



YMCA JOHN ISLAND

Fall 2020

ALUMNI

NEWSLETTER

The official newsletter of the John Island Camp Alumni and Friends of John Island

“What I Missed With No Camp”

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Read articles by

- Erin (O'Neill) Ethelston
- Ryan “Turbo” Forsyth
- Margie Lougheed
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NEW BEACH FACILITIES READY FOR 2021

CAMPER BURSARY FUND STARTED BY ALUMNI - Pg. 3



WHAT'S UP



YMCA JOHN ISLAND

FOR 2021?

With a massive disruption in overnight camping in 2020, the most asked question now is "What is planned for 2021? Don't expect a solid detailed response to that question quite yet, but planning has been happening for the coming year and if positive trends in controlling the virus continue, we should have an active year of camping ahead. However, we will notice some differences as precautions will still force camps to operate differently, but it will still be "camp".

Most camp sessions usually offered by John Island Camp will be available this year. Dates and costs will vary slightly from what was planned for 2020, but the favourite camp sessions will still be there. Information required for registering can be found on the camp website: www.ymcaneo.ca/john-island-camp

During the pandemic, the YMCA changed its computer systems so you will notice some changes in the registration process, but changes are made for efficiency and ease of registration.

Registration for 2021 camping programs begins on line on Tuesday, Jan. 12th.

What's New in 2021

Exciting new programs include a hiking (Trekking) program for 12 to 15 year old campers (a 13 day program including a hike along the Lake Superior coastal trail) and an expanded science program as part of the regular camp activities featuring our new bug hut and resources. Other changes will include a renaming of our Little Guys and Gals participants to "Sapplings".

Also available this coming summer will all-gender cabins. Information on this long requested opportunity will be available on the camp web page.

A new beach facility (pictured on the cover) has been completed for heightened enjoyment by all campers, new individual fun kayaks will be added to the program and improvements to other facilities have been made in preparation for the new season. ***Our thanks to the John Island Camp alumni for helping make most of these additions and improvements possible this past year.***

A Soft Landing

This Sharp-Shinned Hawk appeared on a John Island pathway this past summer. Obviously in the wrong place, this scared young bird posed quietly while we grabbed a few quick photos and then left it alone. On checking on it shortly after, this fuzzy feathered baby hawk was safely gone, rescued by its mother back to its nesting place.





CAMPER BURSARY ESTABLISHED BY ALUMNI

YMCA John Island Camp General Manager/Director Aspen Groom was approached by Alumni member David Horne regarding the set-up of a bursary fund to help campers wanting to attend John Island Camp. Following up on this suggestion, a Bursary Fund has been established and all Alumni and Friends of the camp are invited to participate. We asked David to describe details of the Bursary Fund.

As a parent of John Island campers, I was mindful of the cost of sending my children to John Island over 10 years ago. At the time I found the cost for one camper to participate in the summer long canoe trip in Northern Ontario to be costly. Fortunately, I had a good job at the time and could afford the camp fees.

Currently, given the economic uncertainty involving the employment of many parents, I was thinking there had to be a way to support families wanting to send their children to camp. I raised the possibility with camp management of a bursary for campers wanting to go to John Island Camp. We decided to establish the "John Island Alumni and Friends Bursary".

Here is how it will work. Every fall a campaign will be launched to raise funds for the bursary. Parents of prospective campers would be encouraged to submit an application by November 30th for support for the following summer.

A committee of JIC alumni and friends of the camp will review applications and make recommendations to the camp for bursaries for the forthcoming year. Bursary recipients will be notified about the amount of bursary support they will receive by February 1st of the coming year.

Constitution of the JIC Alumni and Friends Bursary Committee will be made prior to the camper selection process each year.



David Horne

To contribute to the John Island Camp Alumni and Friends Bursary Fund, contact John Island Camp General Manager Aspen Groom at: aspen.groom@ymcaneo.ca

New Dock Gets a Lift

It just seems like yesterday that everyone was bemoaning the fact that the water levels of the Great Lakes was going down and was touted as never to rise again. Our regular high water dock was virtually left sitting in the mud and reeds and the low water dock on the far side of the bridge became our main dock.

However, nature reminded us who was in charge of these things and the water began rising again and within a couple of years submerged our low water dock and forced a rehabilitation effort to reclaim our regular high water dock. A new high water dock replaced the rotting previous structure in 2017 and it was made a good height to allow for future water rises.

When parts of this dock saw water covering part of the new decking in 2019 and 2020, the decking was raised this fall thanks to the efforts of Jody Waddell.





A summer with NO CAMP was a hard concept to swallow for a lot of people this year. We asked a camper, a parent and a staff member to write how a summer with no camp affected them. As we might imagine, the results were traumatic.

Below are what they had to say. Alexis is an 11 year old camper who started at JIC when she was 5. Alice Toni is a counsellor with both camper and staff experience. Laura Young is a parent with three camp aged children. They all missed not having camp.

WHAT I MISSED MOST ABOUT JOHN ISLAND CAMP - Alexis

The thing I think we all missed this summer was that we couldn't go to John Island. What I missed the most about not being at John Island are the people. I've been going to camp since I was 5 years old. Mainly because all my friends go there and I make new friends before I leave. Because of all the camp activities and the time together, I learn so much about other people - it's crazy. You go there with 0 friends, and you come back with the whole camp as your friend. I also miss all the activities such as rock climbing, archery, camp fires,snacks, swimming, and all the other camp activities. I go there every year to find something new that the camp has created. People might say "it's just another summer camp". But no, it's another world, it's my second home. We're all a big family and we just love it. And the best part is there are no parents trying to make me clean my room! ;)

Alexis



ON LINE AUCTION RAISES \$1,700

During a normal year, John Island Camp has a few auctions which help send kids to camp. Our spring staff auction and Family Camp auction raise several thousand dollars each year. This year, although we were not able to have campers at camp, it was still important to build up our sponsorship fund for coming years.

Camp staff put together a few items as did some of our alumni and camp friends and an on-line auction was help on Facebook, taking the form of a silent auction over the space of 2 weeks. This raised just over \$1,700 toward the camp fund. Thanks to all who participated



A MOTHER TALKS ABOUT A CAMPLESS SUMMER

By Laura Young

Ah summer camp!! I have so many fond memories of summer camp - though none of those memories are as a camper. My first experience with summer camp came while working as a camp counsellor for the YMCA-YWCA of Guelph, up in Haliburton Forest. I took the job with no expectations as I had never been a camper. I had no idea just how magical and memorable camp summers are, for both campers and staff.

I enjoyed watching the campers form wonderful friendships with people who had been strangers the day before. They worked well together to solve problems and face their fears - like conquering the high ropes course, or climbing the most challenging route on the real rock wall.

What amazed me was how I had the same experiences; I formed great relationships with many staff members, some of whom I am still in contact with to this day. I also set my own goals - after stopping halfway to the top the first year on that rock wall, I felt great pride and a sense of exhilaration the next summer when I conquered that tallest route. I still search out ways to get back to that summer camp feeling; as a teacher I try to take my classes to camp, and my first JIC camper experience was attending a Women's Wellness Weekend.

All of these camp memories led my husband and I to prioritize sending our own children to camp. Our kids are 11, 9, and 6. The eldest two have attended JIC for a couple of summers, but all three kids were so disappointed when camp was cancelled. The eldest loves everything about JIC and was looking forward to trying the zip line this year and the high ropes course. Our middle child couldn't wait for the excitement of the boat ride to camp, skipping stones on the beach and playing on the water trampoline. The cancellation was perhaps hardest on the youngest, as summer 2020 was to be his first at JIC, that magical place his older siblings have always come home from with so many stories, smiles and sand. He was most disappointed that he couldn't get a John Island water bottle - though thanks to Aspen's dedication his first JIC dream did get to come true! All three kids wanted the t-shirts and some sort of tangible reminder of the camp season that almost was.

When I asked the kids to tell me what they missed most about camp this summer, I was impressed that they all mentioned gal setting. They wanted to best their previous achievements and try new things, all while making new friends. We have also been impressed by their resilience through all the uncertainties this year brought; though they were sad about the cancellation of the 2020 season, they didn't dwell on it or wallow. They set new goals and created their own sibling summer memories. Though it wasn't the same, the lessons of camp still shone through - having fun while challenging themselves to do their best all while stretching outside of their comfort zones. When the recent e-mail camp through indicating that families need to communicate their intentions for



The Young family - Anna, Laura, Adam, Paul and Ian
Gwen is standing in front, a happy dog

having their kids attend camp next summer, I replied within 20 minutes with a very enthusiastic yes they are coming back and here is our pick for camp session! The loss of camp didn't ruin the summer of 2020, but it left a gap that was hard to fill. Camp is magical and our family sincerely hopes that magic can be rekindled for so many next summer. Here's to staying safe and well, and I think we've all earned a few extra s'mores around the 2021 JIC campfire!

JIC THROUGH THE EYES OF A NURSE PRACTICIONER

- by Erin (O'Neill) Ethelston

My name is Erin (O'Neill) Ethelston. I am a JIC alumni, having been a camper from the Little Guys and Gals program to the Norquay program. My time as a camper was followed by 7 years on staff filling various positions from camp counselor to Greenway and Norquay Leader, and finally Wellness Director. To say that my summer camp experience was instrumental in shaping the person I am today would be an understatement. John Island Camp led me to build essential skills in leadership, self-confidence, organization, independence, and appreciation and respect for nature. It also gifted me with life-long friendships and relationships. I am lucky to have met my husband Dave (Carney) Ethelston while working at camp! We have been blessed with two children, Abigail and Liam. Abigail was a first time camper last year and had an amazing experience.

I was invited to contribute to this newsletter to

I am happy and grateful for what camp has gifted me

share my experiences at camp and my perspective of camp from the lens of a healthcare worker. While I've always had anecdotal evidence that summer camp had many lasting benefits, I felt compelled to look into the real evidence while preparing this article. I came across a recent research project from the University of Waterloo called "The Canadian Summer Camp Research Project". This was a National research study exploring the benefits of summer camp. For the project, they interviewed over 60 camp directors across the country. This led to identifying five desired outcomes of the summer camp experience: 1) social integration and leadership, 2) environmental awareness, 3) self-confidence and personal development, 4) emotional intelligence, 5) attitudes towards physical activity. The study found that campers exhibited significant positive change in each of the five areas at the end of their camp experience.

Continued on next page.....



Erin and Dave (Carney) Ethelston

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As a former camper/camp counsellor, a mother and nurse practitioner, these study findings don't come as a surprise. Having been fortunate enough to have been a longtime JIC camper and staff member, my camp experiences have had a significant positive impact on my life outcome/achievements. Starting with the leadership program, I first developed a keen interest in the environment, wilderness first aid skills and personal achievement/perseverance. After my first year on staff, having completed a wilderness first aid course and lifesaving course to be able to lifeguard, a career in the medical field began to pique my interest. By my fifth year on staff (and in my 3rd year of nursing school) I had the opportunity to work in the role of Wellness Director. This gave me a view into the world of community health and health promotion. I have continued on to work as a community based primary care nurse practitioner for a decade now, a career that has been challenging and very rewarding.

I was proud to be able to send my eldest child to camp last summer. She was shy and slightly hesitant to jump on that boat at Walkhouse, but after a week at camp she returned more confident and independent. She had a wonderful first experience and can't wait to get back! We were thrilled to have her share her camp stories and campfire songs with us on our drive home. Our once quiet and reserved girl talked and sang most of the way home! Such a small moment in a child's life has already begun to have a significant impact!

I am happy and grateful for what camp has gifted me. I hope to continue to share this gift with our children in the years to come!



Abigail Ethelston

SPRING WORK WEEKEND

- MORE THAN JUST WORK

One of the most anticipated weekends of the year is the John Island Camp Work Weekend. Alumni, parents, staff, and the most amazing assortment of camp supporters gather to get camp ready for the spring and summer. Save the date now and then keep warm thoughts about John Island Camp in your head throughout the winter. More details to follow on this weekend.

Friday, May 7th - Sunday, May 9th



THE TIE THAT BINDS BETWEEN GENERATIONS

By Margie Lougheed

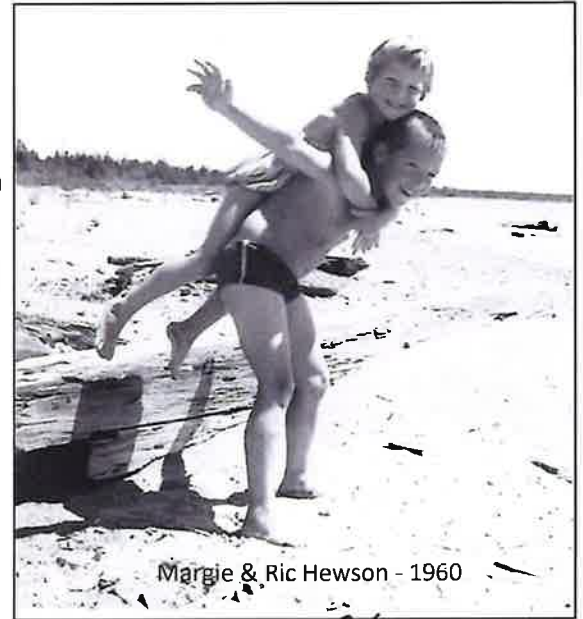
*"Something bound between us, without us knowing why" **

Like so many families, my older sibling paved the way for me to attend John Island Camp. My brother, Ric Hewson recalls his 4 years there, in the 1960s, as being a wonderful time in his life. Some of his own memories include the thrill when he realized he was, for the first time, ahead during a cross country race against his contemporaries, Sam Inch and Edgar Davey, running like "I never knew I could"! Or another story, being on a "beam reach" in a canoe across the North Channel, powered by an improvised sail rigged from nothing more than some tree limbs and a poncho.

*"Some things aren't defined, Some things they're just right" **

The 60s and 70s were a time of great change and JIC was no exception. In 1971, the year before the gradual phasing in of CO-ED camp, I along with my neighbour, Mary Townend and 8 other 14/15 year old intrepid took part in JIC's first ever all-girls wilderness expedition. With our counsellors Pam Smith and O.B. (Dave O'Brien) we struck out into the open water, set up a base camp on an adjacent island, and paddled in and around the Whalesback Channel for 5 days. The Whalesback Channel was aptly named in 1816 by Henry Wolsey Bayfield because "the beautifully streamlined rocks that flanked this passage reminded him of the Atlantic Ocean" ** It was a great ride and in the face of Mother Nature, we, like those many boys before us, grew into a resilient group! The following week we tripped through a string of lakes and rivers from Elliot Lake to the Serpent River, and triumphantly made it back to camp for the final campfire. By all accounts it was a success and by 1974 the idea that girls could "canoe trip" led to the newly blended CIT program, although, as one participant added, we still "did the canoe trip (part of the program) with just girls".

*"Cause it's more than the green of trees, it's more than the summer breeze. The smell of rocks and water, Washing over me" **



Margie & Ric Hewson - 1960



A quarter of a century later I returned to JIC as the Wellness Manager, which is another story, but safe to say, it was a far cry from the nurse of the infirmary days. It was almost surreal seeing a next generation with so many faces resembling those of my cabin mates (their parents) from my earlier camp life. I will never forget watching my nephew David along with his cabin mates, ripping around the ping pong table and tether ball pole as his father did before him. Genetics? Evolution? Succession? Whatever you call it, in our case, as with many others, "going to John Island" is a special ongoing family tradition.

As a result of a plea for help to our eldest son Sean, he arrived at JIC as a last minute, dare I say reluctant kitchen helper. He tells me he washed 136,000 dishes that summer. Well, like osmosis, he connected with every camper and staffer (which included his future partner, Erika), who passed a dirty dish through that kitchen's open window, and, like a big, wet, slimy onion I witnessed first-hand how trepidation can instantly peel away in the face of love and inclusivity.

THE TIE THAT BINDS (CONT'D FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

*"From that moment on, nothing could undo, the feeling of belonging, that would always be true" **

Sandy, our middle child, recalls the energy of JIC's dining hall as though having its own life force, second only to the swell of the boat ride that brought him there. Always preferring not to be in the shadow of his brother, Sandy volunteered his first summer at JIC in the daily grind of maintenance details and somehow, over time, transitioned into learning the hard and soft skills of Norquay leadership while paddling the Attawapiskat river. How does this happen?

*"Some things don't need words, some things they just work..." **

Heather, the youngest of our fold, took to JIC at a much earlier age than either of her brothers. She shares, "Just thinking about it I get so emotional. It gave me so much confidence. I remember the first time I went windsurfing all by myself, that was great!"

*"How can I explain, what I take away, when the autumn falls, and we go our separate ways" **

And so, it goes on, year after year. My husband Dale and I are thrilled and full of gratitude that our eldest grandchildren, River and Audrey, are now experiencing the joy of John Island Camp, and with any luck their cousins will join them in the years ahead. Nothing closes the inter-generational divide faster than a thread of JIC stories and songs while sitting round a campfire full of twinkling eyes!-

"It's something you can't touch, but you can hold so dear, and maybe it's not much....,

*But I'll be back next year" **

* Peter Kratz's The Camp song

**The North Channel and St. Mary's River: A Guide to the History by Gutsche, Chisholm and Flore

**COMING
IN
DECEMBER!**

CAMPERS CONNECT WITH ALUMNI - write a letter, get a t-shirt

This December camp staff will be doing a holiday letter exchange. This is a way JIC campers, staff, and alumni to connect or reconnect in a meaningful way.

How does it work?

Everyone can register through our online system and upload a letter. This letter will then be sent to someone else who has also registered. We take care of all the mailing and every letter comes with a JIC T-shirt.

Who can participate?

Anyone! Everyone must sign a consent form to release the letter.

How much does it cost?

It will cost \$5 this will cover the shipping cost.

When do I need to register by?

Register online and upload your letter by December 15th, 2020. This will allow us to mail it out before the Holiday break.

What should I write?

Please share a camp story or memory. Feel free to include drawings or pictures. Please make sure to keep everything camp appropriate

For safety reasons, we will be reviewing letters before they are sent.

Keep watch on our Social media accounts for details.

BEING AN INCLUSIVE CAMP

JOHN ISLAND TAKES THIS SERIOUSLY

Over the last year I have written two articles about gender in camping, this third segment is a summary of actions we are and have taken at JIC to be more inclusive.

Facilities

JIC is blessed with some lovely buildings. When it comes to being inclusive our traditional methods of segregation (boys/girls) don't always work for everyone, which can create anxiety for some folks.

Bathrooms

JIC has all gendered single stall toilets or Rub-A-Dubs. These open to the outside and allows for easy supervision from staff. We have three Rub-A-Dubs, North, Central, and South. These names are gender neutral like the Rub-A-Dubs.

Showers

JIC has a shower house with two sides. Each side is identical and has four stalls each with an enclosed changing area and shower stall. This orientation allow for easy supervision by staff, while still giving each child their own privacy during shower time. This summer each side will be renamed as the East and West Shower, to be more gender inclusive.

Programs

JIC offers many opportunities for all campers to interact, regardless of age, race, ability, gender, or background. This is important as we work to establish that everyone is welcome to try new things and work together while at camp.

All-Gendered Cabins

New this year we will be offering *all-gendered* cabins. When registering for camp, parents will be able to choose if their child is in a girls, boys, or all-gendered cabin based on where they see their child being most comfortable.

Personal Choice Activities and Happy Hour

These two programs allow children to interact with others at camp who have similar interests.

This gives all children the opportunity to meet, work together, and building lasting relationships with those outside of their cabin.

Culture

Your 'home camps' culture is something we love deeply. I know that camp traditions are some of the things that make camp, camp. But as Mya Angelou said "*Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.*" and JIC has accepted the challenge of always working to be the best for all of our campers, staff, and volunteers. This means reflecting and sometimes changing when needed.



Aspen Groom
General Manager/Director
YMCA John Island Camp

Staff Training

Staff training sets clear expectations of staff while at camp: how to manage bullying, conflict, and other responsibilities. Each year, we make time to talk about inclusion and what is on the minds of our community. Many JIC Staff are very knowledgeable of these issues and they work together to create a space for everyone.

Sides of Camp

Over the last couple years, we have been working to call the two distinctive side of camp as the North and South side of camp, previously referred to the Boy and Girls side. This allows us to be more inclusive to campers, staff and volunteers, of all genders, and to group cabins based on other factors like bedtime, program etc.

Cabin Contracts

At the beginning of camp all campers work together to set a standard of rules for how they should behave. We know when everyone works together to understand and create the rules everyone is better equipped to follow them and hold each other accountable.



A PEAK AT THE NEW SCIENCE PROGRAM

Nature Program

We are fortunate to have a great natural environment on John Island for our programs. We do our best to help develop a deep seeded respect for nature in all of our campers. To continue to facilitate campers' understanding and connection with nature, we are making changes to expand our nature programming.

Goals for the Program

The goal is to have programs that will give campers camper fun, hands on experiences that will also be educational that help guide their interests. The Camp plans to accomplish this in four ways.

Create a facility that supports nature programming.

Develop new and exciting nature programs that focus on learning and that utilizes the camp's environment.
Provide tools, equipment that will support the programs
Training for staff that focuses on learning the nature programs.

Renovations to Bug Hut

We started renovations during the summer, working hard on making improvements to the bug hut. To the outside of the hut, we have added three new garden beds filled with composted soil, ready for seeds to be planted. We have also attached a rain barrel have added evestrough to collect rain water that can be used for watering gardens. To the inside, we have gathered some fun nature items from around the camp for campers to explore and terrariums to collect and observe and appreciate our 6-legged friends.

Nature program for next year

Garden Program

This coming season, campers will participate in our new gardening program. This program will involve planting and maintaining a vegetable garden, as well as learning all about plants. Gardening is a great learning opportunity for children and youth alike, it promotes environmental engagement and a positive association with vegetables (if you are interested to learn more please check out some of Dr. Nicole Yantzi's [Laurentian University] research on children engagement and gardening).



Other Programs

We have a plan to pilot a few other nature activities and to evaluate them and try and continue to improve and grow the nature program.

I am super excited for this program, if you have any suggestions I would love to hear from you. You can send me an email at katie.runions@ymcaneoc.ca or give me a call at the camping office 705-674-6171



- Katie Runions, Ass't Director, YMCA John Island Camp



Recently, I was asked by Mr. Gray to submit an article about 'my philosophy of portages'. Where to begin... Well, I have never thought of portaging as an ethos, but if one existed it would be: **Wear closed toed shoes.**¹

But now that I'm here I might as well do some palavering.

John Island has been a pivotal force in my life. Beginning in 1997, when Mr. Robinson encouraged me to apply, John Island is where I emerged from the chrysalis of adolescence and transformed into a portage-friendly tripper. I was exposed to many bright and intelligent people who molded me into the person I am today. It was from my years as a cabin row counsellor, Greenway and Norquay Leader that the embers of the fabled 'Trip Norquay Group C' sparked into a fire. Indeed, this group of former counsellors and campers have plied the waters of the Missinaibi River, Moisie River, Seal River, Pipestone/Ashweig/Fawn/Severn Rivers, Allanwater River, Spanish River, Serpent River.... And countless other lakes and streams. Indeed, these relationships have paid dividends time and time again as I have benefitted from their support, care, and adventure.

Back to portaging. I believe Mr. Gray was referring to my once famous credo, 'It is better to drag a canoe than a body.' In context, the origin of this credo was likely borne out of a handful of close calls. I can vividly remember standing on the shore of some far-flung river watching in horror as a Swift Dumoine danced violently like a bronco until 'bucking' its terrified contents into the froth. The joys of witnessing survivors clamber to shore were oftentimes quickly dashed as my attention undoubtedly turned to the canoe. I can still recall the humbling, guttural sounds of a Swift canoe slowly wrapping and her thwarts cracking. Those are sounds that reach your soul and remind us all of our mortality. Certainly, it is a long trek to finish a canoe trip without a canoe. Eventually, I came to appreciate that it would be far less problematic to simply walk around risky rapids. After all, the human cargo was far, far too valuable to treat as anything less than irreplaceable.

What do I do now? I manage approximately 500 lockers, 1 'smoker's pit', 1 detention room (currently on a temporary suspension due to COVID 19) and a whole lot of phone calls and emails. My day to day life is going well and I can't help but feel truly grateful for my experience at John Island which I know has prepared me well for the next portage...

(Ryan "Turbo" Forsyth is currently the Vice-principal of Elliot Lake Secondary School And still enjoys regular canoe expeditions,,,,,and portages)



"Turbo" - a photo from the Elliot Lake Secondary School 2019 Yearbook

¹ According to page 62 of the 1997 Staff Manual (after the skinny-dipping policy part), "... and covered shoes (NO sandals) must be worn at all times by leaders and campers..."

JIC "T" SHIRT QUILT

In memory of Pam (Smith) Will (1953-2018)

If my memory serves me well my wife Pam told me that she snuck into JIC a year before she should have! I think her years at JIC were from 1960 to 1977. Pam I know phoned home (not an easy thing to do then) after one-week of her first year and asked her parents if she could stay for an extra week. Pam's younger brother Robin and sister Patti also went to JIC as soon as they could. Pam was a camper, CIT, and Counsellor. She missed a year or 2 around 1972-73 and came back in 1974 as Program Director and Girl's Camp Director. I came to JIC as Assistant Camp Director in 1973 and was Director from 1974 until June 1977 when Pam & I moved to Thunder Bay, and Don Waddell took over as Camp Director.

Our daughter Morgan first went to little guys & girls camp for I think 5 days when she was five in 1987 and stayed through until 2001 as a Greenway Leader.

At some point Morgan & Pam looked at our collection of JIC T shirts and came up with a plan to make a quilt and started on it – but didn't finish the project. After Pam passed away I found the bag with quilting material and the T shirts and contacted one of Pam's best friends Barb (Cullen) Baker and she gladly accepted the challenge. Barb was at both Y-Land and JIC as a camper and on staff. Can you find the one shirt that is not from JIC?

I think the PMAC NHOJ – NHOJ PMAC T shirt is a story worth explaining. I think the year was about 1975. I think the instigators were Mary-Anne Roman and friends but I'm missing other names. This became kind of a secret code where one cabin group would call out PMAC NHOJ (Camp John spelled backwards) and the other cabin would yell back NHOJ PMAC (we had a very noisy dining hall in those days). That winter Pam & I decided to create the T shirts. Way beyond our wildest dreams, it became a great marketing tool. Campers would walk around Sudbury, Sault St Marie, North Bay plus other communities and people would ask them "What is PMAC NHOJ?" and our campers were great promoters and would tell them about this magical, special place to make friends in the North Channel.

I presented Morgan with this quilt as a gift on a subsequent birthday. The quilt hangs in our water-access cottage in Honey Harbour. If you have lost touch with any of this Smith Clan (As there were other Smith Clans) including Patti, Darryl, Cameron, Erin, or Barb or Morgan you can reach out to me. I would love to hear from you.



Al and Pam at JIC Week Party



Al Will
905-869-8639
al@alwill.ca

A SUMMER WITHOUT CAMP - STAFF SUFFER TOO

By Alice Toni

In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, the provincial government's decision to close all overnight camps put me in a very new situation. After attending John Island Camp for 12 consecutive years, I didn't really know what to do with myself. I have always had it to fall back on, and loved spending the majority of my summers there. I was excited to be a second year staff member this year, and I was especially devastated because my first year was so fun. Before the YMCA finalized their decision to not run John Island, I volunteered alongside Aspen, Katie, Hannah and Gary through Zoom calls, trying our best to provide entertaining content in the spirit of John Island. Even as the



Alice Toni



Alice and Georgia

pandemic numbers grew, I kept my hopes up for John Island, albeit with some changes. It was tough when we were finally told that the staff were being let go, with only a few returning to make renovations and repairs to camp facilities. All the friends I'd only get to see through John Island, all the time spent having fun with my campers, all the sailing, swimming, climbing, canoeing-- that was gone, and it was really difficult. Not to mention, the returning international staff were not only unable to return to John Island, but to Canada as a whole. I was lucky that John Island recommended me to another summer day camp being run at the Walden Trails, where I got the opportunity to teach kids sports, outdoor living skills, and mountain biking in an outdoor setting. I had a good time this summer, but I know I would've been happier at John Island. Missing it showed me just how important a John Island summer is for me, and I cannot wait to be back on staff for summer 2021!

WE HAVE ALL BEEN AFFECTED... BUT CAMP'S INFLUENCE IS STRONG

As we read the comments written by those affected most by the closure of camp, there is one factor that breaks through the absence of something we all love - the strong and lasting effects of camp. So what happens when a camp is restricted from opening for an entire summer after 65 years of continuous operation? Most importantly, in our case, hundreds of youth were denied a critical component of their growing up. This can not be overemphasized. Any of us as camp alumni can recall case after case of former campers and staff passionately recalling how camp played a critical role in their development. One missing year of this positive influence in a short youth lifespan is a major loss, but camp's influence is strong.

Thanks to the alumni and friends of John Island, YMCA John Island Camp will be there to carry on when the pandemic allows. The success of John Island Camp is the result of the love and care that staff and friends of the camp have put into the camp for 65 years and is currently a major factor in the support needed to carry through the negative effects of Covid-19.

Thank You!

YMCA John Island Camp has been operating since 1954 as an overnight camp for children and youth. The pages of our Alumni Newsletter are filled with testimonies from past campers and staff who claim their experience at John Island Camp was largely responsible for their development. Camp is where they discovered who they were, what they were good at and made life-long friends.

We want to thank just some of the people who help make YMCA John Island Camp possible by volunteering their skills and support.

Lasalle Secondary School

For 12 years, students from LaSalle Secondary School have spent 3 weeks each spring to rebuild our camper cabins and other facilities in camp. This has been part of their program at the school, giving them practical experience while benefitting the camp.



Amatol

This group of camp alumni from YMC Camp Wabinaki has spent a weekend every spring for over a decade completing major construction projects at John Island (such as the panelling of the inside of the dining hall, rebuilding of Tern Cabin, and many other camp projects). These are professionals in their fields and the camp has benefitted from their volunteer work.

Rotary Club of Sudbury

This group actually started their volunteer work at John Island back in the 1950s as they built our lone double cabin now Eagle and Talon. (originally known as the Senior Cabin). In recent years this group has done major renovations on the cabin they originally built (Eagle and Talon), the camp dock, and other projects that have benefitted the camp.



Friends of John Island

Every spring a work party is convened to help get the camp ready for spring and summer programs. This group of all ages has continually worked on clean up activities each year, opening up cabins and buildings, clearing broken branches and brush, getting program areas prepared, and a lot of painting. While many are alumni, others include current staff, friends, parents, and a lot of interested volunteers.

There are many, many more volunteers....and of course donors. Camp exists because of the commitment of these and many others, having a positive and lasting effect on the lives of thousands.

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2021



JIC ALUMNI

Alumni and friends of the camp are the life blood of John Island Camp. There are several ways alumni support the camp and keep it part of their lives.

- **Annual Spring and Fall Work Weekends (no special skills required)**
 - **Write for the Alumni Newsletter (Your story will be read)**
 - **Bring your family to Family Camp (Many already do)**
- **Contribute to the JIC Capital Fund (Help keep OUR camp in great shape)**
 - **Sponsor a camper (Any amount helps)**
 - **Be a John Island Camp Ambassador**

The YMCA John Island Camp Alumni Newsletter is published 2 times a year with Semi occasional Special Editions.

For comments or to submit articles or content ideas: gary.gray@ymcaneo.ca
 Visit the John Island page on the website of the YMCA of Northeastern Ontario to access all past issues of this newsletter.

www.ymcaneo.ca/john-island-camp/

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