THE GULL ROCK GAZETTE

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THE BIG SCARE - WATERFRONT EVACS

If you were Staff or CIT in the early 60's like I was, the most frightening sound you could hear was the Klaxon on the Tower being used to signal a Waterfront Evacuation at the beach or tower.

For many years after I left Kilcoo, I would still be startled if someone in another room was watching a World War II submarine movie, and the sound of a Klaxon signalled a submarine dive.



As a CIT in those days, one of your tasks was to take turns staffing the Beach Tower which essentially put you in charge of all the swimmers at the beach. With the amazing technology of the day, we actually had a phone connection back to the Buddy Board at the beach, the main tower, Chief's cottage, and the office.

If you were on the Beach Tower, you were constantly being made aware of the number of swimmers in the water as indicated by the golf tees on the buddy board. Your only job was to keep counting the number of swimmers in the water to confirm that number matched the buddy board count. From the tower, you would determine when and how often to call for a 'buddy-up' to make the counting easier. The swimmers would all find their buddy, stay in one spot, and hold hands in the air. This made the counting easier so that the number of swimmers could be matched to the active number of golf tees on the buddy board.

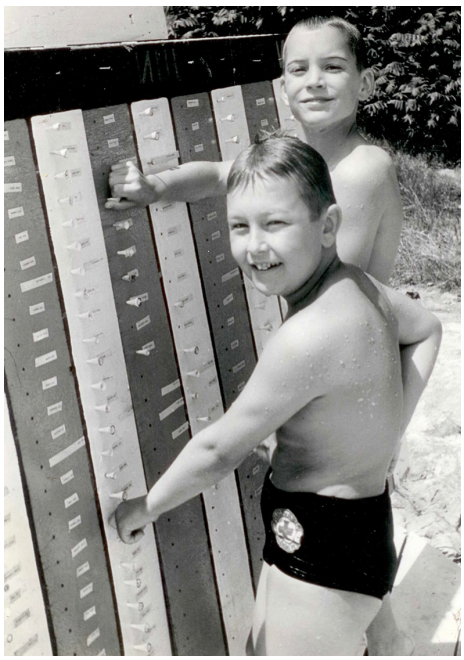
Since the swimmers were always moving, some temporarily under water, etc. your constant counting would occasionally be higher or lower than the number of active tees on the buddy board. The real concern was when your count was short by one swimmer…two, three, four times in a row…and the CIT or counsellor at the beach was getting the same result. That would result in the Beach Tower quickly calling for a 'buddy up'. If I was on the Beach Tower, I remember this would also trigger a phone call to the main tower to advise that we might have a short count at the beach. If the count was still short after the 'buddy up', the call for the waterfront evacuation would be made and we would start the process of getting all the swimmers to check out of the area.

On at least two occasions over the two years I was a CIT, while on duty on the Beach Tower I had to trigger a full waterfront evacuation at the beach. I remember two of these for certain. If you ever had to do this, you will definitely remember the first time. The other time had an interesting twist, and I will get to that below. If memory serves me well some 60 years later, I believe I had to trigger evacuations on at least one, and possibly two, other occasions. If true, I probably hold the record for the number of waterfront evacuations triggered by one CIT in Kilcoo history!

One of the most stressful five or ten minutes you can experience at Kilcoo is to be on the Beach Tower, hear the klaxon signalling a waterfront evacuation at the beach, see all the swimmers rushing to check out at the buddy board and head for their mail collection area….and one golf tee is still active on the buddy board after they have all checked out. It could take a few minutes to confirm that the camper who may have forgotten to move his golf tee on the buddy board had been located, and that all other campers had been accounted for because one or more campers may have accidentally moved someone else's golf tee on the board.

As former staff and CITs, we can all probably remember those runs to the beach or tower when the evacuation Klaxon (or later air raid siren) sound was heard. The view from the Beach Tower was inspiring. The staff/CIT reaction to the Klaxon sounding was so swift, the line of searchers beginning to sweep from the beach towards the raft was usually well formed and moving even before all the campers had checked out at the buddy board.

Now, on to that second memorable beach evacuation. As I remember, it was after dinner and I was on the Beach Tower for the evening swim period. It was also the evening of one of the staff dances. The staff had decided that they would host their guests (gals from Calumet maybe???) with a barbecue over on Long Island, followed by a dance back at the lodge. The view from the beach tower was a bit different that evening as all the Kilcoo staff and young ladies were dressed in their best and getting into canoes and motor boats for the ride over to the island.



Bob Amos & Fedor Frastacky at the buddy board

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Sure enough, while this parade to the island was under way, we had a short count and had to call for a waterfront evacuation at the beach.

The reaction on land was normal for a waterfront evacuation as the campers headed for their mail collection areas. On the water, all the canoes and boats with staff and guests immediately turned around and headed back to camp so the staff could begin the water search. Many of the young ladies who were our guests that evening got to witness the waterfront evacuation procedures at Kilcoo, including the few staff members who stripped down completely to join the search line…..couldn't get those fancy shirts etc. wet prior to the upcoming barbecue and dance.

Lesson learned.



After two years as a CIT, I became a full staff member for two years. My campers were always the among the youngest in camp at 6 or 7 years old. This meant that when they got off the bus, none of them had ever been to Kilcoo before.

Since I had been directly involved in calling for a number of waterfront evacuations, I had to wonder what my six brand new campers would do if the Klaxon sounded. (They weren't going to get the waterfront evacuation briefing until after dinner that afternoon, and they didn't know anyone in camp.) The first thing I always did after settling my campers into their cabin was to take them back to the bus unloading area beside the rec hut. I would explain to them that if they heard an unusual horn sound and people started running around yelling 'waterfront evacuation', they were to immediately run back to the place where they got off the bus. Only after they received this briefing would we continue on for a tour of the rest of the camp.

Advance briefings work. I think it was in my second staff year when we had a waterfront evacuation an hour or two after bus arrivals for either the July or August start date. My brand new campers knew what to do.

FRASER MARR
(1958-1966)

TINGLES' TAKE

A message from the director

Greetings Kilcoo Alumni,

As I sit down to write this note, the sun is shining, the long winter seems to be slowly coming to an end, and I'm hoping to don a pair of shorts this weekend. For me, that is the true indication that camp is just around the corner!

The winter was highlighted by a big office move. Hmmm…how to put this…it was filled with banker boxes, mementos, and discussions and debates of furniture to salvage and old relics to leave behind. We have moved just across the street, so even as Yonge-Eglinton changes, it is nice to remain in the old neighbourhood. The new space is warm and inviting, with the faux wood floors leaning towards a camp vibe! As always, our doors are open to anyone wanting to stop in and say hi.

The office move has resulted in a separation from our long-time office mates at AMICI. We wish them all the best in their new space, just a few subway stops away. We remain committed to helping them send kids to camps all over Ontario. Good luck to all those guys who will be at Canoe Heads for Kids on May 24th.

The spring season will be highlighted by our Dragon Boat groups in camp for essential early season training on Gull Lake. We have more school groups returning to camp from Oakville, Thornhill, Muskoka and Toronto. We are welcoming Camp Cucumber for a week right before pre-camp gets rolling on June 21. Staff and LIT training will build upon foundations set in 2024, with renewed focus on preparing our young staff for their leadership roles, implementing modern policies, and ensuring best practices are followed as per our membership in the Ontario Camps Association.

I am hopeful the summer of 2025 will be as rewarding and enjoyable as 2024. The summer will include our adventure trips to British Columbia guided by our friends from Paddlefoot. Hiking, Sea Kayaking, and Mountain Biking, all in the bountiful geography of the West Coast. The Bushpede, the Olympics, and all that makes a Kilcoo summer the best, and I am excited. I am looking forward to working with an expanded group of LITs and an eager staff. We all want to pass along the memories and positive experiences that we enjoyed as campers in our time to the 2025 crop of campers.

I would like to say thank you to Tracy Morley & Tobias Partridge for their efforts this off-season. They have been great partners in running camp in the off-season, both in a micro and macro sense. Staff hiring, campership, mailings, camp policies, OCA policies, the new website, social media stuff, and so much more. There are so many nuances to summer camp these days that need to be managed by caring and dedicated folks. Tobias and Tracy are camping professionals in the truest sense and make 55 Eglinton East a fun and productive place.

Of course, a huge thank you must go to Kim Bouchard who is taking care of countless behind-the-scenes details along with the rest of her essential role at Kilcoo. She remains steadfast in keeping Kilcoo Camp moving forward, and on a personal note, is a trusted friend and colleague. Thank you, Kim.

Thank you, Paul Chamberlain, our indefatigable Editor in Chief and Alumni Co-Ordinator, and thank you Mike Adamson, Graphic Designer, for another fine issue of the Gazette.

Paul, thank you for your Call to Alumni. Too all of you, we appreciate any thoughts that you wish to share about what makes Kilcoo a special place. As Kilcoo continues to move forward, we are so thankful for your dedication and commitment to maintaining the values and ideals of Kilcoo. The Alumni have been a great support and we will continue to reach out and ask for help and guidance. Everyone in the new Kilcoo office wishes our entire Alumni all the best for the next few months, as the leaves and flowers emerge and the sun rises to its heights. The gates are always open and I hope we will see some of you on Gull Lake during our 94th season.

CHEERS,
PATRICK TINGLEY – "TINGLES"

EDITOR'S MUSINGS

From the many alumni updates I have sent out over the past 17 months you are all aware that this has been a very difficult period in Kilcoo Camp's 93 year history, perhaps only to be matched by the 1947-48 period with the polio outbreak.

As we look ahead to the 2025 camping season the leadership team of Pat Tingley and Kim Bouchard ably supported by Tracy Morley and Tobias Partridge are busy finalizing staff positions and signing up campers. The camp office has moved to a new address on Eglinton Avenue closer to Yonge Street and there is a new energy which sounds very positive.

As I look at Kilcoo I feel one consistent aspect of the camp has been our involvement as alumni. All of us have maintained our connection with the camp and many of us have done so through an evolving connection we have with each other. There have been innumerable life long friendships that began at camp and this has led to many groups getting together. Whether it has involved skiing trips, visits to each other's cottages or, as mentioned in George Wright's article, windsurfing trips, many of us have found ways despite busy lives to keep the connections strong. Lindsay Ko has for many years convened a special April Fool's luncheon and Randy Kline brings in thirty or more alumni each spring for the annual golf tournament.



April Fool's luncheon

Even Amici fund raising projects provide a means fo
r alumni to be together as last year over 60 Kilcoo alumni participated in Canoe Heads for Kids.



Canoe Heads 2023

Even the winter season allows for alumni to gather at camp as our Gazette publisher, Mike Huggy Adamson has written in a past issue about a group of his contemporaries who spend a weekend yearly for hockey in the beach swim area.

Of course the alumni reunions at camp are a highlight many of us look forward to, and up until the Covid pandemic shuttered many of us, I organized a dinner get together at a Toronto bar that was started years ago by Don Wilson, Derek Allen and Jay Haddad.



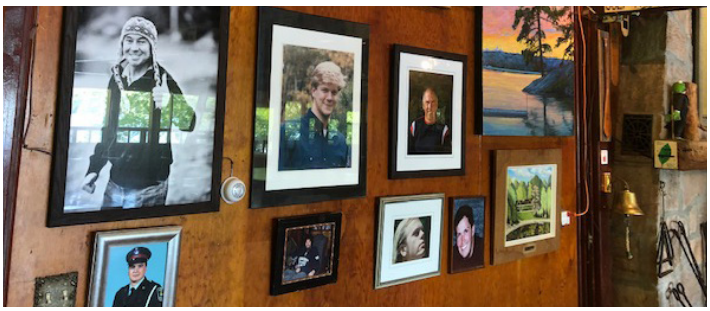
Kilcoo hockey rink

I hope to resume that later this year. Any reason to get together works. Last year a welcome home luncheon was organized for Don Wilson who was visiting from his present home in Ecuador.



Welcoming Don Wilson

I think an important reason why we all maintain our connection with Kilcoo goes back to the many good memories we have of our time at camp, but more importantly, the good friendships that began at camp and continue to the present day, even if some of these friends are only in our memory as we get older.



Remembering

I am told by the Latimer family and by the present leadership team that the existence of a supportive alumni is very important to the camp and I hope whenever you visit the camp or get together with Kilcoo friends you will feel that your involvement is important. I for one feel that way and when I participate in Amici's Canoe Heads event again this year I will do so because I believe the camp experience for young people is very important, and that feeling developed from my time at Kilcoo more than half a century ago.



Remembering Peter Maybury at the reunion

PAUL CHAMBERLAIN

KILCOO LEFT ITS MARK ON ME

Undoubtedly, Kilcoo has been in my thoughts through the years, never more so than when the Gull Rock Gazette appears to stir up the embers. I often imagine stories I might write, trying to come up with a big theme and some dramatic action, and then I put it off. But this time, Paul Chamberlain's pleas for contributions have made it clear. I just had to jot something down.

While we may not be a Kilcoo dynasty like the Latimers or the Chamberlains or the Reynolds family, there have been Amos boys at Kilcoo for a long time. Paul came in 1955 after a year at Camp Pinecrest and stayed for ten years, eventually becoming lifeguard on the tower. Bruce came in 1956 and stayed for ten years, becoming a CIT. I arrived at age eight in 1958 and stayed for ten years, eventually becoming a counsellor in the Bantam section. Bruce's son Will followed in our footsteps and was a dedicated camper and alumnus for many years. His son Enrique was a third-generation camper, though just for short time.

My earliest memory of Kilcoo is not a noble "maker of men" sort of thing. On one of my first nights at camp as we got ready for bed one of my cabin mates called us to see something in the kybo. That little building was itself a source of fascination for these were the days of "no flush" outhouses. We rushed out proudly brandishing our flashlights - something else new to us as eight-year olds. When we aimed the Everready beams down through the stinky hole, there gleaming back at us were someone's brand new white high top runners floating in the muck below. We never found out how they got there.

Things could only get better in the light of day. Non-swimmers at first wore a red bandana and later each was awarded a pierced poker chip strung on a length of "gimp" - plastic lace - to wear around the neck at all times. Our activities were of course limited, and the beach and punting area were the centre of my waterfront. We little ones spent our time paddling about in those little grey boats, trying to sink one another in the clay-bottomed shallows.

The first big event of the camp season - we were July campers - was the celebration of Canada Day. On the beach in front of the triple cabin called The Kremlin we toasted marshmallows, sang some songs and played Pat and Mike. This was a blind-folded pillow fight between two campers perched facing one another as they straddled a rail. Mattresses were spread on the ground below to receive the loser. At some point in the evening there was a sort of raffle, and to my amazement, I won first prize. I was invited to come and choose something from the prize table and, with a huge grin on my face, I walked back to our cabin group clutching a wooden toy boat, a cabin cruiser with battery-powered motor and lights that really lit up!

In those days camp activities included all the usuals: lighting fires, shooting air rifles and practising with bows and arrows. What really stuck in my mind were the out trips, first of all "shore suppers" on the kitchen staff's days off. With gallons of bug juice and cardboard boxes full of wieners and buns, we were driven across Gull Lake in the camp boat to Rackety Ranch (a cluster of vacation cottages) and from there we hiked up country to the Ranger Tower. This fire lookout was unoccupied at the time, and we were able to climb up the immensely tall ladder and somehow hoist ourselves into the tiny cabin at the top where the view over the trees to the hills around was unforgettable.

Another popular destination was The Narrows, a reedy passage east of Long Island. The night before our expedition we had been primed with a ghost story by our counsellor, who told us about the famous Ghost of the Narrows. I can't remember the gist of it, but when we paddled over there the next day we "discovered" The Alligator, a rusting hulk which I now realize was the remainder of a traction engine used for logging way back when.

When I was ten years old we went for an over-nighter which began by paddling up Gull Lake and then facing the mighty Minden River. Upstream for miles - I couldn't believe it. We eventually camped beside the Minden Power Dam where the water rushed by



in an absolute thunder. 1 At first I couldn't hear anything but the roar but, suprisingly, the next morning I was so used to the sound that I didn't notice it at all. About this time, pizza pie had been discovered and as a special treat our counsellor packed a box of Chef Boyardee Pizza mix. The dough was tricky to make while kneeling by the river's edge, and it came out a bit sandy. We mixed up the powdered red sauce and prepared to sprinkle on the so-called cheese and, wild with anticipation, we awaited our first-ever taste of this exotic foreign food. Our CIT toasted up the concoction in a fold-up convection oven perched precariously atop the fire pit, but in the end it didn't seem worth the trouble.

In the early 1960s I was a Junior and assigned to the new row of cabins up the hill from Mohawk Park which took the name of The Oasis. I was a sort of introverted kid, and my cabin mates were all old pals from school. There was Tort - Terry Collins-Williams - Don McLean, and Keillor Mackay, whose father was the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. Those guys stuck together, leaving me out in the cold at times. I think that was the year that Bob Slingerland arrived and almost immediately the dining hall echoed with the call "Smoooothie!". He meant a lot of things to a lot of people, but to me he was a personal guide and counsellor through difficult times. The personal interest that Smoothie showed me was essential to my well-being at Kilcoo for a number of years.

When I became an Intermediate, with John Hammet as my counsellor, our cabin was in Mohawk Park. This brings me to wonder - in these times of Truth and Reconciliation how did we never really notice the First Nations reality in which we dressed ourselves? We had Sagamore rankings for our archery tests, and a totem pole at

the camp gate. I also recall our constant call of approval was "how how!". In fact, "very how how!". Does that bit of Indian lingo still go on unquestioned?

The major ceremonial event at the end of the first week of camp was a ritualistic campfire amid a circle of boulders behind "the Oasis". We prepared ourselves by daubing our faces with paint and wore "Indian blankets". When we were all in place and ready for the fire to be magically lit, Chief would arrive in fringed buckskins with a huge eagle-feather "war bonnet" which trailed down his back. Summoning the great powers beyond, he held up a peace pipe and invoked the four winds: "to the winds of the north - the winter winds - kayoo-kayonyossny Noomway!', to which we all responded - "Noomway". It seems curious that with all this faux-native stuff going on no one ever drew the obvious connection to the First Nations who had lived on Gull Lake in the recent past, and or even the present. Maybe that has changed.

Thoughts of higher things were never absent from camp life. Tears often welled up in my eyes as I listened to the sound of waves lapping at Chapel Point while Ken Jones pumped the harmonium and we all sang: "Beneath the shadow of Thy throne the saints have dwelt secure. Sufficient is Thine arm alone and our defense is sure." Every day after breakfast, the counsellor whose duty it was to deliver the "chapel" service somehow often cut through to the very heart of what a young boy needed to know. As we passed around jam-stained hymnals, these moments could be more affecting than any church service I attended elsewhere.

What brought us all together most powerfully were the sing-alongs which might take place at any time. During "musicales", or after some important dinner we always sang. At midday before we headed off to rest period, if we were in need of a bit of distraction, out would come the huge roll of cotton sheets with the words of our favourite songs carefully penned on them. 2 Two strong men shouldered the weighty burden as Chief flipped through page after page to get to the song he knew would light us all up. It could be something ridiculous like Gunderbeck ("pussy cats and long-tailed rats would never more be seen. They're all ground up as sausage meat in Gunderbeck's machine") or Vreneli, ("my pretty one pray tell me where's your heart?"). My favourite was The Kilcoo Blues. By legend, it was written by a long-forgotten sailing instructor who had underlined the phrase "when troubles assail you Kilcoo never will fail you". I've often wondered what jazz classic it was based on. All of this inevitably led to the ultimate: "Off we go into the wild blue yonder". How do modern politically correct campers feel when they roar out "down we dive, spouting our flames from under, off with one terrible roar." As they say, "at 'em boys, give 'em the gun, the gun, the gun)"?

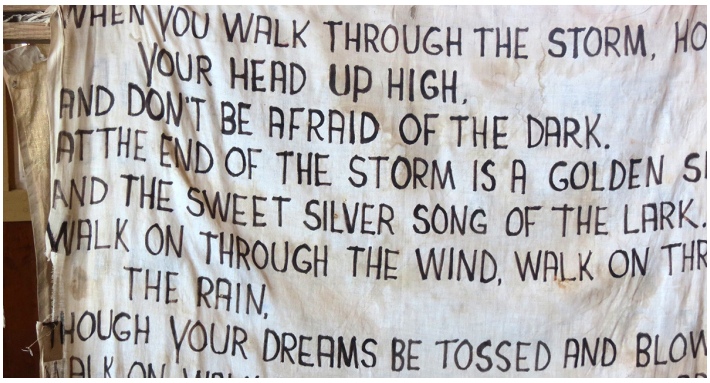
Occasionally real life broke in on our summer fun. One sunny afternoon while we were reading comics through rest period, the camp boat suddenly sprang into life and headed out to Long Island. It was hard to make out what was going on over there, but when the boat came back we learned that some visitors from Braeside had been out fishing and a wave washed over the transom of their boat. No life jackets! Despite desperate attempts to revive him, one man drowned and was returned - dead - to the summer resort next door. That's the closest I've ever been to a drowning in my life.

Of course we were always on high alert about water safety. We spent hours perfecting the Holger-Nielson method of artificial respiration - this was before the advent of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. The most intense moment of camp life was the waterfront evacuation for which we were all prepared in our various ways. It began with an awareness of the buddy system and the vital importance of turning your golf tee from white to red and back in the buddy board.

But if, God forbid, something unexplained occurred, the soul-chilling "aaa-oooo-gah" rang out from the siren mounted on the tower. It was understood that this hand-cranked horn had been on a tank in World War II, and its unearthly sound galvanized everyone into action. Golf tees were checked and checked again. Staff members duck-dived in precise formation all through and under the swimming docks. We waited in cabin groups all over the camp for the all-clear, and were greatly relieved when it eventually came - "aaa-oooo-gah". In my years at camp, no misfortune actually happened, thanks to constant vigilance, good planning - and a bit of good luck.

The training stayed with me. In later years I was always somewhat anxious around the dock at the cottage, on school out-trips or at public parks where I couldn't count on others having the Kilcoo waterfront tradition bred into them.

In later years I puzzled over some details of camp life which might have been less than perfect. There was something called The Fogger. We July campers were only too aware of mosquitoes and were armed to a man with tubes of 6-12 insect repellent to smear over every exposed inch of skin. Sometimes more extreme measures were taken, and on occasional evenings Chief would fire up a device which looked alarmingly like a bazooka. It began with an ungodly roar and, after a moment, would switch into low gear and put forth a dense cloud of - something. It was shot into all the low-lying shrubs and bushes, under the cabins and everywhere else. We loved this smoke machine and followed Chief as if he were The Pied Piper, and pretended to get lost in the fog. Years later I wondered what was that fog we were basking in.





But of course the staff was determined to keep us as healthy as possible. One day after lunch in about 1964 Trudy the cook issued us with Vitapops: not very delicious hard candies which offered some nutritional advantage. I think a lot of them ended up tossed into the bay as we made our way back to rest period. Another camp-wide health initiative were the dip pails. A tin (a discarded gallon soup tin from the kitchen) filled with some sort of disinfectant suddenly appeared, nailed to the door frame outside every kybo for us to immerse our hands after a toilet trip. A good idea, perhaps, but hard to enforce.

Camp life was full of ideas to elevate our team spirit. One of the first activities of every year was the selection of a cabin name and production of a cabin sign. In my imagination, the best of these now festoon the Lodge. Under these names, cabin groups were encouraged to issue challenges after dinner in the Lodge, always in the following formula: "We, the high and might men of Publius' Pizzeria challenge the meek and lowly Peppermint Lounge to a game of baseball after mail call."

Ah yes, mail call! It was mandatory to write home every Sunday during rest period and some of those short postcards are still smiled over in our family albums. Every day we sat in rows after supper to receive incoming mail, waiting hopefully, and we always insisted that letters to our CITs were sniffed for traces of perfume or inspected for the inscription "S. W. A. K.". Nelson Vermette was always a star in our section. His father was the director of the Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal and had instructed his secretary to send Nelson the comics she cut out of the Montreal Star every day. The rest of us could wait forever for a letter or - wonder of wonders, a package full of candy and comic books - but Nelson got something every day. Do people still send letters?

I suppose the Lodge is even now bedecked with shields honouring the winners of the Kilcoo Olympics (Commonwealth countries only need apply). But that was an August thing. In July we had the camp game, for which all campers and most of the staff were divided arbitrarily into two teams, and for days in advance the context of the year's game was developed. One year we learned a team song which I will never forget: "I'm glad I'm a son of Yodar. His legend will go very far. The warts on his nose are as big as your toes. I'm glad I'm a son of Yodar." But who was Yodar Krich? I suppose I'll never find out.

One year we were divided into the earthlings and the aliens. Once the game was on, the aliens had to find a quantity of radioactive rocket fuel (big soup cans of sand marked with an X painted on the side) to fuel their rocket which would allow them to escape. We earthlings, of course, had to guard the fuel and keep it out of their hands. At the basic level it was probably a game of Capture the Flag, but with hundreds of boys roaming the Kilcoo acreage it seemed much more complex and serious. At the crucial time late in the afternoon a humungous explosion (what we called a mortar) let us know that the aliens' rocket had taken off to return them to their home planet.



Another annual event was the Kilcoo Carnival. There were games and prizes all afternoon long, involving such things as "shave a balloon" in which the balloon was coated with shaving cream to be cleaned off with a straight razor!. There were sponge tosses in which staff stuck their heads through groundsheets and were pelted with wet sponges. I recall a very complex dunk-tank apparatus with lots of pulleys and trickery. What really sticks in my mind was the year that the food supplier delivered four quarters of a steer, which were reassembled on a spit to make up the whole animal. Over a slow fire near the tennis court the beast was slowly turned all afternoon long, staff using paint brushes tied to long sticks to baste it with molasses. Along side, a rowboat lined with plastic sheeting became a huge salad bowl. At the end of the day slices of that roasted meat were tender and unbelievably delicious.

We were well taken care of. Laundry was sent out every week and came back neatly folded and wrapped in brown paper with an itemized list for each camper. And then there was George the Barber. I seem to recall he had a repurposed school bus as a barber shop, but I know for sure he was a genial and totally bald man whose head was profoundly scarred - it was said he had a metal plate set into his skull!

I was happy to leave Mohawk Park behind and graduate to the forested Senior section where I could stay in one of those half-tents along the shore near the sail cabin. As a little kid I wanted nothing more than to sleep in a sleeping bag and did so for years. But as a Senior, I discovered the pleasure of clean sheets and blankets. In my newfound maturity I also realized that a big bowl of hot porridge made a better breakfast than cold Rice Krispies. Washing it down with a Melmac cup of Tang, we concluded our fueling-up with lots of toast, rolled out endlessly from the assembly-line industrial toaster and buttered with a paint brush.

In 1965, as a prelude to the Centennial Year, Kilcoo tested out a portion of the cross-Canada voyageur canoe trail. Under the watchful eye of Paul Chamberlain a dozen of us boarded a Trans Canada Airlines plane in Toronto (my first plane ride!) and flew to Rainy River. True to its name, at our first campsite it was surely raining, and we launched our canoes in the appalling stench below the pulp mill there. We quickly got underway, and made (illegal) border crossings dozens of times every day as we paddled between the farms along the Canada/US border. Emerging into Lake of the Woods, we spent a bright sunny week on the calm water paddling up to Kenora where we caught the Canadian National train home. Since then Kilcoo has launched some pretty far-flung trips, but I think this was a first.

Back at camp my innocence was fading. About that time we heard that some CITs on a half-day had swiped some flags from the holes at the Minden Golf Course. When this was discovered the leader of the gang was dismissed and "sent down to the city", never to return. That's the only time I remember that happening.

I became a CIT at the dawn of the Age of Aquarius and I decorated my bunk with something like psychedelia. On a half day my pal John Finlay and I put on our love beads and made our way to Minden where we could do our laundry and take in whatever was playing at the Beaver Theatre - big deal! I recall wasting an evening watching "Where Were You When the Lights Went Out?" about a power failure in New York. There really wasn't much else to do.

More eagerly anticipated were the dances when the girls from Gay Venture arrived by the busload. We'd done up The Lodge with paper streamers and painted the light bulbs all colours with poster paint from the Crafts Hut. There was no such thing as a band, and at these "sock hops" we jittered around the floor to the latest 45s in what we imagined to be dancing. When the music slowed and the red lights came on a certain few had their first experience of "cheek to cheek". With luck, this later led to strolling on the waterfront and even "necking" on the canoe dock. Love those life preservers.

By 1968 I was a counsellor with my own flock of little ones. What did we call them then? Bantams? Papooses? After a summer of trying to act like a "maker of men" I learned that I really didn't exhibit much leadership potential. I couldn't think up interesting things to do and, when I did come up with something, the boys weren't eager to follow me. Somehow, with help from the section director, we got by all right. In the end, I found the experience of writing up "camper reports" to be edifying. I really had to think about each child, his qualities and interactions. Did he know the difference between right and wrong? Good question. At least nobody drowned or begged to be sent home.

During those years, some of the best bits didn't happen at camp. I had become fascinated by Ruth, a spry grey-haired woman who rowed into camp one morning every week in her pastel green rowboat to get a treatment from the nurses at the Infirmary. Ruth lived by herself on what we called Ruth's Island across from the camp and rowed all over Gull Lake in her little boat - her only way to get around. In my last year at camp I found a chance to engage her in conversation and she invited me to visit. John Finlay and I left our campers in the hands of our CITs and paddled over one evening. Ruth welcomed us to her island, where she had a lovely cabin with no electricity. She lived there every year for as long as the weather would permit, alone and content. I have often wished I could read a story about who this wonderful eccentric woman was.

More than fond memories, I took home some fundamental things from my years as a Kilcoo camper. Elsewhere, if I wasn't getting along well at school I could go home and if things weren't right at home, I could get away to school. But at camp I had to face up to things, with a devoted counsellor and CIT to help me make sense of it all. Always before us was the shining example of John Latimer. A truly fine human being, Chief showed us by example an irreplaceable series of life lessons which have shaped who I am ever since.

Unlike so many of the Gull Rock Gazette readers, I have not participated in golf tournaments, attended camp reunions or joined in for Amici fundraising. And I have never been back to camp even once. I haven't kept up with former camp mates, though in 1970 I met Derek Allen, the former sailing instructor, when he was studying at Oxford in England. Building on my camp experience, in 1973 I spent three months canoe-tripping on north-flowing rivers in Ontario with a Parks Canada program. But after that my camping days were over.

In 1974 I moved to the West Coast and have lived in Victoria, B.C. ever since. My wife and I have two daughters and, though I sent them off to various camps at first, I found nothing to compare with the quality of Kilcoo. And I also realized that, unlike Toronto, there is no need to get out of the city in the summer. Sailing lessons are available a bike ride away, little lakes abound just beyond the suburbs and the Gulf Islands are close at hand for the whole family. For me there is no going back to cottage country and summer camp life.

But as I am sure you can tell, Kilcoo has left its mark on me, and I hope that sharing some of the outstanding memories here has brought some of the good times back for you. Rip ram razzle scram yell whoop and roar. The Kilcoos The Kilcoos, forever more!

BOB AMOS
1958 - 67

WILL AMOS - A REFLECTION

I think you will have enjoyed reading the article by Bob Amos. Robert Amos is my uncle, my father Bruce's younger brother. He's a remarkable and well-established artist and writer based in Victoria, the author of prize-winning books, so you'll not be surprised by his evocative text.

What's remarkable is how Robert's written expression is articulated by someone who hasn't returned to Kilcoo since the late 1960s, when Vietnam and the civil rights movement were transforming North America. But Kilcoo has clearly been on his mind in the intervening half-century. That's a long time to be holding onto and curating such vivid boyhood memories. That's a long reflection on the meaning of camp, summer fun and the travails of growing up.

Many of the passages he offers about Kilcoo are bracing for their critical authenticity (Truth & Reconciliation and the reckoning with "faux-native" Kilcoo traditions), or fascinating vignettes of historical Gull Lake personalities whose legends cast long shadows, like his encounter with Ruth at her island cottage. There are also reports of major tragedies like the death by drowning of a Braeside tourist, and lip-curling accounts of dip pails and floating basketball shoes in Kybo Row. Then he pivots to acknowledge camp's moments of



Continued on next page

collective spiritual awakening, even noting how Sundays at Chapel Point could be more impactful than his father's own weekly sermons at Oriole York Mills United Church.

But what stands out to me is the authenticity of Robert's shared experience that reflects our own; the shards of Kilcoo connection that hang together like decorations on a gimp bracelet fashioned under the Arts & Crafts bell, threaded along a timeline on which so many of us have dangled during the course of our lives. It reminds me that camp isn't just about the good moments and the great characters. Fun, yes...but it's also about the tough moments, the goodbyes, and the awkward personal growth. Becoming who we are has not always been comfortable. Nothing wrong with that.

With so many flashbacks that are equal parts wistful, cringeful and questioning, Robert teases just the beginning of many more intoxicating tales, though perhaps most sobering is how his storytelling better fits the analog era. I'm biased of course, but Uncle Robert's recollections remind us (and him) that our own memories merit more pen, paper, paintings and photos. Kilcoo truly does exist in our creative minds as a place that continues to evolve. The past is still present, and the present is but part of our past, so long as we contribute together. This is the moment we all thank our lucky stars that Paul Chamberlain and other Gull Rock Gazette volunteers have implored us to take the initiative. I urge readers to take up their pens and contribute to our collective memory just as Robert has done so beautifully.

WILL AMOS
1984-2001

IN DEFENCE OF WINDSURFING AT CAMP

Windsurfing is hard.

Let's get that first part out of the way before I begin this article. Most people's reaction when I told them that my sport growing up was windsurfing was something like, "Oh, I remember trying that one time! I could get out but then I had to have a boat come and pick me up!" And to be honest, that pretty much summed up my initial experiences with the sport as well.

The first time I tried windsurfing was at camp, as I assume was the case for most readers of this fine publication. I remember the struggle but also that feeling of total exhilaration when I realized that I could balance my body weight against the power of the wind in my sail, and the board would just start moving faster. Anyone who gets to this point will be hooked for life, I guarantee it.



It is a difficult sport for Blazers and Pathfinders, as normally the size of the equipment requires a level of strength that's beyond these young fellas. But I remember watching guys like Peter Taylor moving effortlessly across the water when I was one of those younger campers, and knew then it was something that I wanted to get good at. Later, as an LIT, I remember asking Pete himself (by that time, an LIT director) for tips on how to become a better windsurfer; "skip a lot of school" was his reply! And he was not wrong - you have to be ready to go when the wind gets good!

My love of windsurfing started a friendship with Pete, along with AJ Benn, Willie Macrae, Pete Smith, and many others. Some of us still get together every few years for a 'windsurf trip' down to the Outer Banks, or up north to my family cottage in Oliphant, a small group of islands off the Bruce Peninsula. I taught windsurfing myself for a few years, and then later watched as waterfront director, as other guys did the same. I remember one of those instructors, my dear friend Mike Lewis summing it up best: the more sails you could spot at any one time (meaning they weren't lying on the water!!!), the better job you were doing. Evening program was always packed with windsurfers (sails up!) during those years, something I'm still proud of. There was only one rule: if it was too windy, windsurfing was closed and the instructor could go let it rip!!! I mean, at least then the kids could see us pros in action, right?! I also convinced Lub to let us run a windsurf trip each summer during the Kilcoo Olympics, where we certainly fostered a love of the sport among more than a few Voyageurs.

I hope this support of our great sport continues for many years to come, although windsurfing is these days, sadly, a dying sport. The cost of the equipment is prohibitive, and the difficulty in lugging more than one or two boards, three or four sails all at once to the same spot does require effort. There are also many fun alternatives like kitesurfing, foiling, sailing, etc. But I urge you that if you ever get the chance to take a lesson somewhere warm and windy, go for it. You will not regret it.

Long after my time at camp was over, I would occasionally come up and help the current windsurfing instructor set up his activity in pre-camp, and even offer a lesson on the water that day. There is still a wonderful feeling being out on that water, looking back across camp, reminding myself of how simple and incredible life was for us at that time.

GEORGE WRIGHT
1987-2002

CRITTER TROUBLE AT KILCOO

Anyone who has spent much time at camp comes to understand that the flora and fauna inhabiting the Haliburton Highlands are actually in control. We're not. From poison ivy and zebra mussels to mosquitoes, black flies and mice, there is no end of living things that can cause annoyance, and even health and safety issues. Probably what stands out most in my mind is episodes involving larger, troublesome mammals.

I recall being up in the old Aerial Course one April (not the current Aerial Park near the office), shortly before Advance Camp commenced. I was checking trees and replacing safety lines. Smokey, one of the camp dogs at that time, was roaming around looking for things to sniff and mark his territory. I was concentrating on tensioning a safety line and securing it with a Modified Tarbuck Knot when I glanced down at the base of the tree I was in near the Tarzan Swing and David's Arc. I noticed something large and black waddling around checking out green garbage bins near cabins. Gee, I thought, Smokey is putting on some weight. I continued with my work and then prepared to rappel down for lunch, when I glanced down again. Smokey appeared to be much bigger than I had previously thought. Wait a minute. That's a black bear! I immediately made some noise and he wandered off. Nevertheless, I decided to move to another tree at the far end of the course, near Ceramics, before I descended. By that time said bear had moved off to better pickings, I had returned to the O.C. Cabin to drop off my gear.

I immediately let other staff know about our visitor and we kept an eye out for it when Advance Camp started. There were no problems for several weeks, that is until smelly and tasty items started accumulating around camp. Then Mr. Black Bear made a brief nightly appearance just before Pre-Camp. He or she appeared again during the beginning of the July session, so the MNR was notified. A day later an MNR truck showed up with a large cylindrical bear trap in tow. The trap, resting on trailer wheels, was set up near the hebertism course with what looked like a nice canned ham as bait. Nothing happened for several nights.

Clang! At around 10:00pm one evening we heard the trap door slam shut. Aha – we've got him! A couple of senior staff came to get me before checking things out. (I think they were a bit nervous about peeking inside.) We trundled up to the trap and, sure enough, the door had swung shut and was secure. We shined our flashlights inside through the mesh door. Three or four sets of beady little eyes shone back at us! Great. A family of raccoons was enjoying the last of the ham and licking their paws. So we opened the door and they sauntered off looking rather smug and contented. The trap was reset the next day and eventually Mr. Bear was apprehended and transported to greener pastures by the MNR.





Raccoons were a real nuisance during some seasons. You could hear them yowling and fighting like cats at night, arguing over choice bits or garbage. In the morning, we'd find debris strewn all over the place. Despite efforts to secure garbage containers and eliminate organic waste, the little varmints always found a way of getting their grubby little paws into places they didn't belong. And they could be quite bold about it. I recall one morning heading down to the Lodge to await flag raising and breakfast. Early risers were milling about the park and Lodge entrance, reading stuff on the notice board. One half-awake camper took a casual look into the garbage can by the door. Suddenly, like popcorn cooking, out jumped a young raccoon with a snoot full of something. The poor kid jumped back, startled. He was definitely awake at that point. Mr. Raccoon scuttled off with his or her trophy, indifferent to everyone watching.

Fun memories. I'm sure Gull Lake cottagers and Kilcoo staff and campers alike will continue to cohabitate harmoniously with the local wildlife, as long as they keep a respectful distance from one another.

ROB (CHISSY) CHISNALL
1985-2017

I'M A HOARDER

That being said, and as I enter upon my eighth decade of life, I'm conscious of the fact that my kids don't want to inherit my crap. Hence, I've been sorting through the detritus of my life and throwing most of it away.

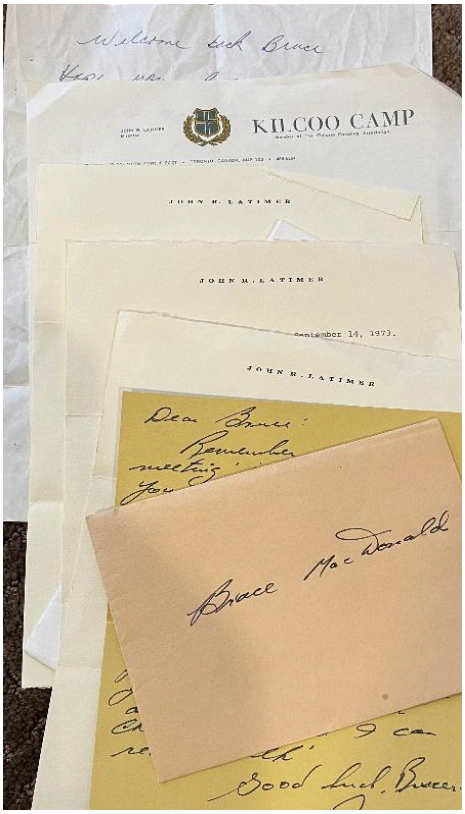
But here's the rub. In amongst my shoeboxes of old letters, news clippings, etc., I have all the correspondence which "Chief" John R. Latimer sent to me, starting with my camper progress reports which he sent to my parents. (My mother kept those camper reports, and I found them amongst her memories and treasures after she died - a hoot to read!)

I hadn't read Chief's letters in many decades and now I am reviewing them again, especially the directly personal notes to me. They bring back a flood of memories and emotions. Some are bittersweet. I was surprised at just how much correspondence we had with each other – some deeply personal - baring souls.

Some of Chief's letters are ones that we all would've received - formal letters offering me the opportunity to become a CIT and later the invitation to become a cabin counsellor. Cherished letters!

BUT...it's his personal, handwritten letters that he sent, including handwritten notes that he would leave for us in our cabins, placed upon our bunks, which prompt strong emotional reactions.

His notes included notes of thanks and praise but more importantly comments concerning my need for improvement. Now rereading his notes, and as is my nature, I focus upon his Needs Improvement comments. He's encouraging me to be better - listing what he expects of me and clarifying that which he feels I'm capable of…but???



All these decades later, I must ask myself, because I can't ask Chief, did I improve? Maybe??? He wrote those notes in the 1970's but did I live up to his expectations??? Self-analysis is tough to do. If I am going to be honest with myself, I'm still a work in progress. We all learned from Chief's leadership style - combining thanks and praise with encouragement to be better. I certainly tried to emulate his management style with those who I was called upon to mentor throughout my career, and especially with my own children. I learned from Chief, as I believe did all of us who were under his tutelage and direction. I miss him but his legacy and his impact remain with us. In many ways, he was and still is "The Spirit of Kilcoo Camp".

And so, here's my question. Before I die, do I keep Chief's letters, on the off chance that someone might be interested, or throw them out?

BRUCE MACDONALD
1968 – 1975
NASHVILLE, TN / PARRY SOUND

SEARCHING FOR MORE ALUMNI

In each issue of the Gazette I am placing names of alumni with whom we have lost contact. If you know the whereabouts of any in the list below please send their contact to me at pchamp@sympatico.ca.

Jeff Bradley	Roger Harper
Andy Muir	Bill Carruthers
Steve Harrop	James Newton
Colin Deeks	Taylor Kain
John Paddle	Russell Fleming
Will Lepage	Bryan Ramsden
Max Fulton	David Lewis
Paul Ross	Sean Gilday
Ron Scott	Fred McCutcheon
Jeremy Gomes	Max McLernon
Doug Grant	Jamie Sharpless
Mike Merry	Matthew Vernon

SMOOTHIE GOLF TOURNAMENT

A reminder to golfers: The annual Smoothie Golf tournament will be held on June 12th at the Westview Golf & Country Club in Aurora. If you are on the mailing list already don't forget to let Randy know your intentions (pairs or foursomes) and to those who have not participated before you are invited to participate. Send an e-mail to Randy Kline at Randy.kline@cogeco.ca.



The picture above shows flag raising at camp. Noticing the Union Jack suggests the photo was taken in the 1950's and most likely around 1957 because of the presence of the Norberg sailboat moored in the bay.

AMICI'S CABIN CAMPAIGN: CHANGING LIVES, ONE CABIN AT A TIME

The older we get, the more we tend to reflect on the people, places and experiences that have shaped us. Or at least I do. For me, Kilcoo Camp is often at the heart of that reflection. Lucky me, I got to spend 11 unforgettable summers there, six of which were on staff. I feel so indebted to John Latimer and Kilcoo. My summers there were not only my happiest, they were also my most transformative. Looking back, I increasingly see how much Kilcoo affected my future interests and enthusiasms, my values and my beliefs. Happily, I believe that legions of Kilcoo alumni feel the same way.

It was my experience at Kilcoo that first led me to Amici Children's Camp Charity, as a board member, in the early 1980s. At that time, Amici was an entirely volunteer, but passionate grassroots initiative with a singular mission: to provide children from low-income families with access to overnight summer camp. I remained a steady supporter over the years. It wasn't until Duncan Robertson, Director of Onondaga Camp and Amici's Board Chair at the time, reintroduced me to Amici, that I realized just how much the organization had evolved. Duncan shared Amici's renewed vision, their sophisticated Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Roadmap, and their brand refresh—an effort that redefined how Amici could grow and impact even more lives. I was inspired.

At its core, Amici is about changing the trajectory of children's lives. It provides opportunities for kids who would otherwise never experience the magic of summer camp. With Amici's support, these children build confidence, develop leadership skills, and form friendships that last a lifetime. And as a long-time advocate for the value of summer camp, I knew I had to get involved again in a meaningful way.

One of Amici's most ambitious initiatives to date is the Cabin Campaign. This campaign is designed to create a predictable and sustainable source of funding for Amici's campers. The idea is simple yet powerful: donors commit to supporting a cabin of eight children, funding their summer camp experiences for five years, the average stay of a returning camper. This model ensures that Amici can continue to provide transformative camp opportunities while planning for the future with financial stability.
Under the exceptional leadership of Amici's Executive Director, Judy MacGowan, the organization has experienced remarkable growth, sending 311 children to camp last summer! Amici is a well-structured, ethically driven and highly efficient organization—one that maximizes the impact of every donation. It is truly inspiring to see how far Amici has come, and even more exciting to be part of its next chapter.

It was with this in mind that my BFF, Rodger Wright and I, decided to co-chair Amici's Cabin Campaign. Together, we committed to sponsoring Cabin 1 for the next five years. We believe deeply in the power of camp, and we know that by funding a cabin, we are providing life-changing experiences for a group of children year after year.

At Kilcoo, I experienced firsthand the incredible difference camp can make to a young person's life. Now, through Amici's Cabin Campaign, I have the privilege and honour to be able to help pay it forward - one cabin at a time. We are extremely grateful to our bunk mates for their commitment and generosity.



To learn more about the Cabin Campaign please contact Molly Skelly at Amici Children's Camp Charity at molly@amicicharity.org.

DAVID HADDEN
1964-1974

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

This picture shows the shoreline of Gull Lake in the fall of 1931 before Charlie Plewman signed his rental deal with the Lackie family for what became Kilcoo Camp.

Now I need many of you to bring alive your memories of Kilcoo to fill my needs for material in future Gull Rock Gazettes. If you need ideas to get you going or you have an article to offer, please e-mail me at pchamp@sympatico.ca

The survival of the Gazette depends on you.



SEPTEMBER EVENTS!

Kilcoo is excited to share that there will be three community events up at camp this fall! Registration and more information for these weekends will be available through the camp website beginning in May, so save the date(s) and keep an eye out for further announcements!

Alumni Daughter Weekend: September 12 - 14, 2025

For former campers and staff whose daughters don't have the opportunity to attend Kilcoo!

Bring A Friend to Camp Weekend: September 19-21, 2025

For current campers to show Kilcoo to their friends back home who might want to join them at camp in 2026!

Father/Son Weekend: September 26-28, 2025

For current campers and their fathers to spend a weekend at Kilcoo together!

CALLING ALL ALUMNI

Through the 17 years during which I have edited the Gull Rock Gazette many of you have written articles which in most cases were a reflection of the importance of the Kilcoo experience on your lives. Whether it was the friendships that were created or the many leaders you have since tried to emulate, there has always been that something that has drawn you to the September reunions or simply makes you want to keep your contact with Kilcoo alive.



After two difficult years, Kilcoo's present leaders - Kim, Pat, Tracy and Tobias - are working at "growing the business" at a time when camping has become more expensive and many families are experiencing difficult financial stresses.

YOU CAN HELP!

As we meet with new families and campers for our New Camper Nights/Information evenings, to assist us in advertising the benefits of Kilcoo as a special camp, Kilcoo is asking you to offer your thoughts on why and how Kilcoo has impacted your life in positive ways. **We want you to help explain the Kilcoo Magic!** We are looking for short "catch phrases" that might attract new campers to ensure that they will benefit from Kilcoo as have all of you. **What is the Kilcoo Magic to you?**



Please send us your thoughts to Tracy at tracy@kilcoo.com as a "pay it forward" message and help us project what is special about Kilcoo to others.

SPEAKING OF KILCOO EVENTS...

You can help experience a little more of the Kilcoo magic by attending the next alumni reunion.



Note the weekend dates: **September 25th to 27th, 2026**.

More information to follow in the fall issue of the Gazette.

KILCOO SUMMER 2025 UPDATE...

We are pleased to introduce the newly established Kilcoo Parents Committee! This passionate group of dedicated Kilcoo parents will work closely with the Kilcoo Leadership Team to:

1. Engage with our new campers (With over 95 new families coming to camp this summer we have the opportunity to grow our Kilcoo community)
2. Provide creative marketing insights, to excite current campers and their families and engage with potential new campers
3. Help ensure Kilcoo continues into the next century as Ontario's premier boys' camp

This initiative will be led by Bill Jack, (Kilcoo Alumni - with 3 nephews thriving at camp) and the committee includes an incredible team of parents, with kids at camp, who share a deep love for Kilcoo and its values.

And the Parents are;

Libby Barnicke
Emma Gorsline
Carolyn Meacher
Jessica Buganto
Tanya Primaylon (Brador)
Sarah Barker
Brent Knightley
Pete Bombaci
Aldrin Primaylon (Buzz)



KILCOO IN WINTER

This doesn't look like summer, but in fact staff will start arriving in less than 4 weeks to start preparations for July camp.





Chapel Point



IDEAS ALWAYS WELCOME & NEEDED!

The Gull Rock Gazette is always looking for your favourite Kilcoo memories and stories. If you need help to develop your ideas, please contact us by email at pchamp@sympatico.ca, and we will help you.