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YMCA JOHN ISLAND

Volume 9, Issue 1  
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## Alumni Newsletter

### PARTNERSHIPS CONTINUE WITH MORE CAMP IMPROVEMENTS

Thanks to the continuing partnership with LaSalle Secondary School and the Rainbow Board of Education and the Lowe's Toolbox for Education program, work will continue at John Island this spring as the John Island Renewal program continues. Students from LaSalle Secondary School will spend three weeks at the camp under the leadership of teacher Ron Lucano. This year through the generosity of Lowes Charitable and Education Foundation, \$10,000 has been made available to help supply students with the necessary tools and building supplies.

During the past five years Mr. Lucano and the students from LaSalle have worked on the construction of eight new "L" shaped cabins. The renovation of 2 rectangular cabins, and the construction of a new rub-a-dub with 4 composting toilets on the girls' side of camp. They were assisted by Murray Low from the camp staff.

"It is only through the efforts of the students over the past five years that we have been able to rebuild or renovate practically every camper cabin in camp", states Pete Kerigan, Director of Camping Services at the Sudbury YMCA.

This year the students will be concentrating on many of the finishing jobs with the cabins they have build or renovated. This will include railings where required on porches and stairs, new skylights in cabins, painting, and a lot of finishing details.

While the program has been a great benefit in helping John Island provide new cabins for its campers to enjoy, it has also provided practical skills to the students involved. Many of the students involved have been able to secure jobs in related trades upon graduation.



### JOHN ISLAND HOLDS UP YMCA CANADA TABLE



Jody Waddell cuts a piling for table

It was a cold, wet day in November, 2010 when Jody Waddell and Pete Kerigan went to the pilings in the back harbour at John Island and cut a sizable length of a waterlogged pine from the pilings in the centre of the main harbour.

They brought it by boat and truck to Sudbury where it sat for a few weeks to dry out in the CEO's office. From there, this century old log was taken to YMCA Canada where it was crafted and shaped to become part of the legs of a large display/conference table at the national offices of YMCA Canada in Toronto.

The table was built by craftsmen Jason and Lars Dressler (twin brothers) who are modern furniture makers by trade. They received artifacts from YMCA's across Canada to include in the construction of the table—a table representing the history of all local YMCA's in Canada.

## STUART McLEAN TALKS ABOUT YMCA CAMPING

### From YMCA Camp Counsellor to CBC Broadcaster

*We asked Stuart McLean to write about his experience with YMCA Kamp Kanawana of the Montreal YMCA and how it influenced his life. Stuart's story probably recounts many similar feelings with our own camp experience.*



Stuart McLean

In the summer of 1969 I had the good fortune to visit a friend who worked at a Y summer camp.

I never left. I got hired on as a counsellor in the senior boys section that summer.

Kamp Kanawana on the shores of Lake Kanawana in the Laurentian Mountains is where I found my sea legs.

Kamp is where it *really* began for me.

Where I was able to leave the shakey and uncertain turbulence of my adolescence behind me, and find the road, or more to the point, to find the wherewithal to find the road, that led me to where I am today.

I was a wholly unsuccessful boy.

A failure on the playing field and in the classroom.

I arrived at camp with a packsack full of fears. I was the boy who couldn't throw the ball as well as all the other boys. Who was afraid, or unable, to study as well.

People always want to know what changed for me. What happened. And the best I can say is that camp happened.

Finding myself in a place where I felt accepted was a very powerful thing for me. Being able to contribute to the greater good even more so. It gave me confidence. And confidence is very important to the growth and development of a young person.

Camp was my safe place.

It didn't actually save my life. It gave me my life. It gave me the tools, the confidence, the opportunity to discover my life. Or my self. My best self anyway.

When I graduated from Sir George Williams University, Ross Seaman offered me a job at the Cornwall YMCA, as a youth worker. I almost accepted it.

Instead of joining Ross, and it was a close call, I went off to Toronto to seek my fame and fortune. And I found the second great thing in my life. My heart's desire. CBC Radio. I couldn't have done that, I couldn't have tramped off into the unknown, if I hadn't had my summers at camp.

A few years ago I was asked to address a meeting of YMCA Camp Directors. While preparing for that speech I started to realize that if you look at my work carefully I am still working on the things that I was taught to work on by the people that steered me through those formative years at camp.

I write about a family. What preoccupies me as a writer however is not the Vinyl Cafe family I write about – Dave, Morley, Stephanie and Sam – but the world in which they live. I don't mean the geo-political world, or even the nation state. I mean the world of the family, the neighbourhood. I am interested in the safe places – the ones that foster a sense of belonging, a sense of place – that are so enormously important to the development and preservation of healthy societies and healthy individuals.

These are the kinds of places that are created at YMCA camps across North America. Places that foster community, and a sense of neighbourhood in the biggest sense.

The YMCA is a great organization. Revolutionary, transformative and enduring. I am proud and grateful for the ties that bind us.

Stuart McLean  
Writer, broadcaster.

## FOLLOWING CAMP THROUGH ITS T-SHIRTS

- always a favourite with campers



One of the first professionally designed shirts



The first and only camp shirt crested at camp.



An abstract designed by professionals but never one of the more popular



Campers and staff could identify the campers and locations in this shirt

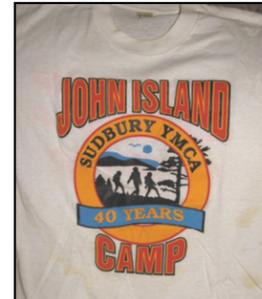
Wearing a piece of clothing that clearly identifies the camp you are part of has long been a tradition in organized overnight camping. At John Island, the first few decades were identified by silk-screened crests which most campers would get sewn onto a jacket or even, in some cases, a t-shirt. On occasion we would see a staff jacket amongst a camp staff, but again the identification was a silk-screened crest. In most cases the crests were silk screened right at the camp, thanks to Jack Smith and a few of the staff that learned the trade from him.

It was in the late 1980's that John Island began producing enough camp t-shirts that every camper could go home proudly wearing a John Island Camp T-shirt. At first the shirts were screened right at the camp, but soon after the numbers of shirts required reached up into the hundreds and beyond the means of the staff to silk-screen them effectively. It was around 1980 that the making of our camp t-shirts was contracted out to professionals, and the competition began to produce a more attractive design every year.

Pictured on the here are some of the camp t-shirts worn by happy campers from the first mass produced shirt at the camp through the era of colourful pictures on the shirts, to the stage of more abstract designs to the current and more artistic designs.

At Camp staff auctions to raise funds for the Sudbury YMCA's Strong Kids Campaign, some of these retro t-shirts have garnered as much as \$120.00 and more and are treasured by the staff who win the bid. If you happen to have any of these shirts, don't throw them out—they could be worth as much as jewellery in a few more years.

In a much appreciated effort to display the history of camp in its t-shirts, Kathie Thomas, mother of new John Island Camp Director Scott Thomas and Site Manager Jamie Thomas is making a quilt from a large assortment of retro shirts. The quilt will be framed and displayed on the wall in the new renovated dining hall. They will be on display for everyone to see for years to come.



1994—our own design but professionally made



The early 1990's saw designs that reflected the beauty of the camp area



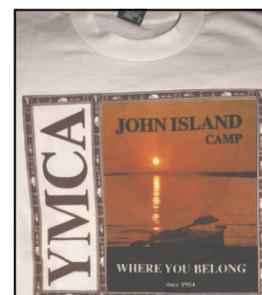
This design still remains one of the most popular



2011—simple but that Greenway pine makes the shirt



2000—first sketched on a piece of coloured paper with correction fluid.



1994—the Mary's Cove scene was in demand at camping conferences

## CAMP CHAPEL TO BE REBUILT

When the camp opened in 1954, the chapel was a fresh looking facility with a picturesque archway, an impressive lectern and new benches. Since that time the archway and lectern have succumbed to the harsh winter weather and have been replaced with less creative structures. The benches have been patched and the size of the sitting area has doubled to accommodate the growing number of campers.

Jody Waddell, a dedicated volunteer and alumni of John Island along with his brother Brendan and other family members will be rebuilding the chapel this year as a memorial to their father, Don Waddell, who passed away in 2011.

Don was a camper in the late 1950's and progressed through the leadership training program at the camp to become a counsellor in 1960 and 1961 and then Waterfront Director. Don returned to the camp in 1967 after spending a few years in Germany with his family where his father taught in a Canadian Armed Forces Base. He became Camp Director from 1977 to 1979

During his career as teacher, Outward Bound Director, municipal government employee and senior YMCA staff member, Don continued his passion for John Island by spending weekends and other available time volunteering on numerous work parties and expeditions. Don also initiated the first steps on our move toward solar energy at the camp.

Jody, Brendan and Dean feel that the rebuilding of the camp chapel is a suitable way to remember their father who spent many hours in the area as a camper, staff and as a volunteer.



Don Waddell during a Sunday Morning Reflections in the camp Chapel - circa 1962



The Camp Chapel as it exists today

## SPRING WORK WEEKEND 2012

Set the weekend of May 11th to 13th aside for the annual spring work weekend at John Island. There are a number of tasks for all members of the family during the weekend from painting to clearing brush from the winter to cabin repairs and helping get set up for spring programs. If you are interested, contact Director of Camping Services, Pete Kerigan at [pete.kerigan@sudbury.ymca.ca](mailto:pete.kerigan@sudbury.ymca.ca)



2011 Spring Work Weekend volunteers.

## CAMPING DEPARTMENT UNDERGOES CHANGES

The YMCA has reorganized its camping department to better serve the hundreds of campers that attend both John Island Camp and Camp Falcona. As we reported in the Fall 2011 Alumni Newsletter, Pete Kerigan has been appointed the Director of Camping Services. Pete will be responsible for all aspects of both John Island and Camp Falcona on a year-round basis. Both camps will have a seasonal Camp Director, responsible for the staffing and operation each camp.

Rob Groccia has been appointed Director of Camp Falcona. Rob has spent several years at Camp Falcona in various roles and most recently as the Co-Director in 2011. Rob is currently finishing up his Teacher's College Diploma in North Bay. Rob will join us in May to open up Falcona for the season.

Scott Thomas has been appointed the Director of John Island Camp. Over the past 2 years, Scott has worked full-time with YMCA Camp Elphinstone (Vancouver YMCA) as their year-round Outdoor Education Director. Previous to this role, Scott was the Assistant Director at YMCA John Island Camp in 2008 & 2009. Scott graduated in 2008 with a Bachelor of Education degree and has spent time as a supply teacher in the Rainbow School Board.

An important aspect of the reorganization is the appointment of a full-time Camp Registrar for both camps. Summer Brooks has been appointed the Camp Registrar and has been looking after the camp office on a daily basis taking care of registrations, calls to the camp office and ensuring all enquiries get dealt with in a timely and efficient manner. Summer has been with the Sudbury YMCA since 2002 in various roles and most recently at the Front Desk for 3 years. Summer will work in our camping office year round, focusing on strengthening our customer service while supporting the staff team of directors and volunteers.



Pete Kerigan  
Director,  
YMCA Camping Services



Summer Brooks  
Camp Registrar



Rob Groccia  
Director, Camp Falcona



Scott Thomas  
Director, John Island Camp

## YMCA CAMP FALCONA LOOKING FOR FALCONA ALUMNI

In 1937, Falcona Camp opened its doors for the first of many thousands of children that were to become campers of one of Northern Ontario's first overnight camp for children. In 1999, after an aging and declining workforce at Falconbridge Nickel Mines could no longer fill the camp with the offspring of their employees, they asked the YMCA to operate the camp. The deed for the camp and its property were later turned over to the YMCA.

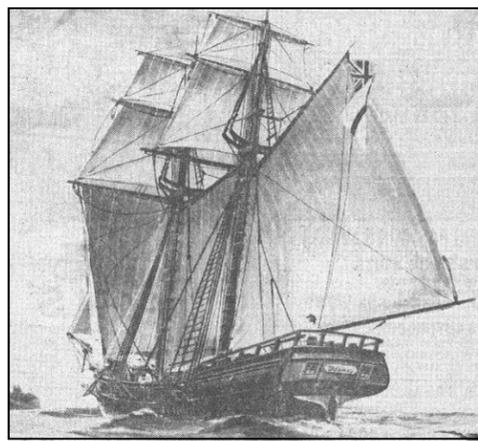
With the camp now in its 75th year, a Camp Falcona Alumni is being organized by the YMCA to enable the past staff and friends of the camp keep in touch with the camp and each other and to allow for an avenue of support for the camp.

If you, or anyone you know, has had a past affiliation with Falcona Camp, please let us know so we can build up a comprehensive list of Alumni. Names and contact information can be provided by contacting us at: [falcona.alumni@sudbury.ymca.ca](mailto:falcona.alumni@sudbury.ymca.ca)

## SCHOONER HM NANCY VISITS JOHN ISLAND IN 1812

The log of the famous schooner HM Nancy is on display in the Marine Museum in Midland. Reading through the log entries written 200 years ago reveals fascinating information to those interested in the past history of John Island. It tells of a special role played by John Island in the War of 1812.

The HM Schooner Nancy was built in Detroit in 1789. She served for several years in the fur trade on the Great Lakes, but is best known for the role it played in the War of 1812. It served as a supply ship for the British until August 1814 when she was set on fire to prevent the capture of the ship and her cargo. It was originally built by the fur trading company Forsyth, Richardson and Company of Montreal., in Detroit.



HM Schooner NANCY

The schooner was a perfect masterpiece of workmanship. It was not only beautiful, but strong and durable. It was built primarily of oak and red cedar. The boat was named after Richardson's daughter, Nancy and in 1790 went to Grand Portage at Sault Ste. Marie with a full cargo.....sailing right past John Island. During her early years, the ship changed owners several times as it remained engaged primarily in the fur trade.

In 1813, while the Nancy was in Lake Huron on a trip to Fort Mackinac (which was controlled by the British at this time), the Americans captured all of the British ships on Lake Erie, leaving the HM Nancy as the only British ship remaining on the upper lakes. The ship's log tells us she stopped at John Island in the North Channel for repairs and supplies. We have no information where on the island or what type of supplies she picked up, but the entry is quite clear in the log, indicating John Island played a role in the historic War of 1812.

The following year, the HM Nancy was caught by the Americans as she was bringing supplies up the Notawasaga River. Rather than allow the boat and her cargo get captured by the Americans, the crew set fire to the boat and it eventually sank. It remained at the bottom of the river until July 1927 when it was rediscovered and the remains placed in the Nancy Island Museum.

The story of the HM Nancy not only adds a new dimension to our knowledge of the past history of John Island, but also puts to rest the argument that John Island was named after John Moiles who brought the lumber mill to John Island from Detour, Michigan in 1885. The entry in the HM Nancy log refers to John Island back during the war of 1812.....long before John Moiles was even born.

## RON MAHOOD - CARETAKER, COOK . . . & FRIEND

We regret to report that Ron Mahood, cook in 1957 and 1958 and long time John Island supporter, passed away in January at the age of 87. Ron came to Canada along with his thick Irish brogue and was known to many Sudburians in the 1940's and early 1950's as the colourful clerk at Wolfe's Book Store. Wolfe's Book Store was located in the wedged shaped building at the corner of Elgin and Durham Streets in Sudbury, across the street from the current location of the YMCA. In 1956 Ron joined the staff of the YMCA as building superintendant, handing out tote baskets to Y members, running the coffee shop in the Y and keeping the building clean and well maintained until his retirement in 1979. He spent the summers of 1957 and 1958 as the cook at John Island Camp. Ron took over the cabin down on the beach by Chapel Point, painted the floor black, set up his chaise lounge on the cabin deck and enjoyed the summer. He would often play the piano in the dining hall as campers came in for meals and for sing songs in the evening. He was a man of many talents and skills and will be remembered for his many contributions to the YMCA, John Island Camp, and maybe just a little bit for being opinionated on just about everything.



Ron Mahood

## 1954 – The Year It All Started

**We asked Melinda Cassio Dozzi to write about some of her recollections as a Girls' Camp Counsellor in 1954 – the year it all started at John Island Camp. Melinda spent a lot of her time as a youth at the Y. She credits this experience with her getting a phys. ed. teachers position locally where she taught at Levack High, Lively High and Marymount. Melinda left teaching in 1979 to help with the family business – Cassio's Restaurant. Melinda lives in Sudbury and would love to hear from any of her campers or fellow staff from the early years of John Island.**

As a young girl, my favourite place to go after school and on Sudbury was the Y. This offered me the opportunity to take swimming lessons and also gymnastics. I, after a few years, became involved with the junior "Y" group and then in high school, Hi-Y. I even ended up teaching swimming, much to my surprise.

In 1954 I was asked to go to John Island. "Where's John Island?" I asked. "What do I do there?" They told me that Mildred Aitkenhead (later Jeremaz) would be the Director. That convinced me to say yes, I would go. They asked me to be their senior counsellor.

John Island Camp was (and still is) on Lake Huron's North Channel. The camp for girls was from July 24<sup>th</sup> to August 11, 1954. It took work to get enough girls but we managed to have 34 girls attend. They were divided into 2 groups – Juniors (5 to 12 years) and Intermediates (13 to 15 years). We met at the Government Dock in Spanish. Elwood Mitchell was to take us to the island in his large wooded boat called "Kismet". This only took 2 trips across. We were pleasantly surprised when we arrived at John Island.

There were 6 or 7 sleeping cabins. We had a working Delco but it shut down at 9:00 pm. After that we had flashlights and lanterns to use. We had camp fires and sing songs at night.....who needed electricity? In fact, after the girls were in their cabins the counsellors raided Ma Strain's kitchen. We did not do very well as we could only find jam to make sandwiches. She was smarter than we were but we were satisfied anyway.

This first year at John Island had us all working hard to get this camp going and therefore get more girls to come. The second year we doubled the numbers. I am sure in this first year we had the parents waiting to see how we and the girls would get along and survive.

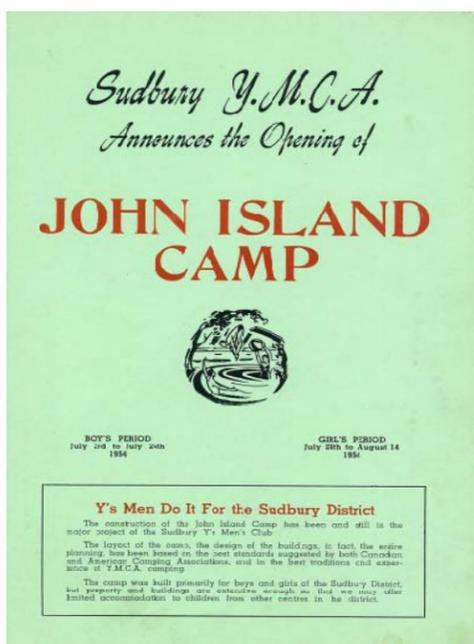
I want to mention the directors we had in 1954. Mildred – the Director; Ian McIntosh – Nurse (the camp hospital was situated a short distance from the girls' camps); Elwood Mitchell – Handy Man (the girls all thought he was great); May Burgess (Lionel's wife) – Craft Director; Mary Margaret Caswell – Swimming Director; and Jean Giroux – Music and Entertainment Director. With the help of Mildred, Mary Margaret and Ian they composed a camp song about an island far away to the tune of Valderi – Valdera.

Everyone helped to get the chapel going even if we were not builders. It was built down at the end of the beach. We were all good workers and proud also.

I do not always remember all the campers' names but I do remember taking the senior group on an all night camping trip not too far away. This was our first time sleeping out all night. Of course, it had to rain a little. We went with canoes and built our campfire, ate, sang and had a fun experience. I will not forget it and neither will the girls.

Know we did a good job at John Island. We must have. Look at the numbers the camp has now. We worked hard to keep the girls happy with us and all that happened when we were there in 1954. I even came back in 1955. The only thing I regret is not remembering all the early campers. I wish I knew where they all are today.

I must say that the years I spent at the Y were great years for me. It led me to teaching Physical Education when I started teaching in 1959. My thanks to all who made these years so great for me.



1954 John Island Camp Promotion

- Melinda Cassio Dozzi

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW? JOHN ISLAND ALUMNI KEEP IN TOUCH

### **Melissa Welch writes.....**

It seems like far too long since I've stepped foot on John Island. It is with fondness that I remember; early morning polar bear dips, sunny, sand filled days, unending laughs with friends and heartfelt singing during campfire

It's funny how things end up. After working many seasons at JIC, I took part in the exchange between JIC and YMCA Wainui Park (in New Zealand), in 1998/99. Little did I know it would be one of the best years of my life and one of the best things I've ever done. I fell in love with New Zealand (and traveling) and my fiancée, Scotty Moore (cue the cheesy music). Scotty and I met while I was working at Wainui Park and he was working, in town, for the Christchurch YMCA.

In a nutshell, Scotty travelled to Canada and worked at JIC, then we both lived in England while I completed Teachers College, and then we decided to go our separate ways. I continued to travel around the world and teach, while Scotty returned to NZ and taught at Outward Bound. We kept in touch over the years and reunited in 2009.

We are now living in New Zealand, about 30 min. out of Christchurch. Scotty is at Lincoln University studying Environmental Planning and Management and I am teaching Yr. 2/3 at a local Primary School. We are expecting our first child in May.

Both Wainui Park and John Island Camp hold a special place in our hearts. Scotty and I still visit Wainui Park on a regular basis and have met some of the exchange staff from JIC. I wonder what the future holds for them?



Melissa and Scotty

### **Audrey Lougheed tells us.....**

You don't have to be able to read and write to know how much you want to go to the camp where your parents met. Audrey Lougheed has joined her older brother River (4 years) and parents Sean and Erika Lougheed into the Lougheed family. They are all currently living in Kenora, Ontario where Sean has a position with the government and Erika is organizing a roller-derby team.

### **THIS IS THE LAST NEWSLETTER TO BE MAILED TO YOU....UNLESS.....**

We don't mean to sound threatening, but this is the last Alumni Newsletter to be mailed to our existing mailing list without confirmation of mailing address. Please refer to the insert in this newsletter to ensure that you keep receiving this newsletter either by regular mail or electronically.

### **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.

You can contact us at: [gary.gray@sudbury.ymca.ca](mailto:gary.gray@sudbury.ymca.ca)



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