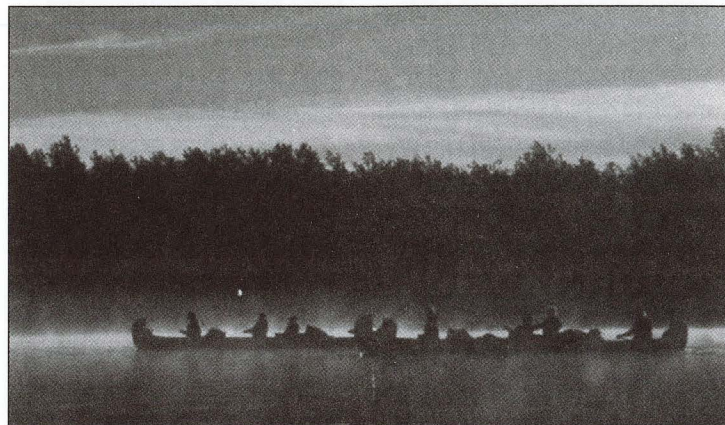


Imagining ourselves into the past...

BY JACOB RODENBURG, CAMP KAWARTHA



To care means to imagine. To walk in someone else's footsteps, to view the world from someone else's perspective, to empathize and to care: these are ultimately

acts of the imagination. At camp, we may intuitively recognize the importance of creativity and imagining, but we don't often recognize what a powerful build-

ing block of a child's consciousness the imagination can be.

Creating worlds, pretending, playing and becoming...these acts are an essential part of childhood and they are part of what makes us social beings. Imagining ourselves to be someone or something else helps us to understand, a little more clearly, who we are.

At our camp, we actively try to foster childrens' imaginations through our creative theme days, drama, and storytelling.

Over the past several years, we've tried to connect campers with their past by offering a

Voyageur tripping experience. It's one thing to learn about history from books, videos and web sites. But – as our experience shows kids – it's quite another to imagine yourself into the past.

During our three-day Voyageur Trip this past summer, campers began their experience by meeting Roger Charlebois, an indentured Voyageur from the North West Company, circa 1798. Campers were provided with a sash, a voyageur shirt and a toque and immediately had to prove their mettle as voyageurs,

Imagining, continued on page 8

Lower your credit card fees now!

BY ROB CARMICHAEL, TREASURER, OCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Do you accept credit cards or are you considering this payment option for your customers? If so, we have a FANTASTIC, NEW BENEFIT for all OCA members. The OCA Board of Directors has recently negotiated a great credit card deal on behalf of its members. This deal allows OCA members to accept Visa and MasterCard at a rate (cost) of 1.85%, with no application or setup fees.

To get this deal, you must be an OCA MEMBER, and open a merchant account with Global Payments.

Global Payments is one of the largest credit card processors in Canada, used by thousands of businesses to process credit card and debit transactions. We approached Global Payments a few months ago to see if they would be willing to offer our

membership a preferential credit card rate. We emphasized our number and stability of members, strong history, growth potential and the low-risk industry. Global Payments recognized that our industry was an excellent fit for them and were willing to work with us as an Association. It was an excellent example of how, as a unified group, we can come together and achieve a

much better result for all than if each camp had individually attempted the same task.

The OCA Board is pleased to announce this benefit. We hope that it assists as many of our members as possible. We have enclosed a one-page summary of the Global Payments offer along with contact details. Please contact Global Payments directly to obtain further details.



The Ontario Camping Association

250 Merton St., Suite 403 | Toronto, ON M4S 1B1

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The View From Here

BY BRIAN BLACKSTOCK,
OCA PRESIDENT

A letter to those who are thinking of working at camp this summer

Working at a summer camp is an investment – a very good investment in your future. It will pay dividends now and for years to come. Some of the immediate dividends are ... that at an age when most are not given the privilege and responsibility to do so, you can test your people skills as well as your camp skills and have the reward of knowing you have made a positive difference in the lives of some or several children. You can prove to yourself that sometimes with help from your leaders, you can make a difference in some small way to make the world a better place.

Some of the long term dividends are described in what follows.

- **Opportunity:** working as a staff member at a summer camp provides you with an opportunity to work with children in an environment where you are well-trained for your job(s) and are also able to get the assistance and supervision necessary to do your job well. You learn early in your life some of the basic lessons of living – such things as teamwork – leadership – communication – problem-solving – risk management – awareness of safety rules – program initiative – to name just a few. You

rarely will find a summer job that provides this and more for you AND your camp work experience can be an important part of your résumé.

Value: the earlier you begin, the better you get.

- **Leadership Skills:** there are few areas where you have the opportunity to develop leadership skills at such an early age. One of the outstanding features of working in a camp environment, compared to most others, is that the camp leaders help you learn leadership skills and constantly help you develop them throughout the summer.

Value: dividends daily.

- **Salaries:** at camps, salaries vary widely depending on the type of camp and the qualifications necessary to do the job. It is true that you would probably make more money working in some traditional “city” jobs. However, you need to remember that your expenses, when working at camp (especially a residential camp) can be minimal and, if you save wisely, you could end up at the end of the summer with almost as much as you have left after the expense of living in the city.

Value: an early lesson in personal financial planning.

- **Friendship:** “To have a friend, you have to be a friend.” Camp is a fine place to develop your interpersonal skills – again the experience of the camp directors and senior staff can help you here. There are few places where you can work in which you will have the opportunity to make lifelong friendships and contacts which could be very

beneficial in your future. Often, it’s the right place and the right time.

Value: a life support system for your future.

- **New Experiences:** If it is true that “experience is the best teacher,” at camp you have an opportunity to work with some of Ontario’s outstanding leaders of youth. Many of our camp directors have a wealth of experience and wisdom to pass on to their staff each summer. Leaders in many areas of our life got their start working at camp. It was at camp that their abilities were noted and nurtured, and it was at camp that they gained the experience and confidence to go on to be successful in the world beyond camp.

Value of this teaching – no charge.

- **“Live Over Days”:** Recently I heard this expression on a PBS program. What are “Live Over Days”? They are the days that have been so good that you will want to live them over and over. Certainly most of us who have been fortunate enough to have been part of a camp for one or several summers can recall many “Live Over Days.” Often they are the result of us being a part of the planning and the participation in all aspects of our camp programs – we learn while doing and, of course, that’s one of the big life lessons we get out of camp. By being creative and involving others in what we do teaches us all a lot about learning to live together comfortably with others, now and in the future.

Value: an open door to “OUR MEMORY BANK.”

Like any investment, you must take some risk, usually a calculated risk, if you are to reap dividends in the future. Unfortunately, many young people underestimate the dividends they can gain from spending some summers at camp. The chance usually only comes by once then its gone. As Ferris Bueller once wisely said, “Life moves pretty fast – if we don’t slow down once in a while we could miss it.” Don’t miss it.

Talk to some people who have experienced camp and see what they have to say about their summers and how those summers have affected their lives since. Camp is not just a place full of “Live Over Days” – it’s a place where living really is learning for now and for your future.

Value of a summer at camp: priceless.

All of us at the OCA Office wish you a very happy and healthy holiday with family and friends.

Safe journeys to all.





Eureka! Finding the formula for supercharged programming

BY PETER McMAHON, OCA'sional NEWS EDITOR

Invariably, one program or another seems to get the shaft at camp.

One site I worked at couldn't pay kids to go canoeing but practically had a waiting list for kayaking. Drive up the highway a few hundred kilometers and the opposite was the case.

Another camp I worked at brought in a consultant each year to train its archery instructors – while I've seen others that leave bows and arrows to collect dust in the box they came in.

When charged with coming up with ideas to rejuvenate a program or build a new one that's sure to be a winner, I often wonder if there's a perfect formula for creating great activities for kids.

Who knows if there is, but until such a formula turns up in a scholarly journal (or more likely in casual conversation at a camping conference), here's the closest I've come to a surefire path to supercharged programming:

Before I go any further with a programming idea, it has to a) be new to kids (or at least seem new to kids); b) leave them with something they didn't have before, and; c) add another magical experience to their stay at camp

If the idea makes it past this intellectual gauntlet, I test it out on the people who'd be delivering or participating in the activity

If the idea really does end up being one that both teaches and entertains, I record everything required to do the activity

in a way that's easy for staff to learn and deliver with confidence and glee!

Engineering fun is tough work – even with a formula. To summon the creativity needed to take a programming idea through the process above, I've come up with three simple rules:

Rule #1: Pamper your brain – Take all the time you need: Don't try so hard it becomes a chore. Find a thinking spot. Drink a cup of the most decadent coffee you can find.

When I tried this for the first time, I felt like Keanu Reeves bending the spoon in that first *Matrix* movie (you know, the good one). After an hour of this, I ended up with a new science program obstacle course called

Engineering fun is tough work – even with a formula. To summon the creativity needed to take a programming idea through the process above, I've come up with three simple rules.

Escape From The Black Hole.

Rule #2: Brainstorm in the area your program will take place – Sick of the usual fare of day camp environmental programming, I wandered out onto the windy field outside a museum I was teaching at one day. Remembering an article I'd read on how to do kite-cam photography, I set out to buy a disposable camera, some balsa wood and a garbage bag so the kids could make their own Earth observing satellite (we got the kite and the camera up in the air, but I'm still working on getting it to take clear pictures...).

Rule #3: When all else fails, take one successful idea and modify it to get something new but just as successful – Working in TV, I'm always amazed at how many times this works. One idea that came from this mindset was something called *Space: The Musical* – a tongue-in-cheek send-up of science camp, drama camp, or both. (You may not be able to do this sort of thing for every program, but – then again – just think what a coup it would be to show up your drama program with *Whitewater Paddling: The Musical* put on by one of your camp's canoeing classes!)

I've heard nearly all the great bosses I've had – from day camps to TV networks – asking the same question upon starting a big project: "Do we have all the right resources to make this happen?"

It's a question I've started asking myself in my own big projects lately and I think it's one

that applies to camping.

One of those resources at camp must surely be the programs of activities kids write home about and remember – for better or worse – for years. Why not make sure those programs lead rather than follow, dare to challenge staff as much as campers, and maybe even add to that special sense of magic and discovery you find in spades at camp.

In addition to editing the OCA'sional News, Peter McMahon is an online host/producer for Discovery Channel Canada and founder of North Star Science and Astronomy Programming – he can be reached at pmcmahon@ctv.ca.

coming
in the January
OCA News

We look at food and the role it plays at camp.

Do you have a favourite recipe you're just dying to share? Maybe you've stumbled upon something brand new that's a hit at your camp, or you've found the ultimate culinary experience for out-tripping. We want to hear about it!

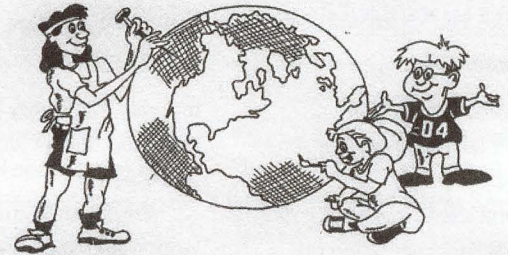
Send in your recipes and anecdotes to the OCA office by mail to 250 Merton St., Suite 403, Toronto, ON M4S 1B1, by fax to 416-485-0422 or by email to info@ontcamp.on.ca.



ONTARIO CAMPING
ASSOCIATION

ONTARIO CAMPING ASSOCIATION 2004 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**"THE TOP 10 REASONS
TO MAKE ATTENDING THIS
YEAR'S CONFERENCE YOUR
NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION!"**



**CREATING
A BETTER WORLD
THROUGH CAMPING**

We hope that by now you've had a chance to review the incredible program for this year's Annual Conference recently sent by mail or on the OCA's website. If you have, you already know that this year's power-packed program features dynamic and insightful speakers such as Michael Brandwein, Dr. Debra Pepler, Joey Rich and Christopher Thurber. As you balance your training needs for the coming year, we're bringing you another 10 reasons why attending the OCA's Annual Conference will be your most important resolution of 2004!

10. Play casino and carnival games at Casino Fun House 3 on Friday night.
9. Where else in Ontario can you wear shorts and Birkenstocks in February?
8. Meet and socialize with others from all over the world at meals and receptions throughout the weekend.
7. Meet our Commercial Members and find out how their products can help you.
6. Have YOUR SAY about your Association at the Annual General Meeting.
5. Talk about YOUR ISSUES with other camping professionals.
4. Celebrate the history of the camping legacy at the Saturday banquet.
3. Feel the heat as Camp Maple Rock goes to court for an all-new trial.
2. There's always more to learn. Pick the brains of leaders in our industry.
1. It's by far the best way to get your fix of camp fun in the middle of winter!

FEBRUARY 19 - 21, 2004

and **CAMP DIRECTORS WORKSHOP**: February 17 - 18, 2004

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Early Bird Registration Deadline: January 9, 2004. Register for the FULL conference AND 3 nights of hotel accommodation by the early bird deadline and you'll be entered to win 1 of 2 prizes of ONE FREE NIGHT of accommodation. Register by the deadline and you could also win 2 FREE passes for Saturday's program!

FILLING THE CAMP DIRECTOR'S TOOLBOX FOR OVER 70 YEARS

A summer camp escape for the whole family

BY MATT CLARE

A visit to a spa can be a great escape.

When it comes to individuals from a community at risk, escaping the pressures of day-to-day life is particularly invigorating.

Such a load off one's shoulders is what the Chetwynd Community Development Program is all about during events like its Spa Night, aimed at reinvigorating a particular at-risk community, with the help of the community itself.

Throughout the Chetwynd camp program, adult members of a particular community, and the staff that work with that community, put on events for both the children and each other.

The goal of this community-based initiative is to promote and encourage networks between families and related community-based organizations. According

to organizers, Chetwynd seeks to improve service coordination and access in a specific community, selecting a new community every couple of years.

Here's how it works: starting around March, a committee is formed to develop a plan for camp. This committee decides things like who is to be invited to the camp – criteria for selection, and how many will be selected. The actual camp takes place up north in the Muskokas every July.

The adults in the community and front-line workers from organizations like Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto (CCAS), Children's Aid Society of Toronto (CAST), Toronto Community Housing (TCH), the Hope for Children Foundation and even local police officers participate in the roles of camp staff for a week. The children have all the

fun associated with camp while adults foster bonds within the community and with service workers.

Parents and children use camp to make connections ranging from favourite recipes to babysitting. At the same time, members from the various support agencies have informal opportunities to offer their services and better understand the community.

At the end of a week that includes an international dinner, soccer games, canoeing, campfires, and other camp favourites, the group returns home, though everyone – from children to adults to agency staff – all ask to come back the next year.

Matt Clare has worked with special needs children for four years – most recently at Camp Couchiching.



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Risk management and residential camping

BY BRIAN SHELLEY, RKY CAMP

On February 1, 2003, seven students from Strathcona-Tweedsmuir School died in a tragic backcountry skiing accident at Roger's Pass in Alberta, just north-west of Calgary. They were telemark-skiing on a class trip led by staff members from the school. Despite the fact that staff and students knew there was a very real chance of an avalanche that day, the group entered Roger's Pass. Understandably, since the tragic events of the Strathcona-Tweedsmuir incident, the philosophy behind "adventure" programming for youth has come under public scrutiny.

I recently returned from a two-day risk management course at the Outward Bound base camp in Burk's Falls, Ontario. The keynote speaker for the weekend was Ross Cloutier, who was recently contracted by the Strathcona-Tweedsmuir School to review their Outdoor Education Program and the unfortunate events that led to the fatal avalanche last February. The Outward Bound course was designed to act as a springboard for discussion about risk management and outdoor education in a post-Strathcona-Tweedsmuir environment.

This event was extremely valuable for myself and the other 25 outdoor education professionals attending. Some of the questions raised included:

- As an industry, are we providing opportunities for outdoor education or are we providing wilderness adventure programs? That is to say, is the purpose of

our programs to provide youth with opportunities to develop a sense of respect for themselves, their cabin-mates and the outdoors? Or, is the purpose of our programs to provide youths with a "wilderness adventure" where we take campers, and possibly staff, out of their collective safety zones in an attempt to push the limits in a perceived high-risk environment?

- If the philosophy behind our programs is the former, then we are doing a great service to our campers, their communities and families, the environment and Canadian society as a whole.

- However, if the basis of our program philosophy is the latter, then we must be prepared to answer some important questions, including: "Why?" Whether or not this level of risk is perceived or real, the provision of adventure education as opposed to outdoor education leads us into dangerous waters.

I urge you to consider this question as we – as camping professionals – do all that we can do to prevent the next Strathcona-Tweedsmuir incident.

Brian Shelley is the Assistant Director of RKY Camp near Kingston.

To read Ross Cloutier's Review of the Strathcona-Tweedsmuir Outdoor Education Program online, go to Ross's website at www.bhudak.com.

Upcoming Opportunities for Risk Management Training:

Wilderness Risk Management Conference at Sedbergh School, Montebello, QC, March 26-28, 2004. For more information, visit www.sedbergh.com.

Risk Management Skill Builder at Outward Bound Base Camp, Burk's Fall, ON, April 2-4, 2004. For more information on this event, visit www.outwardbound.ca.



A rookie director's account of his first season on the job

With my teddy bear in tow ...

BY VELOS CHRISTOU, TORONTO MONTESSORI CAMPS

As the program director at Camp Nomingue, I always took great pleasure in watching our squeegees prepare for their overnight canoe trips (squeegee was the name given to our 6- and 7-year old campers one summer after the senior staff had started a window-washing business in the months leading up to camp.) Although their journey would only take them to the sheltered confines of a private beach at the other end of our lake, listening to their comments as they loaded up their boats made you realize just how monumental their first canoe trip would be: "We get to paddle our canoe all the way to Bobo Beach?...That's so far...Have you ever paddled that far before? Are there bears on the beach? What are we going to eat? I know how to set up the tent ... I think ..."

Through their wide-eyed excitement and non-stop questions, there was always that underlying sense of uncertainty and fear. Coming to camp was already a big step, but now they were stepping out of their comfort zone once more and venturing into wild and mysterious terrain (at least for a 6-year-old). With overstuffed packs and teddy bears in tow, they would load up their canoes and set off, paddles dipping into the water in less than perfect form, but with the energy and enthusiasm of real voyageurs.

Having undertaken that same trip myself as a camper at

Nomingue, I am always amazed to find those same feelings surfacing every time I begin a new journey in my life.

And so it came as no great surprise to me this past June that those same feelings came back once again, as I stood outside the dining hall preparing to meet my staff for the first time, as camp director.

I had just begun my first day helping the Toronto Montessori Schools' camps and outdoor education centre – my first year-round camp management position. I had new staff to meet, camp routines to establish and a camp culture to foster.

While I have experience and knowledge to build on, I still feel – as I felt that first day in June – a familiar twinge of uncertainty and anxiety as I undertake this new role. I am now solely responsible for ensuring the success of a camp and the children it serves. I must learn how to navigate the school's administration, how best to run the camp office and how to juggle responsibility between two camps and an outdoor centre. I also have to become an expert in marketing and design.

There are labour laws to familiarize myself with and staff that need to be hired. And don't even get me started on transportation! How can I be certain I will make the right choices? How can I ensure that each and every camper will have the very best experience possible while at camp? How do I know I'm cut out

for this job?

Like those campers heading out on their canoe trip, I have to trust in my abilities and in those of the people around me. And like them, there will be missteps and wrong turns along the way. But just like that small group of campers who'd always return home with their eyes a little brighter, their shoulders a little stronger, and their heads full of stories to share, so it is with me.

My first few months as a director have come and gone. New logos have been designed and a brochure and web site are on their way. New program offerings and facilities are making the transition from mid-summer daydreams to reality.

As the snow starts to fall while thoughts turn to summer, I am ready to continue my adventure stronger, wiser (somewhat!) and full of stories to share with you.

So grab your pack and your paddle and join my teddy bear and me on the journey.

Like those campers heading out on their canoe trip, I have to trust in my abilities and in those of the people around me. And like them, there will be missteps and wrong turns along the way.

Velos Christou is the Director of Toronto Montessori Schools' Discovery Day Camp and Cold Creek Camp and Outdoor Centre. When he's not locked in his office with his teddy bear for support, he spends his time explaining to his two young children that everyone needs at least a few hours of sleep every night and that "Country Roads" is the only camp song Daddy can sing for them.

Classifieds

Experienced day and residential director (male) seeks to contribute much as a senior member of a camp leadership team, preferably in a full-time capacity. Please reply to oca@ontcamp.on.ca, quoting "December 03 Ad."

Seeking Full-time Program Manager (CATI, Brock University). Responsibilities include managing spring camps (5,000 participants), designing curriculum-based day programs, managing two challenge courses, adventure and school-based program delivery, delivering adult training. Teachers preferred. **Also hiring a Senior Facilitator** (8-month contract). Visit www.brocku.ca/cati.

Imagining, continued from page 1

by playing traditional games, dancing jigs, and learning to portage and paddle our two 26' North canoes. Starting flint and steel fires, paddling in rhythm to traditional songs, as well as eating bannock and dried meat, our voyageurs powered the North canoes along the rocky shores of Stoney Lake.

On the first night, we harvested a medley of edible wilds, including wood sorrel, wild mint, sweet gale and yarrow to flavour a Voyageur stew. On the second day, tired muscles were spurred on by lusty renditions of traditional (and not so traditional) songs. As one paddler put it "I didn't know I worked that hard!"

A favourable breeze sprang up from the east on the last day and lashing a tarp to some paddles, the two North canoes coasted towards camp. (Even hearty Voyageurs will take a rest if they can get one!)

A theme-based trip such as this can be a powerful experience for campers because it conjures up the past in such a vivid and magical way. Campers not only learn about the past,

but they experience a remarkable period in Canadian history, with the help of a few props and their own imagination.

Find ways to bring other worlds, other times, and other experiences to *your* campers this coming summer. All you need to do so is to harness the most important catalyst in the creative process...the imagination.

Jacob Rodenburg is Executive Director of Camp Kawartha and The Kawartha Outdoor Education Centre near Peterborough.

Winter Photo Contest!

Send us the best picture of your site covered in snow and ice to help us celebrate the beauty of camp in the off-season. Top entries will be published in a special photo gallery in an upcoming issue.

Send your photos to:

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OR

email your entries to:
oca@ontcamp.on.ca (be sure to put "OCA Winter Photo Contest" in the subject line)

OCA'sional News

The Ontario Camping Association publishes the OCA's official newsletter, the OCA'sional News, monthly from October to June of each year. The newsletter keeps OCA members informed about developments in children's, youth, and special needs camping, both within and outside of the Association. Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Ontario Camping Association.

The editor of the OCA'sional News, Peter McMahon, welcomes letters to the editor as well as queries regarding submissions. Please contact Peter at pmcmahon@ctv.ca.

Advertisers may purchase display ads at single or multiple insertion rates. There is an additional fee of \$50.00 for non-members. Contact the OCA office for information regarding sizes and rates. The OCA'sional News also accepts classified ads: the rate for OCA members is \$20 for the first 25 words and \$15 for each additional 25 words. For non-OCA members, the rate is \$35 for the first 25 words and \$30 for each additional 25 words. Paid advertising space will not exceed editorial content.