



YMCA JOHN ISLAND

Fall 2023

# ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

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

70th Anniversary  
May 25 - 26  
Info Inside



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# Our Alumni Newsletter. . . .. it's a lot to read on line

(and you do not want to miss reading anything!)

Here are a few suggestions

- save the newsletter in your files to return to later to read as you have time (it comes as a pdf file so does not require a lot of space.
- don't attempt to read it when you are opening a batch of e-mail. Open it when you have an opportunity to at least preview the entire newsletter.
- print a copy of the newsletter if you have a printer available. That way you can read it any where at any time.
- open a file just to keep the alumni newsletters. That way you can refer to any one of them at any time.
- if at any time you want to refer to or read any part of any newsletter from past years, they are all on the John Island Website under "Alumni Newsletters". Here is a link [www.ymca neo.ca/john-island-camp](http://www.ymca neo.ca/john-island-camp)

## About our cover photo

Almost 20 years ago a group of camp friends, from their earlier years came to John Island Camp to spend a weekend to help doing construction work. This group, from the K-W area) call themselves "Amato!" and are all volunteers committed to helping make overnight camping a good experience for youth.



Over the years, they have done considerable work on most camp buildings, including the paneling of the inside of the dining hall. In the cover photo they stand in front of the camp Health Centre this year where they were beginning the screening in of the new deck and porch which had been built earlier in the year by students from Lasalle Secondary in Sudbury.

The YMCA and John Island Camp are forever grateful for all the volunteer groups who do incredible work.

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# Our Camp's 70th Anniversary... a Time To Celebrate!

By Kendra MacIsaac  
Vice President of Health and Wellness  
YMCA of Northeastern Ontario



After what felt like the never-ending summer in Northeastern Ontario (30' weather during the first week of October), the leaves have changed, the wind has gotten cooler, and we close another chapter of the JIC book- the end of the 2023 season.

With fall comes change and that change includes the resignation of our Camp Director, Finn Thomas. Finn was a great addition to our team over the past 2 summers, which saw us re-open camp and make some significant improvements this past summer. Is there still work to do? Absolutely, and with change comes opportunity and we're looking forward to introducing your new camp leadership team soon.

Last fall I shared with you that we were working on a capital assessment plan and although we were not able to secure Ameresco (the same firm who did the assessments on our North Bay and Sudbury facilities) we did tour around a Senior Technologist and Architect who provided an extensive report that we have start to dissect and share with a few contractors who are providing quotes and/or material plans for work groups next spring. Dan has shared some of his thoughts and photos on page 11 of this newsletter.

Looking ahead!

If you can believe it, our beloved John Island will be celebrating its 70th anniversary in 2024. Plans are well underway for an amazing celebration, taking place May 25 - 26. These plans include a Friday night early arriver's reception, a visit to camp and a 70th celebration gala. More details will be shared in the coming months with tickets going on sale in early 2024. This is an event that you won't want to miss and don't worry, for those who won't be able to make it, we will have a virtual option available.

As previously stated, staffing continues to be an area of concern, and we are continuing to address these challenges. This past summer we amended program schedules to allow for additional staff time off and we continue to address wage disparities and will be posting for our management and leadership team in the coming weeks.

Next summer will be my 4th summer overseeing John Island, 3rd summer of traditional camp, however I first visited the island in 2013 for spring work weekend. My kids have both attended camp and I am committed to growing, improving and enhancing the camp experience for all who have the benefit of attending JIC. As always, I am available to chat on all things camp related, at any time, so please do not hesitate to reach out!

Yours in Camping

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "K MacIsaac". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

# My Time At YMCA John Island Camp

By Abigail Ethelston

YMCA John Island Camp is a super fun sleep-away camp. There are a lot of fun activities such as canoeing, kayaking, boogie boarding, and high ropes to name a few. Today, I'm going to tell you all about the things that I loved at John Island Camp this summer. First, I loved the food! My favourites were the chicken burgers and the meatball subs. I also loved the camp counsellors; they were all so nice and funny!

My favourite waterfront activity was boogie boarding. Boogie boarding was so much fun! I loved paddling through the big waves of Lake Huron and jumping off into the water. I went to a 1-week camp session called Adventure Camp. I did the Waterfront Skill and had a chance to learn so many different skills like canoeing and kayaking.

My cabin this year was Rainboth. There were 10 kids in my cabin and I met some new friends. Some new friends have become pen pals and we chat on a regular basis. My counsellors were Alice and Parker and we had a Norquay (a counsellor in training) named Winter. They were all really nice. Our cabin were big "Swifties" and liked to have Taylor Swift dance parties.

Most of my cabin participated in an activity called Polar Bear. Polar Bear is a morning dip in the chilly lake to wake yourself up. The Cabin of the Day walks cabin row and bangs on each cabin yelling "Polar Bear" to wake everyone up and invite them to join. If you do Polar Bear dip every morning then you can earn a Polar Bear badge.

Another one of my favourite activities was Colour Wars. In Colour Wars, there are four teams—Blue, Yellow, Red, and Green. I was on team Yellow this year. All teams compete in a bunch of fun activities such as dodge ball and capture the flag. This year, my team placed in 3rd.



Abigail (in blue t-shirt) with some cabin mates



A camp tradition is to have an opening and closing campfire. The whole camp joins in and each cabin participates in singing campfire songs. My favourite songs were "Humpty Dumpty" and "Boogaloo".

This summer my brother Liam joined me at camp. We both loved it so much and made new friends. Next year, we are hoping to go back to John Island—maybe this time for two weeks!

*Editor's note: Abigail is an 11year old John Island Camp camper. Her parents met at the camp when they were on staff together.*

## ALUMNI BURSARY TO SUPPORT LEADERSHIP PARTICIPANTS

The John Island Camp Alumni and Friends Bursary is going to make bursaries available to leadership campers registering in the Greenway or Norquay Leadership programs in 2024. The bursaries will be available to campers who have demonstrated both an interest and the ability to become a camp counsellor. Eligible bursary applicants will have shown superior initiative and participation in camp life and activities and in becoming a member of the camp staff. Applicants will be evaluated on their camp involvement, understanding of camp goals and demonstrated leadership potential.

Applicants will be required to complete a Leadership Bursary Application which will include a 500 word essay explaining how the applicant feels they meet the criteria and why they desire to become part of the counselling staff at John Island Camp. While it is not necessary to have been a camper at John Island Camp, preference will be given to those who have John Island Camp experience. Both \$300 and \$500 bursary amounts will be awarded.



Application details will be available Nov. 1st, 2023

Funds for this bursary are contributed by the Alumni and Friends of John Island Camp. In order to make the bursary as effective as possible **Alumni and Friends of John Island Camp are requested to consider donating to the bursary fund.**

Donations to the John Island Camp Alumni and Friends Bursary funds can be made on the YMCA John Island Camp website under the heading "Alumni Bursary Fund". Charitable receipts from the YMCA of North-eastern Ontario are issued for all donations.

YMCA John Island Camp website: [www.ymcaneo.ca/john-island-camp](http://www.ymcaneo.ca/john-island-camp)

## YMCA RAISES FUNDS TO SEND KIDS TO CAMP

Through the camp financial assistance program, support is available to youth wishing to attend any John Island program as a camper when financial cost is a barrier. Kendra MacIsaac, YMCA V.P. for Health, and Wellness, states that "No child should be prevented from attending camp for financial reasons."

In order to ensure that funds are available to offer financial assistance, the Y accepts donations on its website AND runs an annual "Fill the Bus" Campaign specifically for this purpose. Every year hundreds of youth are able to attend John Island Camp because of these efforts. **All donations received on or prior to Nov. 16th for the Fill the Bus Campaign on Hot 93.5 Radio in Sudbury will see their donation amount matched by the Laking Group of Companies.**

Visit the "Pay for Play" website for donations: <https://fillthebus.ca/payforplay/>

More information is available on the camp website: [www.ymcaneo.ca/john-island-camp](http://www.ymcaneo.ca/john-island-camp)





**BEST  
SUMMER  
EVER!**

## ***Volunteers Put On the “Best Summer Ever” for Kids Affected by Childhood Cancer at Camp Quality Northern Ontario***

Stephanie Kramp is a dedicated volunteer and Co-Camp Director for Camp Quality Northern Ontario. She led the team to deliver an amazing camp week despite facing ongoing challenges in recruiting volunteers. Stephanie says, “Our volunteers are our greatest resource and they are the backbone of Camp Quality. Because of the pandemic’s disruption, we’ve had to adapt, but our volunteers and our Camp Organizing Committee continue to show their devotion to making camp week as magical as ever!”

Camp Quality is a volunteer driven national charitable organization that provides inclusive year-round programs for children with cancer and blood disorders that support the whole family through fun camp adventures, free of charge. Camp Quality Northern Ontario has been operating camps for kids with cancer since 1992, with the past two years hosted at YMCA John Island Camp, an exciting new partnership. This camp collaboration has expanded the range of activities offered to campers, including sailing, kayaking, a rock wall, a challenge course, and more

Continued on next page

## Camp Quality—Best Summer Ever (cont'd)

For campers, the week of camp is nothing short of magical. Days are filled with engaging activities that encourage campers to try new things, make new friends and develop skills! This summer the theme was 'Down on the Farm'. Campers and volunteers participated in a costume night, a hoedown dance party, their annual teen-lead volleyball tournament and many hours cooling down by the waterfront. Whether it's through LARPing, conquering the ropes course, creating art projects or hitting a bullseye at archery, every moment is an opportunity for adventure, fun and joy.

Margie Lougheed is a first year CQ medical volunteer and JIC alumni. When asked about her camp experience, she had this to say: "Returning to JIC as a volunteer for CQ was truly amazing. The moment you step foot off of the mainland and head for John Island your heart will fill with wondrous anticipation! CQ volunteers with the support of Y staff instill a great sense of F-U-N, optimism and goodwill at a time when these kids need it the most. I am so glad to be a part of it. See you next year!" Margie committed 2 weeks this summer in Northern and Southern Ontario to ensure that Camp Quality was able to run programs for nearly 100 campers free of charge. Margie is an incredible Camp Nurse and her commitment is invaluable.



Camp Quality volunteers on duty at the Health Centre



Camp Quality fun - valued by many

Volunteering at Camp Quality Northern Ontario is a truly life changing experience. For those who enter the gates of camp and join us around the campfire - they are in for a week of pure magic. As a volunteer, you make a huge difference in a child's life by supporting them as they step out of their comfort zone to try new things, encourage them to make new friends and help them to develop new skills! All while making memories and having FUN in a safe and welcoming environment. On the flipside of things, as a volunteer you're also making a huge difference in your own life!

By volunteering at camp you are building your resume with new leadership skills, getting back to nature, making lifetime friendships with other volunteers and impacting the future of Camp Quality.

Breanne McTiernan, Co-Camp Director says, "We are always looking to recruit new volunteers to join our team at camp as we create memorable experiences for our campers! Our volunteers bring their skills and experiences to camp and help to create an environment where kids can try new things, make new friends, build self-confidence, discover the outdoors, and of course have fun. Volunteering is also a great



2023 Camp Quality campers and staff - a happy group

way to network, develop new skills and even build your resume! As we look to welcome even more campers in 2024, our need for volunteers is even greater than last summer."

If you want to experience the 'best summer ever' fill out our volunteer inquiry form or reach out to a member of the team at:

[info@campquality.org](mailto:info@campquality.org).

Applications will open in January 2024. We hope to have you join us around the campfire next summer



## Plaque Commemorates Murray Low's Contributions

On a bright August 8th this past summer, the Family of Murray Low was present at camp as a plaque was unveiled on the Greenway Woods cabin commemorating Murray Low's many contributions at the camp during his life. Murray's wife Maureen was joined by his daughter Maggie and sons Nick and Greg.

Murray was involved in giving leadership to The first several years of LaSalle Secondary School's involvement in rebuilding the majority of camper cabins and other facilities with the first two teachers involved from LaSalle, Peter Lucano and Jon Black. Murray also did a lot of the reconstruction at Camp Falcona and major projects at the YMCA building on Durham St. Murray put his heart into everything he did with John Island and the YMCA.



Pictured here are (left to right): Finn Thomas (John Island Camp Director), Greg, Maureen, Maggie and Nick.

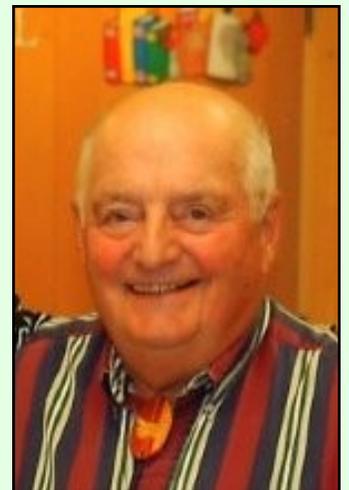
## John Island loses a Camp Icon

With family members by his side, Don Mitchell passed away peacefully in hospital in North Bay on Sept. 22nd. Following in his father's footsteps, Don played a major role in the building and support to the camp for decades. For years, transportation to the camp during construction and then during its operation was provided by the Mitchell's from their home and camping operation in Spanish.

Beside bringing supplies and campers to the camp from Spanish, Don was always available for the occasional rescue when boats would break down or someone with familiarity with the water around the camp was needed. Don's family attended camp as campers and both his son and grandson (Mark and Zach) have worked on staff of John Island Camp. Don's wife Mary has always been a camp supporter and is a past staff member. John Island Camp was indeed a family affair.

Don will be remembered as a supportive, generous and very caring individual. He was one of a kind and will be missed.

*Pictured to the left is Don's Father, Earl Mitchell at the wheel of one of his boats making a crossing from Spanish to the camp.*



## Final Campfire at Family Camp Tugs at Campers' Hearts



The last event of the summer not only for family campers, but for all staff is the final campfire at Family Camp. It brings out the best in all of us, reminds us of the friends made, adventures experienced, and new learnings we acquired. And, it is time to say good bye for another year. There were several highlights this past summer at the campfire, but an awesome job by two of our 13 year old campers this summer would have received the "golden buzzer" at AGT. Jack Harmon and Anderson Whittington (pictured above, were the masters of ceremonies.



Another highlight was a presentation by Tony Higgins and Matt Perpick joined by Aisling Higgins, replicating a presentation they made when on staff almost 2 decades ago. Matt's young son Kyoshi, stands admiring his dad's musical presentation.

# 70th Anniversary Photo Contest



*A fun contest for all ages*  
(with no experience required)

## 4 Categories

**Action: Friendship: Nature: Historical (from earlier JIC years)**

- Photos must have been taken at John Island Camp
- All persons in photos must have given permission for their photo to be included in the contest
- Photos may be sent by e-mail in PDF format (use address below)
- Photos may be mailed to:  
JIC 70th Photo Contest, 140 Durham St., Sudbury, ON . P3E 3M7
- Photos may be colour or black and white and be of high resolution
- **Photos must be received no later than midnight, February 15th, 2024**
- **E-mail submissions should be sent to: [gary.gray@ymcaneo.ca](mailto:gary.gray@ymcaneo.ca) (marked "photo contest")**

The winning photo of each category will be used in a special JIC 70th anniversary calendar to be available at the Anniversary events

Winning and 1st runner up photos in each category will also be presented in  
The YMCA John Island Camp Alumni Newsletter.



# Our Camp. . . Looking to the Future

Over the past 70 years YMCA John Island Camp has been instrumental in building friendships, helping youth discover talents and has contributed to many youth building confidence in themselves. The camp has had a significant influence on thousands.

As alumni, we consider it paramount that the positive influence of the camp continue into the future. With over 30 buildings a constant renewal and upgrade of the John Island Camp facilities is critical. In order to create a capital renewal plan, Kendra MacIsaac, V.P of the YMCA of Northeastern Ontario, arranged with Dan Guillemette of Centreline Architecture to review the current facilities with recommendations for future work. Dan produced a multi-page document with recommendations as he describes as follows:

*On August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Centreline Architecture had the pleasure of attending John Island Camp to conduct a visual review of the buildings at John Island Camp. During our visit, while the camp was well attended, we visited each building to identify items that can be upgraded to enhance the campers experiences and bring the buildings up to current building code requirements and protect the organization from any potential accidents from certain hazards. Many of the items may be easily repaired and maintained with an outlined schedule of maintenance. This would help prolong the buildings for campers to enjoy their stay for years to come.*

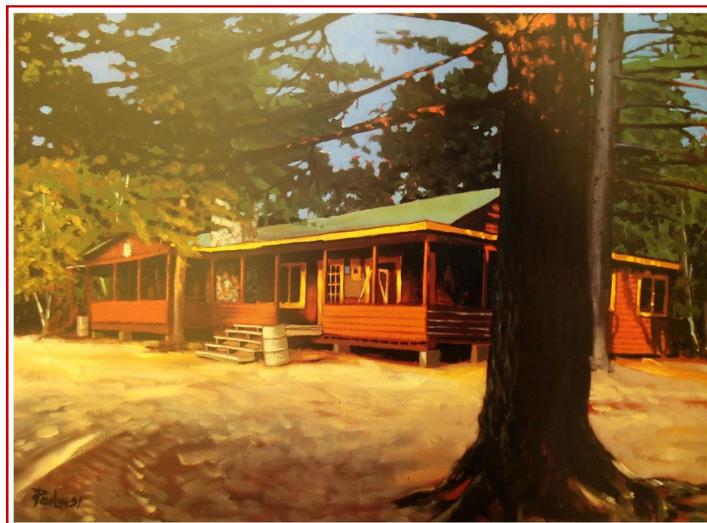
Some of the work will begin this coming spring with the construction of a new low-water dock and a bridge over the “Kwai”. To guarantee safety and to meet camp timelines for 2024 programs, a contractor is currently being engaged for these projects.

Contributions from Alumni of the camp to help ensure the work needed gets done can be made on the camp website and designated as “capital” donations.

*The “Cabin on the Hill” requires a new roof and several rodent access points to be dealt with.*



*The current outtripping building (previously the office together with Fox and Fisher cabins) requires a new roof and repairs to parts of the wooden structure.*



*The John Island Camp dining hall as depicted in an original oil painting by well-known Canadian artist, Bernie Poulin. The dining hall was built by volunteers beginning in 1951 and has several “wear and tear” issues that will be dealt with.*

# JIC Connections

The character of John Island Camp has grown over the past 70 years due to the influence and often unrecognized value added to the camp by many individuals. Here are a few that were significant in their support and involvement with the camp.



## Taizo Miaki

Taizo is highly recognized as the designer of the exhibits in the Ontario Science Centre, Science North, and a number of other education centres and museums around the world. Taizo taught us at John Island that ***“education is a learning process, not a teaching process”*** and that camp should be ***“fun, arouse curiosity and a be a place of wonder”***. In 1994 and 1995 Taizo arranged for 20 Japanese students from Tokyo to come to John Island to discover that science is not just technology, but found in nature. The campers from Canada and Japan both learned from each other and Taizo spent the entire camping session at John Island both years. The Japanese students were sponsored by the National Space and Aeronautics Association of Japan and spoke no English when they arrived. The youth mixed well with others at camp and soon discovered they did not need a translator to understand each other. In 1996, a few JIC staff and volunteers were brought to Japan to help establish a “John Island” camp in Japan.

Taizo had a significant impact on the camp and all staff that got to know him.

## Stuart McLean

Well known

There is an interesting story about Stuart McLean’s involvement with John Island Camp. I first met the popular CBC radio story teller (the “Vinyl Café”) when we were both students at Sir George Williams University in Montreal. While going to university, we both worked at YMCA camps in the summer and attended many of the same classes.

Stuart wrote for our JIC Alumni Newsletter to reinforce the feelings we all have of the value of camp. In the Spring 2012 edition of our newsletter, Stuart wrote about his own YMCA camp experience, ***“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.”***

Stuart had a significant impact on John Island Camp and was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada.



## Robbert Hartog

You may have seen Robbert’s 53’ boat “D’eendracht” pull into Moiles Harbour a few years back. He was not there to look for a good place to bring his boat, but he was bringing a group of friends and business associates there because he wanted to show them the YMCA camp that operated there and the amazing effect that the camp had on the lives of youth. Robbert was a John Island Camp supporter, an industrialist and a philanthropist. He believed in the YMCA and worked miracles behind the scene to support it. He was the founder and President of Waltec Industries, listed in the Economist as one of Canada’s top 25 profitable companies.

Robbert was continually asking what the camp needed and while visiting him on his boat in the harbour, I jokingly said we needed an 18” swinging sink faucet—virtually impossible to get in our area. A few days later an unmarked box arrived with nothing inside but a shiny 18” swinging sink faucet from Waltec.

In his spare time Robbert organized canoe trips in Canada’s north with his friends. He was unique - a strong donor to John Island Camp and many other charities in Canada. He was a strong supporter of many organizations involved in youth development. He was appointed as a Member of the Order of Canada.



A time to reunite!

A time to engage!

A time to come together

*A time to celebrate!*

*It's YMCA John Island Camp's*

# **70th Anniversary**

May 25th - 26th, 2024

**WELCOMING  
RECEPTION  
FRIDAY EVENING**

**SPECIAL 70th  
LOGO CONTEST**

**GALA DINNER  
MAY 25TH**

**SATURDAY VISIT TO  
CAMP**

**CAMP "70th"  
TUCK SHOP OPEN**

**FRIENDSHIPS!  
FRIENDSHIPS!  
FRIENDSHIPS!**

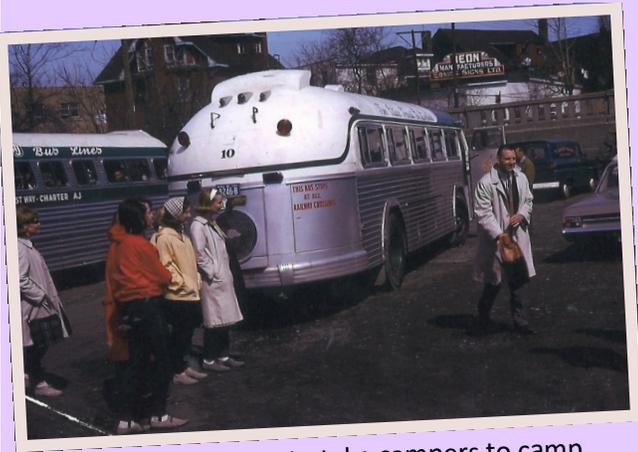
**CAMP  
AUCTION**



**YMCA JOHN ISLAND**

*Another*  
**YMCA  
JOHN ISLAND CAMP**  
*Alumni*  
INITIATIVE

# PHOTO FLASHBACK



Busses loading up to take campers to camp



Preparing food in the original camp kitchen



Staff giving the sailboats a test in the 1960's



Entering the Earthkeepers Centre in the 1980's



Ceiling plaque



Original cedar strip sailboat in the 1950's

# CHANGE IN YMCA CEO LEADERSHIP



Helen Francis

A strong advocate for John Island Camp, **Helen Francis** announced in February that she would be retiring at the end of this year. Helen has been the CEO of the YMCA of Sudbury and the YMCA of Northeastern Ontario since January 2019. During this time she has successfully led the YMCA through the years of Covid-19 and has subsequently brought together the YMCA's in North Bay, Timmins and Sudbury to form the YMCA of Northeastern Ontario. Beside being a strong supporter of the camp, Helen had previously served on the Board of the Sudbury YMCA and of YMCA Canada. We wish Helen well in her retirement as she continues to enjoy her special interest of long distance running.



Lorrie Turnbull

**Lorrie Turnbull** begins her exciting new role as the CEO of the YMCA of Northeastern Ontario on November 27th. We are happy to welcome Lorrie to her new role. Lorrie comes to us from Halifax where she has 30 years YMCA experience with the Halifax YMCA as a volunteer and staff member. Most recently, Lorrie was Chief Development Officer for the YMCA. Previous to this Lorrie was Chief Operations Officer of the Halifax YMCA, a position which included responsibility for overseeing the operation of a new 70,000 square foot Y building, employment, immigration and camping. Halifax YMCA is the operator of YMCA Big Cove Camp—the first overnight children's camp in Canada. We welcome Lorrie!

## WANT TO HELP CAMP? HERE'S HOW!

On the back cover we list several ways to help. We are fortunate that we have a very dedicated alumni at YMCA John Island Camp and they want to help camp continue for years ahead.

**FINANCIAL HELP** - the three primary areas of financial need supported most by alumni are:

- A) The John Island Camp Capital Fund (for details see Page 11)
- B) The Alumni Bursary Fund (for Leadership candidate bursaries) - (see page 5)
- B) The John Island Campership Fund which provides for financial assistance to parents needing assistance to send their children to John Island

Donations can be made to YMCA John Island Camp (charitable receipts available)

Visit the website to make donations: [ymcaneo.ca@john-island-camp](mailto:ymcaneo.ca@john-island-camp)

**VOLUNTEER HELP** - There are **Work Weekends** - contact [kendra.macisaac@ymcaneo.ca](mailto:kendra.macisaac@ymcaneo.ca)

- There are **Newsletter stories** to be written -contact [gary.gray@ymcaneo.ca](mailto:gary.gray@ymcaneo.ca)

And most important, be a **Camp Ambassador** by telling your family members and friends about the great opportunities at an outstanding YMCA overnight camp for youth. Information will be on line at [ymcaneo.ca@john-island-camp](mailto:ymcaneo.ca@john-island-camp)

**YMCA John Island Camp—an important part of growing up**



**Making lifelong friendships and memories**

## 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**
  - **Be a John Island Camp Ambassador**

**It is easy to donate on line - see page 15 for details**

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.

[www.ymcaneo.ca/john-island-camp](http://www.ymcaneo.ca/john-island-camp)

on Facebook: YMCA John Island Camp

