



Director's Message

For the last (almost) two years, being a part of the YMCA Camp Kitchikewana directing team has taught me more about community and fellowship than any other organization I've had the pleasure of working with. It was the first year for three of us in full-time camping positions: my first year as Director, Emma's first year as Assistant Director, and Gord's first year as General Manager of Camping. The Kitchikewana community did two things: it never made us feel like outsiders, and it never left us with questions unanswered. With 100 years of history, there is a lot to know about the camp; sending a quick email to an alumnus never left us without generous, and fulsome responses. We are incredibly grateful for the Camp Kitchikewana community in guiding our transitions into our respective roles.

In 2019, a lot of things happened: there was a friendly fox (more on this later), there were high water levels, and there were brilliant counsellors. We had a huge win in our annual baseball game against Camp Queen Elizabeth, our neighbours on Beausoleil Island. Campers and staff performed at "Kitchistock", our Woodstock inspired Kitchikewana Music Festival. The Midland Penetanguishene District Builder's Association helped repair docks and repair the washstand in the Treasure Section. We are so grateful for their continued commitment to Camp Kitchikewana. Our Family Camp volleyball game got moved from its spot on the Beach to the Baseball diamond due to the high water levels. Hopefully our beloved beaches will return this year! We welcomed 618 summer campers, whose stays ranged from 1 week to 4 weeks. We hosted 53 school groups who chose Kitchikewana as the location for a class trip. We had 31 generous volunteers give their time and help to us over the season. We welcomed 430 alumni and friends to camp for the incredible 100th Anniversary Celebration.

It is hard to put into words just how special this milestone year at Camp Kitchikewana has been. Hopefully the following pieces will help; enjoy the collection of stories and memories in this winter's Soup Strainer. It has been a privilege to work as Director during the 100th Anniversary – thanks, and I hope to see you on Kitchikewana Sands sometime soon.

Julia Fulton

Director – 2019 – Present

Assistant Director – 2018



100th Anniversary Recap

Matt Ladner served as the 100th Anniversary Event Coordinator. The entire event and lead-up would not have been possible without Matt's strong leadership, dedication, and attention to detail. Here, are some of Matt's reflections on the event. [For Matt's complete list, please click here.](#)

Well it's been nearly four months since we gathered at Camp Kitchikewana to celebrate the first 100 years of YMCA camping on Beausoleil. For the nearly 450 alumni who gathered in person during the weekend of September 6-8th, 2019 it was a magical weekend indeed.

I thought it was apropos that the formal remarks made at the 100th event reflected the strong partnership between Parks Canada and the camp, and acknowledged the importance of the land to the Indigenous communities on whose traditional lands the camp is located.

For me though, the two things that stood out above all else were the Saturday night "campfire" and the Sunday Gathering (formerly Chapel). Reflecting back on those moments, it's hard not to be moved to tears; the absolute talent, intelligence, spirituality and connectedness of the alumni certainly shone through.

In closing, I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge at least a few of the many, many volunteers who made the weekend possible. We had over 60 volunteers who made the event a success by offering their time in advance, during and following the weekend – thank you.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge three wonderful new members of our Kitchikewana family, without whom this event would not have happened: Gord Dunlop, Emma Langlois, and Julia Fulton. It can't be understated just how much extra effort was involved for these three in order to pull off the logistics of the largest alumni event in Kitchikewana history!

With love and gratitude,

Matt Ladner

Kitchikewana Camper 80-87,

Kitchikewana Counsellor 88-90

Kitchikewana Staff 91-94

Alumni Advisory Committee – 2000-2002, 2012-Present





Thank You for the support!

Thank you to BigRedWorks Inc. for their generosity in our 100th Anniversary Celebration! Scott, Todd, and the team worked hard all weekend, and in the week leading up, to transport and deliver all of the luggage, as well as help transport a great deal of equipment from the mainland to Beausoleil for the celebration. Thank you so much to Scott, Todd, and the entire BigRedWorks team!

Gratitude, a poem written by Jim Wilgar

The following is an excerpt of a poem written by Jim Wilgar, performed at Sunday Gathering (formerly Chapel) at the 100th Anniversary Celebration on September 8th, 2019. [The full poem can be read here:](#)

...
 The Grunski's were of symphony fame,
 Classical music was their pro game.
 Each Sunday night there was a show
 'Twas such great fun and all did go!

Oh, sailing was my favourite thing
 delighted when the stays did sing!
 And Ed had taught us well for sure
 Those gaf rig boats how they could purr!

The "tent alley" games - were camp began,
 Were rough and tough on every "man".
 But in the end, true friendships won,
 We all drank "freshie" 'neath the setting sun.

And who could forget the morning dips!
 Au naturel, you made those trips.
 Observed by chipmunks, birds and snakes
 Devoid of care or "face time" takes.

The "picnic" hikes to Fairy Lake
 When kitchen staff had their weekly break.
 I still can taste, that blueberry pie.
 See mouths all coated in a purple dye!

...

...
 Those special fires on Champlain rocks.
 To laugh at skits, hear thoughtful talks.
 A meeting place for all to go
 And watch the Miriad stars aglow!

Recollections, so many, but minutes few,
 Join hands with those sitting next to you...
 Please, close your eyes for a quiet thought
 And think of all that Kitchikewana's taught.

The People, places and things that mattered,
 A time and space not torn and tattered!
 The "Kitchikewana Spirit" is in your souls;
 Depart dear friends with renewed goals!

May Kitchikewana last ten thousand more!
 With people committed to the core.
 With "gratitude" we're here for you!
 And all who come both older and new.

Let go the hands, but the "spirit", keep!
 Our camps made memories, oh... so deep!
 My thanks to all who've made this day
 so special yes, in every way!

ON WE GO...

Choosing a Mentor: a story and lesson from Paul Gifford

When I was 11 years old, in 1977, I didn't want to go back to camp. The previous summer I'd gone for a month, which is a long time if you're not having a good time, and I wasn't.

But I agreed to go back—on two conditions: The first was that, although my parents registered me for a month, I only had to stay for the first two weeks, unless I was having the time of my life, which I knew I wouldn't be. The second was that the camp director would guarantee Stuart would be in my cabin.

When we arrived at camp, Stuart and I were greeted with the news that we were not in the same cabin. A clerical error had occurred. And so camp began. To make matters worse, I had to sail all the time—during skills, morning free time, and afternoon free time. Somehow, and without my consent, I'd become a child-prodigy in sailing.

I prayed for gale-force winds or for no wind at all, so that the sailing director would be forced to cancel the races. And one day it happened. The wind was howling and the races got cancelled. Thank you, thank you, thank you, I said to the gods of wind and water and fun at camp.

But then, a half hour after the race had been cancelled, during rest hour, the sailing director, Bee, came to my cabin to see me. And while I hated sailing, I liked Bee. I wanted to be like Bee someday, if I survived camp.

"I was wondering if you'd like to go sailing this afternoon?" he said. My heart sank. "Me and you," he said. "I thought maybe we could take a boat out and I could help you with your sailing, so you'd enjoy it more." How did he know?

I asked, "But won't it be dangerous?" I could hear the wind roaring through the treetops. "No, it will be fine. You have nothing to be scared of. It'll be fun."

"Well, I guess I'll go," I said, my anxiety rising.

And so later that day I went sailing with Bee. And it was, well, joyful. We just zoomed around effortlessly, making a massive wake behind the boat. I couldn't believe how fast we were going and how easy it was. It was the first time I'd felt a sailboat go up onto a plane, buzzing along the surface of the water. It was more like flying. And in an hour and a half I finally understood why people did this. I felt at once elated and tearful—maybe this was self-compassion for anxiety I had endured, I don't know.

Bee had the emotional intelligence to know I needed some help, and the compassion to provide it, things turned around for me on that July day in 1977. I stayed for the whole month and had a great time, and I kept going back for 13 years—including 5 years as sailing staff, where I tried to emulate Bee.

We choose our mentors. They don't choose us. They can try, but it's not how it works. You look around until you see someone you want to be like, and they may never know you are watching them. Eleven-year-old boys are highly impressionable and they desperately need young men to look up to.

And at the 100th anniversary it really struck me how mentorship works, how it gets handed down informally, how it's not written down in the program guide, not in the curriculum. The truly important stuff never is. I know that I was mentor for some at Kitchikewana. I know that Matt Ladner, had looked to my example when he was a counsellor. Matt didn't get to have Bee as a mentor, and yet, maybe he did. And surely Bee had his mentors. Maybe Bob Morton, who had a similar leadership style.

In a moment in time last June, Matt Ladner and I got to deliver a leadership session to the Kitchikewana staff with Bob Morton. Bob was Assistant Camp Director when I first went to Kitchikewana as a family camper (I was 6), and Bob told the story of 'How the Chipmunk got its Stripes' at an evening campfire. He cast a spell on me and I picked up that story years later and have told it countless times. In 1989, Mike Elrick and I invited Bob to come up and talk to the Kitchikewana staff about the history and culture of the camp, and about leadership as he saw it. We felt that as young leaders, we needed guidance from an elder. Who better than Bob Morton? He graciously accepted and he spoke to the staff out at Champlain's Point one evening by a campfire as the sun set, and Mike and I felt both empowered and humbled in the legacy of the place he described.

Bob had a similar effect on the staff this past June. When Matt and I got out to the rock to begin the session, Bob was already there, sitting among the staff, laughing about some story one of them had told him. He was listening, fully present, even though he knew he was dying and that this might be the last time he would ever sit on that rock. He looked just like he looks in the photo of him in the Wall of Distinction book (probably taken in the early 70s): He is sitting back and his eyes are closed and he looks so full of gratitude—for where he is and who he is. And I will never forget that mirror image of him out on the rock this past June, leaning back and laughing among the staff who were two generations younger.

Leadership, mentorship. We are grateful.

To read Paul's full story, [click here.](#)

In Memoriam

It is with great sadness that we share the passing of our dear Kitchikewana friend, Bob Morton. Bob spent many years at Camp Kitchikewana on Beausoleil Island. In September 2019, Bob was added to the Wall of Distinction during the 100th Anniversary Celebration for his lifetime dedication to the camp. He also served as our Keynote Speaker at the 100th Anniversary Celebration, and generously donated a canoe that is believed to belong to the original fleet of Camp Kitchikewana canoes. The Family is planning a Celebration of Life on Saturday May 23, 2020 at the Midland Golf and Country Club from 2 – 5 pm. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Huronia Hospice or Georgian Bay District Hospital.





Update on REACH

REACH for Inclusion, previously Reach for the Rainbow, was an organization that matched children and youth with exceptionalities to camps that fit their needs. REACH provided funding to camps, including YMCA Camp Kitchikewana, to be able to pay for 1:1 workers for participants with special needs. In January of 2019, we received news that REACH was no longer. Due to funding cuts and coming up short in fundraising, the organization was ceasing operations.

Members of the Kitchikewana community dating back to the early 90s can speak to the amazing impact that the integration program has had. Campers and staff alike attest to finding so much joy in their involvement with the program, and to learning a lot about communication, patience, and love when working with a participant with differing needs. Families of participants who have come through REACH are thankful for the respite that camp provides, and the social skills that it can impart on their child.

At YMCA Camp Kitchikewana, we value every individual and believe that everyone deserves a positive camp experience. Inclusiveness is a core value of the YMCA and we strive to eliminate barriers and allow interested children and youth to attend camp. We believe strongly in the value of the integration program at Kitchikewana, and it is a priority of ours to continue the program despite REACH no longer existing.

It is hard to put into words the incredible impact Camp Kitchikewana has made on our family. Not only does Camp provide two weeks of much needed respite for our family and gives us our only break each year, but our non-verbal, autistic, iPad dependent daughter comes back from camp having had an incredible experience with kids from all walks of life. Camp has given her the independence that is so important for her growth and she comes back beaming with happiness - even after 2 weeks without technology. It broadens her interests and lets her participate in activities that she would normally never get the chance to do. Each year she comes back with a bit more confidence and a new independent skill. She is so happy when I drop her off at the dock in Honey Harbour - all the staff yell her name and greet her like a rock star - she beams from ear to ear. She feels special, she is safe and she is happy. That to us is priceless.

Wendy Robertson – Camp Kitchikewana Parent

Endowment Fund Update

On behalf of Kitchikewana campers for generations to come, we would both like to extend our thanks to everyone who has made a commitment to the 100th Anniversary Endowment Fund. We are pleased to share that we have now surpassed \$1.1 million in financial commitments to this legacy project to celebrate 100 years of YMCA Camp Kitchikewana camping on Beausoleil Island.

This fund has been set up in partnership with the Huronia Community Foundation and is designed to enrich the Camp Kitchikewana "camper experience" with investments focused on new initiatives, program equipment and non-capital expenses. Each year, camp management will recommend a project or projects that meet the criteria of the fund. The Camp Kitchikewana Alumni Advisory Committee will approve the project to ensure that the interest generated by the endowment is allocated in the spirit of the fund.

The 100th Anniversary Endowment Fund is truly a "game changer" for YMCA Camp Kitchikewana.

Gifts can be in the form of one-time cash gifts, multi-year pledges, transfer of stock/securities or a planned gift in the form of a bequest or life insurance policy. Our lead donor, Paul Lawrence, has agreed to match each gift pledged between now and June 2022 (planned gifts will be matched at net present value). If you would like to learn more about the fund or if you are interested in making a gift of your own, please email susan.kulkarni@sm.ymca.ca. Note that one-time cash donations can be made online at: <https://www.huroniacommunityfoundation.com/donate-now/form/>

The Fund on this page is listed as - "YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka Camp Kitchikewana".

Thank you for considering supporting this project - we really can't think of a greater way to celebrate 100 years of Kitchikewana camping than by making an investment in the next 100.

Matt Ladner and Sean Weaser
Endowment Campaign Co-Chairs

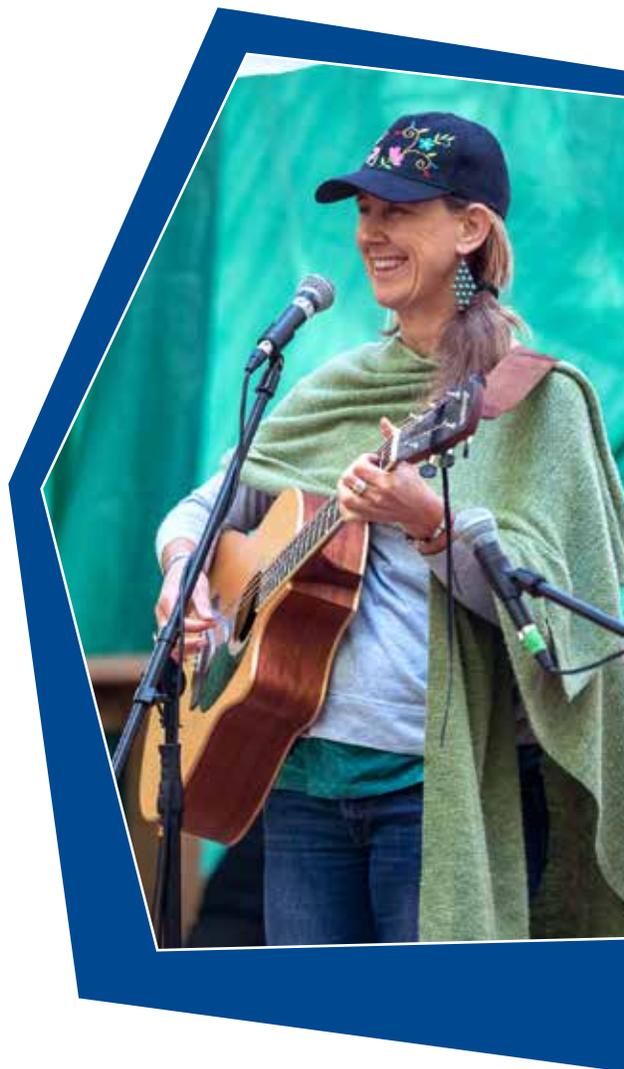
Music at Camp

Music is an undeniably important part of camp. This year's Endowment Fund expenditures were used to purchase new guitars for Guitar Skill, so that campers can better develop this skill that so many cite as one of the most important parts of camp.

"...I'd tell my friends at home about closing campfire, one of my favourite (albeit bitter-sweet) happenings at camp, and they'd be confused, "Um, okay, so you all just sit around a fire and sing and cry? That's weird." But we know that to be amongst like-minded souls with a love for Kitchi and its values, and to be open and vulnerable with each other through our tears at a young age was so rich and healing. I believe it set us up to be more reflective, to celebrate friendships and to be empathetic, compassionate human beings. Those campfire songs told the stories of our lives. Carole King's 'You've Got a Friend' solidified friendships in a way that we didn't need to have a conversation; singing and swaying together was enough. I still call on Kitchi friends today when I'm "down and troubled". James Taylor's 'Fire and Rain' inspired us to believe that indeed, we would see each other again. I can still hear Sarah Hill's sweet voice coming in on verse two. When I close my eyes around a campfire today, I can hear Graham Weber strumming Blue Rodeo's 'Lost Together'. That music became a fabric, weaved by so many voices and memories, and I take that with me wherever I go in the world.

"...It's my hope that through music, I can convey much of what I've learned, from Kitchikewana and my journey, to encourage more kindness, compassion and love in this world."

Sarah Calvert attended Camp Kitchikewana from 1983-1995 as a camper, counsellor then programming staff, and was one of our many musicians that played at the 100th Anniversary this past September. She was asked to write some thoughts about how the intersection of camp and music has affected her life – [To read Sarah's full story, click here.](#)



The Fox

If you spent any time at Kitchikewana during the 2019 season, you may have heard ... we had a resident fox.

This fox quickly became a beloved member of the Kitchikewana family, to most. Despite learning from Parks Canada that it was best to ignore it, it was seemingly impossible to stop campers from falling in love with the fox. Many had names for it, and exclaimed excitedly when they would see it.

In a day and age where this love and excitement for nature is harder and harder to come by – we needed to nurture these feelings in our campers while ultimately doing what was best for the fox, and letting it be.

The fox taught me that connection with nature comes in three stages. The first is love and awe, the second is wonder and learning, the third is protection.

In my many adventures of scaring this fox back into the woods, the campers who had been mesmerized by the fox would ask why I was doing so. Once they understood that this was all to protect the fox, they would help encourage others to stay away from the fox. Awe, wonder, protection. Connection..

Emma Langlois

Assistant Director – 2019 – Present

To read Emma's full story, [click here.](#)



Want to Visit Camp Kitchikewana in 2020?!

» Volunteer Work Weekend

May 8th – 10th

» Open House

June 6th & 7th

» July Family Camp

July 26th – August 1st

» Senior Women on the Move

September 8th – 11th

» Women's Wellness Weekend

September 18th – 20th

Email

Camp.Kitchikewana@sm.ymca.ca
or call (705) 330-0378 x641 for
more information or to register.

When will the ice go out?!

Here are the Camping Team's predictions as to when we will be able to access Beausoleil Island by boat (specifically, the main docks). Do you agree with our predictions? Do you have a different guess? Email us with your date! If you're right, you will win a free piece of Kitchikewana swag!

Gord's guess: April 13th

Emma's guess: April 21st

Lesley's guess: April 24th

Julia's guess: April 26th