



YMCA JOHN ISLAND

Spring 2018

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

Our older pines are suffering -
are woodpeckers the culprit?
- story on page 5



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Letters From Camp- What a Story they Tell

When I was a camper back in the 1950's, a handwritten letter would get mailed and delivered home in Sudbury all within 3 days. Today, letters that campers write home seldom make it to their house before they return home from camp. Electronic "Bunk Notes" allows parents to send letters to camp instantaneously, but those post cards and letters home can take weeks with our current postal system.

Back in the 1950's, Brian was a dedicated camper who wrote home regularly. His years at camp are beautifully shared with his parents through his letters. Some of his letters have been shared with us and we would now like to share them with you. We have decided to share them in print rather than the original hand-written letters - easier to read this way.

John Island Camp
Spanish
YMCA

June 30, 1955

Dear Mom and Dad

I got all wet coming on the boat. I'm in cabin 5 with the Boultons, Allen Dick Kim Dennis, Mikik Walker, Paul Anderson. Our counsellor is Mac Sinclair. The weather is very cold.

John Island YMCA Camp
Spanish, Ont.

June 30, 1956

Dear Folks

I arrived in camp safely and am having fun. We are building a camp of our own and I am finishing my 2nd class Canoeing. If I finish this, I will be going on an overnight hike.

By the way, I am in Cabin 6 with most of my old friends and some new ones too.

I busted my flashlight and my haversack but I can fix both of them.

John Island Camp
Spanish, Ont.

June 30, 1957

Dear Mom and Dad

I went fishing on Sunday and caught a 3 lb. pike. While I was cleaning him off, I dropped him. Our counsellor saw it and can prove I caught it. It is now at the bottom of the lake, rotting away. I also lost one of my lures. I am starting 1st class canoeing and 2nd class sailing. I am the best archer in the cabin and I am the best rifleman. I got a cold right now and I can't go swimming. But I am doing a lot of swimming. Send me some candy because it's alright to do it (our leader says so). Come up on the second last week. Home to see you soon. I am fine.

Brian

John Island Camp
Spanish, Ont.

July 3, Sunday (1960)

Dear Mom and Dad:

I have had a lovely week. Being a C.I.T. has more responsibilities than I thought. I am in Cabin 11 with Doug Boulton, Cam Eaton, and Doug Smith. The weather has been pretty good and I am enjoying myself. I don't know whether or not you will get this letter, but if you do, please reply. I am going on a canoe trip for 2 days and I hope to setay alive. My counsellor is Ernie Hurtle (also section director) and he is a very nice person. I am taking 1 set class sailing and my instructor is a dope (not really, just too funny). Please write soon.

LEADERSHIP ISLAND

a new Island brought into the camp spotlight

- by Alan Semrau



Alan Semrau

Islands are scattered around John Island Camp (JIC) in such quantity they define the memory and traditions of camp. There are so many, they continue to be discovered to this day, like Leadership Island.

The JIC experience starts with Norquay and Greenway Islands greeting campers on both sides from Walkhouse. Aikens Island gently directs boats into the secluded Moiles Harbour as it has since the 1800's. Ivy Island hangs on to its neighbour by a thread from which winds whip across to fill the sails in the bay off Front Beach. Out-trips leave directly from camp under human power to make landfall at secluded island refuges few people visit. Used to identify JIC cabins that house campers summer after summer, these surrounding islands are ingrained in the camp experience. Named or not, islands surrounding JIC are its prized possessions.

There are innumerable, unnamed, and untouched islands that blend into the background of JIC. For some observers, they are casually appreciated; for others, they are seen as unique havens. From unnamed and over-looked to named and talked about, Leadership Island is a recent addition and contribution to JIC's traditions and memories reached only by boat.

Paddling in a pack from the Kwai or Front Beach, leadership youth make their journey to an island they only heard of as campers. Little did they know, they've have seen Leadership Island hundreds of times. Its gentle sloping rock shelf offers a group's view of Lake Huron. Its pocket of swaying Eastern White Pines give shelter and solace for a congregation of youth.

They'll find benches made of old planks from the sawmill. Plaques with camper names from past leadership groups are strewn throughout the great green hall. A natural stage is set for them to listen and be heard.

A place to call their own, Leadership Island is meant for Greenway Leaders-in-training and Norquay Counsellors-in-training to take a step away from the commotion of camp. By day it serves as background to the floating trampoline and a backdrop to Chapel. Far enough to be unseen and elusive, but close enough to hear the activities of camp, Leadership island mirrors what it's like to be seen as a Greenway and Norquay.



A group of Greenway campers gathering on Leadership Island for their final evening

From the eyes of a camper, the leadership youth make all star appearances at evening activities and meal times. They congregate for snackies but lack the glazed over looks of campers ready for bed. At the word of their Leaders, they disperse into the night only to converge and reflect as a group. At times, they disappear for several days or weeks only to reappear a little wiser and a lot grungier.

Where do they go after snackies and for days on end?

How can we get there?

Haven't you heard of Leadership Island?!

What's New at JIC This Year?

As camp time starts drawing nigh and we get ready to consider a John Island Camp Experience for our children and our grand children, it is always fun to look a bit into the future and find out what is new in 2018. While camp places a great deal of value in tradition and those things which have proven effective and exciting through the years, it is the new and different that makes each year another adventure that helps shape young lives.

This is an exceptionally exciting year for John Island as the Y takes another step forward. Roxy Peterson, a camp director with extensive experience in directing camp operations and Jenny Groom as assistant camp director bring a wealth of current and new concepts in camping and camper development. Background details on both of our new senior camp team can be found in this newsletter.

Roxy and Jenny tell us that we can expect to see another step forward this year in the development of familiar programs with an emphasis on fun, personal learning, friendships and love of the natural surroundings of the camp. Returning campers will be thrilled to see exciting new aspects of familiar camp activities such as archery, waterfront activities, crafts and campfires. New campers will get to experience activities that challenge their abilities and leave them excited about new skills they have developed, friends they have made and fun they have had.

But wait, there's more! With the rising water levels we have experienced lately we have built a new dock to replace the original high water dock. Also, the Woods Greenway cabin is receiving a major renovation with new roof, interior renovations, windows, doors, outside deck, etc. This is a great improvement to match the outstanding job done the past 2 years by Lasalle secondary students in beginning the rebuilding the older Beach Greenway Cabin by the Chapel (originally the Camp Hospital). This is a two year project. Other upgrades to the facility will also be undertaken this year as well as additions to our camp program equipment such as new canoes, craft equipment, archery equipment, etc. Much thanks to the many Alumni who have contributed to our John Island Capital Fund this past year and made many of these improvements and additions possible.

But wait, there is still more! Our Camp Cook this summer, Kim Taggart, brings years of camp experience and camp cooking experience and is already working on menu ideas that, from her own experience, meets healthy standards AND rave reviews from campers.

Spring Work Weekend - May 11 - 13th

The main work weekend of the year at John Island is coming up quickly from May 9th to 11th. We are in need of carpenters, painters and people to help clean up new fallen branches, set up program areas and general clean up activities.

We provide the tools you will need (unless you prefer your own) and will feed you, give you a bed (you bring your own sleeping bag) and transportation from the camp dock at Walkhouse Bay to camp and back again.

This is a great time to get together with alumni, new camp staff, and friends from the past. The evening gives us all a time to socialize and meet each other.



Pileated Woodpeckers and our Pine Trees

Their sound is familiar as the Pileated Woodpeckers tap away on many of the pine trees around camp. They are an attractive bird with their red head tops and long beaks. We hear them early in the morning and throughout the day as they tap away. But what are they looking for? What causes the persistent head jolting activity to continue hour after hour? And most importantly, are they responsible for killing so many of our stately pines around camp?

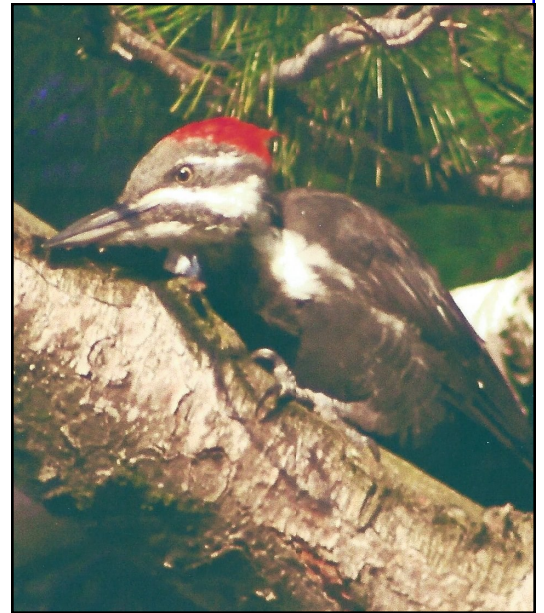
When spring comes and the forest begins to come alive with life, we are told that woodpeckers start tapping away to claim their territory and in some cases, to attract mates—the mating call of the exciting pileated woodpecker

When we look at the holes created by these birds we notice that the holes are small and in rows in the tree back. These are holes created by the woodpecker to get sap from the tree and cause an ugly scar on the trunk of the tree but are unlikely to cause the death of most trees.

One of the most common reasons woodpeckers are attracted to pine trees is that pine trees are susceptible to different types of insects that are particularly attractive to the birds. Carpenter ants, bark lice and bark beetles are sought after by the birds and once a tree is infested with any of these types of insects, the life of the tree could well be threatened as the woodpeckers continuously attack the trunks until they rid the tree of delicious crawlers, resulting in the death of the tree.

Of course those bigger holes that are left in the tree can also be useful as homes not only to the offspring of the pileated woodpeckers themselves, but to other species of birds and animals.

So what is the final verdict—are the woodpeckers killers of our camp pines? There is no doubt that they are the cause of some dying trees, but not every visit by a woodpecker results in the tree's death.



A pileated woodpecker



A pileated woodpecker feeds the chicks—home is a hole made in a pine tree.



Small holes usually in rows to get at sap in the tree.



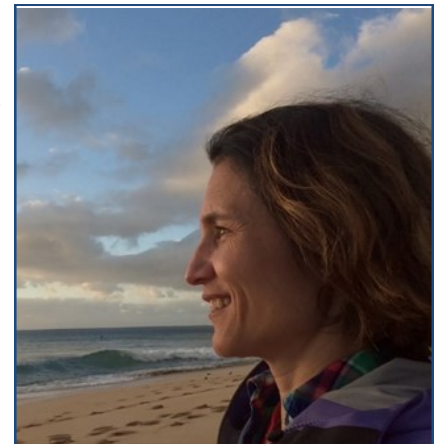
Woodpecker holes large enough to kill a tree when searching for insects

JOHN ISLAND AND CORAL REEFS

By Dr. Andréa G Grottoli

I first went to John Island Camp in 1975 when I was 6 years old. My dad, Fritz Grottoli, had been hired to make a promotional movie about JIC, and we all went to family camp. That is how it started. Over the years I went to girls camp, co-ed camp, and then transitioned to various leadership programs and roles. As a camper I gained a sense of self, a love of the outdoors, and a connection to water. Through my experiences as a Counsellor in Training (CIT), Junior Counsellor, Counsellor, Waterfront Director, and CIT Director, that sense of self, love of the outdoors, and connection to water grew stronger. I also developed leadership skills that continue to guide me today: respect for others, working with groups of people, how to balance different kinds of learning experiences (which I now call work) and play, and most importantly, how to have fun. I now take my family to family camp. I get just as excited now as I did then in the months and weeks leading up to camp. My connection to JIC is one that I value and treasure. And it is this connection to JIC that influenced my career.

As an undergraduate in Biology at McGill University, I gravitated towards experiences that were extensions of JIC. I worked as an undergraduate research assistant for 1.5 years in a lab that studied lakes and rivers. I spent two summers on boats sampling rivers and then in the lab processing samples as part of my senior thesis. This experience was a turning point as I learned what it meant to be a scientist. During my PhD, I discovered coral reefs. Studying coral reefs allowed me to be outdoors (at least some of the time) and involved water – the salty kind. It also required a lot of the independence and organizational skills that were initially nurtured at JIC, and then honed over the years. I had found my happy place. But the connection between JIC and coral reefs goes deeper than that. JIC instilled in me a sense of stewardship and respect of the Earth. Coral reefs, one of the most amazing ecosystems on the planet, are threatened, and my career as a coral reef scientist has let me play a role in being an advocate for protecting reefs.



Dr. Andrea Grottoli



Andrea Grottoli and Nikki Littlehales in 1988 leading a hippy day activity

Coral reefs are under threat. Carbon dioxide (CO₂), a greenhouse gas, is increasing at an alarming rate in our atmosphere and causing the planet and oceans to warm. Over the past century, tropical seawater temperature increased by almost a degree Celsius. By the end of this century, tropical seawater temperature is projected to increase by another 2-3°C. On top of that, about 25% of all atmospheric CO₂ dissolves in the surface ocean and undergoes a chemical reaction that produces acid. During the 1900's, the oceans became about 30% more acidic due to this ocean acidification process. By the end of this century, the tropical oceans are projected to be another 100-150% more acidic. Both ocean warming and acidification are detrimental to corals. Increases in summertime seawater temperature of as little as 1-2°C for as little as 10 days can cause coral bleaching – a physiological heat stress response that can kill corals. In 2016, the northern half of the Great Barrier Reef in Australia – a region equivalent to the USA forests from Maine to Georgia – bleached and 67% of the corals died. At the same time, the frequency and intensity of bleaching events is going up. Over the coming decades, coral abundance is expected to decline by another 60% due to temperature stress alone.

Ocean acidification, the other CO₂ problem, interferes with coral growth. By the end of this century, there will not be one place left on Earth where ocean acidity is favorable for reef accretion, and the reef structure will start to dissolve. While the immediate threat to corals is temperature-induced bleaching, over this century the dual threats of rising temperatures and ocean acidification could decimate the majority of reefs on the planet.

Yet there are some corals that survive bleaching events and that can tolerate more acidic conditions than others. My research focuses on understanding what drives coral resilience. What characteristics make some corals less vulnerable than others? Can we use that information to make better coral conservation and management decisions? By making evidence-based management decisions for coral reefs, we may be able to buy some corals more time so that they survive this century. Seed populations of corals may be able to repopulate decimated reefs in the future once CO2 emission rates start to go down and the rate of ocean warming and acidification slows enough for coral to be able to adapt and/or evolve to the new environmental conditions.

To date, my team and I have identified a few characteristics that make a coral resilient to short-term ocean temperature and acidity stress. We are now trying to establish if the same characteristics impart resilience when the temperature and acidity stress is chronic on a multi-year timeframe. This last step is critical since projected increases in ocean temperature and acidity will be chronic stressors on coral reefs.

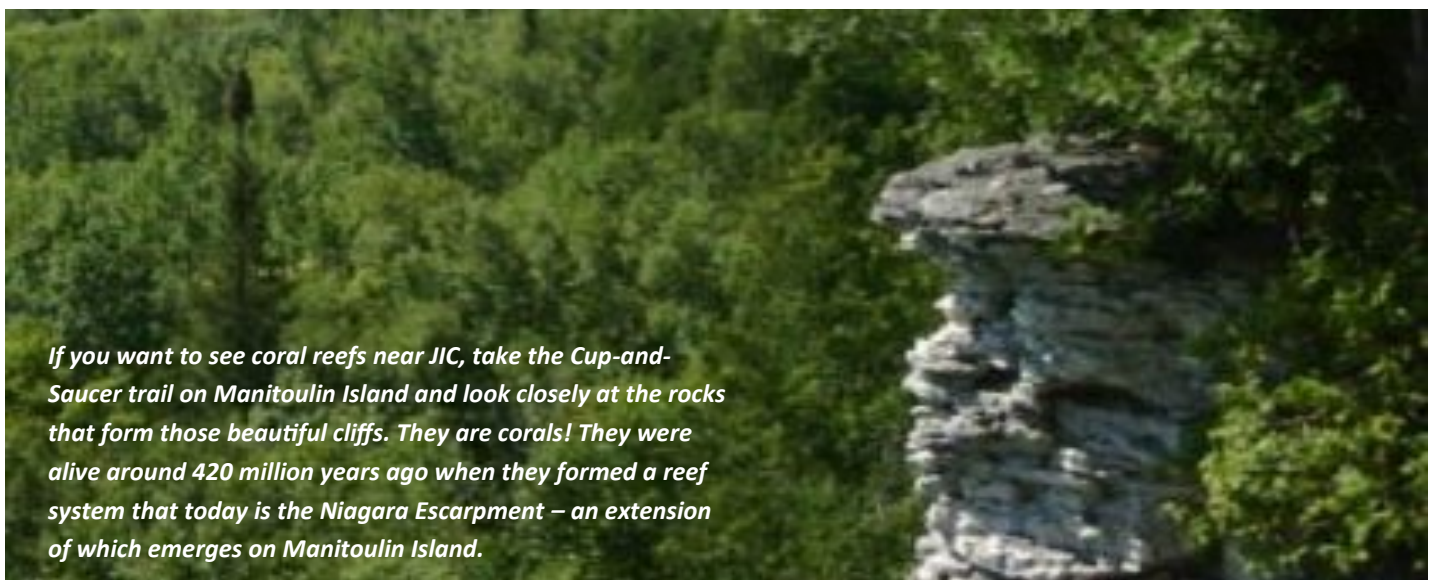
But the fate of coral reefs will depend on more than good science and evidence-based management and conservation decisions. The ultimate fate of coral reefs will depend on mitigating the rate of CO2 emissions and slowing down the rate of global warming and ocean acidification. This requires both bottom-up and top-down actions. At the individual level, we can make choices in our daily lives to reduce our carbon footprint (e.g., recycle, bike/walk/use public transportation, put on a sweater and keep the house a bit cooler in the winter, etc...). Individual actions do make a difference because small savings from each person, multiplied by all of the people who makes the savings, yields real decreases in CO2 emissions. Top-down approaches mean implementing legislation that regulates and reduces carbon emissions from large emitters like industry and commercial operations. While we are not all legislators or politicians, we are all voters. By voicing our concerns to legislators at all levels of government (local, provincial/state, and federal) and voting for legislators at all levels that are willing to implement regulations to minimize climate change, we affect top-down actions. Legislative action works – it was done to mitigate acid rain it can be done to mitigate climate change. When we become good stewards of coral reefs, we also become good stewards of our planet. Every ecosystem affected by climate change will benefit. My ecosystem of choice just happens to be coral reefs.

Now, I am a Professor in the School of Earth Sciences at the Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio and love the work that I do. My journey started at JIC.

To learn more about Andrea Grottoli's coral research, check out her webpage at u.osu.edu/grottoli.1



Andrea sampling corals in Mexico in 2010



If you want to see coral reefs near JIC, take the Cup-and-Saucer trail on Manitoulin Island and look closely at the rocks that form those beautiful cliffs. They are corals! They were alive around 420 million years ago when they formed a reef system that today is the Niagara Escarpment – an extension of which emerges on Manitoulin Island.

Pam Will's Loss Will Be Felt By Many

When Al Will came to Sudbury to work for the Y and direct John Island Camp in 1974, he also met his life-long partner and best friend - Pam Smith. After 43 years of marriage, Pam passed away recently from cancer in Hamilton. Many John Island Alumni will fondly remember Al and Pam and their two daughters Megan and Morgan.

Pam shared many happy memories while at John Island when Al was director from 1974 to 1976. She was a lover of the outdoor life and enjoyed her time sailing, kayaking and while engaged in many other camp and fitness activities.



After moving to the Hamilton area, Pam and Al kept their ties with John Island, helping with work weekends and other camp needs over the years.

Al and Pam Will at a John Island Work Weekend, renovating the old staff cabin - now the out-tripping building.

New Info About an Old Mill

The phone rang on a cool winter's afternoon in the John Island Camp Office. Fred Holmes, along with Roger Miller, had written a book about the lumber mills along the North Shore of Lake Huron; They were searching for the best place to maintain possession of much of the research documentation for the book they had gathered. Here are some of the more interesting, and new, information we now have thanks to these authors.

- the cutting rights for the logs used at the mill came from the Lake Pogamasing area and were brought down the Spanish | River to John Island.

- of the 100 men employed at the Mill, 40 were Swedish. These men provided doctors with trouble when vaccinating against small pox was carried out in the area. That year small pox was responsible for the death of some of the children of families living on the island.

- in 1903-04, the mill cut about 17 million board feet of lumber each year. This was roughly the same for ensuing years.

- timber marks for the John Island Mill included "GUY" and "SX1"

New to the museum at camp this year will be a copy of the original land survey and a copy of the original bill of sale for the land to the Moiles



Meet Roxy, Our John Island Camp Director

My name is Roxy Peterson. Yup! Roxy is my real name - I know you were wondering! I am super excited to be joining the YMCA of Northeastern Ontario Camping Services in leading John Island Camp. JIC is a truly breath taking place. From the moment that I stepped into camp I was in-love!

I was born and raised in London, UK and hold three passports – British, Irish and Canadian. Please excuse all my British spellings! Ha! My greatest memories as a child were formed over three great summers that I spent at British summer camps by the sea in Kessingland, Suffolk. Coming from an economically challenging background my camp experiences were supported by a London based charity called the Children's Country Holiday Fund (CCHF) - which was originally set up to give severely disadvantaged children and young people access to a range of overnight camp, respite breaks and on-going support to help improve the quality of their lives, recognise their potential and achieve their goals in the safest possible environments. This is where my passion and fire was lit for summer camping and outdoor education.

I've been privileged to work at a diverse range of summer camps in the USA and Canada. My mother camp (Camp Lohikan in the Pocono Mountains, PA) is where I began as a cabin Counsellor and where I elevated through the ranks to senior staff with love, guidance and support from great senior staff role models. My first Y camp was YMCA Camp Wapomeo in Nova Scotia where I served as the Assistant Camp Director. Over the past 9 years I've served as the Camp and Education Director for the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts in the Annapolis Valley, Nova Scotia and was fortunate enough to be able to build Ross Creek's summer camp pretty much from the ground up using principles from CCHF, Camp Lohikan and the Y. I've been honoured to serve as Vice President and Education Chair for the Camping Association of Nova Scotia and PEI and sit on the Canadian Camping Association board as a provincial representative. If you've seen any of those pesky "Wear your camp shirt" posters over the past 6 years for National Camp shirt day...those designs were by my hand. I hold a BA in Design studies and an MA in Youth and Community development. My career has taken me up and down North America supporting young people from many backgrounds - from Florida to Nova Scotia. I am super excited for this summer and I cannot wait to meet our campers, families and friends! See you on the Island!



Roxy

Meet Jenny, Our Asst. Camp Director

Hello, my name is Jenny Groom and I am the Assistant Director of John Island Camp. I am very excited to be here at JIC and could not have imagined a more beautiful place for me to join as a first time director.

I grew up in Kingston Ontario where I attended RKY Camp and Gould Lake Outdoor Centre every summer. I loved camp, and I can credit a lot of my passion and foundational hard skills to my time spent outdoors with RKY and GLOC. Throughout my summers I developed crucial outdoor living skills that have helped me on every trip since; from flatwater to whitewater, from canoe to kayak, from orienteering to high ropes; I am lucky to have had the opportunity to learn such a diverse range of skills and be mentored by such incredible leaders.

After finishing all the GLOC camper programs I applied at a small local camp north of Kingston. I was very lucky that they were in search of someone who had considerable waterfront experience just as I was looking for somewhere to develop my leadership skills. So with some determination and serendipity I got my first camping job, and it changed me. In that first summer I experienced the amazing sense of community that camp has to offer and grew into a more compassionate and responsible individual.

Throughout the years since that summer I have finished an undergraduate degree in Health Sciences at McMaster University, and a diploma in Recreation Therapy at Mohawk College. I've worked at a range of camps and outdoor organizations (Camp Hyanto, Camp Woolsey, Camp Arowhon, YMCA Camp Queen Elizabeth, YMCA Camp Wanakita, McMaster Outdoor Club, Voyageur Quest, Wilderness Adventure, Inclusive outdoors) in a variety of roles (Coordinator, Canoe Trip Guide, Leadership Trainer, Program instructor/facilitator, President, Owner/Operator). I find that no matter where I am in life, camp always pulls me back in – providing a place where my experience and knowledge can benefit the next generation of camp enthusiasts. I hope that they too will be inspired to lead active lives in the beauty of the great outdoors.

For now, I am grateful to have the opportunity to spend time at JIC, sharing my knowledge and skills, and learning about what makes JIC "home" to so many.

Yours in camping, Jenny



Have You Felt It?

There's something about a day at John Island,
There's something you can't quite explain,
There's something that makes you both happy and proud,
And you hope that you will live it again

There's something about waking up in the morn
There's something that makes you feel great.
There's something that wants you to get up and go
Mother nature and you have a date.

There's something about the sun when it rises
There's something that goes through your veins.
There's something about that great ball of warmth
That takes care of your aches and your pains.

There's something about the call of a thrush
And the sound of the wind in the air.
There's something about each plant that you see
Satisfaction is just being there.

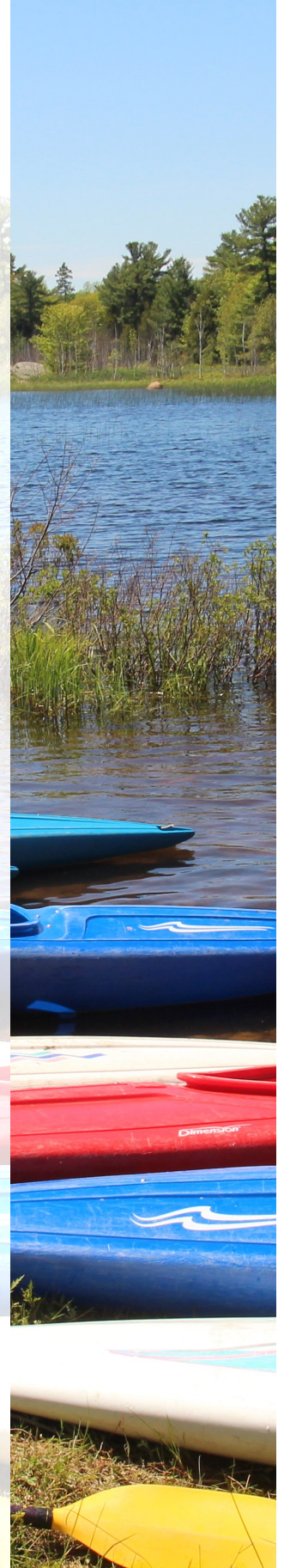
There's something about lying down in the grass
And looking up at the trees and the sky
There's something that makes you feel ever so small
When everything else seems so high

There's something about the sound of the waves
As they wash up on the well beaten shore
There's something that puts you in high captivation
Even though you have heard it before.

There's something about a drink of cool water
There is something that refreshes your soul
There's something about a rest in the shade
It enhances and makes possible your goal

There's something about the sound of a fire
As it crackles and sparks in the night
And the light that it gives as you sit in its glow
Attracts you and takes care of sight your.

There's something about sleeping under the stars
With nature's sounds in the still night air
And you slip into a sleep with a smile on your face
And you're thankful the day brought you there



Overnight hikes and trips have been a favourite activity for campers right from John Island’s first years. Going on an overnight can be an exciting and memorable experience.

We are fortunate at John Island that there are so many good spots for both hiking and overnighing. In 2015, thanks to our alumni and a very supportive M.P.’s office, we were able to have a map made that highlighted favourite and well-known camp locations that are very specific to the camp.

As you look at a photo of that map below, you can identify a number of these locations that are shown on the map - some of which you may have experienced at your time at camp.

The names such as First Beach and Marys Cove are names designated by John Island Camp over the years and few others would recognize them.

Two of our most popular overnight spots for older campers are Lost Lake and Mary’s Cove. While Mary’s Cove can be reached via and all day hike, most travel there by canoe or kayak. Other good camping locations also exist close to John Island on Klotz Island, Aitkens Island and Gowan Island

OVERNIGHT SPOTS YOU MAY REMEMBER



First Beach, on the western extremities of our camp property, has been a favourite overnight spot since 1954. It is equipped to provide a first overnight site for young campers



How to Stay Involved as Alumni

It may have been 5 years since you were last involved as a staff member at John Island Camp. Or, perhaps, 10, 25 or even 50 years. But, more and more alumni have been getting connected again in many ways to ensure the quality of the camp keeps improving so new generations can enjoy the benefits of a camping experience. Here are a few ways that you can get involved to stay connected to your camp.

Annual Spring Work Party

Here is an opportunity to grab your sleeping bag and work clothes and come out to camp to help with some projects and get the camp ready for the next camping season. The 2018 work weekend will be May 11 - 13, 2018. Activities usually include painting, construction, cleaning, etc. Bring the family and enjoy the camp while working - there will be jobs for all ages and abilities. Contact the Regional Manager of Camping Services for the YMCA of Northeastern Ontario - Rob Groccia - at rob.groccia@ymcaneo.ca for more information on how to get involved.

Write For the Alumni Newsletter

We are always looking for interesting and historical articles and other information for the newsletter. For more information or to contribute a personal update, article or any comments, contact gary.gray@ymcaneo.ca

Bring Your Family to Family Camp - Spring or Summer

You can choose between a late spring weekend camping experience with your family or a full week in mid-summer and enjoy all the benefits and features of John Island Camp. A number of camp alumni are currently part of the family camp sessions and tend to return year after year. Families find it is an excellent opportunity to renew friendships, keep involved with their family members and to share the camp experience with their children during a busy summer and before starting to plan for a busy fall.

Contribute to the John Island Camp Capital Fund

Alumni were responsible for us reaching our recent capital campaign goal and are now instrumental in helping us keep the camp in top shape and up to date with program equipment. Many alumni have contributed to help with annual donations and some with monthly contributions. These funds have made possible the capital projects you read about in our newsletter. To contribute to the JIC Capital Fund, contact Gary Gray at gary.gray@ymcaneo.ca

Sponsor a Camper in 2018

John Island has a rich and respected history of not turning away campers because of an inability to pay the fees. The John Island Camp experience is one that all youth can benefit from and by helping sponsor a camper, you can assist many more youth have that experience. To help sponsor a camper, contact the camp registrar, Summer Brooks, at summer.brooks@ymcaneo.ca

Be a John Island Camp Ambassador

Nothing is as effective in the promotion of a camp than word of mouth. As someone who understands the unsurpassed value of the camp experience at John Island, you can tell your family, your friends and co-workers about the many values in the life of a child. Information about the camp is on the camp website at www.johnisland.ymca.ca