



THE
OCONTO

ECHO

Spring 2025

View from the Bung

The 100th Anniversary of Camp Oconto was celebrated in true Oconto style last year—with joy, laughter, and the unmistakable spirit of camp shining through every alumnae and camper who joined us. It was incredible to see that spark alive in so many of you, spanning generations and decades.

We felt so proud to welcome so many familiar faces and hear the heartfelt stories of your time at camp—the memories that stuck, and the friendships that have stood the test of time. We also loved showing you some of the exciting updates we've made in recent years, from the new Dining Hall deck and shower house to refreshed tennis courts, a climbing wall, and other improvements that keep camp both current and true to its roots.

Ted and I are counting down the days to Summer 2025. We're fully booked and hard at work getting our staff and facilities ready to carry forward the Oconto tradition for a whole new generation of campers.

And don't forget—you can stay connected with camp all year long! Follow us on Facebook and Instagram for photos, updates, and a glimpse into the magic of summers past, including highlights from our incredible reunions.

Bronwyn & Ted Gorsline



View from Misty Cove

What a year—wow!

We are so proud to have celebrated Camp Oconto's 100th anniversary in 2024, and to continue operating as a third-generation family-run camp. It's been an incredible journey, and this past year was nothing short of extraordinary.

As you'll read throughout this edition of The Echo, the centennial celebrations began in late April with a beautiful luncheon—made even more memorable by a mix of snow and rain! A heartfelt thank you to Linda Ford Sutherland for hosting, and to the many alumnae who helped make the event such a success. Memories were shared, songs were sung, and treasured photographs from years past sparked smiles and laughter.

The reunion weekend at camp in September was pure magic. We were blessed with July-like weather and “perma-smiles” on so many faces. Alumnae paddled, sailed, swam, skinny-dipped, sang, ate, and caught up with old friends—and made plenty of new ones too. One of the highlights was our spirited Decathlon, where teams competed in relay-style events like swimming a distance, paddling, and rigging (and de-rigging!) a sailboat. The enthusiasm was contagious.

Perhaps nothing captured the spirit of the weekend more than the Blueberry swim. Over 100 people signed up, and despite modern safety regulations requiring life jackets, 50 alumnae braved the chilly water with smiles and cheers. The air was warm, the water was not—but the spirit of Oconto carried us through.

Campfires burned into the wee hours. There was yoga on the dock at dawn, and spontaneous skinny dips that echoed memories of summers past. It was a weekend of laughter, reconnection, and joy—a time to relive old traditions and make new memories that will last a lifetime.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you to everyone who came back, helped out, and brought their love for Oconto with them. This year reminded us all of something we've always known: there's truly nothing like a camp friend.

Lisa Wilson

Alumnae Luncheon

Celebrations of Oconto's 100th year started in April when just over 100 alumnae and current staff gathered at the Markland Wood Golf Club to catch up and share memories of their time on Eagle Lake. The afternoon event included a buffet luncheon, the first screening of the newly digitized footage from Oconto's archives, and even a sing song of a few camp classics. Kirsty Griffiths, Mary Bell Spring, Jules Miller, Mackenzie Blakeley and Linda Ford Sutherland joined Lisa and Bronwyn in leading "Fish", "Misty Skies", "Barges" and of course "Have You Been to Camp Oconto". Lisa and Bruce hit the mic to share some of their favourite memories and Bronwyn and Ted caught everyone up on what life at camp looks like today. It was a wonderful celebration that would not have been possible without the organizing committee. Thank you to Mary Bell Spring, Marney Cousins Winn, Marlee Maslove, Jules Miller and Linda Ford Sutherland for all their hard work in making the day successful.



Camp is for the Campers

During summer we celebrated the 100th at camp a few different times! We had 100th Anniversary baseball hats that every camper and staff was given to help kick off the festivities.

In July we opened the 100th time capsule that has been in the rafters of the Dining Hall since the summer of 1999. Campers and staff from the summer, as well as alumnae from the 75th Reunion all contributed to the time capsule. The Section heads from Summer 2024 opened the trunk and unfortunately discovered that a mouse had gone through its entire life cycle while making a home and eating most of the contents of the time capsule... the smell was something else! (See photo of Bronwyn and Mackenzie reacting to said smell!)



In August we did a full camp birthday party! We brought back a ton of activities and games that we found in the archive videos of camp through the years. We took the afternoon off and had different groups of campers create a float out of a canoe. For Evening Program, we had different stations that campers rotated through that were all previously played and popular games. We played:

- Canoe Tug-of War (Sitting back to back on the gunnels of a canoe and paddling forwards, trying to get the canoe to paddle further onto your side)
- Canoe Fill (trying to fill your canoe by splashing water in it before the other team does)
- Night at the Races (Different races like 3-legged race, wheel barrow race etc.)
- “June Junes off the Cliff” (throwing jujubes to a camper jumping off tower and they try and catch it!)
- Water balloon toss
- Whipped Cream (throwing whipped cream in the air and trying to catch it in your mouth)
- Tug of War
- Smartie/flour game (Hiding smarties in a bowl of flour and campers have to blow on the flour to find the Smartie)
- Slip n/ Slide
- Letters to future selves for a new time capsule!

We displayed the contents that survived the time capsule mouse in the Dining Hall for campers and also played all the archival videos that were restored for campers throughout the day. To end the night, we did a parade of all the Canoe floats in the shallow end, followed by a fireworks show!

During Vespers we also created a 100 out of wood and lit it on fire out in the lake during candle kissing.



Alumnae Reunion Weekend – A Century of Oconto Memories

This past September, more than 300 Oconto alumnae returned to the shores of Eagle Lake to celebrate a truly historic milestone—Camp Oconto’s 100th Anniversary. It was a weekend overflowing with joy, laughter, and gratitude, as generations of Oconto women came home to honour the place that has shaped their hearts and lives.

Throughout the weekend, alumnae rekindled old friendships, shared cherished memories, and immersed themselves in beloved camp traditions. From flag raising to a swim to Blueberry Island, a spirited decathlon, wandering through camp to admire thoughtful updates, an ‘80s-themed pre-dinner party on the beach, and soulful campfire singalongs—the spirit of Oconto was alive in every moment.

Saturday’s banquet was filled with both laughter and reflection. Assistant Camp Directors from across the decades were honoured with a new plaque commemorating their contributions, and special guests delighted the crowd with heartfelt and hilarious stories from summers past. Each table was decorated with snapshots of Oconto’s rich history—a beautiful reminder that we are all part of its enduring legacy.

One of the weekend’s highlights was Saturday evening concert—equal parts typically outrageous and a showcase of talent. Sunday morning Chapel was as perfect as Chapel can be—sunlight streaming through the branches, voices raised in song, and stories shared that captured the magic of Oconto.

The weather was spectacular, the smiles were contagious, and the sense of community was more powerful than ever. Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of staff, volunteers, and alumnae, it was a weekend-long celebration we will never forget.

Here’s to the next 100 years of Oconto—and to all the campers still to come.











The Ripple Effect Capital Campaign

In celebration of Camp Oconto's 100th Anniversary in 2024, the Oconto Campership Fund was thrilled to launch The Ripple Effect: a special capital campaign. The campaign goal is to raise \$1,000,000, which will form a permanent endowment funding consistent, dependable campership opportunities — ensuring that generations of girls, from all backgrounds, have the chance to experience the magic of Oconto.

The Oconto Campership Fund (and the Ripple Effect Campaign within it) is a Registered Canadian Charity, # 889022398, entirely separate from Camp Oconto.

For more than three decades, the OCF supported campers through need-based financial assistance, however the need is growing exponentially, and Camp is out-of-reach for too many. The Ripple Effect is designed to stabilize and expand the possibility of camperships for the decades ahead. By establishing well-funded capital, yielding reliable revenue, the OCF will be able to help qualified campers to attend Oconto—thereby welcoming both returning and new campers into the Oconto family.

We are extremely happy and proud to announce that alumnae have already contributed an incredible \$115,000 toward our initial alumnae goal of \$200,000. Your generosity is already making a significant and meaningful difference in the lives of girls and young women - we are incredibly grateful to everyone who has donated. This early support strengthens and validates our campaign and will be the foundation for The Ripple Effect Campaign's broader outreach to corporate and foundational donors – planned for the next year, as it seeks larger-scale contributions to attain the ultimate goal of \$1 million in total capital contribution commitments.

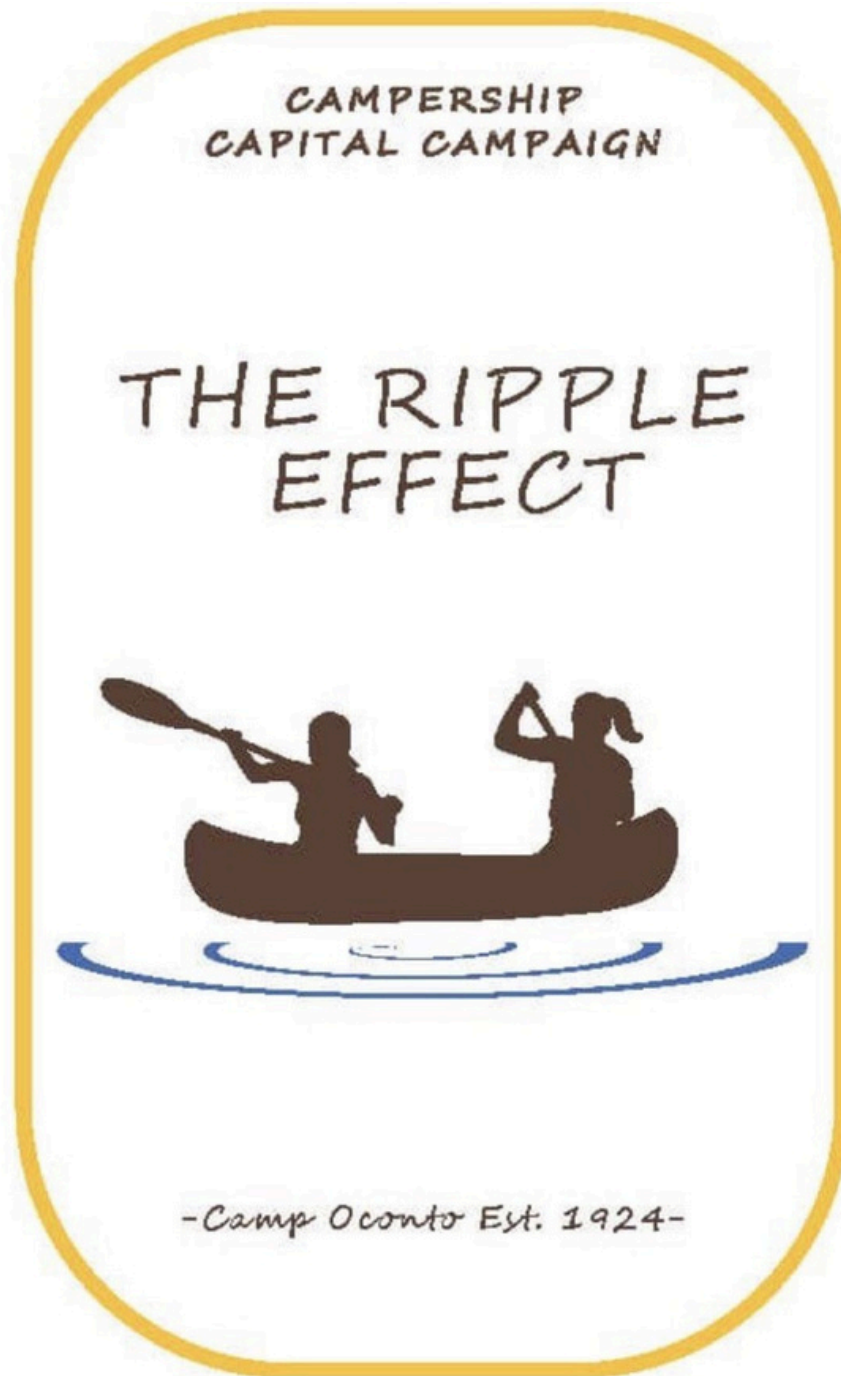
BUT! We're not there yet—we still need your help.

If Oconto has shaped your life or holds a special place in your heart, now is the time to pay it forward. Your donation will ripple outward, giving future deserving campers the opportunity to grow, laugh, explore, and thrive in the same magical setting we all hold dear. And as you know, when you make a Camp Oconto experience possible for a girl, you help to produce a remarkable and amazing woman of the future.

Together, we can and will create lasting change—and ensure that the Oconto experience continues to inspire girls and young women for the next 100 years.

To donate:

- <https://ocontocampershipfund.campbraingiving.com>
- E-transfer to: OCF1924@gmail.com (please include “Ripple Effect” in the message)
- Send a cheque payable to: Oconto Campership Fund
c/o Linda Sutherland
307-2855 Bloor St. W.
Toronto, ON M8X 3A1
- Questions? Reach us at OCF.RippleEffect@gmail.com



Announcements

Katie (Shaw) Noiles & Brett Noiles welcomed their first daughter, Emma Noiles, in February 2024. They are loving all the special moments together. Emma is counting down the days until she can spend her summer at Camp Oconto and is already practicing with lots of camp songs (The Great Big Moose is her current favourite!)



Laura Barlow (2000-2009) and her husband Jamie welcomed Emma on November 8, 2024. It didn't take her long to start enjoying Oconto clothing!



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

