



YMCA JOHN ISLAND

Spring 2022

# ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

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



## **SPECIAL THIS ISSUE**

- Meet JIC's New Leadership
- Rotary, a John Island Giant
- Heart and Soul by Jim Shaver
- JIC Reflections by Des Hann
- A Parent Talks About JIC  
by Will Morin
- The Burgess Effect



# The Path Ahead

As this is being written, the snow is starting to melt, the lakes are frozen and walking through the trees and warmth of summer is still only a dream. But with two years of Covid behind us and a forecast for a brighter time ahead, living the kind of life that only overnight camping can provide is getting closer.

While campers have not been able to take advantage of all that overnight camping provides youth recently, the path ahead is looking promising. The joy of going on a nature walk with a group of campers . . . the sound of laughter and good fun echoes up from the main beach . . . Singing as we proceed into the dining hall for a meal . . . Rejoicing around the campfire with familiar songs we have learned . . . Just being able to be ourself away from the pressures of life in the city.

We are not sure what the summer of 2022 will look like in detail, but one thing we do know - being able to get together with old and new friends in John Island's natural surroundings has been long awaited.

See you at camp this summer!

## When Camp is Home.....

The world with myriad paths is lined  
But one alone for me  
One little road where I may find  
The charms I want to see.  
Though thoroughfares majestic call  
The multitude to roam,  
I would not leave, to know them all,  
The path that leads to home.

*From: The Path That Leads To Home  
By Edgar Albert Guest*



# The Alumni Welcomes...



**Finn Thomas**—Hi There! My name is Finn Thomas and I am the new *Director of John Island Camp*. I am very excited for the opportunity to continue my career at such a reputable camp. I am from Owen Sound, Ontario, and I have spent lots of time exploring some of the coolest places in Canada. Some of my favourite camp activities involve Outdoor Living Skills, Canoeing, Camp Wide Games, and Out-trips! Like many directors, camp had a large influence on me from an early age. It is a place that has always felt kind of surreal. A place to truly be yourself, to learn grow and create ever-lasting friendships. I am thrilled to be a part of the YMCA of Northeastern Ontario and looking forward for what is to come for John Island Camp in 2022 and beyond!



**Tanner Beange** - I am the *Assistant Director of John Island Camp* and very excited to be coming back to John Island after almost 3 years. I have been a camper at JIC since I was 8 years old and always thought of the place as a second home and the people as a second family. As a recent graduate of the Outdoor Adventure Leadership program at Laurentian University, I am very happy to be coming back to camp in a new role. I am very passionate about outdoor leadership, canoeing and am excited to share my knowledge and love of the outdoors with others. I am excited to return and to help facilitate a more traditional John Island summer. I hope to see familiar faces and meet new ones along the way.

## UPCOMING EVENTS IN 2022

**John Island Camp Work Weekend** - Date to be Confirmed (Check the JIC Webpage for updates)

This annual weekend is an opportunity for alumni and their families to visit camp and volunteer to help get camp ready for a busy 2022 camping season. Alumni bring their sleeping bag, work clothes and any snacks they might want and a musical instrument if they have one. If you are interested, contact the Y office at [johnisland@ymcaneo.ca](mailto:johnisland@ymcaneo.ca). It is a weekend of small but fun jobs (painting, brush clearing, light maintenance work, etc.) while renewing alumni friendships while working and enjoying camp again.

**John Island Camp Alumni Weekend** - Date to be Confirmed (Check the JIC Website for updates)

Our first special Alumni Weekend is an opportunity for our alumni (going back to 1954) to get together to meet each other, reminisce and experience the beauty and magic of YMCA John Island Camp. The camp has 14 cabins ready for alumni to book for this upcoming and very special weekend. Register online (JIC Webpage) when dates are established on the JIC website.

### What's Inside this Issue

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## There are a few things in life we know we

can count on. Food tastes better on a canoe trip. Taxes will go up. Standard mail delivery will get slower each year. Gasoline prices will rise etc. etc. However, the most predictable of all – the Rotary Club of Sudbury will be there to help John Island Camp.

Back in the early 1950's, the Rotary Club was there to help provide a cabin for senior campers to be ready when camp opened in 1954. Depending on your John Island decade of participation, you would know it as the Sr. Cabin, Eagle Cabin or most recently, as Eagle/Talon. It originally consisted of three sleeping rooms (2 rooms with two double bunks for campers and one room for the counsellor), a common room with a beautiful fireplace for warmth in cool seasons (and a bit of ambiance) and storage space for clothing and other camp gear. Rotary made that happen.

Lionel Burgess was the General Secretary of the Sudbury YMCA back then and also an active member of the Rotary Club. Lionel would tell stories to the camp staff about the Rotary Club and its motto of "Service Above Self". Their example of this in their camp involvement was an example to all staff of how community members support and enrich their communities. In the mid 1960's, another wing was added to the cabin allowing to sleep twice as many campers and staff. The Rotary wheel has hung on the outside of the cabin with pride.

*"The projects that we do together as a Rotary Club offer fellowship for our members and help build a stronger Rotary Club. Our John Island project is no different and offers the club members a great opportunity to help out a very worthwhile cause. Whether it's changing locks on cabin doors, or painting the cabin's exterior, building new bunks, or sitting around the campfire, we enjoy the bonding with our fellow Rotarians. The more we get to know our fellow Rotarians the more fun we have in serving. And it certainly fits our Rotary creed which asks "Will it build Goodwill and Better Friendships". We appreciate the opportunity to help our friends at John Island.*

*Bill Querney*

Over the decades to follow, Rotarians continued with their support of John Island. It was a community asset that was having a positive influence on the lives of youth. In more recent years, Rotary's commitment continued with both financial help and labour support. The cabin at the end of path, also known as the Rotary cabin, showed its wear and tear after years of use by hundreds of youth. The Rotary Club of Sudbury picked up on this emerging need for upgrading and worked with the camp on a number of tasks – some major and some minor.



The original Eagle cabin in 1954 (above)  
Eagle/Talon cabin with new Rotary Renovations in (below)



Together with camp staff, Rotarians straightened walls, constructed new bunk beds, painted the outside walls, repaired cabin parts that had been showing over 60 years of use. A new deck outside was added together with a new set of stairs. It was a true labour of love and once again the cabin showed remarkable improvements and upgrades. If some of the work was beyond the expertise of the members, they would ensure that the funds were there to pay for professional support.

This past year, the club took on a major responsibility. The roof was in need of replacement and although the members did not have the qualifications to work on a rooftop, financial support was supplied to the YMCA to purchase all the materials for a new steel roof. Fully qualified volunteers tore off the old roof and installed the new steel roof and tied it all together with beautiful trim. What next?



ROTARY - Continued from previous page

Inside the common room of the cabin, the original stone fireplace has not been in use due to issues with the box and the chimney. The Sudbury Rotary Club has pledged to ensure that the fireplace is brought back to its original appearance and current standards of construction. This will bring the club back in the spring of 2022.

While hundreds and perhaps thousands of youth have had an enhanced camp experience because of the work of Rotary at John Island Camp over the past 70 years, the club has also benefitted. Work weekends are also social weekends, bringing the club closer together while working on a common project. The John Island Camp involvement has also been a good example of how Rotary demonstrates "Service Above Self".

*"It was amazing to be back at John Island helping to get everything ready for the session of campers. I have very fond memories of attending camp there and now new memories made with my fellow Rotarians. I look forward to this weekend every year!"*

- Joanne Bowers

*"The most difficult part of the weekend was finding our way back to the cabin after the campfire!"*

*"The best part was eating Johnny Dow's Gourmet BBQ dinner."*

*"The saddest part was leaving the Island on Sunday afternoon."*  
- Peter Edmunds



I have had a long connection with John Island from back when it first opened and I attended camp there. I am happy as a Rotarian to be able to give back to the camp through the Rotary Club of Sudbury.

- John Knight

*"This was my first trip to John Island. I was impressed by the terrific facilities and programming and fascinated by its history. I'm proud that Rotary has been a part of it over the years and glad to have the chance to help out."*

- Fred Slade



YMCA John Island Camp thanks the Rotary Club of Sudbury





## A PARENT TALKS ABOUT JIC

by Will Morin

From the overnight camps to the Women's Wellness Weekends, the YMCA John Island Camp's programming is socially inclusive and culturally aware. Truth be told, there is potential for true learning and collective healing at the YMCA John Island Camp. In light of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) final report, John Island Camp is an ideal location for true engagement and prime for the 'calls to action' to be delivered.

As a local Anishinaabe artist and professor of Indigenous Studies, I was honoured several times when invited to present Indigenous Craft and Cultural workshops for the Women's Wellness Weekend at John Island Camp. As a father of two Indigenous campers, one of who has Down Syndrome, John Island has provided my boys with inclusive strong memories and lasting friendships.

Showing these women how to make a dream-catcher enabled me to provide them with teachings of the interconnection within Indigenous cultural values. Both my sons have long dark hair they wear in a braid, that carries cultural teachings and is part of their Anishinaabek identity. While attending the overnight camping independently both my boys thrived in the inclusive and accepting environment of the camp experience.

The YMCA overnight camping programming does include Indigenous historical and cultural elements but has the potential to expand and include more presentations from the nearby First Nation Community, Serpent River Anishinaabek, or other Indigenous resource people of the region of Northern Ontario. As well, just south of John Island, is a larger one, Manitoulin Island, literally meaning "Spirit Island" in the Ojibway language.

The road to John Island passes through Serpent River First Nation. Just east along the north shore of Lake Huron is the site of the Spanish Indian Residential School which ran from 1913 to 1965 by the [Jesuit Fathers](#), the [Daughters of the Heart of Mary](#), and the [Government of Canada](#). As Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the TRC stressed that: "The road we travel is equal in importance to the destination we seek. There are no shortcuts. When it comes to Truth and Reconciliation, we are forced to go the distance." The work he outlines Canadians need to do will be uncomfortable if we are to do it right. Only then can we better reflect our shared history in all segments of society.

From canoes to archery, bush survival to learning through play, so much of the island's activities and YMCA's camp programming are primed for expansion in Indigenous content and methodology. Learning about indigenous plants and animals will link to traditional stories that speak of Anishinaabek Constellations and issues related to climate change. The word for 'earth' in Ojibway is "aki / ki" and the word for 'medicine' is "mash-ki-ki", literally meaning the 'strength of the earth-earth'. When we walk on the earth in a balanced way, then we become stronger and we become the medicine.

Will Morin

BFA, BA Indigenous Studies, B.Ed, MA, PhD (ABD)



*Jim Shaver was Tripping Director and Assistant Camp Director at John Island Camp in the early 1990's. He moved to Scotland after camp where he still lives with his wife .*

If we head off on a few tangents during this little encounter I apologize but *bear* with me and you'll see where we're going. Gary and I were chatting and he tells me about the new book called Sand in Everything and Everywhere You Never Thought Possible....actually it's called *The Sand In My Shoes* and it is so nice to go through that you must get a copy for yourself (maybe a pressie for next Christmas as it is just around the corner). Anyway, where was I? Ahh, sand. The title of this lovely new book flashed up a thought of my first season at camp and the Texas that cost me my whole summer's wages (no really, the whole lot). Fortunately grilled cheese flowed free and easy and the lodgings were as luxurious as one could ever wish for and I wanted for nothing.

All of us have had a different introduction to John Island. Some will have come from the age of one or maybe ten and others will have first arrived far later in life. Was it a camper or staff experience that was your first encounter or as a visitor with a school group or just dragged along to some weekend as a volunteer or guest? Regardless, you arrived. From that point forward we were all connected by some enchanted web.

# Heart and Soul

By Jim Shaver



My mind floats all over the place and I'm not embarrassed to say that I thoroughly enjoy following where it leads me. So how about a few examples if you would indulge me with your time.

OK, I'm having lasagne for dinner and because of the dreamy look on my face my wife asks 'whatcha thinkin about?' 'Charlotte in the kitchen at camp, she made great lasagne and always saved me a plate if I was late for dinner.' Now you may not know Charlotte but you are connected.

It's a cold autumn day and I pull out my favourite down vest that has been with me for the better part of 25 years. Poor Mike. Every day for months I'd pass him on a trail with a spring group or paddle by him on the waterfront or dance and sing around him doing a skit in the evening with a 'do you want to trade for that great vest of yours yet?' The answer was always 'no way, I just got it'. Well, to make a long story short, one morning at about 6am I hear the flap on the tent platform I'm sleeping in fling open (the zippers never worked) and Mike pokes his head in and says 'I'm off' and leaves his vest on the end of my bed. Wow. Generous, kind, incredibly giving.

Cont'd on next page



## HEART and SOUL (cont'd from previous page)

How about just one more (got a million, bet you do too). So it's three in the morning and the dog starts barking like a maniac down in the living room and I'm flying out of bed ready to take on the bear at the door, or was it the three racoons on the roof, chipmunks at the window? Really? Decades go by and it's still so within me. A wee day dream here, a reminiscence there. Do you remember that camper? Yeah the wee one who was so funny when she..... what was her name? What about the time when, ohhh that was so scary I almost (oh don't we know).

Some of you reading this will still be a regular at camp. For others it will have been a year since you were last there (or maybe 10 or even 50 years) and there are some who have passed beyond and live in our hearts but there is one common tie that binds us - it is the lovely family we have with the Y and John Island Camp. To have participated in the joy of camp, the hardship, the making of bonds and relationships and the breaking of boundaries; to have enjoyed the amazing experiences with, for and because of camp is something that connects us all.

When I was at camp and working with the Y I was always hearing stories of so and so from ten years back or maybe thirty or forty; my time came and went like those people before me and new amazing lovely people came after. This will continue but whether you know the person writing one of these articles or not you have a vested interest. Always curious about what's happened since you've left and what's new that will be happening in the future. John Island has this amazing gentle yet profound impact through the giving, nurturing, loving people that are its heart and soul.



Jim Shaver in discussion with Camp Director, Jim Blake



There may come a time when you no longer work for or visit the Y and John Island, but guaranteed what you learned and shared there will travel with you for the rest of your time and most likely wiggle its way into your own teachings and learning as we continue to develop as people.

I'm pretty sure my story is not dissimilar to most reading this otherwise we all wouldn't have taken the time to read it.

Just writing this has been a lovely way to spend some time with you all. By the way, if you're able to give a hug, go do it and tell someone you love them. It feels really nice.

Just remember we are all part of something very special.





Rocky and Bandit—JIC's canine rulers

## Rocky (and Bandit) Talk Camp

You have to think like a dog to really understand what goes on at camp. Actually, you have to BE a dog. That is where Bandit and I come in. We are the canine holdouts at YMCA John Island Camp.

Do you think the humans at camp really understand what they have here at camp? How many partridge nests can they show you? Can they demonstrate the shortest and fastest route to the dining hall at meal time from ANY building or facility in camp? Can they find their way anywhere in camp in the darkest nights without tying a light to their forehead? Or best of all, can they show you how to crawl under the office when they score a bag of chips from someone's backpack? Can they walk into the nearest stream or lake and cool off naked and unashamed and then take a nice cool drink while they are there? And then roll around in the sand to dry off.

Dogs relieve themselves outside in bush or on a decaying old birch stump where any foul odour dissipates into the air while camp people hide behind closed doors in those smelly little rooms with holes to sit on. Wow!

Humans are strange as they create and enhance their own discomfort zones.

My name is Rocky and I first was introduced to John Island Camp 15 years ago. I should be a Greenway this year, but Bandit would be left alone and he alone would benefit from all the hugs, scratches and apple cores thrown into the bushes. Plus, I have to stay around to be a role model for my younger brother who still likes to play hide and seek in the dining hall. At times visitors like to bring their dogs and boy what nerve invading our camp with any other dog. If they decide to stay, we show them where the borders are and where they can go. Last year there was a real cute female King Cavalier King Charles Spaniel that I got along with pretty well - too bad Gary had me fixed when I was a puppy but we still had a good time smelling each other.

Bandit says he can tell what humans are like and how they are going to behave at camp. He is good at that and can tell when a camper is feeling homesick. He sometimes goes up to them and sits beside them waiting to be pet. I do that too, especially if they have food in their hand (or in their pocket). Sometimes staff look a little depressed or frustrated and need a dog to just look at them, wagging their tails.

One of my favourite activities at camp is to lie on the front deck of the dining hall and just look at all the activities and all the wild life and take in all of the amazing smells in the air— bacon cooking, lunch being prepared, hot dogs on the bar-b-que or my favourite. . .POPCORN being popped.

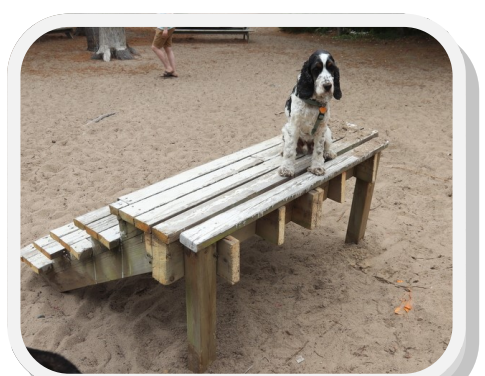
Even though my paws don't reach the peddles, another of my favourite activities (but don't tell Jody) is driving one of the quads sitting with Gary (my paws don't reach the brake peddle). Going for a boat ride with Bandit, especially on a garbage run or going for a walk down the path to where the low water dock used to be is great as well. We have even seen a bear on that path but it ran away when Bandit started barking at it. Bears do that.

A question both Bandit and I have is why humans have row boats in the bush, old shingles on top of a hill and a set of stairs that goes nowhere sitting in the sand. We are both confused but think there must be a good ghost story to be told regarding each of these.

Camp has been my life for over a quarter of my existence. Bandit too. But now it is time to go into the office and lie down in our own personal cardboard boxes and listen to the staff talk about their personal lives. Now that is real fun!

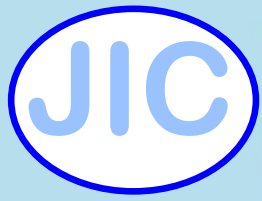


Here I am trying to give Gary instructions on driving the quad correctly.



Bandit has a question in his mind.





# REFLECTIONS

By Des Hann

When the evergreen Gary Gray asked if I might strain the memory to share distant-worldly thoughts of JIC, I surprised myself because, though I loved my two JIC wilderness trips (Mississaugi and Missinaibi), though I cherished the counselor-in-training, junior counsellor (as they were called then!) and counsellor years and though my years on summer staff were fantastic and formative, my fondest memories remain those of the May/June spring session or Outdoor Ed, both as a camper and a staff member.

As a weedy, cheeky, elementary student from Elliot Lake, Outdoor Ed was my first experience of John Island - 2 ½ May days of a delightful, outdoor, energy-sapping experience with classmates. And what a time! - a boat trip to a new world, a blur of (cold!) water activities and land-based challenges, topped off by the traditional camp-wide games, campfire and hot-chocolate. Seriously, what was not to like...

And when I eventually made the staff (sailing instructor, pre-qualification era - who knew?), spring session was magic. No sooner had first year university exams ended and the ice on the north channel cracked and melted, than we chugged across to help open up and get things ready for the crazed hordes. During the Spring Session, there were only 8 senior staff, programme director, skeleton maintenance and kitchen staff, and, oh ya, a guy named Rick - I think he was the Director ...

A fond note about Rick - he arrived at a time, late 80s, when Camps were transitioning to a more professional and safe provision. Any way you slice it, JIC was a tad late to this party. Rick brought his 'Southern Ontario' ways to JIC, questioning (incredulously) why there were more kids than lifejackets(!), insisting that maintenance staff driving the vehicles needed more than a '365' license(!), requiring that staff should, perhaps, if it was not too much trouble, have at least a minimum of swimming qualifications and explain patiently, usually with his head in his hands, why *'but Rick, we've always done it this way!'* was not quite an adequate excuse when he was trying to introduce positive change. Wise by name, wise by nature, and more than a bit patient...

Being spring staff at that time was a great gig. For 5 weeks, Monday to Friday, we would teach program during the day, tuck into all camp activities and campfire after dinner, then (guilty pleasure) hand the kids back to their teachers who had the unenviable task of staying with them in the cabins (once we had fully hyped them up). We then would make our way first to the dining hall in the hopes of charming some extra snackies from Charlotte, then outside to chill (sometimes literally) whilst mulling over some of life's bigger questions under the watchful canopy of countless stars. We were a small, tight band of JIC veterans.



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My first two summers on spring staff I taught sailing in the slow-drift winds of the back bay. Ostensibly, the kids learned to sail in the fine fleet of Petrels - the great 'not-so-secret' secret of these boats was that they were armour-plated - you could take them into a serious naval battle and they would emerge unscathed. There was simply no way to tip or sink these sleepy behemoths.

Then, life then got even better! In a clearly weak moment, and needing to fill magnificent Marett's flip-flops, Rick appointed me Program Director. Thence began two glorious summers of indulgent self-importance, swanning about 'checking on things' - the thing I learned in that role was that you are only as good as your staff. For me, the spring staff was brimful of all-star JIC legends - Vince P, Brian S, Krissy W, Mike G, Johnny S, Sean and Collie B, Lise, cousin Orlagh from Ireland and, of course, my fab li'l sister, Veron.

Weekends, glorious weekends, we had off, and we could choose to stay on the island (at that time there were no weekend retreats - imagine it, the island to ourselves!) or leave Friday night to Sunday. I wish I could fill you in on what happened on the weekends when we stayed but for a number of very good reasons I must remain shtum. (You know the score - what goes on on the Island, stays on the island...)

Though I make light of it, I am genuinely proud of the work we did in Outdoor Ed. The demographic was different to regular summer camp; for a good few kids, for financial reasons, it may well have been their only taste of camp. This was their big school trip and I can hand-on-

***Des Hann was involved with John Island Camp from 1981 to 1990. He started as a camper doing river trips—both the Mississauga and Missinaibi Rivers. He spent one summer as a CIT (see photo below) and two summers as a counsellor. He then spent two summers as sailing Director and completed his nine year stint as Program Director in 1988 and 1990.***



1983 C.I.T.'s  
Back Row L to R - Sean,  
Brian, 'Big' Darren  
Front row L to R - Greg, Des



# HIGH ADVENTURE

It started in 1988 when Rick Wise introduced a new adventure in program to John Island - a high ropes course. Rumoured to have originated as an aerial Hebertism program, high ropes courses have become a favourite program at many overnight camps around the world. Although the elements have changed over the years, the concept is still the same and each year at John Island Camp hundreds of campers meet the challenge of conquering a seemingly difficult task while as high as 50 or 60 feet in the air. All high ropes elements follow the strictest safety precautions.



Multi Vine



Dangle Duo



Leap of Faith



Climbing Wall



Cat Walk



Flying Squirrel



Vertical Playpen



# THE BURGESS EFFECT

## JIC WAS A GLEAM IN HIS EYE

**We all have our dreams of what we would like to accomplish in our lives.**

In 1940, Lionel Burgess accepted the position of General Secretary of the Sudbury YMCA, with a gleam in his eye. Around this time a Y staff member from the Galt YMCA came to the Sudbury area with a small group of boys to camp. Lionel Burgess thought that there should be a YMCA camp for boys and girls from our own area and from that early dream, a camp was born.



Lionel Burgess in discussion with young YMCA leaders

The YMCA around the world was fortunate to have a service club as part of their many organizations and Sudbury was definitely one of them. The club was called the Y's Men's Club and it was active in Sudbury before the Y itself actually began. Lionel, or Mr. "B" as he was affectionately called, was an active member of the club. As the camp had been a goal of the club since 1933, Mr. B was right there to further develop the concept and to facilitate the construction of such a program. The YMCA wanted a camp and the Y's Men's Club wanted to build it.

After looking at various sites and being fortunate in obtaining their first choice of land on John Island thanks to a donation by Mrs. W. Bell, there was no looking back.

The 278 acres on the eastern end of John Island was to be the site for John Island Camp

of the Sudbury YMCA.

The club had raised the funds to purchase the land, but when Mrs. Bell gave it to the club as a gift, they then had the funds to begin construction immediately. The parcel of land had previously been the home of a lumber mill and a small town of approximately 250-300 residents. When the mill burned in 1917, it was left vacant until ownership went to the Sudbury Y's Men's Club in 1948.

Starting in 1949 and without the use of power tools, the Y's Men's Club spent 6 summers volunteering and constructing the buildings required for the camp to open in 1954. By the time the campers arrived in 1954, there were 14 buildings and a long dock. A driving force and major inspiration during these years was Lionel Burgess who helped recruit volunteer engineers, designers, architects and others to support the dedicated work of the Club members. When the camp opened, the only paid worker in the building of the camp was the stone mason who built the dining hall fireplace (see the article "Working With Hughie", in the Winter 2004 Newsletter).

Mr. B built a strong set of supportive relationships for the camp as management of the camp was left to staff and a strong crew of volunteers. The camp grew in both physical structure (now has 38 as opposed to the original 14 buildings) and number of campers.

What was a vision in the mind of Lionel Burgess has become a Northern Ontario Tradition to thousands.



Before the age of television in Sudbury, the Y's Men's Club of Sudbury raised money for the development of John Island Camp by a radiothon—a forerunner to our now familiar telethons.



# Steph Klein, JIC Alumni opens the SEEDLINGS FOREST SCHOOL

Forest School is an educational approach where nature and play are at the center of learning. With roots in the UK, Scandinavia and Indigenous learning practices, Forest and Nature Schools are gaining popularity in Canada. When Gary asked me to share a bit more about them in the Alumni Newsletter, I was happy to do it. I became interested in Forest School when we moved back to Sudbury. They were popular out west, but Sudbury didn't have an outdoor preschool experience. Thinking about what I wanted for own my kids and talking with friends planted the idea to open a Forest School. With a lot of research, planning and training, that idea grew into Seedlings Forest School.

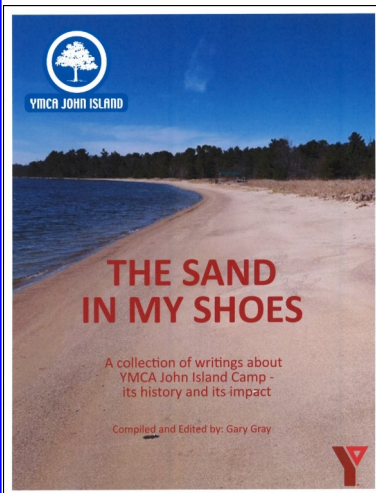
There are ten principles of Forest and Nature Schools, but the main element that defines them is that they take place in the same natural space over a period of time and that the learning is directed by the child using play-based, emergent, and inquiry-driven learning. Regular exposure to the same natural space is the basis of creating a relationship with the land and recognizing our role within the ecosystem. When the inquiry and play is directed by the children, it makes for a powerful learning experience.

A day at Forest School usually begins with greeting each other and the forest as we walk into our site. One of our groups made their own path to the site which included crossing the "tiny bridge" and passing through "Squirrel's path." We play and explore concepts depending on what we see in the forest and the group's interest that day. We've spent many hours fascinated by mushrooms, and recently the group has been interested in woodpeckers. In play inspired by the forest, they imitate woodpeckers by making their calls, banging on stumps and looking for insects in dead wood. There is usually a snack and a story, and often our play involves some type of building, swinging or climbing. At the end we quickly recap our day and reflect on the learning that happened, and loosely plan for our next day of fun! Forest School happens rain or shine, in cold or hot weather, and is entirely outdoors.

Forest School practitioners come from many different backgrounds including teachers, social workers, ECE's, RECE's, etc. Experience teaching, working with children, first aid certification, and outdoor skills are key areas of competence for a practitioner. Additionally, there are several different organizations worldwide that promote Forest School best practices and provide training to become a Forest School practitioner. In Canada, the Forest School Association fills this role and is part of the Child and Nature Alliance of Canada (CNAC). CNAC offers courses all over Canada where future practitioners immerse themselves in a Forest School experience to explore different types of play, theories of child development, risk management, Indigenous perspectives, pedagogical documentation, and outdoor skills. After a week of in-person training (which, I must admit, felt like summer camp for grown-ups!) we have one year to complete a series of assignments including a practicum before receiving certification.

I have loved watching my preschool group change and grow over the last six months. Their play has become bigger – they have gone from tentative, small movements and quiet play to balancing on logs, swinging on ropes and climbing on everything. They have learned that birch bark is a great fire starter, how to safely light a match, where the best puffball mushroom patch is, and what a pileated woodpecker sounds like. They have become more self-sufficient: getting their own snacks and cushions for story time, initiating play on their own, and working together as a team pulling the toboggan or helping a friend build a structure. I'm excited by the potential of Seedlings Forest School, and in the meantime, I'm in my happy place connecting children to nature.





A book all about YMCA John Island Camp based on stories written by camp alumni and friends of the camp for the JIC Alumni Newsletter over the past 30 years.

- Facts about the lumber mill days
- Builders of the camp tell their stories
- Over 50 personal impact stories
- Maps and photos
- Memories



‘Learning to live (and thrive) with sand in your shoes is a surprisingly important life lesson.’

- Alex Haalboom



### To order your copy. . . .

Contact Gary Gray at the YMCA at: [gary.gray@ymcaneoc.ca](mailto:gary.gray@ymcaneoc.ca) with your name, mailing address and e-mail address.

This book is a project of the YMCA John Island Camp Alumni in support of the YMCA through John Island Camp



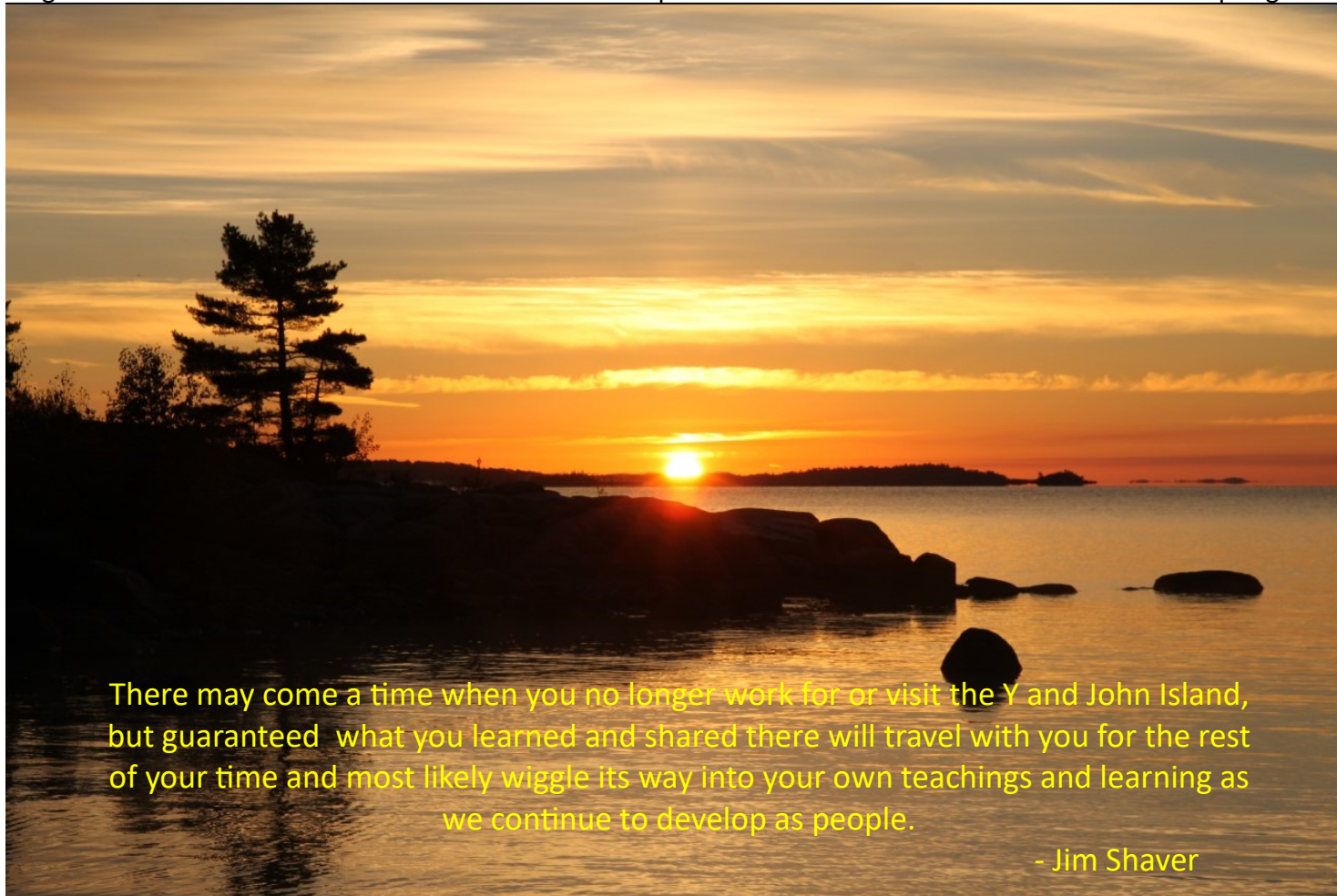
## JIC Alumni and Friends Bursary Fund Update

Following an unexpected Covid-19 interruption John Island Camp's regular summer programs, it appears as though camp is getting ready to go this coming summer. With regular camping programs comes the need to support children who have special circumstances that prevent them from being able to pay the cost of camp. YMCA John Island Camp has very specific goals aimed at attempting to ensure that anyone who would like to go to camp should not be restricted for financial reasons. For years, the YMCA has had a sponsorship program that has helped youth get to camp. Now, with the new Camp Alumni Bursary Fund, supported by donations from JIC Alumni and Friends of the Camp, a new avenue of support is available to campers. Application forms for bursary funds can be obtained from the camp office. Until a sizable pool of funds can be obtained, the first bursaries will come from flow through funds available from donations received to date. Bursaries are awarded dependant on the funds available. The camp will continue to offer financial assistance through its normal assistance program to campers requiring help to get to camp. Donations to this point have reached over \$6,100 (based on our original goal of \$5,000).



Donations to the JIC Alumni Camper Bursary Fund are currently being accepted to add to the fund for the 2022 camp season. Donations can be made on line on the John Island Camp Website and the option directing your donation to where you would like it to go appears at the end of the operation. Donations should be marked for the "Alumni Bursary Fund".





There may come a time when you no longer work for or visit the Y and John Island, but guaranteed what you learned and shared there will travel with you for the rest of your time and most likely wiggle its way into your own teachings and learning as we continue to develop as people.

- Jim Shaver

## JIC ALUMNI

Alumni and friends of the camp are the life blood of John Island Camp.

Our goal is to provide support to the ongoing life of the camp and to provide a means for alumni to keep engaged with the camp. There are several ways alumni can 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**
- **Contribute to the Alumni and Friends of JIC Bursary Fund**

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](mailto: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.

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