, he disappeared off into the forest. He re-emerged about twenty minutes later and handed me a small flower, leaving again without saying anything. I instantly burst into tears, and the realization that I wouldn't just miss this time of my life just because of the place but also because of the people hit me.

The trip is something I'll never get to experience ever again, but it was the best experience I've ever had and will ever have. I wouldn't give it up for anything, and I'm pretty sure if you asked any of the others they would say the same thing. Trip changes you as a person, and not just toughening you up after going through challenges that are taxing on mental and physical state but also removing you from everything you know to show you people at their most real selves and experiencing everything in a different way for forever. This was the best part of my life, and if anybody ever has the chance to go forth and experience something like this, there should be no reason stopping you.

“THIS TRIP HAD A HUGE IMPACT ON ME”**AFTER 25 YEARS, TRIPPING STILL CREATING LEADERS**

by Kyle Medd, Norquay River Group,

Five years ago I went to John Island for the first time. It was a new experience for me. I was in youth camp and I remember how everyone would talk about the group of people who were doing an amazing out-trip. They called the the “River Norquays”. Naturally, since I had no idea who they were, I asked friends who had already been to John Island about the River Norquays. The River Norquay program is a leaders-in-training (or L.I.T.) program where a group of people go on an absolutely fantastic and challenging out trip. The River Norquays learn important skills and knowledge about out-tripping while also improving their leadership skills. I learned that the River Norquays were not only respected, but also revered. Ever since, being a River Norquay became a goal of mine, a dream even, a dream that this year finally became reality.

When I got to camp was so happy to see my friends again. The first person I saw was my leader, Kiernan. Every year the camp sends out 2 groups on the same river. I asked Kiernan who was in our group. There were 14 people in total, including myself, most of which I had already known from Greenways or from youth camp. I was a little worried about the new people who I had never met before, but now that the trip is over I could never have asked for a better group. We spent the first day getting to know each other and settling into camp. We spent a lot of the time we had before trip preparing to leave. We packed food barrels, looked over maps, made packing lists, packed our equipment, and learned about white water rafting techniques and safety and we were finally ready to leave.



Kyle Medd

After a seven hour long bus ride to our launch at Dog Lake, we were all nervous, but super excited at the same time. The first 10 days were difficult, it rained, we got tired quickly, and most importantly, we all craved a nice juicy hamburger. After the 10 day mark, everything seemed to become routine. We got up anywhere between 6:00 and 8:00 am and after having breakfast and packing up camp, we would normally leave site by 9:00 am. Breakfast usually consisted of either fried granola, cereal with dehydrated milk with an apple, pancakes, or if we were lucky, breakfast bowls (potatoes, cheese, eggs and fried salami).

The entire trip was about 600 km long which meant we had to paddle around 20 km a day to keep up with our 30 day limit. Around lunch time on a short day we would normally be getting to site, so we would set up camp while someone made lunch. On a long day however we would have floating lunches and get to camp in time for dinner. Lunch was usually either pitas with wow butter and apple leather, tea biscuits, muffins, left-overs from the night before, or just a whole bunch of snacks. Dinners were either stir-fry, pasta, soup, lazy perogies, calzones, or if we caught any, we would have fish. For dessert, we would have either hot chocolate, cookies or brownies. Some of the most challenging points on this trip would definitely be the CIII level rapids like rock island or the long portages like Hell’s Gate which is 4 km long.



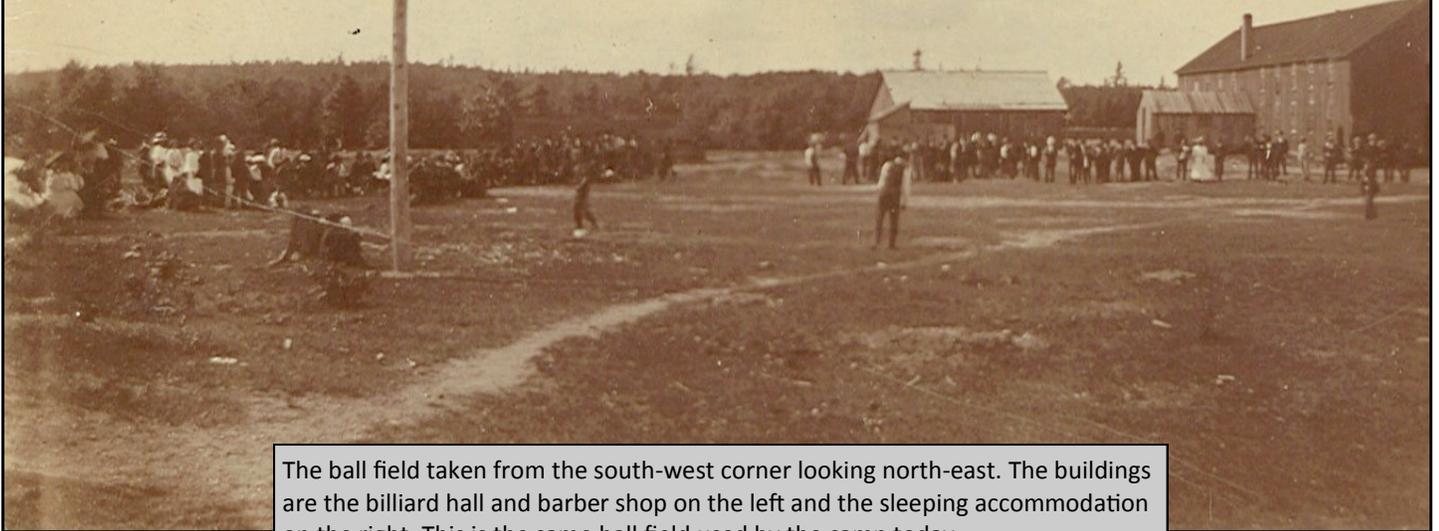
Kyle’s Norquay River Group, 2015

This trip was no walk in the park which is why I’m proud to say we conquered the Missinaibi.

Having been on this trip taught me so much about out-tripping, leadership and even about myself. I learned about setting up camp, what needs to be done and how it needs to be done. I learned about white water rafting, how to read a set of rapids, how to run them safely, and in case of an emergency, what to do. I learned while LOD (Leader of the Day) that running an out-trip is much more difficult than it seems, but with enough practice and knowledge its fun. All in all, this trip had a huge impact on me. It taught me so much and made me so excited to come back next year and give the same experience that I got to the next generation.

WHO WOULD HAVE BELIEVED IT

JOHN ISLAND BALL FIELD 130 YEARS OLD



The ball field taken from the south-west corner looking north-east. The buildings are the billiard hall and barber shop on the left and the sleeping accommodation on the right. This is the same ball field used by the camp today.

FIELD STILL USED TODAY

When the Moiles brothers first pulled their barges up in the back harbour of John Island loaded with a lumber mill and a troop of labourers, the first smack of a baseball bat could be heard loud and clear. They had just completed an arduous trip across Lake Michigan from Detour Michigan on their barges and needed some recreation to shake off the effects of their lengthy and uncomfortable voyage with the infamous 'Stolen Mill'.

Houses for close to 300 people were built across the small inlet from the mill and a schoolhouse, boarding house, barber shop and pool hall were all built around the edges of the John Island Ball Field. This was one of seven such ball fields along the North Shore, each associated with a new lumber mill. The mills were built to respond to the needs of lumber to help rebuild Chicago after the fire that virtually destroyed the city.

As the lumber mill and all of the first workers came from the United States, baseball was the recreational activity of choice for the men. With seven such mills in the area, there was a ready-made league and the John Island team was there from the beginning. They even wore John Island uniforms, although not fancy.

Although the first documented baseball game in North America was played in Beachville, Ontario (June 4, 1838), and the first documented game in the US was played eight years later in Hoboken, NJ, it is felt that the baseball fields in the lumbering communities along the North Shore were amongst the first to be used for league play in Ontario (1885 to 1917).

It is appropriate, therefore, that the long standing John Island ball field is still used today by campers for a variety of games, including the occasional baseball game - as long as the turtles from the back bay are not laying their eggs in the centre of the playing area.



The 1913 John Island baseball team. Is that a blue jay looking on from the trees in the background?

WHAT`S NEW FOR 2016!

By Rob Groccia
Sr. Manager, YMCA Camping Services

The 2016 season is starting to look very exciting with all of the planning that has been happening in the Camping Services Office this fall.

Thanks to the help and support from John Island Alumni and Community Partners lending a hand, we are able to continue with the upkeep and additions to the John Island facilities and program areas. This year we are planning on focusing on three areas; the High Water Docks, Greenway Beach Cabin and some amenities being added to the 1st Beach camp site for our first time overnight campers.

We are excited to be valued as a tripping camp. We believe that few things can make a group closer and an individual stronger. The growth an individual has while on a trip is parallel to none. We continue to hear stories from our past campers of how their out trips have shaped their leadership and set them up to be the person they are today.

This is why here in the office we believe it is so important to give our first time trippers the best and most comfortable experience to begin that growth at a young age. For most of our Campers their first trip takes place at 1st Beach. Think back, was your first trip there? Mine was! The new additions will include a platform tent, a new campfire pit with benches, storage area and picnic tables.

It is our hopes this site will also be a great resource for our leadership campers, school groups and specialty weekends as an offsite classroom or an easy out lunch location



Rob Groccia

WORK WEEKEND - NEW TIMING FOR 2016 - MAY 13 - 15

It could be referred to as the social event of the year as alumni and friends of the camp gather at the camp to work together to help get the camp ready for a new year of activity. Boats leave from our Walkhouse dock on Friday, May 13th at 6:00 pm and we will return you to the dock right after lunch on Sunday, May 15th.

We will provide you with a bunk and lots of food. All you need bring is a sleeping bag, work clothes and a lot of energy for a full day of work on Saturday and a bit more on Sunday morning. Friday and Saturday evening will be a time to renew friendships, have a bit of fun, and wander the camp grounds to get your John Island fix for another year.

There will be cleaning of downed branches and trees, painting, a bit of light carpentry, tent platforms to put up, and other similar work to do—something for all ages and capabilities. We will provide the required tools.

If you are interested, contact Alex Haalboom, Camp Director at alex.haalboom@sudbury.ymca.ca

Getting cabins ready

Part of the 2015 group

Registrations For 2016 Begin Jan. 5/16

Registration for Leadership sessions began in November, but registration for all other 2016 camping sessions at John Island begins on Jan. 5th, 2016. Approximately 20% of our camper registrations are related to our John Island Alumni. Don't miss out on a favourite session by registering too late.

All About Alumni. . . .

Meredith Coulas welcomed a new son into her family this past year when she adopted young Abraham. He just melts your heart when you see him and will certainly keep Meredith busy as he brings her much joy in the years ahead.

Jamie Thomas and **Laura Wadsworth** joined the multitude of couples who met at John Island Camp and were married on September 26th. To keep everyone in the camp spirit, the ceremony was held at YMCA Camp Falcona in a 3-day celebration.

Tony Higgins, now a doctor in Southern Ontario, recently got married to Sarah Dee and resides in Hamilton, Ontario. Tony works as an ER physician in Brantford and Burlington and Sarah is a social worker.

Marie Hartman also joined the ranks of the married this summer as she married Ian McDonald. Best wishes to Marie and Ian.

Also on the "just married" list are JIC alumni **Drew Beaumont** and **Erika Bondarenko** who joined together in June. Drew and Erika live in Sault Ste. Marie.

Steph Grenko (staff 2001-2007, 2011) and Rob Klein welcomed their new baby Andrew in 2015.

Ashley Machum (staff 2001 - 2007) and Greg Hutton welcomed their new baby Beatrix in 2015.

And what about **Corbett Hancey** who recently appeared on Jeopardy, hosted by Sudbury native, Alec Trebec. Although Corbett came in second that evening, he was the only competitor to get the final jeopardy question correct. Congratulations Corbett.

Norquay River A boys from 1995 still keep in touch, naturally - **Dave Neligan**, now a lawyer; **Brian Lawson**, now a PhD in Philosophy with 2 daughters; **Graeme Robertson**, an engineer with 2 sons; and **Mark Jenkins**, a GP in Sault Ste. Marie with 2 daughters.

Jen MacLeod, One of our original Norquay trip leaders on the Albany and Missinabi rivers and camp nurse is currently living and working in Sault Ste. Marie and a frequent volunteer at the JIC Work Weekend. Jen says, "I'm so proud to have been a Norquay leader! Canoeing the Missinabi and the Albany were significant and valuable experiences for me. Every drop of rain, every ray of sun and every paddle stroke helped to create the person I am today. I am profoundly grateful to all those who shared those times with me."

The John Island Camp Alumni Newsletter is available 3 ways:

1. On line at: www.johnisland.ymca.ca
2. By e-mail
3. Printed and mailed

WE NEED TO KNOW YOUR PREFERENCE(S)

Send us an e-mail to: gary.gray@sudbury.ymca.ca

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We all know that camp friendships last a lifetime.

However, time can separate us and send us to unknown addresses and even distant countries.

Send us an e-mail about yourself—where you live and what you are doing and whatever else you would like to share with those who you may have lost touch with. We have an active mailing list of over 750 alumni and hundreds more check us out on the John Island website.



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For past newsletters - visit the Alumni section of the John Island website.