



# THE OCONTO ECHO

**Fall 2019**

## **The View from the Bung**

What a fabulous Summer!

We are thrilled to be able to officially announce that Bronwyn and Ted Gorsline, our daughter and son in law, have now taken on the roles of Oconto's Camp Directors. Bronwyn has been at Oconto in various roles over the course of her life, most recently working as Associate Director in 2018 and 2019. Ted worked this past summer as a Director at Oconto as well. Ted has a lot of camping experience from his many years as a camper and staff member at Camp Ponacka. We are excited that they are now the Directors of Oconto!

Happy reading!

**Lisa and Bruce**

I am excited to join Camp Oconto, together with my wife and family, as Directors for the summer of 2020. I started going to camp in 1995, I continued in various capacities as a counsellor in training, counsellor, sailing instructor, and director, finally stopping in 2011. Little did I know, when I met Bronwyn on a camper airport drop-off in 2010, we had yet to write the most exciting chapter of our camping stories.

For Bronwyn and me, this is a dream coming to fruition. To be directors at Oconto, and to carry on the proud traditions; while leading after strong examples like June & Cliff and Lisa & Bruce.

Although I am still meeting so many of you in the Oconto family, each time we meet, you remind me what makes Oconto so special. It is the warmth on your faces, the kindness in your hearts, and the joy in your soul as you sing camp songs together.

Thank you for welcoming me into this amazing Oconto family!

**Ted**

Summer 2019 at Oconto was amazing! We had fabulous weather, the lake was beautifully warm, and camp was busy with lots and lots of smiling faces! It is always heartwarming to see campers and staff members achieve their goals at camp and there were so many highlights this summer! Both groups of QCs planned wonderful QC-All-Camps, Wizard of Oz in July and Charlie and the Chocolate Factory in August. The Semis hosted two spectacular Banquets, Toy Story and an Enchanted Forest. At Drama they put on two fun and energetic monther plays, Shrek and Disney's Lemonade Mouth. As always, the competition between Team Birch (formerly Iroquois/Orange) and Team Maple (formerly Algonquin/Brown) was intense! Birch won in both July and August! Down at swim dock, every camper in the Bronze Med and Cross classes passed their levels! Over the course of the summer, 27 campers earned their Bronze Med and 19 campers earned their Bronze Cross! As well, 25 QCs (everyone that was eligible) earned their GPP30 credit! This is a grade 11 course focusing on Peer Leadership and Support. It was quite a summer!

I have loved being back at Oconto full time the past two summers and am very proud to be stepping into the role of director, along with my husband Ted. It feels very special to be the third generation of my family to hold this position and I am so excited to be here and help lead the next generation of Oconto girls! I also love that my own children, Sebastian and Eliza, will get to grow up on the shores of Eagle Lake, as my brother Mark and I did years ago.

I can't wait for summer 2020 to begin!

**Bronwyn**

## ALUMNAE WEEKEND AT CAMP OCONTO!



SEPTEMBER 18-20, 2020

We would love it if you could join us for a super fun camp weekend at camp!!!

We're packing the equivalent of 2 months at camp into two days – activities, sing songs, banquet, Saturday Evening Concert, Chapel, and more. Or you can just sit on the dock and talk/laugh all weekend long!

Registrations will be available in the New Year, but in the meantime – Save the Date!!! Would you like to help? Jen Palacios has accepted the responsibility of leading the weekend. Hooray!

We are calling for volunteers to help. Whatever time commitment you are willing to give, we have a job for you!

If you would like to volunteer, please contact Jen Palacios - call or text 416-319-6534 or email [jenpalacios83@gmail.com](mailto:jenpalacios83@gmail.com)



### Please Help Us Find Alumnae

We do not have current email addresses for lots of alumnae, and we would love to be in touch with everyone. If each of us finds one friend from Oconto, and gets them to register as an alumna on our website, maybe we will track everyone down! It would be great if we could include as many alumnae as possible! For privacy reasons, alumnae must register themselves – you should not register for someone else. Please ask them to go to the alumnae page of our website [www.campoconto.com](http://www.campoconto.com).

### Oconto Campership Fund

We are happy to report that the fund sponsored three campers to attend Oconto last Summer for one month each! Thank you to everyone who contributed to the fund – we couldn't have done it without you. ❤️

If you would like to make a donation to the OCF, please see instructions [HERE](#).

As a reminder, the fund is available for girls who have already been to Oconto but, for unforeseen reasons, such as job loss or family separation, are unable to return. They may also be the child of alumnae, who cannot afford to send their daughter to Oconto, but want their child to share and benefit from the Oconto experience that they had.



Lovely alum Sarah & Nora Hammond modeling their fleeces.

### Camp Oconto Fleeces

This summer we sold camp fleeces and they were very popular with our campers and staff!

We have a limited number remaining, available for alumnae to purchase.

The fleeces are \$75.00, plus HST and shipping.

To view our size chart click [HERE](#).

If you are interested in purchasing one, email

[christy@campoconto.com](mailto:christy@campoconto.com).



## Alumnae Updates

**From Andrea Nelson** - I'm going to start this off by saying that I hate needles. In fact, I really hate anything to do with medical procedures, or hospitals in general. They make me squeamish and uncomfortable. Over the years I've had my fair share of hospital encounters; stitches on my lip, a broken nose, a surgery to remove part of my skull. And one thing that I always found myself doing in these uncomfortable moments, when I was filled with anxiety, was singing camp songs. I always started with Fish, my favourite camp song, but anything from Barges to section cheers would work. Singing these Oconto songs in my head over and over, for as long as it was needed, would calm my breathing, let me relax a little, and help me make it through. I honestly can't quite express how much I use these songs,



and the happy associations that come with them, to help me get past these painful moments.



Most recently on the list of hospital adventures was a two month stay last Fall after I fractured my spine, causing paralysis below the waist. To say that dealing with this injury has been the hardest thing in my life would be a vast understatement. But even as I was going through the most difficult time in my life, Oconto managed to find a way to make me smile. From reconnecting with an old camp friend, who I ran into at the rehab centre, to discovering that one of the doctors was also an Oconto alumni, it was proven that the Oconto community is something that can bring a smile to your face, regardless of the circumstances. Oconto sisters are sisters for life, even if you didn't attend camp at the same time! Camp made me a stronger, and more resilient person, and I often wonder how different I would be if I had never been to Camp Oconto. I am so thankful for all of the wonderful experiences I had there and I don't think I'd be able to handle my injury as well as I have been if I had never gone to camp. The last nine months have been an extremely tough journey, but I'm not giving up. Currently, I'm doing physio as if it's my full time job, and I'm fighting to

be able to walk again. Despite the doctor's concerns about my ability to ever walk normally, I have made a lot of progress, and I am hopeful that one day I will come back to camp, race down the hill, and jump off tower!



The above was written in May 2018, and I'm happy to say that since then I have continued to slowly progress in my abilities to walk. I was also able to go back to camp this summer and teach parasports to the Camp Awakening campers, which was a wonderful experience. And while I was there, I even managed to jump off tower!



If anyone wants to see my journey and progress, please feel free to follow me on instagram [@andreanels](https://www.instagram.com/andreanels).



**Céline Junke** and John Daley were married on August 4, 2019, in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. She had longtime Oconto friends Emily Monkman and Laurène (Tabet) Motte by her side as bridesmaids and Anne Pigott as her Master of Ceremonies. Céline and John recently moved to London, England from San Francisco, California.



Céline and John's wedding reception with Emily Monkman, Anne Pigott, Meghan Buckley, Alexa Ironside, Laurene (Tabet) Motte, Lisa Wilson, Erika Siren, Calynn Irwin, and Bruce Wilson

**Carolyn Neufeld** and Carter Durant were married on July 20th, 2019 in Collingwood, Ontario. Several Oconto friends celebrated alongside them. Photographed with Carolyn are, Kay Watson, Chelsea Hill, Lexa Graham, Calynn Irwin, Maddie Kotzer, Lisa Wilson, and Keara Rodd



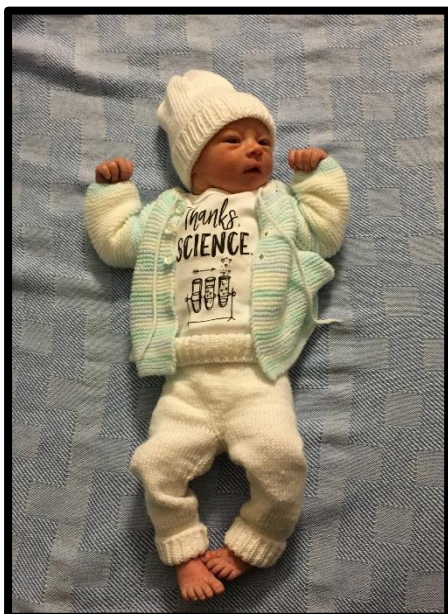
**From Emma Rohmann** - I'm really loving the work I'm doing (I started my own business a few years ago), and the kids are now 7 and 4. We're skiing a lot this winter and spending our weekends at a rental home south of Collingwood. We just planned our next camping trip with the kids (we're doing 2 weeks in Algonquin). This past summer my husband and I and 2 friends left our kids with the grandparents and spent 13 days on the Big Salmon River in the Yukon. We paddled over 300km through the mountains. It was absolutely incredible! My love of paddling continues... hard to believe my days teaching canoeing at Oconto were almost 20 years ago!!!



**Bronwyn (née Wilson)** and Ted joyfully welcomed Eliza Mary June Gorline to the world on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019! She was born at Sunnybrook Hospital in Toronto weighing 8lbs. Eliza and her big brother Sebastian were 2 of Oconto's youngest campers this past summer. Sebastian delighted in showing Eliza the wonderful world of Camp Oconto- from taking dips in Eagle Lake to going on peaceful canoe rides in Turtle Bay and watching (sometimes napping at) Sunday Evening Concerts! She received lots of love and attention from campers and staff all summer long. Eliza especially loved going to flag raising where she would often sing along with her adorable baby noises. Her favourite activity was most definitely Song Circle at Tawa where she was serenaded by Oconto campers and staff who love to sing and play guitar! She can't wait to go back for summer 2020!



Thanksgiving weekend 2018 **Joanna (née Hood)** and Alec Martin were thrilled to welcome their first child, Edwin (Teddy) Craig Martin. Teddy was born on October 7<sup>th</sup> and weighed 6lbs 12ozs. Teddy has had a wonderful first year and is an incredibly happy baby! He loves anything he can climb on, dancing to The Wiggles, and throwing balls for his puppy Aussie! Teddy is also a water baby and loved swimming in Eagle Lake with his Aunt Christy in the summer.





**Dominique Soubry** and her husband Steven Ponari are thrilled to introduce Charlotte Ponari, born in Montreal on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019. Weighing in at 9lbs8oz, this tall girl is ready to take on the world! She has a love for swimming and being outdoors, and will hopefully be enjoying the fresh Oconto air, as a Chickadee, very soon. Charlotte visited Oconto for the first time this summer, pictured on the right with Madeline Soubry, Dom Soubry, Michele Nadeau, and Élisabeth Soubry.



**Kate MacDonald**, husband Brandon Law and older brother Cedric welcomed baby Angus to their family in early January 2019. They live in the west end of Toronto.

**Jessica John** and her husband Lan welcomed a daughter on April 29th, 2019! Her name is Maya Grace Nguyen, and her 2.5 year old big brother Jackson is over the moon about his new sister. Maya is already excited to go to Oconto when she's big enough!



**Gillian Topp** and her husband Erik welcomed their son Max Bruce Joffe April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019!  
Photo on the right is of Eliza Gorsline and Max in their Halloween costumes.



**SJ Topp** and her husband Ian welcomed their son, Harris Bruce Colterjohn, on October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019



**Anne (née McLelland) and Bruce Topp** were thrilled to become grandparents to two grandsons in 2019! After raising three girls and spending years together at Oconto they are excited for the new adventures Max and Harris will bring!



**From Christine (née Harbinson) Macdonald** - We are happy to announce our family will be growing by one more in April 2020! If all goes well, the plan is for the MacDonald clan to attend family camp in August 2020! My husband Mark has been listening to me reminisce about camp for years, so I am very excited to be able to share the magic of Oconto with him, my two sons; Sean (age 3) and Will (age 18 months), and the new little bundle on the way!

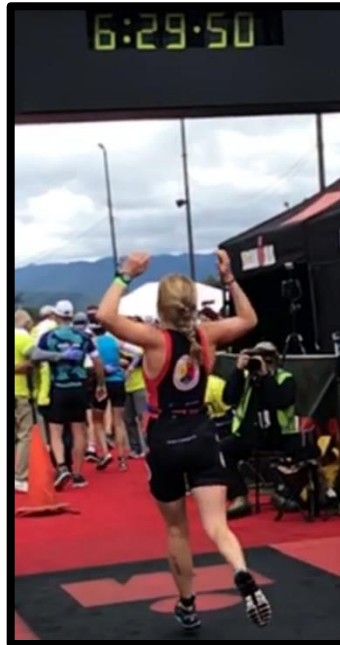
**From Michelle “Mitch” Kelly** - Work, kids, life...it's keeping me busy these days! I just took on a new job at Blue Ant Media as the Vice President of Content for Cottage Life while still maintaining my position as Editor in Chief of *Cottage Life* magazine. It's a challenging role in a tough industry, but I love being constantly pushed to try new things. And I get to do lots of fun things in the name of "work"; for example, I recently stumbled into a particularly sweet task when I served as judge of the butter tart competition at The Royal Winter Fair in Toronto. I didn't think it was possible to get sick of eating butter tarts but it appears I found my limit! It was a fun and surprisingly *challenging* day. Outside of work I'm keeping busy with my 8 and 7 year-olds, both of whom are playing lots of sports with a particular interest in hockey at the moment. And they are both counting the days until camp. My son is heading into his second summer at Kilcoo, and my daughter will be returning to Oconto for two weeks as a Tad. What are my husband and I going to do for two weeks with no kids? It makes me so happy to see them both loving camp as I did, particularly hearing my daughter singing the same songs and telling the same stories that I loved as a camper.

Photo on the right is of Mitch dropping her daughter, Mary, off at Oconto to be a Robin this past summer.





On September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019, **Alix Morse** finally put her years of running the road in the decathlon to the ultimate test and completed her first 70.3 Iron Man! The race, which took place in Lake Placid, comprised of a 2-kilometer swim, 90-kilometer bike and 21-kilometer run and took her 6 hours and 8 minutes to complete. With 4 degree temperatures, rain, wind and steep rolling hills, it was a tough but beautiful and deeply fulfilling course. Alix's mother (Camp Oconto's former camp doctor, Willa Henry) and father were cheering at transition points the whole way and met her with big hugs at the finish line. Alix says her favourite times at camp were the organized events - capture the flag, QC all camp and the decathlon. She believes the positive, upbeat, exciting, and competitive experiences she had when she was a camper (and, let's be honest, as a staff member too) is what fuels her desire to still participate in these types of events today.



Peggy Keyes Kelly, Kirsty Griffiths, Sally Young Theysmeyer, Mary Gay Mills McNeil, and Vicky Bedford Taylor



Lisa Labbett Wilson, Sue Keating MacDonald, Vicky Stikeman, Beth Heckman Kavanagh, & Martha Wheelwright Griffin (as ordered in the photo on the right)



**Julia “Steegs” Steegstra** is part of an exciting project on Toronto’s waterfront! As a project engineer on the earthworks and soil remediation team at Waterfront Toronto, she is supporting the redevelopment and flood protection of the Port Lands area in downtown Toronto. The Port Lands Flood Protection project involves the creation of a new river valley to re-route the Don River where it enters Lake Ontario. The new river valley will provide flood protection for parts of eastern Toronto presently at risk of flooding under a Hurricane Hazel level storm event. Since the area has seen heavy industrial use throughout the city’s past, much of the soil and groundwater is contaminated. The project has an ambitious soil reuse target of 80%, so among other environmental and earthworks activities, Steegs’ team is overseeing the management, remediation, and placement of over one million cubic metres of contaminated soil across the site. This will raise the grade by 1–3 metres to provide flood protection, create a new island, and unlock the underutilized Port Lands for further development. The project will also include building new parks, roads, utilities, and bridges – highlighted by 25 hectares of new parkland creating habitat for animals and canoe/kayak routes to explore the new river!

Steegs studied geological engineering at Queen’s University and environmental science at the University of Toronto. Her previous work experience has been in environmental site assessment, remediation, and brownfield redevelopment as an environmental consultant. She attended camp from 2002 to 2014 and credits work camp for her first exposure to health & safety and her first pair of steel toe boots that she still uses on the project site today! For more information on the project, check out <https://portlandsto.ca> and Waterfront Toronto’s “Port Lands 2024” videos on YouTube.



**Kristi Stefanison** is currently living in Halifax, completing a residency in periodontics at Dalhousie University. She will become a periodontist, a dental specialty, focusing on the treatment of gum disease, periodontal plastic surgery and implant surgery next May.

### **We want to hear from you!**

We love receiving alumnae updates and pictures of life events and tales from your exciting adventures, both big and small. Please continue to keep in touch and we would love to include you in our next edition of the Echo!

# SKY MCLEAN 35

**Sky McLean has built a hospitality brand from the ground up. Since opening her first hotel, Basecamp Resorts Canmore, in 2017, she has added three more properties in Canmore and has two more in progress in Golden and Revelstoke.**



Sky McLean knows she doesn't fit the profile of a typical hotel CEO (a man in his 50s). As such, McLean constantly faces misperceptions that her company, Basecamp Resorts,

must have a wealthy benefactor. "People think, 'oh, you're young and you're a girl so someone's just giving you money.' Well nobody just gave me money. Let me tell you! I had to go *find* it," she says.

In 2016, McLean, who previously worked for real-estate developers, scraped together the funds to build her first property, a townhouse-style hotel in Canmore. She refinanced her car and convinced her husband to rent out their home in Calgary and move into a camping trailer on the site — only to have two bank loans for construction fall through. At the 11th hour, a private lender loaned her the \$5.5 million she needed to pull the project back from the brink, allowing Basecamp Resorts Canmore to open in August 2017. It was recently appraised at \$13.5 million.

McLean then raised \$1.75 million in equity to develop 10 residential townhouses above her Canmore corporate office. Simultaneously, she raised \$3.5 million to purchase and redevelop two more hotels in Canmore: Lamphouse Hotel and Basecamp Lodge, formerly derelict buildings that were reinvigorated with Basecamp's alpine-modern aesthetic. "Obviously, in business, you have to do things that make economic sense, but it's nice to be able to make economic sense of something that's adding value to the community," McLean says.

Currently, McLean has Basecamp projects underway in Golden and Revelstoke with two more planned for Canmore. The company gives back to that community by hosting an annual Christmas gala for the Canmore General Hospital that raised \$8,500 in 2017 and \$15,000 in 2018.

And this past summer, McLean was elected to the board of the Bow Valley Builders and Developers Association, further cementing her status as a builder of note, and changing the face of the hotel establishment while she's at it. —S.A.

Sky McLean, Owner, Basecamp Resorts.

"Sure, money is great — who doesn't want to go on holidays, or buy a boat? That's all good. But if you're miserable on your boat, that's useless. I'd rather be happy sitting in the sand than miserable on my boat."

## Obituary for Jean Crowther Long

Surrounded by her family, Jean died on April 13 at the age of 80. She was born in Toronto, attended Havergal College and graduated from Victoria College at UofT. A lifelong Torontonion, proud and loving wife, mother, grandmother, and friend. Jean was married for 58 years to Stephen Long and mother to Mary Eleanor, Stephanie (Greg) and Alex (Neel) and grandmother to Hannah and Thomas. Her sister Mary Thompson predeceased her. Whether through cross-Canada camping adventures, visiting her children in far-flung places, global travel with Stephen and friends, or spending time at her beloved schoolhouse, Jean's caring, loving and adventurous spirit was always in evidence. She was a keen sportswoman and was at various times a champion runner, swim team captain, badminton and tennis player, jazz dancer and more recently, aquafit aficionado. Her strong Christian values and urge to help others led to a life of volunteerism – Brownies and Girl Guides, Delisle Youth Services, Churches-on-the-Hill food bank and especially with her church family, at Calvin. Later in life she enjoyed a second career teaching adult high school to new Canadians. Her retirement party was a large gathering, attended by many students who had been touched by her passion, hard work and dedication. But Jean's family was always her biggest source of pride and joy.

