



OCAsional News

The Newsletter of the Ontario Camping Association

February 2002

250 Merton St.
Suite 403
Toronto, ON M4S 1B1
416-485-0425
F: 416-485-0422
oca@ontcamp.on.ca

Taking back the night:

How your camp can keep light pollution out of the summer sky

by Peter McMahon, North Star Astronomy Programming

Last summer, while guest-hosting a stargazing session at Camp Couchiching, one of my greatest fears came true.

The Milky Way – a sure sign of crisp, clear skies – was visibly dimmer than the brilliant river of stars I saw arching across the summer sky in 1999, the last summer I worked there.

Over the last few decades, the pristine night skies that thousands of kids and kids-at-heart enjoy at camps across Ontario are beginning to fall victim to light pollution. Light pollution is the loss of contrast between the darkness of space and pinpoint lights up there we see as stars and planets down on Earth.

Two kinds of light pollution can impair campers' views of the heavens:

- Direct light pollution: light that shines right in your face from bright spot or flood lights, security lights and other nearby sources that ruins your eyes' sensitivity to faint details
- Indirect light pollution: this is the real toughie. This type of light pollution is caused by poorly-designed streetlights, large-scale decorative lights on high-rises and lights lining the province's highways; they shine up onto the atmosphere and wash out our clear skies with a smothering haze for miles around

A frustrating problem

It truly breaks my heart to hear people come back from trips to remote areas of the world to tell stories of skies so clear they felt like they were in space. This experience should be available to anyone living in all but the largest cities. But thanks to widespread light pollution in and even at great distance from those cities, such vivid views haven't been the norm for a generation or two.

Even more ironic, nearly three quarters of the light pollution that washes out our city skies and is slowly encroaching on cottage country could be stopped.

A standard floodlight, for example, may send roughly half its rays above the horizontal and off into the sky, rather than down to the ground, where the light is meant to go. The upper half is completely wasted.

A modest solution

In the case of Camp Couchiching, one of the things threatening campers' stargazing nights is a massive floodlight array from a nearby ballpark. While out for a run down the road at night, there were times I could have sworn the lights were pointed practically straight up to the stratosphere. Lights from nearby Casino Rama – just as close as the ball-

park – create little trouble for Cooch's astronomy program. Those lights employ a new "full-cutoff shield" design.

The modern fixtures direct all the light down where it's supposed to go. And the quality of illumination is actually improved because of the reduction in glare – the near-horizontal beams that dazzle your eyes directly from a bulb. That also helps us get back some of our lost starry skies!

Saving the environment... and a little dough too

It's not just our view of the night sky that's at risk because of light pollution. According to the Tucson, Arizona-based International Dark Sky Association (IDA), North America loses about \$1.5 billion U.S. per year in wasted electricity in fixtures that needlessly spill unused light into the sky.

The full-cutoff shield design, on the other hand, allows bulb wattage to be cut in half for big savings of electricity and money. As a result, many municipalities in the U.S. and Canada are already converting over to them. So, how can you help preserve your camp's dark skies?

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The official newsletter of the Ontario Camping Association, the *OCA'sional News* is published monthly from October to June of each year. The newsletter helps to keep the OCA membership informed about developments both in and out of the Association pertaining to children's, youth, and special needs camping.

Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Ontario Camping Association.

Queries regarding submissions and letters are welcome. Please direct correspondence to:

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250 Merton St., Suite 403
Toronto, ON M4S 1B1
416-485-0425
F: 416-485-0422
oca@ontcamp.on.ca
www.ontcamp.on.ca

OCA Office Staff:

Bev Jahnke
Office Administrator

Kim Mitchell
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John Zachariah
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The View from Here



Brian Blackstock,
OCA President

As Frank Sinatra would say, "It's been a very good year" for the OCA . . .

Because of the careful, committed work done by so many of you, our Association has grown in size and stature. Here are some of the things we have done in the past year.

- The MINIMUM WAGE TASK FORCE was successful in its efforts to have children's camps exempted from the minimum wage restrictions in the new Employment Standards Act.
 - The WATERWORKS TASK FORCE has created a strong case to make the government representatives and member of parliament we met with aware of our concerns.
 - The IPSOS-REID market research report has been completed so we now have a clearer picture of the public's perception of children's camping in Canada, as well as some ideas about where we might direct ourselves in the future.
 - The MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE reports that we are now on the brink of breaking through the "300" goal of member camps. This should happen in 2002.
- The PUBLIC AWARENESS COMMITTEE has created some new signage, participated in the WOMEN'S HEALTH MATTERS FORUM & EXPO and the CITY PARENT camp show, had articles and ads promoting the OCA in many regional papers, made contact with new organizations interested in children's camps, and spearheaded the Camp/Kite Day at the KORTRIGHT CENTRE last spring.
 - The STANDARDS COMMITTEE completed over 100 visits in the summer of 2001.
 - The STANDARDS REVIEW TASK FORCE has been established as an ongoing group.
 - A COMMERCIAL MEMBERS TASK FORCE has been initiated to try to address Commercial Members' concerns and increase their numbers. (And speaking of Commercial Members, a special welcome to Rob Carmichael, our new Treasurer – I think he is the first Commercial Member on our Board for some time.)
 - The OFFICE STAFF have worked hard and well to keep up and improve on the quality of service offered to our members. As of September, all office staff have access to a health benefits program offered by our Association.
 - This year's ANNUAL CONFERENCE – Foundations for the Future – offers speakers and sessions for an ever-widening group of camp people, including, this year, full-day round

Ontario Camp Leadership Workshop



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table sessions for camp support staff: site managers, food managers, office staff, and members of volunteer boards.

• The SPRING TRAINING CONFERENCE and SKILLS WEEKEND continue to provide excellent educational opportunities for our staff.

Attention 2002 OCA Annual Conference Delegates!

Please bring your funky, over-the-top, brightly coloured attire for the event of a lifetime – the Saturday Night Banquet: **"Chocolat Fiesta"**, Saturday, February 16th, 2002



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Stolen equipment bulletin

by Skid Crease, Experiential Education Coordinator, Toronto Montessori Schools

Special Bulletin from Toronto Montessori Schools Summer Day Camp: we need your eyes and ears! Over the Christmas Break we were the unfortunate victims of a break-in at our Bolton site, and most of our Challenge Course equipment was stolen. We are asking all OCA members who are knowledgeable about Challenge Courses and climbing to be alert for rumours of "hot" deals on equipment, and to keep their eyes open at climbing sites this spring and summer. All of our high elements equipment was individually stored in black mesh MEC duffle bags, and contained the necessary ropes, belay sets with DMM Bugs and biners, Project Adventure K-1 pulleys, and shear reduction tubes. Our Zip-Line bag had a brand new PA K-2 pulley and two custom spliced lanyards.

While some of the equipment was generic to a lot of users, like our red Ecrin Roc helmets, the PA harnesses and hardware are apparently pretty unique to Ontario sites. This includes six bright blue Headwall Universal seat harnesses featuring both front and rear purple clip-in loops, and a yellow warning label that looks upside down except to the climber, five chest harnesses are dark blue Headwall universals with a bright purple tether, and two bright red PA SAFER lanyards (used like Lobster Claws) with Hugh Banner autolock carabiners.

If you hear any rumours, spot any of our items in your travels, or come across someone selling gear from their trunk, please call Skid Crease at 905-857-0999.

Summer is just around the corner . . .
Are you ready?

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Taking back the night,
continued from page 1

Getting the ball rolling

Start with the direct light pollution on-site that you do

have control over. Consider installing motion sensors on floodlights that don't need to be on all the time and keep nearby cabin windows covered near any site at which you plan to lead night hikes or stargazing sessions.

While I taught astronomy at Camp Kawartha, we'd often turn off all but the dimmest lights inside the camp's dining hall in order to keep our deep-space observing site as dark-adapted as possible.

In terms of indirect light pollution – those intrusive streetlights that shine up onto the sky by the thousands – try pushing your local politicians and business people to have

ground-facing, energy efficient lights replace their 1960s counterparts as soon as possible. But don't just promote the benefits of clearer skies. Rather, emphasize the money that improved low shining, low voltage lights will save taxpayers.

The proof is in the pudding

Believe it or not, such efforts have already proven successful in cities near prime astronomy sites, such as Tucson. After a successful IDA lobbying campaign there, special ordinances were passed in the 1980s, requiring all outdoor lighting to be efficient and "task-oriented."

All that may seem extreme – especially if your camp is deep within the inner regions of Algonquin or Temagami. But you never know when even the local small town may turn into a bustling metropolis! Or worse yet, install a baseball park's worth of sky-facing floodlights.

So before your clearest nights start to resemble a heavy morning fog, enjoy the view you have of the night sky, lobby the powers that be to be responsible with the type and location of bright lights near your camp and maybe even invite them out for an evening of stargazing.

Peter McMahon is a freelance science writer for CTV News and the Discovery Channel as well as the founder/coordinator of North Star Astronomy Programming (www.northstarastronomy.com).

Congratulations to OCA Honorary Life Member

Kirk Wipper, recently appointed a Member of the Order of Canada for his efforts to preserve a vital part of Canada's history.

From the Governor-General's website:

He has dedicated his life to promoting and preserving the canoe as a symbol of Canadiana. Over a 45-year period, he collected more than 500 canoes and kayaks which now form the greater part of the exhibits at the Canadian Canoe Museum in Peterborough. A retired professor of physical education and health at the University of Toronto, he has received numerous honours for his contributions to the University and to conservation. Known as a man of vision and determination, he has helped, in his many endeavours, to bring alive the history and culture of our nation.

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- Conference Delegates bringing Camp Health Issues to our Nurses' Round Table
- A dozen enthusiastic OCA Healthcare Committee members
- 1 Registered Practical Nurse (RPN) representative - Who are these professionals and what can they do for your camp healthcare?

Directions:

Following Dr. Mickey Lester's session, the Nurses' Round Table will be cooking with information on Saturday, February 16th, 2002, from 3:45 to 5:00 pm in the Oak Ridges Room.

See you there!
Pearl Bell
and the OCA Healthcare Committee

Food service changes in revised provincial regulation

by Mary Casey, OCA Healthcare Committee

The Provincial Food Premise Regulations (Reg. 562 and this will affect 568) are currently being revised and brought up to date. One of the recommendations requires that at least one person in the kitchen have a certificate indicating successful completion of an approved course related to food service presented by one of the Health Units or another accredited institution. This is a great step forward and we know that camps will welcome the change. There are courses being presented this winter

in a number of venues, and also by means of correspondence. Contact your camp's local Health Unit for further information. The number of requests cannot be managed if all camps wait until late spring.

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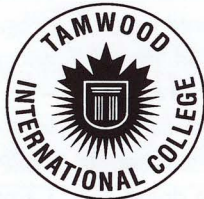
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Over 16,000 delegates visited the Women's Health Matters Forum & Expo for new information and fresh perspectives on "hot" issues in the ever-changing women's health environment! Visitors attended sessions by renowned speakers, and visited over 140 booths at the incredible exhibit hall! OCA's Public Awareness Committee and Human Resources Committee joined forces to teach visitors about the OCA and the value of the camping experience for children. Over 20 volunteers from a variety of camps and committees worked OCA's newly designed booth and handed out over 1,200 OCA *Camping Guides* – incredible exposure for all our member camps!

On Saturday, Dr. Carolyn Bennett gave an uplifting and enthusiastic address to the camping folk that attended! The Healthcare Committee had a number of nurses and a physi-

Women's Health Matters Forum & Expo

Metro Toronto Convention Centre,
January 18th and 19th, 2002

cian available to talk with delegates following the address. The hosting of a camping stream was a first-time event for OCA and one that all who attended found amazing!

We would like to thank the volunteers and the health care professionals who gave so willingly of their time to raise the OCA's profile in the eyes of the public.

The energy and enthusiasm of our volunteers moves our Association forward!

Educational opportunities like the Women's Health Forum & Expo offer something of value to us all. We hope that next year you'll remember this article and choose to get involved!

*Patti Thom, OCA Human Resources Committee Chair
Women's Health Matters Forum & Expo, Camping Stream Liaison*

Dr. Doug Biggar, Taylor Statten Camps

I had the good fortune to attend the Summer Camp and Health Issues session at the Women's Health Matters Forum & Expo, which featured two valuable keynote addresses. Marcia E. Herman-Giddens spoke about the natural progression of puberty in girls and the extraordinary pressures placed on today's youth. These pressures certainly continue at camp. Staff need to be aware of the issues and how to manage them effectively. Young girls now mature earlier than they did 30 years ago. We need to help them to prepare for the changes which will take place in their bodies, and to create an awareness in staff and avoid teasing by others.

Dr. Carolyn Bennett highlighted the core values of a camping experience and the importance of camp as a life laboratory for creating citizens who develop many loyal friends for life.

Attendees had the opportunity to ask questions, share ideas, and network with colleagues from the camping world. Don't miss next year's event.

Elaine Cole, Camp Walden

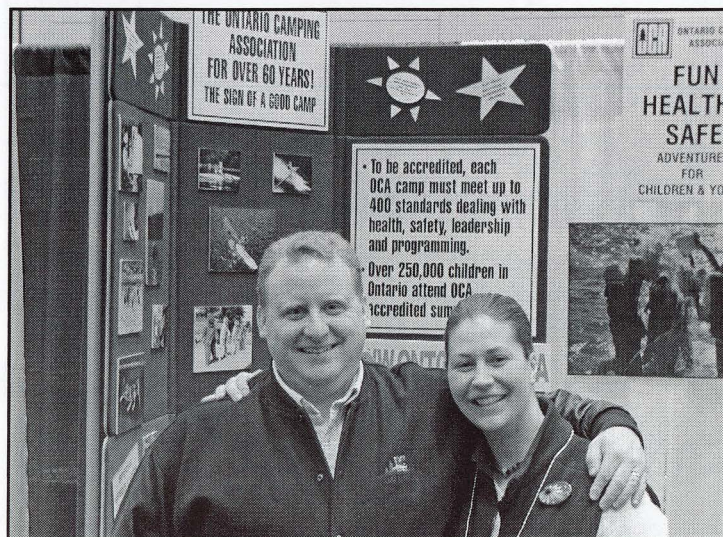
The Camping Stream at the Women's Health Matters Forum & Expo provided a special opportunity for camp directors to network. Dr. Carolyn Bennett, M.P. and camp doctor, spoke on the issue of self-esteem among children. She stated that children need strong role models and that we, as camp personnel, should never accept second-best from any child. We should always be challenging and "raising the bar" so they develop confidence and acceptance, which carries into adult life.

As a director who has been doing this job for a fair number of years, this conference was very valuable. Just when we think we may have it somewhat mastered – things change so very quickly, and knowledge is our best defense.

Steve Heming, YMCA Wanakita

After seeing the quality of sessions and presenters at this year's Women's Health Matters Forum & Expo, and learning how many people have attended in past, I met with my staff team to discuss how we might participate. Since we offer not only summer camp for kids but year-round programs – like mother/daughter weekends, women's getaways and family camps – we decided to exhibit. We pitched the idea of sharing a booth to a few other OCA camps, and Camp Tawingo and Camp Wenonah joined Camp Wanakita at the Expo. The booth was always busy, and between the three camps, we handed out over 350 information kits. We will be back!

*Kandalore Director
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Services, Ontario March of Dimes, 10 Overlea Blvd., Toronto, ON, M4H 1A4. Phone: 416-425-3463, ext. 288, fax: 416-425-1920, email: recreation@dimes.on.ca. Only candidates being considered for an interview will be contacted.

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