



THE OCONTO ECHO

Fall 2021

Blueberry Blurb

It was an incredible summer at Camp Oconto and we were so thrilled to be back to in-person camp! Running camp during a pandemic was not how we imagined one of our early summers as directors of Oconto would go... but we are so thrilled with how it all turned out.

To run safely, we had to jump through a lot of hoops and it would not have been possible without the cooperation, dedication and enthusiasm of lots and lots of people. Thank you to the campers/QCs and their parents, the staff/Semis, the Section Heads, the Medical Teams, the Camp Excellence Team (kitchen and maintenance) and the Oconto alumnae for everything you all did to make summer 2021 possible and safe.

So, how did Oconto do it?

Testing before camp: All staff and campers had to be PCR tested 72 hours before arriving at camp and then provide proof of their negative result. When anyone arrived at camp they had to be tested- again (this time with a rapid antigen test). This meant campers could not get out of their car until they received a negative. Parents said good-bye in the parking lot.

Camp Awakening: The camp for girls with physical disabilities at Oconto was not able to run in-person due to COVID-19. Camp Awakening did run virtual programming and we can't wait to welcome them back in-person in summer 2022!

Cohorts: Tads, Chips and QCs were each one cohort. Eagles, Ints and Seniors were divided in two or sometimes three cohorts. While in your cohort, camp could be quite normal. At activities, while with someone from outside of a cohort, we had to practice the "two out of three" rule, meaning we had to be two of three things, outside, six feet apart, and masked. This meant at something like canoeing - outside and six feet apart was not hard to achieve.

Visitor's days: We could not have one! Campers were able to call home in 15 minute time slots. A fabulous day of special activities was set up including inflatable toys and a cotton candy machine!

Meals and the Dining Hall: Social distancing was achieved by building a beautiful deck on the dining hall, which worked very well unless it poured rain. Direction signs in the dining hall for flow of traffic and other food service changes were implemented.

Testing: If someone had symptoms they were tested. This meant isolation until a negative result was received, which also meant staff were taken away from regular duties to look after children in isolation.

Days Off: Staff could not leave the Oconto bubble. Days off were done by cohort, staff went to nearby cottages that had been rented by camp.

Cheers and Songs: Yes! They were done, outside and in cohorts. The hill by the Bung was used as an outdoor Main lodge, we also used the tennis courts for things like Sunday Evening Concert.

If you want to know more, please go to the Camp Oconto website and look at the "Camp Oconto's Covid-19 Prevention Plan".

Our favourite memory of the summer was on the 2nd last day of August camp. It was the day of the Dive/Synchro/Kayak show. Earlier that morning, the entire Int Section of campers and staff had led an epic flag raising with a carefully choreographed and rehearsed dance to a song called "Teamwork" by Mackenzie Ziegler. It was one of those magical camp mornings. Fast forward through a busy morning of Decathlon etc. and then we all arrive to Main Dock for the Dive/Synchro/Kayak show. As many of you remember, during these shows the campers are brought onto dock in groups of 4 or 5 with one staff member... so the sections are all scattered in various groupings across the floating docks. The Diving and Synchro shows happen beautifully with tons of participation and campers showing off the new skills they have learned. We get to the kayak show which is always full of immense talent. The 1st act of the kayak show happens to also be choreographed to the same song from flag raising that morning- "Teamwork" by Mackenzie Ziegler. We were sitting on the dock beside the diving board watching the kayakers when we suddenly realized that little clusters of Ints all around the docks are also hearing the song and started doing the choreography they had learned for their flag raising. It was a spectacular sight of connectedness, of belonging and of healing. We were grateful for our sunglasses as we teared up behind them... tears of relief that we had reached the end of the summer without COVID-19 entering camp and that the campers and staff were so happy to be together!

With deep gratitude and thanks to the whole Oconto community.

Bronwyn & Ted



The View from Misty Cove

What a Summer! Bronwyn and Ted had more than their share of challenges. Working together with a very supportive and strong staff, they moved Moby Dick!

The hashtag “Plan for camp” was their motto last winter and spring. No matter what, they were planning to run camp during the Summer of 2021. Staff said to me things like, “I will do whatever it takes to make it so Oconto will open this Summer”, “kids need camp so badly this year”, and “I need camp so badly this year.”

There were a lot of naysayers, but when Premier Doug Ford finally announced in May that overnight camps could open, Oconto was ready to spring into action.

Bruce and I did what we could to help, directing traffic, doing Covid tests, pickup up stuff, dropping off stuff, driving canoe trips, and our favourite... looking after our grandchildren, Eliza 2 and Sebastian, 5. This was nothing compared to what Bronwyn and Ted did.

Along with everything that goes into running camp they had to keep up with all of the news that would affect camp, including importantly implementing all new safety measures – we could go on for a very long time, however the message from Bronwyn and Ted gave you a good idea of the specific challenges!

To say Bruce and I feel very proud of what Bronwyn and Ted accomplished in their first year of being able to open, is an enormous understatement.



This summer Oconto was again a place of friendship, happiness, lots of activities and the same feelings and life lessons at its core. Kids needed camp. Oconto was able to give support, hope, normalcy and love when it was so badly needed by so many.

The view from Misty Cove was clear. Oconto continues to thrive!

Lisa & Bruce

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT SUMMER 2021:

- 532 campers attended Oconto over the course of summer 2021
- They were cared for by 81 staff and Semis
- Oconto administered over 1,000 rapid antigen COVID-19 tests over the course of the summer (results were all negative).
- The “S” name for the Semis of 2021 was “Snacking Semis!” Their Semi banner is so creative- it is a vending machine with each Semi’s name written on a snack item!
- The QC All Camp themes were: Ratatouille (July) and Inside Out (August)
- The Semi Banquets were: Phineas and Ferb (July) and Ancient Greece (August)
- The monther plays were: The Lorax (July) and The Teen Beach Movie (August)
- 100 people were able to eat outdoors each meal on the new deck!

Testimonials (In the words of camper parents...)

Thank you to the amazing Oconto staff for making camp such a joyful, fun, silly, wonderful experience! At the best of times, Camp provides a tremendous opportunity for fun, connection and growth. And during these times, which have been lonely and challenging for our kids, the importance of camp was intensified, and the benefits felt even more profoundly... my daughter came home full of happiness. She is sharing stories of delight, new experiences and new friendships. She is expressing feelings of strength and confidence. She spoke so highly of all of the staff she interacted with, especially her counsellor. She spoke of their kindness and their fun attitude...From the moment we reached out to the camp, to the time we picked our daughter up at the bus we were impressed with how well the camp was organized, the contagious optimism, and the expression of confidence that camp could be run safely with the right precautions in place. My sense is that both parents and campers found reassurance in Oconto's approach.

- Sarah, mother of an Oconto camper

I wanted to take a moment and thank the whole Oconto team for providing my daughter with such a wonderful camp experience - and frankly, any camp experience at all. I know how hard you all worked to press the government on the importance of camp, adapt and innovate to ensure you could open the gates, train and retrain and more... My daughter came back from her session feeling like she'd aged a full year! She was confident, full of stories, and so, so happy. She spoke about trying hard in her first-ever swim test, riding on a bunch of different boats, archery, rock climbing, arts and crafts, how she had a choice at bedtime between a high-five and a hug (smart) but mostly wanted hugs, how she had the best grilled cheese she's ever had, tried a guitar, and the song (Yakkity Sax?) is now on constant repeat around here. Thank you Oconto- I am overjoyed. I'd send her back tomorrow if I could!

- Jessey, mother of an Oconto camper

Oconto Women Out and About!

Enduring Friendships:

Linda Ford Sutherland and Lynn Somers were both Intermediate Counsellors in 1970 and 1971. Linda was the Head of Waterskiing, and Lynn was the Head of Music/Section Head. They have been great friends ever since. Fast-forward fifty years and they tell the Echo that in October 2021 they were out exploring Victoria together!



Planned Encounters:

Julia "Steegs" Steegstra (2002-2014) and Sophie Bertram (2000-2012) enjoyed a rainy canoe trip in Algonquin Park this past summer. Steegs' "vintage" special arts paddle designed in 2002 even made an appearance!



Chance Encounters:

A note from Melissa Mantifel (2007-2017): At the end of June 2021, I was finishing the Powell Lake Canoe Circuit on the Sunshine Coast of British Columbia when my partner and I crossed paths with another group who started out in the opposite direction. We started chatting at the dock (these are nicely maintained campsites) about the heat, the route, and how nice the water felt after paddling and portaging. As most trippers and outdoor enthusiasts do, you start to talk about your past trip experiences and how current trip compares. When Ali Palmer-Fluevog (1991-2003) and I, realized that we had both learned our canoe camping skill from summer camp in Ontario, we connected the dots back to Oconto. We immediately starting to make connections. Of course two Oconto girls from different generations would meet along a canoe circuit on the other side of Canada. We shared memories of Oconto, trying to find people and experiences in common while also sharing canoe-tripping techniques. Oconto girls find each other and it was pretty special to share this evening on Horseshoe Lake with Ali.



Camper Perspective:

Mary Thompson (2019-2021), daughter of Oconto Alumna Michelle (Mitch) Kelly (1987-1996) was a Tad camper this year.

What was different about this summer?

This summer was different because we could only stay with the Tads. We would be social distanced or wearing masks with any of the other section campers. We ate social distanced; the tables were moved further apart. When you got up in the mess hall, you would have to wear your mask. Also, you would have to wear your mask in main lodge. One good thing is that there was this amazing deck that they put on the dining hall which meant we had more eating space and we got to eat outside. I loved the deck.

Did you find your old friends and make some new ones?

I brought one of my best friends from home and I also brought my cousin, and they were both in Tad section with me. And I also made a lot of new friends. It was fun hanging out with the Tads.

What were your favourite activities?

My favourite activities were SPARTs, horseback riding, diving, swimming lessons, windsurfing, and arts and crafts. I liked horseback riding because I never tried it before and I love being around animals and it was just fun riding on something that isn't a car or a bike!

What Zebo or Cabin were you in?

I was in Tads section, Cabin Hilltop 2.

What were the best evening activities?

The best evening activities I participated in was when we played a game where the counsellors dressed up as animals and hid in Tad section and we had to find them and bring them back to Mountaintop. But, we couldn't touch them, we would have to convince them with our words! And when we got them to Mountaintop, we would get a certain amount of points for each counsellor. My cabin won! We were a very persuasive cabin! I also really loved the last evening program when we did Tad Stampede. We got to run around the camp and play music and shout "TADS!" All the other sections laughed; we did a lot of silly things at camp.

Did you do your activities with your cabin mates or did you pick your own?

Sometimes I'd pick one of my cabin mates to come with me and sometimes I would just be on my own. I liked being on my own because it was a chance to make new friends. Normally, I would just go to SPARTs on my own because I could say "hi" to Kara's dog and paint in peace. It was a good time out.

I liked to go to windsurfing with my cabin mates and friends. We would paddle around on the windsurfing boards and look at all the great views and just play. We had a lot of laughs.

Do you want to go back next summer?

YES!! I want to go for a month.

What years have you been at camp?

In 2019, I was a Robin for 5 days in Tads. In 2020, the camp was closed but my mom, aunt, cousin, and I went for a few days for Family Camp. I was in Tads for two weeks in 2021.

Thanks for letting me talk about my experience at camp! I love Oconto!

Maisie O'Malley (2012-2021), daughter of Oconto Alumni Julie Metcalfe (1988-1994) was a senior camper this summer.

What was different about this year?

There were quite a few things that were different this year - arrival day was very different with the covid testing and parents dropping you off in the parking lot. There were also some new rules, like the 2/3 rule (six feet apart, masks and outdoors), five activities instead of six, a shorter rest hour and cohorts. Visitor's Day was also very different because there were no visits from family, just a 15 minute phone call home.

Did you find your old friends and make some new ones?

One of my oldest camp friends, who lives in Paris, was not able to travel this year, so it was sad not having her there, but like every summer, there are always new friendships that are made. Many of my camp friends returned this summer and even though it had been two years since we last saw each other, it was like no time had passed.

What were your favourite activities?

Bronze Med, cardio, diving, arts & crafts

Did you like having some meals outside?

Yes, but not so much when it had just rained.

What Zebo or Cabin were you in?

The Rainbow

What were the best evening activities?

Soak the Cow!!!, Man Tracker, Reverse Scavenger Hunt

Did you do your activities with your Zebo mates or did you pick your own?

I picked my own

Do you want to go back next summer?

YES!!!!

What else do you want to tell Alumni about this year?

QC All Camp was slightly different - teams were cohorts instead a mix of all the sections, but still fun. Sunday evening concert on the tennis courts worked well except for the fact that it was pretty buggy. Banquet was the exact same except there were no dance parties - another change was no cheers in the dining hall because singing was considered a high-risk activity.

*Despite the fact that there were so many changes and new rules, it was my best summer yet!
That's the magic of camp!*

Alumnae in the Spotlight

CAMP IGNITES LIFE-LONG JOY

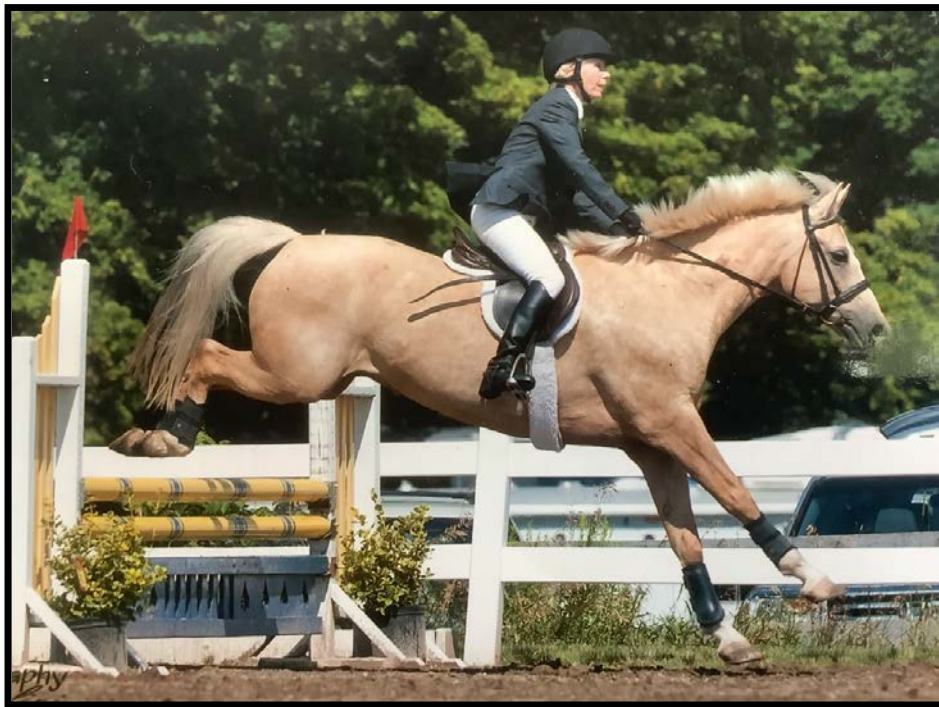
By Marney (Cousins) Winn

Camp Oconto is truly the core of my being. I first went to camp in 1952. I was four! Likely, I became the camp mascot. I was feisty and fearless. The first gift Camp Oconto gave me, is that I was put on a horse. Fast forward almost 70-years and late this September, Peter, my horse and I competed in our first hunter show. Never, could I have dreamed of the life that I live today and it grew from my Oconto experience.

I was a camper from 1952 until 1963. I won the riding cup four time. I returned as a counsellor from 1967 to 1970. In the spring of 1978 my husband died from cancer. I knew that Oconto was where I needed to be in the summer. I again returned, in 1978 and 1979. I almost made four decades at camp!

Peter and I were 9th out of 28 competitors at the Pickering Horse Centre. It was pure joy!

Camp Oconto deeply burrows into ones heart.



INSPIRING GIRLS IN TECHNOLOGY

By Allison Abraham (1984-1986)

I would like to introduce you to a program I am very passionate about and introduced to North America about four years ago: tech_Girl.

My time at Oconto was my first exposure to a girls only environment where everyone was encouraged to become strong leaders of tomorrow. Oconto truly encouraged all of us to grow as individuals; socially, emotional, intellectually and physically. It was a safe environment where girls from all over Canada and the works with all different backgrounds and personalities could be themselves and form lasting relationship. This is the very essence of what we strive to create with tech_Girl, an environment that encourages girls to be intellectually curious.

tech_Girl is a program is about much more than introducing school-aged girls to the basics of coding; its about empowering the next generation of female leaders in a rapidly accelerating industry whose future depends on their input.

We at Valtech, a global digital agency, created tech_Girl over seven years ago out of our office in Sweden to help reach school-aged girls, teaching them the basics of coding and empowering them through inspirational, relatable and local role models from our very own teams. We believe 'IF YOU CAN SEE IT, YOU CAN BE IT'.

In June 2021, we ran events remotely across 14 of our office across the globe from North America to India; Paris to Ukraine, ensuring that regardless of the effects of the pandemic, these future women in tech still had the opportunity to explore the tech world.

Our long term goal is to help increase the participation and leadership of women in Technology. tech_Girl is an initiative to help young girls like my daughter Maddie (also at Oconto now) to learn, connect and grow, introducing them to all of the different career opportunities technology can offer.

If you would like to have your daughter participate please don't hesitate to reach out to me via LinkedIn and I would be happy to host your fellow Oconto daughter in person or virtually at one of our global events. We run these events quarterly across the globe and are always looking to reach out to more future leaders.



FRIENDS THAT GATHER AROUND THE TABLE

By Trish Magwood (1981-1986)

I was at Oconto for 6 years, from an Eagle to a QC. Lisa was running the camp and her mom was very much active right through to when my girls Olivia and Charlotte came to Oconto. Their happy place. Charlotte is entering her seventh year at camp and my niece Sophie is still at camp and a legend!

Like Mrs. Labbett, Lisa and Bronwyn, we are a four-generation large and close knit family who are passionate about camp, activities and gathering together around good food. Oconto remains an important connection for us all. In fact, the fabulous Kathy LaBranche (Lavery) who was my Section Head and ran the musical is the much loved head of admissions at my kids school - Trinity College School.

I wanted to share with the Oconto community that my third cookbook *My New Table* has been just released. It's a cookbook of fresh, simple, and seasonally inspired recipes for every table, following *dish entertains* and *In My Mother's Kitchen*. Inspired by family and the community of friends that gather around the table, this is a collection full of stories and photos shared in a personal way (as we do at camp). A perfect book to add to your collection, or gift family, friends and camp friends this holiday.



Oconto Campership Fund (OCF):

There are many unforeseen reasons that a family's finances would prohibit their daughter from returning to Camp Oconto. The Oconto Campership Fund is available to girls who have been to Oconto previously but for unforeseen reasons, finances prohibit their return to camp. It is also available to children of alumnae who cannot afford to send their daughter to camp but desperately want their child to have the Oconto experience. For more information on how to donate or to apply to use the fund please visit Oconto website and look on the alumnae page. <https://campoconto.com/alumnae-of-camp-oconto/>

Would you like your name to be up in the Dining Hall forever? Here's how! With a minimum donation of \$100 to the Oconto Campership Fund, your generosity and enthusiasm for Oconto will be acknowledged on a plaque in the Dining Hall and forever appreciated.

The OCF accepts donations either by e-transfer or cheque.
Please send e-transfers to ocf1924@gmail.com

Please send cheques, payable to the Oconto Campership Fund, to:
Linda Sutherland
307 - 2855 Bloor Street West
Etobicoke, Ontario
M8X 3A1

The Oconto Campership Fund (OCF) is a registered charity, managed by a Board of Directors that consists of Oconto Alumnae. Donations are tax deductible and tax receipts will be issued.



Looking for the perfect Holiday gift or stocking stuffer for your camper?



Check Out 

[ocontooutfitters.com!](http://ocontooutfitters.com)

Order by December 1st to guarantee delivery for the Holidays!

ALUMNAE CHALLENGE!

What is this? The first three people who send a correct response along with their mailing address to bronwyn@campoconto.com will win a special item from tuck. The correct answer will be in the next edition of the Oconto Echo.



Celebrating the new additions to our Oconto Family!

Sarah Keenleyside (1989-2000) and her husband Justin Rutledge along with big brother Jack are happy to announce the arrival of their newest family member Louie John Hardy Rutledge. Sarah writes, "Born on October 3rd, little Lou has completed our family. The only down side is our boys will never get the chance to be Oconto girls. Family camp here we come!"



Victoria Huntley (1987-2001) and her husband Jon welcomed their second son Frankie (Francis) Henry Ronkai in July. Frankie is little brother to six-year-old Charlie. Victoria sent this photograph and says she highly recommends the Oconto water bottle, her go to for nursing at night!

Remembrances

Patricia “Patti” Lynn Abraham passed away peacefully on May 4th, 2021 after her battle with stage 4 cancer. She will be remembered by all for her contagious positive attitude and optimism, no matter the situation.

Patti attended Oconto from 1967-1972. She was the dear sister of Oconto alumni Joanne Abraham Farrell (1967-1972) , and loving and proud aunt to alumni Stephanie Farrell (1997-2003), Jennifer Farrell (1998) and Patti Farrell (1998-2009).

Patti was born on July 19th, 1958 in Toronto She was an alumni of Branksome Hall, Camp Oconto, and graduated from the University of Western Ontario. The majority of her career was spent with Central Graphics and the Eastwood family. Patti brought so much energy, joy, and dynamism to work every day that rubbed off on employees and customers alike. At every sales meeting they would hand out the Sales Rep of the Month award and it became a running joke as Patti won 9 out of 12 months for years running. It became the “Patti Award”.

Patti retired in 2018 and since that time found joy in travelling the world, cooking, her daily walks by the lake, and spending time with her family, friends, and neighbours. She was known for her never negative, always smiling spirit; she was a vivacious personality that could light up any room she entered. Patti’s outgoing personality was most apparent in her ability to meet and befriend nearly anyone she encountered. She was incredibly loving, compassionate, and always willing to help. Patti was loved and cherished by her family and by all those whose lives she was a part of and will be truly missed.



Remembrances

Anne Elizabeth Hamilton Steacy passed away on September 26, 2021. Her obituary notes she was a journalist, a lover of the fine arts, a world traveller, a hockey player, an excellent swimmer and canoeist and a devoted friend to the vast circle of people she met throughout her life. It goes on to say she was radiant, charming and filled so many lives with her warmth and laughter.

Starting at the age of eleven Anne spent her summers at Camp Oconto. Camp was joyous for Anne and it left her with an independent spirit and spontaneous love of nature and comradeship. She remained a camper at Oconto for fourteen years, ending her time as a swimming instructor and drama counsellor. Many would remember her production of *Guys and Dolls* and *Brigadoon*. After graduating from Havergal College in 1973 Anne enrolled at Trinity College, University of Toronto where she majored in English. As a legacy to her alma mater Anne was especially proud of her ongoing funding legacy to Trinity College. The courses her initiatives helped financially support included 'Science Writing', several Science streams and her most cherished, a counselling program for Trinity students.

In 2016, Anne was featured in the Oconto Echo after setting up a camping fund to assist girls who would otherwise not have the financial resources, to go to camp. The Anne Steacy Camping Fund (TASCF), administered by Kids In Camp (KIC). At that time, she explained her motivation by observing that, "When a girl has the opportunity to get physically and mentally strong by spending time at camp, the attendant independence and buoyed self-image will inevitably enhance her whole life. At least, that's how it worked for me."

Anne is survived by her brother Peter, his wife Pauline and their two children, niece Oconto Alumna Miranda and nephew, Eric and by her husband, Brian Gable.



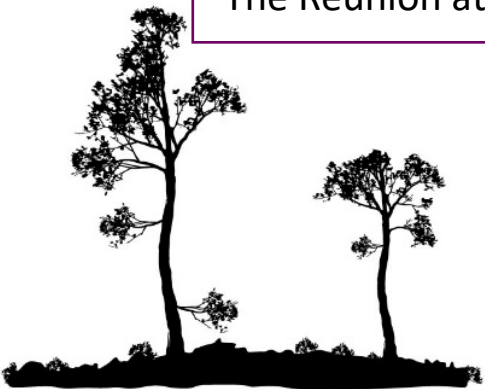
SAVE THE DATE!

CAMP OCONTO ALUMNAE REUNION!

Friday Sept. 16 to Sunday Sept. 18, 2022 at camp!



Three times a charm – After postponing our Oconto Alumnae Reunion two years in a row, we are trying again! The Reunion at camp is being planned for September 16- 18



Want to stay caught up with Camp Oconto through social media?
Follow us on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube!

