

Beyond the Challenge

THE ONGOING STORY OF
CRANE LAKE DISCOVERY CAMP

DR. ULRICH FRISSE, LL.M.



the **Beyond Challenge**

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2014

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What is Crane Lake Discovery Camp?

CHAPTER ONE



“Camp—Camp is a simple word, but what it means to me is that it made a huge difference in my life, and in so many other lives as well.”

—Matthew

What is Crane Lake Discovery Camp?

Crane Lake Discovery Camp is...



Crane Lake

Birds, moose, bears, beavers, frogs, fish, natural beauty, water, remoteness, restoration, wild animals, rock jumping, canoe races, reflections...

Discovery

Learn about ourselves, wildlife and nature, discover God, go beyond the familiar, be courageous, lead, share, succeed as a team, adventure, focus, push into the unknown, grow, bushwhack, experience...

Camp

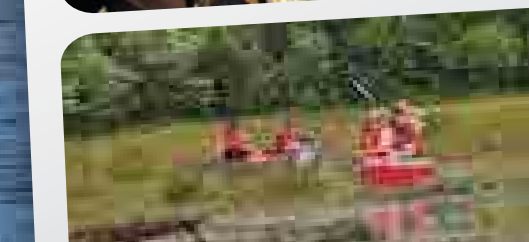
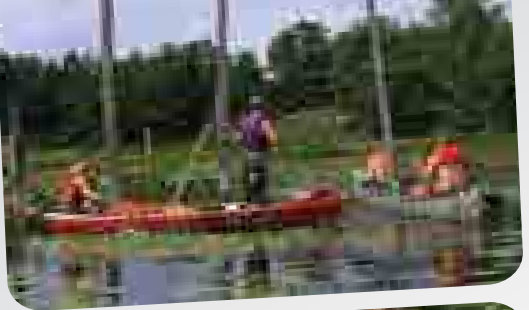
Living together as a group, nature, fire, fishing, canoeing, marshmallows, fish fries, pancakes, bread on a stick, friends...

Crane Lake Discovery Camp sits at the west end of Crane Lake, where the lake empties over the dam, through the narrows and into a small series of waterfalls and a rocky gorge to feed the Little Blackstone River. Surrounded by Crown land and Massassauga Provincial Park, CLDC is right in the heart of Muskoka, half an hour drive through the forest from the next paved road that leads into the small town of MacTier (37 kilometers south of

Parry Sound and 100 kilometers north of Barrie, Ontario). CLDC's 200 acres of pristine wilderness encompass 400 feet of water front on Crane Lake plus immediate access to Paul's Lake, a remote lake connected to the property. Little Blackstone River provides direct access all the way into Georgian Bay. Both the river and Crane Lake connect CLDC with many other lakes and canoe routes in the area.

Crane Lake Discovery Camp is all of that, and so much more.





Our Roots

CHAPTER TWO



“Camp has completely changed my point of view on camping, building and lots of other things. I plan on coming back next year.”

—Max

Our Roots

When looking at one of the famous Georgian Bay tree paintings by Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven, have you ever wondered how **STRONG** the roots of those trees must be to **WITHSTAND** the fierce winds of Georgian Bay? At CLDC, we have made many canoe trips into lakes and all the way down into Georgian Bay. Many times our campers have experienced first-hand the leaning tree on an island that has become somewhat of the official image of the Muskokas. CLDC's almost 200 acres are home to thousands of trees whose strong roots **PROTECT** them from storms each and every year. Just as the spruce, jack pine, white birch and other trees on the CLDC property are **ROOTED** in the soil and **ANCHORED** to the rock of the Canadian Shield below, CLDC is rooted in values, beliefs and commitments that have only gotten stronger over the years. We have had our fair share of **STORMS** as well, yet it is those foundational **ROOTS** that keep us **GROUND**ED in our mission to partner with boys and young men who need a helping hand.

"My highlight of camp was growing as a person. By this I mean learning to work with others and using teamwork to do many things. I also feel like I have a better relationship with God. I feel that every year I come here, I grow physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually." —Greg



We believe in the **VALUE** of every individual. We believe that everyone deserves a **SECOND CHANCE**. We believe in the incredible **RESTORATIVE POWER** of the **WILDERNESS** environment. We believe that together we can grow and **MAKE A DIFFERENCE** in each others' lives. We believe that God calls us to turn our beliefs into action and to live out our beliefs each and every day.

Believe! Live your beliefs every day!
Turn your beliefs into a commitment to God, yourself and others! Create change!

We are only part of the larger story

Within our generation we are the **stewards** of one of the most beautiful parts of God's creation to the benefit of those we serve. We are not the first who have been given the privilege to enjoy this pristine piece of wilderness. There have been others before us. **God's vision** for CLDC has been there long before we ever came along. We see ourselves as part of that larger story....



In 1904, European immigrant Aaron Gould purchased the 200 acre property, on which CLDC is located today, from the government as the site for a future homestead to raise a family. To his great disappointment, his fiancé never joined him in Canada and he ended up living in seclusion, raising horses and growing potatoes and apples on the property for over 40 years. In the late 1940's, he willed the property to the Catholic Church in exchange for looking after him in his old age.

In 1960, the Catholic Church sold the property to Ben Doell, an engineer with the Ministry of Natural Resources, who had come across it while rebuilding the dam on Crane Lake. Together with the Mennonite Brethren community in St. Catherine's and the Kitchener area, Ben took steps towards turning the property into a camp. Due to Crane Lake's remote location and distance from Kitchener and St. Catherine's, the Mennonite Brethren Church reconsidered and built a camp in another location instead.

Even after the plan to launch a Mennonite Brethren camp had fallen through, Ben and his wife Artrude **held on to their dream** and owned the property as trustees of the M.B. Camp Association. In 2004, they sold the property to CLDC founder Ron Weber who was acting as a trustee of the CLDC charity-in-founding. Since then, CLDC has been using the property to run annual summer camp programs for boys and young men ages 10 to 17.

The dream behind it all

Everything new starts with a dream - **the dream to make a difference, to create, to innovate...** Often these dreams seem to pop up out of nowhere and many of them never come true. Some vanish before they can take shape like a snowflake on the tip of your tongue. Others die an early death the moment the first real challenges arise. BUT, occasionally a dream takes hold and grows over the course of weeks, months, years and even decades. It's a **different kind of dream, one that stays with you for the rest of your life, that requires your attention, that nags and wants to be fed because it is alive.** These are the dreams that inspire others, make them want to connect, join forces, become a part of it.

CLDC's founder and camp director Ron Weber had one of those dreams. A dream that began when he was a young man and that would just not go away until 25 years after the seed was first planted it resulted in the founding of CLDC in 2004. At the core of CLDC is this very special foundational dream, a FLAME that continues to light the way each time campers walk along trail and that SPARKS the fire each night when the Explorers and Voyagers gather at pow-wow to reflect on their day.

Chief Ron, as everyone at CLDC calls him, was first exposed to therapeutic wilderness camping in 1989, at age 19, at Fair Play Wilderness Camp School, a faith-based camp for at-risk



youth in South Carolina. The seed was planted and two years later, in 1991, he joined the camp as a volunteer counsellor, working with teenaged boys and young men ages 10 to 17. In 1992, when during a staff training session counsellors were asked to write out a dream for their life, Ron shared his vision of a camp similar to Fair Play in his home province of Ontario. He wanted to see Ontario's wilderness and boys who were struggling with everyday life challenges come together. Ron had experienced a new **sense of freedom and passion**, as he had learned at Fair Play to communicate, to solve problems and to deal with conflict in his role as camp counsellor. He felt strongly that he needed to **share that passion** and to **reach out** to at-risk youths in his native Canada as well. The concept of therapeutic wilderness camping resonated with Ron because he realized its impact on campers' lives and because it had changed his life as well.

After completing his term at Fair Play Wilderness Camp School, Ron returned to Ontario, where he worked on the family farm, in construction and in sales for a lumber company for several years. Ron's wife Cindy reflects: "After he came back from Fair Play, Ron never stopped talking about starting a camp in Ontario. That is how sure he was about camp." In 2000, Ron, Cindy and their three children at the time moved to Pennsylvania for Ron to serve as group work supervisor at Bald Eagle Boys Camp for two years. That experience proved to be instrumental, as it taught Ron how to run a camp in a Northern climate similar to that of Crane Lake. In 2000, two weeks before leaving for his two-year term at Bald Eagle Boys

Camp, Ron was introduced to the Crane Lake property for the first time through a friend who had been a Fair Play counsellor as well. The following Saturday they went up and visited the property together. While honouring his commitment in Pennsylvania, the thought of starting a camp at Crane Lake never left Ron.

Cindy shared Ron's dream from early on. "When I married Ron," she reflects, "I knew I was marrying that dream." Working with boys needing a helping hand was anything but new to Cindy. At age four, she had moved with her family to Alabama where her parents, Howard and Alice Horst, ran a group home for a year. After coming back to Waterloo, the Horsts operated another group home in Waterloo before moving to a farm, taking one of the boys they had been looking after with them. Ron and Cindy's son Alex is named after that boy. Cindy's uncle had served as a chief at camp and while Ron had worked at Fair Play in the early 1990's Cindy had worked with First Nations children in Dryden, Ontario. Although Ron's dream would pose real challenges for the young Weber family, as Ron and Cindy's four children - Alex, Chantelle, Tiffany and Abigail - were all little during the early years of camp, Cindy's early exposure to and her genuine caring about boys experiencing challenges made camp a natural fit for her.

"What I liked about camp is that throughout the session I learned that I am a good speaker and can put positive influences in problem solving." -Zack

The dream is taking shape

When was the last time you stared at the dancing flames of a camp fire like CLDC campers and their chiefs do every night during pow-wow? Or gazed out over a calm lake on a sunny day, being drawn in by the evolving image of the sun reflecting on the water? Did you notice that the image eventually becomes blurry as your eyes lose focus and you feel the calming power of that larger image at the expense of its very details? A dream can be like those reflections and colour-changing flames that never seem to stop moving. And then, all of a sudden, seemingly out of nowhere and without your own doing, you notice the individual logs in the fire and each golden sparkle on the water that have been there all along. **The dream is taking shape....**

In early 2002, over a year and a half into his work at Bald Eagle Boys Camp, and two years before CLDC was founded, Ron called Ben Doell, the owner of the Crane Lake property at the time. Ben invited him and his family to camp on the property during the summer and to submit a proposal to purchase it. In 2003, Ron, Cindy and Cindy's family who shared their vision for a camp devised the plan to establish a charity and to purchase the Crane Lake property. Cindy's family coming on board was crucial in completing the purchase and getting the camp started. In the fall of that year, the group put together a proposal and presented it to Ben Doell. Sharing the group's





vision, Ben gave them very favourable conditions without which the purchase could not have been completed. In 2004, Crane Lake Discovery Camp was established as a not-for-profit organization and the original Board of Directors constituted itself. A year later, the organization obtained status as a registered charity. Ron's dream was about to become reality.

God's hand at work

As fellow-believers, CLDC staff, chiefs and volunteers share the foundational belief that in working with boys and young men experiencing challenges in their lives they are fulfilling **God's mission**. As Ron explained when reflecting on the 2009 camp season: "God has a very **special plan** for Crane Lake Discovery Camp. The orchestration this summer superseded anything that we as a staff could have put together. We had tears, we had laughter, we had reconciliation, and we had kids asking about God. This is **God's camp** and **He** is painting a picture of what it will become."

From the earliest days, there were challenges. Working through them has helped define the mission and has made CLDC much stronger for it. The decision to purchase the property without funds lined up, without a corporate structure, without a program in place and without existing connections with agencies was a risky move. It truly needed a long-harboured dream and Ron and Cindy's commitment to go ahead with the plan to start a wilderness camp despite the frequent messages

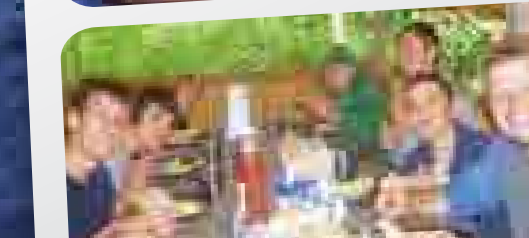
that what they felt committed to do would be impossible to achieve. CLDC might have been Ron's dream, but it was God who put that dream and passion into Ron's heart in the first place. From early on, Ron felt that there was a bigger picture. Giving up on his dream was never an option, even during times of questioning: "What God was telling me was that it has nothing to do with you. This is my big picture and you are just a part of it," he reflects.

God has been at work at CLDC in so many different ways. Without prompting, people have invested into CLDC simply because they believed in the mission. Many times timing was of the essence. Throughout the ongoing story of CLDC, God has ensured so many times that the next step could be undertaken in due time by **working in peoples' hearts**. God's hand has been visible at many critical junctures through the **incredible generosity** of people. The original purchase of the property is one of those many stories....

The ongoing story of people buying into the dream and supporting camp in amazing ways started with Ben Doell, who gave Ron and Cindy as trustees of the CLDC Corporation-in-founding an interest-free, vender-take-back-mortgage that stands symbolic for the transfer of the vision. Based on no more than a few meetings in which both sides shared their dream and vision for camp Ben was willing to take on that risk, simply because he believed in the dream and felt the deep connection between what he had tried to do in the 1960's and Ron's plan for the future of the property.

In trying to gather the funds necessary to complete the purchase, Ron talked to family, friends and people that he knew. A former colleague he had worked with in construction committed to providing an interest-free loan of \$10,000. When Ron and Cindy went to pick up the cheque, they were surprised that it had been made out for \$11,000. Ron and Cindy asked for clarification and were told that the extra \$1,000 was the amount Ron's former colleague had just won from Tim Hortons' Roll up the Rim to Win contest. Since he did not need the money, he had decided to give it to camp instead. He ended up donating the entire amount and more to CLDC in the end.

Next, Cindy's family invested into the project by contributing to the down payment. Just days before the down payment was due, they were still \$40,000 short, however. This is when Ron went to Cindy's uncle Lloyd. Lloyd looked at Cindy's grandparents' investments and pulled out a GIC that had just come up for renewal. As it happened, it was exactly the amount they needed and with that money they were able to complete the purchase. Cindy's Grandma Selena Bowman would later keep investing into camp, lending a substantial amount that allowed CLDC to operate without a mortgage after the original lender-take-back mortgage was paid off. In addition she gave many small donations over the years. There was risk in everything people were doing in support of the vision for CLDC at the time and yet their faith and belief in the dream carried them through. **And this was just the beginning....**



Our Mission

CHAPTER THREE



"Out of these last two weeks I've got a new outlook on life, a better point of view. This camp is great. Would love to come back!"

—Brennan



"I think Chief Jeff, Marv, and Marcus are the best Chiefs ever because they really helped me get through camp and I couldn't have done it without them." —Logan

Giving kids a chance

At CLDC, we are committed to giving kids a chance. How many chances does a young person deserve? At CLDC we say: **"AS MANY AS IT TAKES."** The alternative is far too costly to contemplate. Our ultimate goal is to **ENABLE YOUTH** to develop **meaningful relationships** and build **fulfilling lives**. This, our core mandate, rests on the following imperatives:

- **Restore hope**
- **Build resilience into the lives of boys and their families**
- **Help boys believe and trust in God, themselves and others**
- **Help boys overcome adversity, rejection, failure and pain**
- **Help boys leap back from disappointment and leap forward into life**
- **Help boys deal with seemingly overwhelming challenges**

We all face challenges at different times in our lives. Many of those challenges are not of our own making. Yet, we need to develop the tools to overcome, leap back and restore ourselves with the help of God, a positive attitude and the help of those we trust. Many of the challenges and struggles CLDC campers face in their daily lives have labels attached to them. At CLDC, our mission is to look beyond the limiting messages

those labels convey. Our core imperative is to partner with and provide a lifeline for boys that have felt rejection and failure over and over again.

Built on our foundational belief in the value of each individual, our focus is on the value each camper brings to the group regardless of his personal challenges. In its focus on personal growth, living as a member of a group and reconnecting with nature, camp benefits boys no matter what their personal background. At camp and throughout the year, we try to speak into young men's lives through positive messages that encourage, motivate and enable. Together, we join hands to face challenges head on. **What better environment to learn the tools to succeed in life than the pristine wilderness of Crane Lake Discovery Camp....**





Legacies

Legacy is a **BIG WORD** and rightly so, because it is something very valuable. We create a legacy. We share a legacy. We leave behind a legacy. Can a legacy be a building block of something new? Is it part of its foundations? Is CLDC built on a legacy? On multiple legacies?

During the summer of 2003, the year before Ron and Cindy purchased the camp as trustees of the CLDC charity-in-founding, Ben Doell shared his heart and his vision of the future of the property. A devout Christian, his dream from the day he had bought the property 40 years earlier had always been that of using it as a camp where young people would **come to faith**. Even after his original plan to establish a camp together with the Mennonite Brethren had fallen through, he had made sure that the title and legal zoning for future use of the property as a camp was maintained and held the property in **trust** of the M.B. Camp Association. Over the course of many years, he and his wife Artrude never let go of their original dream.

In retrospect it is clear that Ben was holding the property for all those years for CLDC in trust as a **continuation** of his vision. In the summer of 2003, as Ron, Cindy and Cindy's family were contemplating purchasing camp, Ben took Ron to the narrows and showed him where baptisms could be held and the "amphitheatre" where those in attendance would sit. In 2012, 52 years after Ben's vision for the property had taken shape, it

came **full circle** when two CLDC campers were **baptized** in the same spot that Ben had prophesied over. Ron reflects on the transfer of ownership from Ben to himself: "To me it felt like a **baton was being passed**. It is more than a property. We got a legacy from a man who really had a **heart and a vision** for this property. It has been prayed over and a lot of what camp does to us and to the boys has to do with where it has come from." As Ron's vision of Crane Lake Discovery Camp turned into reality, Ben Doell's personal legacy became part of the camp's mission.

In 2005, Ron and Cindy met Tom Weber, who today serves as CLDC's program supervisor, and his future wife Rita at a camp conference at Fair Play Camp in South Carolina where Tom was serving as a counsellor and Rita as a cook. As their commitment there was coming to the end, Tom and Rita were intrigued by what Ron and Cindy had started in Ontario. Tom had felt called to work with at-risk boys after his younger brother Josh died of cancer at age 9 when Tom was 19. Watching his brother fight for his life for two years left a deep impact on Tom. Seeing his brother's life being taken away planted the seed in him **to help children who still had a fighting chance to succeed in life**. When he connected with Ron in 2005, Tom felt he had to get involved with Crane Lake Discovery Camp after completing his term at Fair Play and ended up moving to Ontario in 2007 with his wife Rita. Since then, Tom and Rita have dedicated themselves full-time to camp for several months in the summer. As the **driving force** behind Tom's commitment, Josh's legacy has become an important part of the Crane Lake mission.

While growing up Ron and Cindy had attended church together with Colin and Rhonda Weber. During the early years of CLDC, both Colin and Rhonda's family used the property to camp on during camp off-seasons. They had two boys - Jordon and Josh - and a daughter - Mikayla - who loved and played hard at camp. When Josh died tragically in an accident in 2008, his family directed donations made in Josh's memory to CLDC. To this day, the CLDC fund that contributes to the fees for campers who otherwise would not be able to attend camp is aptly named Josh Weber Fund to recognize Josh's **ongoing legacy as part of the CLDC mission**.

The first time Ron visited Fair Play Wilderness Boys Camp in 1989, Sanford (Sandy) Martin, who was from the same area as Ron, was there as a counsellor. With Sandy's encouragement Ron decided to become a counsellor as well, setting in motion a process that eventually led to the founding of CLDC. In 1991, three months into his time at Fair Play, while Ron was struggling with the challenges of camp, he attended Sandy and his wife Bonnie's wedding in South Carolina. Sandy instantly sensed that Ron was struggling. When it was Ron's turn in the receiving line, Sandy grabbed hold of Ron's chin, lifted his head and said, "Keep your chin up, you can do it!" These were powerful words which Ron has never forgotten. A year later, Sandy checked in on Ron at Fair Play and blessed the success that he was experiencing. Tragically, the lives of Sandy and his wife were cut short in a car accident. As a result, when Ron was first introduced to the Crane Lake property by Gary Martin, who had been a counsellor at Fair Play as

well and knew Sandy through church, Gary and Ron both contemplated naming the camp "Camp Sanford" in memory of the influence Sandy had on both of their lives. To this day, whenever he drives past the graveyard where Sandy was laid to rest, Ron always says, "Sandy, we are still doing camp".

A partner, not a service provider

At CLDC, our mission is to **create lasting change**. That is why we want to be **partners** with our campers, their families and the agencies we work with. Our goal is to build **lasting relationships** that go beyond a camp session or season. All our processes have been designed with this larger goal in mind.

In order to address each camper's unique individual challenges, CLDC team members meet with the camper and his caregivers before camp to define attainable goals to work on during camp. Throughout the session, campers, chiefs and staff work together towards achieving these goals in an atmosphere of **encouragement and enablement**. Some goals are achieved within a session. Others are reached at the end of multiple sessions, as some of our campers stay with us for the entire summer.

The partnerships we build extend beyond camp. Camp does not end when the camp season wraps up at the end

of summer. CLDC stays connected with campers throughout the year through monthly meetings to talk, play sports and have fun together. In 2009, CLDC expanded its outreach by partnering each of the campers with one of the staff members. Friendships that started at camp are continued throughout the year. Some campers are involved in weekly small group meetings with CLDC team members. In 2010, ongoing joint activities were made easier when CLDC received permission to use the Linwood Public School free of charge one Saturday afternoon each month.

Campers know that Camp Director Ron Weber and Program Supervisor Tom Weber are **only a phone call away** when they experience a challenge in their daily life and require help. It is not unusual that campers call them first when they experience trouble at home, at school or with the authorities. At different times, we have been invited by agencies to come alongside them in working out a plan for individual campers struggling with life. As **partners of our campers**, CLDC has become that special **lifeline** that is accessible to our campers, their families and the agencies they work with whenever and wherever needed.





Evolution of CLDC, 2004-2014

CHAPTER FOUR

“The natural environment up at camp as well as the caring, fun environment created by the Chiefs and cooks is indescribable.”

—Matthew



Over the course of ten years, about 300 “camper spots” have been filled at CLDC with many campers attending camp several years in a row. It has been quite a journey from CLDC’s humble beginnings in 2004 through partnering with Ray of Hope for the 2005 and 2006 seasons to CLDC operating camp independently and launching its new Crisis Intervention Program in the spring of 2014. The evolution of CLDC continues to be a story of learning, growth and progression at many different levels. It’s been a long way from that first canoe trip....

Exploring the property and building a partnership with Ray of Hope, 2003-2004

Following Ron’s original visit to the property in 2000 and camping trips in 2002 and 2003, Ron and current CLDC Director Ulli Frisse did a first exploration canoe trip from camp down into Georgian Bay in the fall of 2003. As he was in the process of deciding on whether to purchase the property, Ron was trying to develop a stronger feel for Crane Lake and its surroundings. Then in the summer of 2004, Ron did a trial run with a number of 15-year-old young men, some of whom later became chiefs. Once again, the purpose was to become

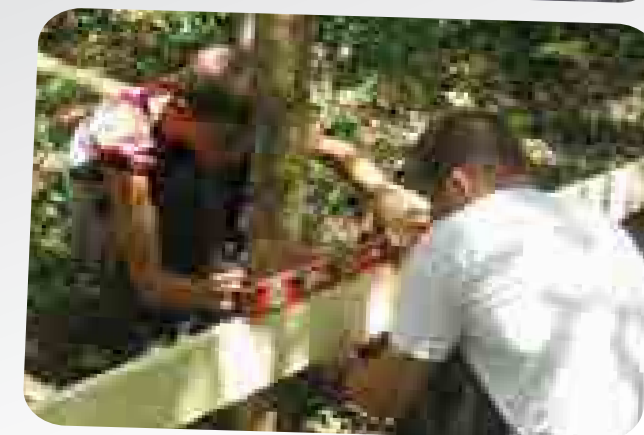
more familiar with the area and to explore whether the chosen route would be manageable with campers.

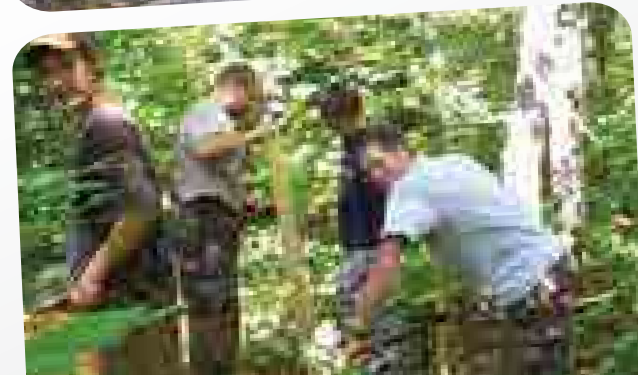
In the spring of 2004, Ron and Cindy cast their vision to Ray of Hope, a Christian organization committed to inspiring hope and transforming the lives of young people who have lost their way through four key ministries: Youth Justice Services, Youth Employment Services, Youth Addiction Services and Community Support Services. Both in their faith-based foundations and in their commitment to impacting the lives of young people who have fallen through the cracks, Ray of Hope and CLDC had lots in common. In the summer of 2004, Ray of Hope director Ron Hallman and three Ray of Hope staff members, together with Cindy’s brother, Dale Horst, and Ron Weber hiked the perimeters of camp together. Without a compass, they got lost in Massassauga Provincial Park. Working together similar to how a group of campers would have problem-solved in a similar situation during camp, they eventually made it back. For Ron Hallman it was the confirmation that he needed. He later confided to Ron that in those two hours of being lost in the woods together he had learned more about the CLDC team and the philosophy behind camp than he ever could have in days of talking. As part of the evolving partnership, in the fall of 2004, Ron organized a first canoe trip together with seven Ray of Hope staff members and six campers. By the end of the year, CLDC was ready to launch.

Testing the waters: 2005 and 2006

In 2005, Ron and the developing team of CLDC counsellors ran the first 3 two-week summer camp sessions with 26 boys attending camp throughout the season. There was no campsite yet and campers, in addition to doing a canoe trip, worked on creating the first structures at the original campsite in the interior of the property (which was later named the Voyager campsite). Connected with the main road into camp through a service trail and with two levels of elevation, the site was ideal for a group camp. Once the plywood floor was completed, campers set up their dome tents on that floor and the group moved to the campsite.

Upon arrival of the second group of campers that year, Ron and his three chiefs took them on a canoe trip immediately. As expected, there were severe challenges, as the boys were all from the same group home with pre-established dynamics. Working with these boys and achieving a significant breakthrough during the canoe trip only reinforced Ron’s conviction that to create a lasting impact CLDC needed to truly partner with boys by listening to them and by providing a loving and caring environment in which they could safely address some of the deep issues that were at the core of their attitudes and corresponding behaviour. In listening to the boys’ stories Ron realized that they had been disappointed





and rejected by authority figures so many times throughout their lives that they really had no reason to trust him and the team. When they finally chose to depend on each other, this decision marked a major breakthrough, as the boys and their leaders became a group that from then on shared life together in the wilderness.

In the summer of 2006, camp consisted of 2 two week sessions and the CLDC team was given the opportunity to work with eight Ray of Hope boys, two of whom stayed for the duration of the summer. Campsite building at the Voyagers camp continued. The boys built another sleeping tent, a personal hygiene area, laid ground logs and put on a lot of finishing touches. Weekly two-day cookouts added a new element to camp that year.

In retrospect, the summer sessions 2005 and 2006 were particularly challenging as there were growing pains in each and every area of camp. "You needed a compass to get to the campsite," Ron remembers. "We did not even have a trail." At chuck wagon, food was cooked in the tiny kitchen upstairs and needed to be carried down the stairs into the dining hall and power from the generator was unreliable at best. With limited infrastructure in place, it took a lot of extra effort to operate camp in those early days.

The core group at camp consisted of Ron, Cindy and Norma Martin. Norma had previously volunteered with Family and Children Services. When during a visit to Ron and Cindy at

"The canoe trip was a lot of fun. There were some long portages but it was worth it. The portages helped us and the group with working on our endurance. Also the rapids were scary but also a lot of fun building our trust in each other." –Chief Marcus





Bald Eagle Camp Norma had been first introduced to the concept of therapeutic wilderness camping, she had felt immediately drawn to it. On their way home from that visit, Cindy's mother had shared with Norma Ron's dream of starting a camp in Ontario and Norma had committed to becoming involved right away. From the earliest days of CLDC Norma would book off her holidays at work and come up to camp to help wherever she could. Ever since, Norma's passion for camp has been an inspiration for countless others, including campers, fellow volunteer staff, chiefs, Board members and community partners.

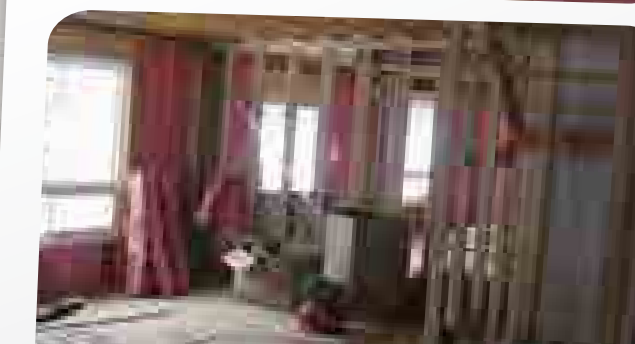
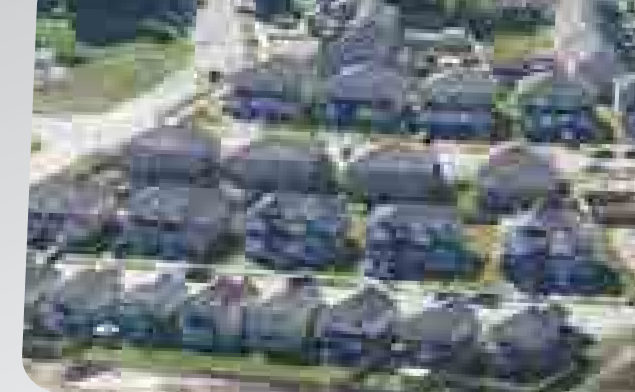
With a core group of three people running camp, CLDC was clearly understaffed. After two years of operating camp on such limited resources CLDC needed to scale back and regroup. Emotionally, by the end of 2006 the CLDC team felt that they could not run camp for another year without putting some stronger foundations into place first.

"You can jump off the rock at Paul's Lake and the big jumping rock in Crane Lake, and you can go on a canoe trip. We get to go on a tractor ride, cut down trees and play a game of trees. Last but not least there are awesome chiefs here named Chief Tom, Chief Ron, Chief Nick, Chief Nate if you need help with your problems. And if you have scratches or anything that hurts then Chief Nate will help you.." —Mathew

Putting camp on a solid foundation - 2007

By the end of the 2006 season, the growing pains of CLDC had become so obvious that there was a growing concern that in its current form camp was not sustainable in the long run. The valued partnership with Ray of Hope had carried CLDC through and afforded Ron and the team to work with campers for two years, yet there were larger questions that needed to be addressed. The core group was small, there was no bridge connecting the two parts of the property below the dam, and the long lane into camp needed to be maintained every spring to ensure access to camp. Furthermore, camp was operating based on the original zoning of the property from the 1960s when it had been zoned for use as a camp by the Mennonite Brethren. The Township of the Archipelago, where CLDC is located, had only been founded in 1980, to the effect that CLDC was operating based on zoning that was grandfathered in as it predated the founding of the township by two decades. By 2006/7, it had become clear that if CLDC ever wanted to expand operations, it required a zoning decision by the Township of the Archipelago.

The need to regroup and work on establishing long-term foundations for CLDC as a fully independent organization became even more urgent when in the fall of 2006, Ray of Hope informed Ron that they could no longer be a partner in



operating camp. As so often in the story of CLDC, what was experienced as a great disappointment and severe challenge at the time, turned out to be a blessing in disguise because it really forced the CLDC team to work on establishing solid foundations for operating camp independently. In retrospect, the instrumental partnership with Ray of Hope had afforded CLDC the opportunity to get off the ground and “test the waters”. Ray of Hope had lent its young partner organization a helping hand in growing it to a point where CLDC would be able to stand on its own feet.

Throughout 2007, the CLDC team focussed on developing processes, apply for zoning that would allow for long-term growth, team building and placing camp on more solid financial foundations. An opportunity for the latter presented itself by means of a partnership with Morningstar Ministries in the form of a residential construction project in New Hamburg. In the fall of 2006, Ron had started working with Morningstar by building four houses. Then Morningstar and CLDC put in a combined bid for another 18 lots, and within days of CLDC being told by Ray of Hope that they would not extend their involvement into the 2007 season, Morningstar and CLDC’s bid was approved.

The extended New Hamburg building project with Morningstar promised a financial return for camp that would allow CLDC to significantly reduce its debt load. At the same time, the application for rezoning and a new site development plan would set the stage for the eventual expansion of camp in the future.

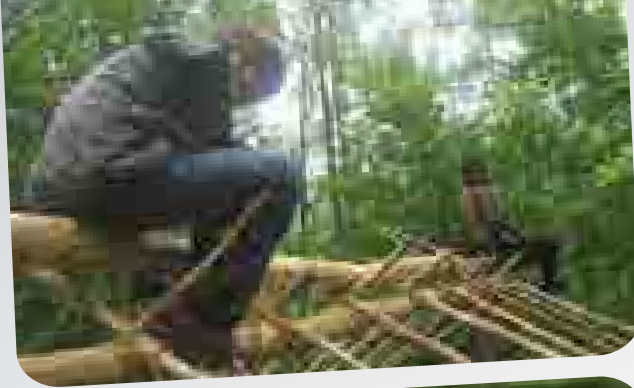
Brian Stubbs, who served as chief in both 2006 and 2008, was instrumental in drafting policies and procedures that are being used at camp to this day. No camp sessions were offered in 2007 and the camp property was used by families and a number of different youth groups. Tom and Rita Weber, who were quickly becoming part of the core CLDC group, went up to camp and, together with a group of friends, started building the chuck tent at the Voyager site. While it was necessary to focus energies on building the long-term foundations for CLDC, CLDC team members found it difficult not to live out camp’s core mission of working with boys that year.

New beginnings - 2008

As hoped for, 2008 turned out to be a milestone year for CLDC. Camp re-launched with two 2-week camp sessions with a total of 14 campers. It was the first time that CLDC operated a summer program developed, funded and carried out entirely as an independent camp. Added to the August 2008 session were 8 young adult men who worked with CLDC Chairman Jeremy Horne for a week developing leadership skills and doing self-reflection while helping CLDC with some campsite development projects. These young men merged into the regular Crane Lake program when they ventured on a three day canoe trip with the eight younger campers.

“My most fun moment was when I caught a 13 inch bass in a net underwater using goggles and will power.” –Zack





One of the shortcomings experienced in the previous years had been that there was no real intake process. Campers had no clear expectation when arriving at camp, they had not met any of the CLDC staff and they had no defined goals. In trying to build a relationship with campers in 2005 and 2006, Ron had realized that to truly enable boys to grow at camp they needed to be part of the intake process. This is why, beginning in 2008, Ron met with campers prior to the camp season to establish the foundation of a relationship, to define goals together and make campers part of the planning process. One of CLDC's particular strengths today is this partnership right from the beginning and the boys' realization that they are not forced into camp like into so many other things in their lives.

The 2008 core team was double the size of that of two years earlier. Tom and Rita Weber had joined the CLDC team and have been with CLDC in supervisory roles ever since. As mentioned, Ron, Cindy, Tom and Rita had met at a conference at Fair Play in 2005 while Rita was serving as a cook and Tom as a counsellor. Tom's campsite at Fair Play used to be the one that Ron had worked at years earlier and Ron and Tom had instantly connected while talking back at the campsite for a long time. Tom and Rita, who were dating at the time, had wanted to know everything about CLDC. When Tom and Rita had gotten married in 2006 and had come up to camp that year, they had told Ron and Cindy that they had very purposely decided to live in Ontario because they wanted to be part of CLDC.

In 2007, after coming back to Canada following his two year stint at Fair Play, Tom had started working with Ron on the New Hamburg building project. In the process, Ron and Tom had realized their common foundations and had come together on the vision for camp. Being able to entrust Tom with the vision was a great relief for Ron. With an eye to becoming long-term partners at camp and in business, they decided to incorporate Summit Building Contractors as a jointly owned business to support them throughout the year so that they could implement their shared vision for camp during the summers. That kind of commitment changed everything for Ron because from then on he had a partner in Tom, both at camp and in business. Ever since, the two areas of their relationship have blended together more and more as Ron and Tom often meet CLDC boys after work, and particularly throughout the camper intake process.

"So on our day trip at Warnika Lake it was about 45 minutes into fishing. Chief Tim was helping Justin unhook his lure from a long branch it was snagged on. I took a quick cast and BAM I reeled in a 14 inch bass. So after my catch, Chief Tim broke Justin's line and did a heroic dive into the lake, went under water like AQUA MAN, and picked up the huge branch and found Justin's lure like a hero." –Chris



2009 - Explorers and Voyagers take to camp

For the 2009 season the format of camp was changed to 3 two week sessions and specific themes were created for each session: "Paddling in the Great Outdoors" focused on learning paddling skills and the different parts of a canoe. One of the highlights of "Surviving in the Wilderness" was a visit by Ken Molynaux from the Ministry of Natural Resources who talked to campers about what to do when encountering a bear or a rattle snake. "Discovering the World of Nature" was about exploring first-hand all the various animals that populate the Crane Lake property. Marvin Kuepfer joined the CLDC team in 2009 as chief after a 2 year stint at Bald Eagle Boys Camp in Pennsylvania and following working together with Ron and Tom at the New Hamburg construction project. Since then, Chief Marv has become a key member of the core team in his ongoing role as one of two CLDC camp supervisors.

Throughout the summer of 2009 a second group campsite, the Explorers camp, was built. Since then, CLDC has been operating with two groups—the "Voyagers" and the "Explorers"—at two campsites in the interior of the property. Having two groups brought a spirit of camaraderie, added competition to group games and increased the overall fun around camp. With two groups, sharing time after meals has become more stimulating as each group shares its adventures





with the other group. At the same time, having two campsites allowed CLDC to accommodate more campers. 31 camper spots were filled in 2009 with some campers staying for more than one session. The majority of boys were return campers who had been at camp the year before, allowing CLDC staff to build even stronger long-term relationships. Having several chiefs stay for the entire summer made a huge difference in 2009 and created the model for the following years.

2010 - 2012

A record number of campers attended camp in 2010 when 44 out of 48 possible spots were filled during 3 two-week-long sessions. As in the years before, sessions were theme-based and many campers of the previous years returned to CLDC. A new sleep tent was built in 2010 at the Explorers site with all 26 rafters and 2 tie rails put in during one morning, an achievement celebrated by the entire group. A year later, in 2011, the format of 3 two-week sessions was maintained until, in 2012, the format was changed to 1 two-week and 2 three-week-sessions.

In March of 2012, Ron, Tom, and a group of campers spent March break at camp. They tapped trees, boiled maple syrup, hiked the perimeter of the property, worked on homework and discovered how to do life at camp during the winter.

A more educational focus was added to the program in 2012. Throughout the spring of 2012, CLDC invested resources into curriculum development as a first step towards accreditation with the province for the future transition of camp into an extended-term facility. Brought on by the CLDC Board as temporary contract staff, an education specialist developed an educational framework for camp including an academic progress evaluation process to assess students' success. At camp, Trading Post was launched in 2012. Marvin Kuepfer took ownership for it, got it running and developed Trading Post into the popular camp institution it has become since then. Referred to by camper Max as "basically a camp version of Canadian Tire," Trading Post gives each camper an opportunity to budget, balance a cheque book, write a cheque, and make wise investments into activity-related items from grub and hooks for fishing to wood for carving. Throughout the 2012 camp season, campers were challenged by different speakers that came to share during Sunday morning chapel times. On the organizational side, a camp video was produced and launched and Camp Brain software was purchased and put to use in 2012.

"My best memory of camp is when we first went fishing at Paul's Lake. I like this the most because I caught my first fish here, even though I could not keep it because it was too small."

—Brennan



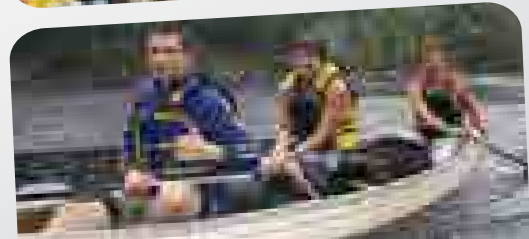
2013 - 2014 Steps towards the transformation of camp

In preparation of the 2013 season, the new CLDC website was launched, renovations were made to the shower house and laundry room and a permanent bridge was installed in the spring of 2013 and officially unveiled by the CLDC Board in the summer. In 2013, camp consisted of one 2-week session and two 3-week-long sessions organized around the themes of "Canoe and Discover the World of Nature", "Design and Build" and "Survive & Thrive in the Wilderness". Voyagers and Explorers designed and built their own cook tent and hearth at their respective campsites.

In 2013, after years of gaining a deeper understanding of the needs of CLDC campers, Ron, the Board and CLDC staff felt strongly that it was time to take camp to the next level. In order to be available to at-risk boys and youths for an extended time to create a better long-term impact, the CLDC team, on May 5th, 2014, launched the new CLDC Crisis Intervention Program. Designed as a test for the transition of camp into an extended-term facility, the overall objective of the program is to give youths who are experiencing an immediate crisis situation and who are not capable of operating in their normal home, school or agency environment a safe alternate setting where



they can work towards developing the life skills necessary for a successful reintegration into their normal environment. The 2014 Crisis Intervention Program fed directly into the regular camping season and the deeper impact created by the opportunity to work with special campers over an extended time was felt by everyone involved in the new program.



Life at Camp

CHAPTER FIVE



"It's so different from other camps because it focuses on team work, growing as a person and survival without electronics."

—Trevor



Therapeutic wilderness camping

CLDC is built on the concept of therapeutic wilderness camping as originally devised by the Salesmanship Club of Dallas, Texas, a charitable organization dedicated to working with at-risk boys and young men, that began operating youth camps in the 1920's. From its inception, therapeutic wilderness camping has provided an alternate setting for boys who are struggling with a traditional class-room setting. Therapeutic camping is built on the premise that sharing life in a controlled group environment in the wilderness can have a lasting positive impact on a boy's or young man's life. The concept rests on four pillars:

- **structures and routines**
- **identification and verbalization of problems and problem-solving**
- **group planning and joint plan implementation**
- **evaluation (self and others)**

As campers work alongside each other, share experiences, address conflict within the group, connect with each other and with counsellors, and make plans and decisions together, they learn fundamental life skills that help them address challenges in their regular home, school and work environment.

Learn, share, help, be part of the team, inspire, lead, overcome, transform, believe, think about life beyond yourself and your own challenges.

Campsites and daily routines

At CLDC, campers are divided into two groups - the Voyagers and the Explorers - by age. Led by two chiefs per group, Voyagers and Explorers live at separate campsites in the forest but share meal times together at the main dining hall called chuck wagon. Each camp consists of multiple tent-like structures built with a pole frame, a vinyl tarp roof and a plywood floor. From the earliest days of CLDC, campers have been involved in the various stages of campsite construction, both the design and the actual construction process. At the present time, each campsite encompasses two sleeping tents, a kitchen tent, a bathroom and designated spaces for storing tools, toothbrushes and cleaning supplies, gathering areas plus a pow-wow area outside the actual site. Cooking tents with hearths were added to both campsites during the 2013 camping season. Both campsites are connected with chuck wagon through a trail that campers walk on back and forth several times every day.

Each day at camp is filled with lots of activity. There are routines and many new things to explore. Campers get up early and

do chores around their camp before heading down trail for a hearty breakfast. The rest of the morning is usually filled with a multiple-day work project that includes construction tasks at the campsite. The idea behind chores, construction projects and working together to affect improvements to the trail is that campers take ownership of and responsibility for "their camp". Over the years, campers have built many things: both the Voyager and Explorer campsites were built by campers under the direction of Ron, Tom and the CLDC team without the use of any power tools. An ongoing project is the building and maintenance of the camp trails which includes cutting down and skinning trees and placing side logs to protect the trails from erosion.



On the way back to chuck wagon for lunch campers often stop at Paul's Lake to take a refreshing plunge in the lake. Lunch is followed by clean up and then siesta back at camp. Afternoon activities include fishing, swimming, canoeing, group games, exploring the underwater life by the narrows, carving and so much more. After an activity-filled day, campers, CLDC staff and volunteers gather back at chuck wagon for dinner and sharing time with camp songs and reflections of the day. Showers and changing into clean clothes are part of the daily routine at camp. After dark, back at their campsites the Voyagers and Explorers gather for pow-pow to reflect on challenges the group experienced throughout the day, to share positive experiences and to set the tone for the next day. Then it is "lights out" as campers and chiefs restore their energy for another activity-filled day.

Building relationships and facilitating accomplishment

While at camp, campers live and operate exclusively in their respective groups. They are Voyagers or they are Explorers and their "tribe" becomes their "family". Two chiefs each stay with their respective groups through all routines and activities and sleep at the campsite as well. As they build relationships with campers and serve as positive role models, their role is key

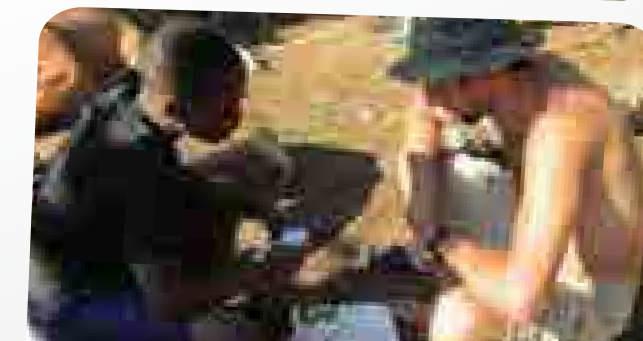
in the daily operations of camp. They are the first to learn of and react to the needs of individual campers. Their dedication and care creates an atmosphere of trust where challenges can be dealt with effectively and meaningful relationships develop between campers and their chiefs and fellow campers.

Camp is a place where actions speak louder than words. Many of our boys have experienced rejection and abandonment in their lives. They are dealing with hurt and pain. Our campers come from a variety of home and agency situations. At CLDC building a relationship with campers is not centered on a boy's negative behaviour. Rather it is achieved through actions -helping a boy make his bed and keep his personal box organized, paddle a canoe, filet a fish or conduct a building task-that help him move towards personal accomplishment. Personal accomplishment in an environment of loving, caring relationships is one of the key experiences campers take away from camp.

"My highlight of Crane Lake Discovery Camp was when I caught that 15" Large Mouth Bass off the dam, just before the fish fry. I also like the three day canoe trip but I didn't like the portages. I loved the saunas and jumping off Paul's dock. I also loved playing capture the flag every Sunday after Chapel." -Liam

Everything we do, we do as a group, and everything we do, we do with a good attitude

The two golden rules that govern daily life at camp are: Everything we do, we do as a group, and everything we do, we do with a good attitude. Daily routines, special projects and life at camp are designed to teach campers life skills that they can take home with them at the end of camp, such as planning, teamwork and personal responsibility. Keeping the campsite in order through daily campsite cleaning chores teaches campers **responsibility as a group member**. Listening to and following instructions by chiefs and CLDC staff teaches **acceptance of rules and authority**. Keeping personal spaces at the campsite neat and clean and daily showers raise campers' focus on personal **responsibilities**. Building projects from design through construction and participating in planning and cooking meals teach the skills of **planning and working together** to achieve planned results. Identifying and verbalizing personal challenges with chiefs and the group teach campers to **communicate effectively** and to **trust and accept the help of others**.



Group dynamics

Groups are organized by age with each group existing of boys of similar maturity level. Aside from that there is great diversity within each group as boys of varying backgrounds and with different challenges share life together. This diversity adds strength to the group work process and reflects the reality of living in a “normal” community. Operating as a member of a group creates lasting effects in campers as they are continuously confronted with the consequences that their choices and behaviour have on other group members, learn empathy and are held accountable for their actions in a controlled and safe environment. Through everyday situations, a boy’s behaviour is mirrored in the eyes of his peers. In this way, the group helps each boy recognize the impact of his actions and - under the leadership of the chiefs and the CLDC team - creates a forum to address related challenges. Positive (and negative) group dynamics play a key role in helping boys identify their challenges and, with the help of their chiefs and peers, to devise ways of modifying their behaviour. As many of our campers struggle with aggression, have difficulty listening to others and accepting authority and leadership, the need to work as part of a group in the wilderness teaches them key life skills that can become powerful tools when transferred into their regular school, home and work environment.

“I also loved trading post. It’s basically a camp version of Canadian Tire. I bought lots of things there like paint for my canoe that I carved, grubs with jig hooks, a pocket knife and more..” –Max

Group problem solving

Identifying and verbalizing a problem and solving it within the group is a big part of the daily routine at camp. Instead of focusing on penalizing a boy’s disruptive behaviour, our goal is to get to the root of the problem and develop a better solution with the help of the group. The moment a problem arises, group routines are stopped and the challenge is dealt with within the group immediately. Whether it is during a construction project, on a canoe trip, while exploring nature and wildlife or during dinner at chuck wagon, the group “moves out” and does not resume its activity until a solution has been found. This approach deliberately puts the onus on the group member who has disrupted the group activity to come up with a plan to move forward. At the same time, it makes the other group members part of the problem solving process. More so than words from chiefs or staff, reactions by peers teach the boys a deeper understanding of how negative behaviour impacts those around them. As they try to motivate and help their struggling fellow-camper, group members individually and the group as a collective, experience the positive impact of joining hands when facing a challenge. In this, camp provides opportunities for personal growth many times throughout each day.





Group planning and plan implementation

Whether it is planning meals, deciding what equipment is needed for a canoe trip or planning tasks for a construction project - campers experience the positive effects of all group members contributing to the planning process. Campers learn new skills and discover abilities they did not know they had and realize how pulling their weight in a joint group effort contributes to the success of the group. They start looking beyond themselves and their own capabilities when trying to devise a solution, experiencing empowerment in the process.

Evaluation

Campers' evaluation of themselves and their peers is a key element in the process of personal growth within the group. Naturally, evaluation is the first step in the process of devising a plan for the group to move forward from a group member's or several members' disruptive behaviour. Outside the context of a particular challenge, evaluation is at the heart of pow-wow each night. Rather than re-evaluating a group member's negative behaviour, pow-wow is a forum for the group to reflect on joint achievements and for the boys to express what they have appreciated about each other during the day. Pow-wow teaches the value of forgiveness, of not holding a

grudge and of always looking for the positive things in people and situations. As the last thing of the day before bedtime, pow-wow ends the day on a positive note and helps prepare a clean slate for the next day.

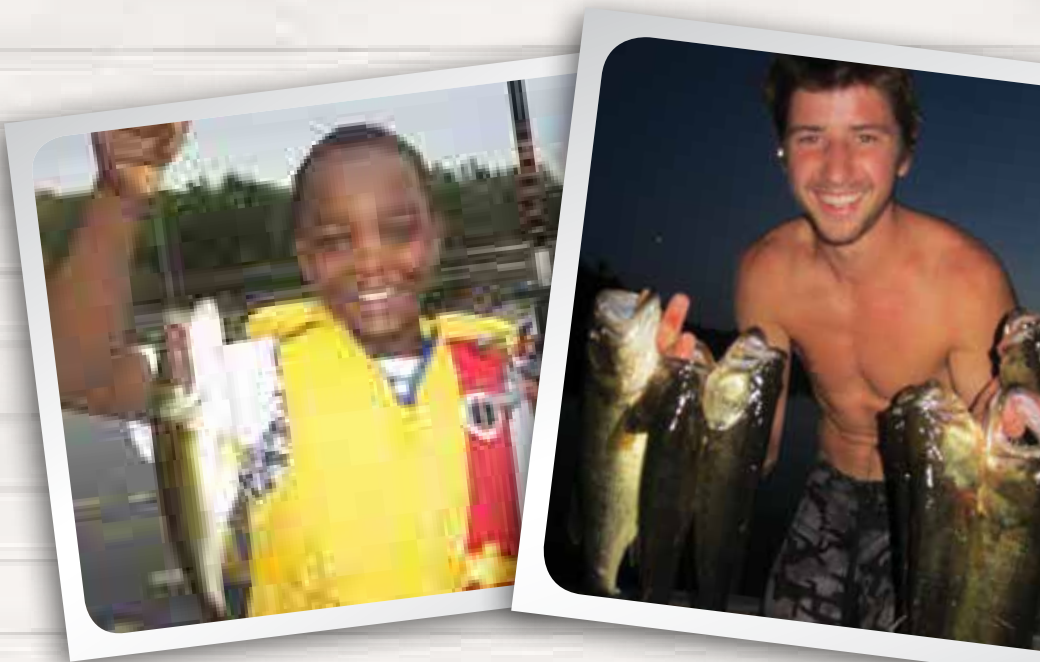
Impact of camp on campers

CLDC is all about changing lives. Camp supervisor Tom Weber explains: "We can talk about infrastructure and improvements to camp, but if we are not reaching the heart of these kids then we are wasting time. Our primary focus is on reaching the heart of the boys and the rest follows suit."

The positive effects of camp on campers' lives express themselves in many ways. It never ceases to amaze parents, friends and people working with CLDC campers throughout the year in various capacities that even campers who come to CLDC with serious reservations think by the end of the season that CLDC is the best place to be and are determined to come back the following year. As CLDC Chairman Don Weber notes: "There is a system about camp that simply works with kids."

"Fishing and being at the fish fry was the best fun EVER! On our canoe trip we had a lot of fun too, but the fish fry was better and funner." -Lionnel

For individual campers who continue to struggle in their daily lives outside of camp, CLDC has become their lifeline throughout the year. Boys who have lived in group homes or other agency-based environments for most of their life experience camp as a place where they feel taken care of and valued. For boys from troubled home environments who have been to camp for consecutive years camp is a resting place and a place of strength and inspiration that helps them get through the time in-between camp seasons. As Tom Weber explains: "The beauty of camp is that kids whose life isn't pretty don't have to paint that pretty picture and can speak about how life really is for them. Camp provides a safe place where they can be honest about life."



Trusting themselves and others is one of the key experiences campers take with them when leaving camp. The following are just two of many examples of how campers have reflected on the impact of camp on their lives:

While fishing, one CLDC camper refused to let anyone help him bring in a big bass, and after 15 minutes of struggle, he lost the fish beside the boat. That same evening he said: "Had I let you help me, I would have that fish."

Another camper shared: "During the first year, I was shy so I didn't want to share my problems until Ron helped me. My troubles at home improved a little. The second year I wasn't afraid to share my feelings. I was able to share and also to work through them since I had more time. My problems at home were less and less."

Spiritual growth is part of the impact CLDC creates. Ron Weber explains: "Showing the boys the clear line of what is right and what is wrong, that there is a right and a wrong way of making your bed, building a tent, paddling a canoe, carving, etc. - those are foundational things of camp. Camp is about showing campers what is right and what is wrong through experience. The spiritual element becomes part of the physical aspects. When a camper's needs are being met he becomes receptive at the spiritual level as well."

God calls us to turn our beliefs into action and to live out our beliefs each and every day.





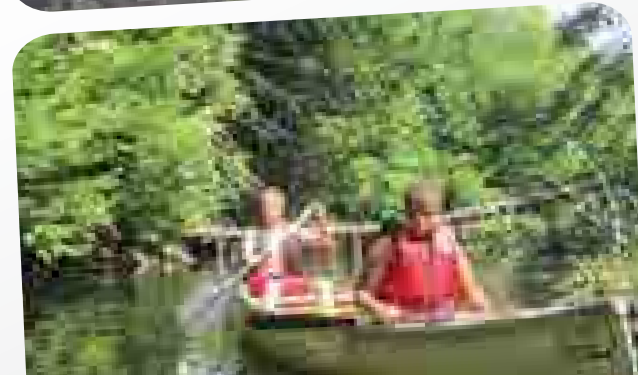
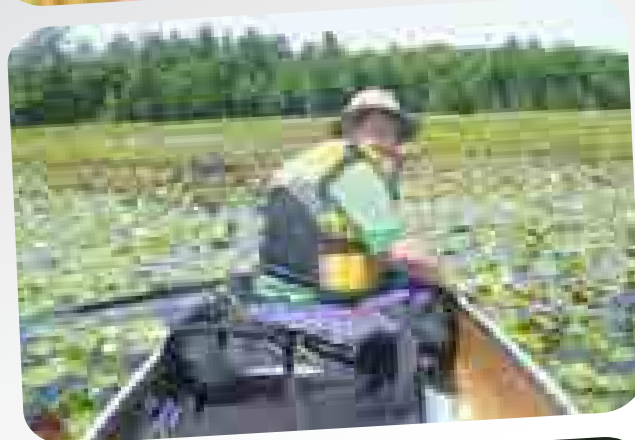
Wilderness Adventures

CHAPTER SIX

"I greatly enjoyed catching a 21" bass during the three day canoe trip. I caught the bass on a homemade wooden lure that Chief Dale helped me make."

—Scott





Canoe trips

At the end of each session, the groups gear up for their wilderness canoe trip. Lasting three to four days depending on the age and ability of the group, these outdoor adventures include canoeing, backpacking and portaging. Although canoe routes vary, typical loops include McChachern Lake, Little Blackstone, Wilcox Lake, Moon River, Eagle Lake, and others.

Throughout the trip the group sets up camp at different locations. Fishing for food at different times throughout the day is a big part of each canoe trip. It is not unusual for the boys to have bread on a stick and fresh-caught fish for breakfast. The entire group is involved in the planning and preparation process from setting goals for the trip, identifying and gathering necessary equipment, mapping the route, planning meals, navigating, etc. Operating as an entirely self-reliant group during a canoe trip provides unique opportunities for campers to learn new skills, problem solve, work together as a group and share many new impressions.

“I am grateful I got this chance to enjoy this camp with other people. Camp helped me to learn how to work as a group and do things that I can't do in the city. I wish to always be a camper. Thanks for the good and bad times that I had which made me a stronger man.” –Yemeri

There are many great experiences to be had during a CLDC canoe trip. Canoe trips are lots of fun for campers. Catching enough fish for a meal for the entire group causes great excitement. Turtle Island in particular is known among campers as the perfect place for catching large-mouth bass. Fun activities during canoe trips include swimming, boys and chiefs doing flips in the water, canoe races or watching turtles in their natural habitat.

While providing many opportunities for having fun together, canoe trips can be strenuous. Sometimes the combination of a compass, map and the wilderness experience of chiefs is required to find an overgrown portage. Portages vary in length from a few hundred meters to more than a kilometer. Canoeing and portaging for multiple days in a row is hard physical work, yet it gives the group a great sense of achievement and the chance to experience the value of teamwork. Most importantly, after a day of canoeing and portaging, the food tastes even better than at camp.

Fishing

At CLDC, there are many opportunities for great fishing. Canoeing and fishing at Paul's or Peanut Lake is a rather typical way for the group to spend an afternoon or evening at camp. “Keepers” are measured, filleted and kept in the freezer for the famous CLDC fish fry every Sunday. Catching a certain size fish is among the goals of many campers for their time



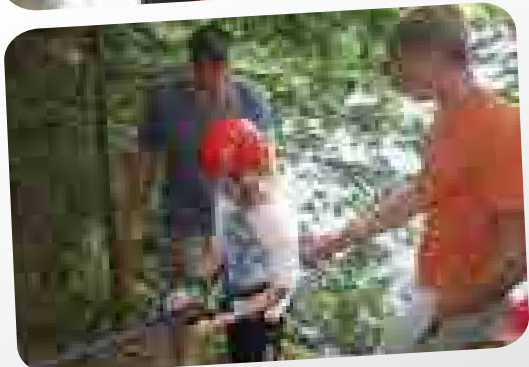
at camp and catching their first keeper fish in particular is a truly unforgettable experience for CLDC campers. Latest by the time they hook their first fish, campers are hooked to CLDC as well.

Little and Big Critters

Camp abounds with wildlife. There are frogs and toads, snapping turtles, fish, rabbits, beavers, deer, snakes, chipmunks, squirrels, herons, loons, ducks, moose and bear. Then there is Roxie (Ron and Cindy's yellow lab), the chickens in the chicken coop and the bugs that operate in a category of their own. At camp, it is always possible to see an animal around the next corner while walking on trail. Canoe trips create even more great opportunities to experience animals in their natural habitat. An entire camp theme is built around discovering wildlife and nature and seeing animals is among the most cherished moments experienced by campers.

"My highlight of being at Crane Lake Discovery Camp was seeing new discoveries like the snapping turtle that lives at McChechern Lake. Also I met some new people, like my chiefs and fellow campers. The animals I've seen are snapping turtles, a kangaroo moose, a snake, fish, mud puppies and loons. I've had a great time here at camp." —Daniel





Be the Shining Light - The CLDC Family

CHAPTER SEVEN



"I loved everything at camp. I thank God for bringing me here and for the Pastor and giving a good message. I just love this camp!"

—Jordan

Be the shining light

A few years back, two CLDC chiefs took their day off to go fishing. What better plan than to grab a canoe and spend a few hours fishing for bass on Paul's Lake. Leaving chuck wagon after a hearty breakfast in the morning, the two chiefs grabbed their fishing rods and tackle and headed down trail. At Paul's Lake, they picked Tippy, the most infamous of the several aluminum canoes permanently placed there and took to the water. It did not take them long to learn why CLDC campers had named her Tippy.

It could not have been a more perfect day: blue skies, sunshine, a little breeze - a somewhat typical Muskoka day. Although they landed a few bass, the catch was nowhere near what they had in mind. At around 4 o'clock in the afternoon the two chiefs decided to portage into nearby Peanut Lake and test the waters there. They completely lost track of time while they spent the afternoon talking and fishing. As dusk settled in they realized that it was time to make the short portage back into Paul's Lake and head back to camp before it got too dark. When they approached the portage, they noticed that a black bear had occupied the ridge right where they needed to cross to get back into Paul's Lake. They waited for a while for the bear to move on, but then decided to bushwhack across the ridge further down the lake. Their unplanned detour led them to the swamiest part of Paul's Lake and they struggled to re-launch the boat among trees, grass, lily pads and mud.

By the time they finally pulled Tippy out where they had started their fishing-trip-turned-sudden-adventure earlier that day, it was pitch black. Without a flashlight, finding the trail took them what felt like another half hour or so. On the trail, one tree looked like another and the two chiefs stopped many times wondering whether they were still headed the right direction. It was a very humbling experience. How could the trail that they had walked so many times during daylight and with flashlights at night be so unfamiliar in complete darkness? As they got closer to camp, they could hear the rolling thunder of the water rushing down the dam and narrows. They were relieved when they finally caught sight of the comforting light from the dining hall shining through the trees. With the light guiding their way, they were back at camp in a heartbeat, ready to share their stories and catch of the day with the entire team.

CLDC wants to be that shining light in the darkness - a shining light when the familiar turns unfamiliar, the going gets tough, guidance is needed, the direction has become unclear or an unexpected challenge has presented itself. Driven by their own faith and based on their shared conviction that Christ calls people to be a positive influence in each others' lives, CLDC staff and team members deeply care about campers at a personal level. Through their actions, they want to be mentors, role models and facilitators of personal growth for boys and young men looking for a difference in their lives. As volunteers they are following a call God has put into their heart.





The CLDC Family

As a 100% volunteer organization, CLDC could not function without the dedication, time and efforts of our volunteers. Camp counsellors (“chiefs”) live with the campers at the campsite and are accessible 24 hours a day. Camp Director Ron Weber and Program and Camp Supervisors Tom Weber and Marvin Kuepfer oversee camp operations and “run with the group” at different times as well. CLDC directors, supervisors and counsellors are experienced in working with children and young adults. They are trained and certified in First Aid and in conflict resolution.

Volunteer staff members serve in a great number of supporting roles as cooks, in maintenance, administration, etc. Ron Weber explains the importance of each and every member of the CLDC family: “The model of therapeutic camping is great, but it is the heart of the people who are running camp that makes the difference and creates the impact.” Members of the CLDC family are united in their shared commitment to making a difference in the lives of CLDC campers. Beyond that, there is a special sense of connectedness, vision sharing and spiritual unity within the CLDC family, as members empower each other and see their own roles at camp as part of something much bigger than themselves.

“When I caught my first fish I was happy. We were at Little Blackstone. There was a tug on my line and I knew I had a fish. It jumped high out of the water at least two times. It was a Large Mouth Bass.” –Bradley



Chiefs

Group counsellors (“chiefs”) are in charge of a group of campers. They live with the group at the campsite and serve as the primary go-to-person for their campers throughout camp. Many chiefs dedicate their entire summer to leading groups of campers at CLDC and are part of the ongoing partnerships with campers throughout the year. Having that kind of staff consistency is instrumental in bringing stability to the programs and enabling campers to develop strong relationships with their chiefs built on trust and the experience of being truly cared for. One of CLDC’s 2012 counsellors has become a “Big Brother” for a camper with the support of Extend-A-Family. Over the years, the following people have served as CLDC chiefs

2005: Jamie Ferber, Shane Martin, Chris Bauman

2006: Brian Stubbs, Doug Brooks, Shane Martin, Rick Frey

2008: Rod Martin, Brian Stubbs

2009: Mike Burkholder, Marvin Kuepfer, Alex Freeman, Dale Horst, Dan Koenig, Kent Shantz, Rex Miller

2010: Isaac Bauman, Mike Burkholder, Alex Freeman, Dale Horst, Marvin Kuepfer, Kent Shantz, Tony Weber, Scott Weir

2011: Scott Weir, Marcus Clemmer, Dwight Martin, Tony Weber, Gary Wideman, Jonathan Kuepfer

2012: Marcus Clemmer, Tim Martin, Luke Frey, Nick Freeman, Scott Weir, Jeff Horst, Ulli Frisse

2013: Luke Frey, Nick Freeman, Nate Weber, Dalton Mishler, Menno Wichers

Chiefs give it their all throughout camp. They “hit the ground running”, as campers’ challenges and needs are real and often require immediate attention. Faced with unexpected situations all the time, theirs is a role of tremendous responsibility. Leading a group enables chiefs to grow in their commitment to the campers and in their own interpersonal skills each and every minute throughout the day. Chiefs don’t teach life to campers; they live life with them and lead by example. In the



process of sharing life together, they add as much to their campers as the campers add to them. Counsellor Rod Martin said it best in 2008: “The youth that joined us were complex, each with their own strengths and struggles, and in the four weeks I spent working with them I think they helped me more than I helped them. The most significant thing I will be taking from CLDC is my own personal growth. I learned so much about leadership, about seeing and highlighting the value in others, about encouragement and constructive criticism, about problem-solving, about planning and organization. I believe I have come out of the experience as a more confident and responsible person. There is nothing that helps a person grow like diving head-first into a challenging environment.”

The chiefs’ role is at the heart of campers’ experiences. In many ways they are the heartbeat of camp throughout each session. Every minute throughout the day they implement CLDC’s core philosophy of connecting with young men through meaningful relationships. Managing the group is a key part of the chiefs’ role at camp. In that, chiefs relate to campers not from a position of strength, but humbleness based on the understanding that relationship building rather than physically or mentally controlling the group creates the biggest impact.

Sorting out fact from feeling and realizing that boys will often project their frustrations onto the counsellor as an authority figure is part of the personal growth process for chiefs. Learning not to internalize campers’ negative reactions and understanding pushback in the larger context of campers’



“Another one of my favourite times at camp was the evenings. Whenever the group would get to bed on time, Chief Luke and I would go around to each of the campers and pray with them. Being able to talk personally with someone and tuck him in bed at night would always encourage me and give me the energy to keep on chiefting.” —Chief Dalton



frustrations, pent-up emotions and painful life experiences is one of the core skills chiefs develop at camp. In reflecting on his own role as a new chief at Fair Play Wilderness Camp back in the 1990s, Ron explains the complex dynamics of being a chief working with boys experiencing challenges: “It wasn’t until I lost total control that I really became the counsellor of that group.” It is in those “where the rubber hits the road” situations that a chief truly connects with and earns the trust of his group. Back in the early 1990s, Ron struggled through camp for the first three months: “But at the same time something happened. I had to throw away all my biases and get down to the core of who I was only to discover that it was not me who was doing this – it was God who was telling me to learn how to relate to and love these kids. Because that was the only thing that carried it: to learn how to love these kids beyond their pain.”

Cooks and Support Staff

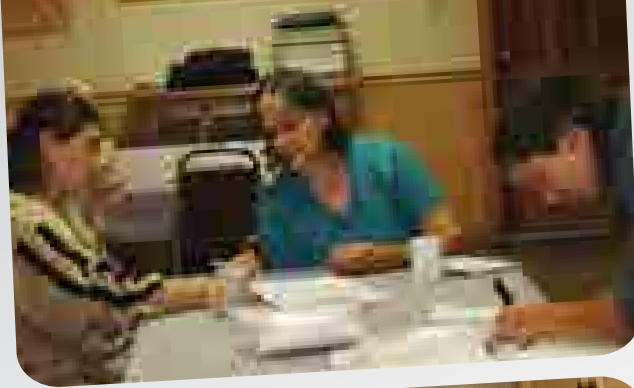
CLDC kitchen staff ensures that campers receive three nutritious meals a day during camp while other volunteer staff help ensure smooth operations through maintenance and in so many other ways. Volunteers who have served over the years are Art Bauman, Myrna Bauman, Mike Burkholder, Ashley Burkholder, Alice Horst, Howard Horst, Kristen Horst, Becky Kroeker, Pedro Kroeker, Heather Kuepfer, Gary Martin,

Leon Martin, Leanne Martin, Mel Martin, Norma Martin, Ruth Martin, Laurissa Pinczuk, Ellen Sauder, Gavin Shantz, Shannon Shantz, James Sommerville, Dawn Sommerville, Juanita Staken, Lynette Streicher, Holly Swartzentruber, Dale Troyer, Jen Wagler, Maria Weaver, Dennis Weber, Leonard Weber, Lucille Weber, and Yvonne Weber.

From the first day of camp, Cindy Weber has gone the extra mile both for the campers and for the chiefs. She has created a culture at chuck wagon where volunteer staff in the kitchen interact with the boys and are a part of the program rather than just being part of the background structure of camp. Cindy makes camp a welcoming home to everyone, working in the kitchen together with her team of dedicated volunteers from 6:30am to 8:30pm every day. When coming off trail three times during each day, campers are not just looking forward to a great meal, but are equally excited to interact with Cindy and the CLDC volunteer staff at chuck wagon. To receive their food, campers line up in front of the kitchen window where they are served by Cindy and the kitchen staff. On one

“Coming in part way through the first day in second session I hit the ground running. Camp is always full of surprises. You are constantly on the tip of your toes. My patience has been tested, my heart has been poured out and my strength cut down. God has taught me to often humble myself and submit to his will not my own.” –Chief Luke





occasion, a CLDC camper came through the food line for dessert. Cindy had watched him and from that she knew that he liked having his dessert out of an orange colour bowl. As she greeted him, Cindy moved a blue bowl aside so she could get to an orange one instead. The boy had been watching to see what colour would be at the top when his turn came. His face fell a little when he saw it was blue. The moment Cindy switched it for him his whole face lit up and he had the biggest smile ever! Cindy said: "You like the orange one, don't you?" He nodded, still smiling. More than just getting the orange bowl, this camper knew he was loved and cared about. It was written all over his face.

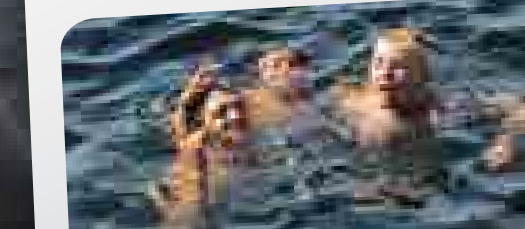
Cindy's parents, Alice and Howard Horst, have been part of the foundations of camp from the earliest days as well. Alice's signature is all over camp. She made most of the blankets used by campers at the campsites and she sewed the shower and laundry bags carried by campers each day. It was Alice's idea to make curtain rods out of fishing poles for chuck wagon and she sewed the curtains as well. Throughout the year, she always looks for supplies, like bedding, and kitchen gadgets to be added to camp. She plants the flowers on the porch every year and set up the canoe for a flower bed near the dam. Howard sweeps the porches every morning, takes the garbage out, interacts with the campers and greets visitors to the property. A hands-on guy who is always friendly and willing to help, many of the boys refer to him as "Grandpa Howard". In addition to spending time at camp each summer, Alice and Howard have also been helping look after Ron and

Cindy's children for periods of time while Ron and Cindy have been running camp.

Norma Martin, in her various roles including volunteer staff during camp, board member and fundraiser, exemplifies the very idea of CLDC as an organization run by volunteers committed to the success of campers. Over the years, she has done many things at camp, such as peeling potatoes and carrots, serving food, passing out medicine, cleaning cuts and putting on bandages, taking kids to the doctor, getting groceries, delivering water samples, hauling garbage, hauling canoes, giving campers rides to and from camp, helping to build things, tearing things down, delivering water to campsite, repairing things, organizing things, and running with the group in the woods for a day on more than one occasion. Reflecting on her involvement in 2013, she says: "This summer when I got underneath the chicken cages to clean out the poop while droppings were landing all around me it felt like I had helped with it all."

"I like finding lots of toads and frogs. I found a really small toad on a beach at Blackstone Harbour when we canoed there one day. I also liked that Bradley caught a turtle and we named him Hershey's. I think it was cool that we saw a snake while playing wiffle ball and someone picked it up." —Andrew





Working Behind the Scenes

CHAPTER EIGHT

*“This camp has good fishing and good food, good chiefs
and most importantly good Additudes.”*

—Andrew



Building the physical foundations

Due to CLDC's setup as a remote wilderness camp, there are considerable infrastructure requirements to make camp work, from securing ongoing generator-produced power through access to clean water (filtration system), kitchen equipment (industrial fridge and dishwasher), emergency equipment (fire extinguishers, etc.), heavy equipment that allows CLDC to move stuff around and to support camp's construction-based program components (tractor, truck) plus other light equipment for staff to get around (ATV, three-wheeler, pontoon boat).

Every spring the gravel road into camp requires work to regain and/or maintain access to camp after a long winter. Roofs on camp buildings need to be replaced periodically, tent structures require updates and battery and emergency systems have to be supervised on a regular basis. Maintaining the physical foundations of camp is an ongoing hands-on experience.

Over the years, CLDC has been blessed with the generosity of many people who have given freely of their time and other resources: people and businesses have donated almost all of CLDC's equipment; the year camp started, CLDC was given furniture, mattresses, bedframes and beds. This early





generosity established a pattern that continues to this day: volunteer work crews come up for work weekends in the spring, often bringing with them material at no cost to camp and a work ethic that speaks strongly to the volunteers' commitment to camp. Volunteer maintenance staff keeps equipment running during the summer camp sessions. Their combined efforts and contributions have been invaluable to CLDC in freeing up funds to be invested into programming.

Long-term infrastructure projects over the years include the new aluminum bridge that connects the two parts of the CLDC property and that was installed in 2013 plus the ongoing construction of a new utility building. Even when working with contractors who have no inherent link to camp, we never cease to be surprised by the amount of labour and material that is donated. It simply blows our minds how many business owners share and support our mission. The generosity we experienced throughout the most recent excavation phase of the new utility building is just one of many incredible stories that form the backbone of the ongoing story of CLDC.

Due to this great generosity, necessary construction projects have repeatedly come in way below budget, thus freeing us up to continue to make major investments into our programs. Putting in the new bridge, starting construction on the utility building and launching the new Crisis Intervention Program within a twelve month time span in 2013/14 would not have been possible if it had not been for that kind of generosity. These blessings continue to turn what otherwise could

"I liked camp this year because it helped me build character and I can't wait for my parents to see the new me. I am really excited because I want to tell my parents about everything I did." —Logan



be challenging tasks and expenses into truly inspirational experiences for the volunteers running camp. When the going gets tough during the camp season, the camp director, volunteer staff, chiefs and board members alike draw strength from knowing that the spirit of camp is reaching peoples' hearts beyond the actual physical parameters of camp.

The CLDC Board

On the organizational side, camp is led by a Board of Directors whose mandate it is to keep developing the vision, come alongside the team, look after finances and administration, secure funding, build relationships with corporate partners and agencies, make infrastructure investments and ensure compliance with charity regulations and accountability and integrity within all of CLDC's processes.

Together with Ron and Cindy and people that have come alongside camp, the Board has played an important role in defining the CLDC mission and in creating growth opportunities for camp. A group consisting of Shawn Good, Dale Horst, Jeremy Horne, Marcus Good, Norm Wise, Corey Bradley, Bernia Wheaton, Steve Tulloch, Howard and Alice Horst and others helped in the process of acquiring the property and putting the first structures for camp into place. The core group that would form the first official Board after CLDC was officially incorporated came together during that early stage in 2003.

Throughout the foundational process, the group's time and energy was taken up by establishing the CLDC not-for-profit corporation, acquiring charity status, establishing relationships with the Township of the Archipelago, in which CLDC is located, and with cottagers on Crane Lake, as well as building a partnership with Ray of Hope for programming in 2005 and 2006. Bernia Wheaton was instrumental in establishing CLDC's not-for-profit corporate structure. When CLDC became a not-for-profit organization and the first Board of Directors was formed, the ultimate decision-making power for camp was transferred from Ron and Cindy to the Board of Directors.

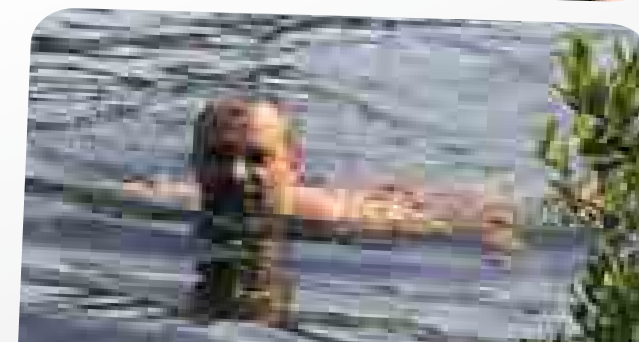
The Board's 2007 decision to focus on putting the foundations into place for CLDC to operate and offer programming independently marked the beginning of a significant transition. After years of a busy agenda determined by imminent pressures and processes, the Board's focus began changing to adopting a long-term strategy for the future of camp. As part of this process, the Josh Weber Fund was started in 2008 with camper families' financial needs in mind and an application for approval of a site development plan was made with the future growth of camp in mind. The seller-held mortgage was paid off in 2008 and when CLDC's application for site development was approved in 2010, the site plan agreement laid the foundations for future growth and for the eventual transition of camp into an extended-term facility. CLDC was now authorized to add another two group campsites as well as a dining lodge and storage facility in the interior of the property. Current CLDC Board Chairman Don

Weber reflects on the Board's changed focus: "During the first years we made decisions to survive. Then we started making decisions to progress. That shift was huge."

The strength of the Board was tested when, following the cutting of the wing wall of the dam by the Ministry of Natural Resources in 2009, a permanent bridge was needed to connect the two parts of the camp property. Between then and 2013, when the new permanent aluminum bridge finally went in, a lot of individual Board members' time and energy was taken up by navigating four levels of government required in the approval process: Township, Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries and Ministry of Navigable Waters. For several years, the bridge was an agenda item at each and every Board meeting and it was jokingly referred to by Board members as the project that just would not go away.

Reflecting on the many challenges and struggles experienced during the first five years of camp, CLDC Director Trevor Martin reflects: "Some of the beauty in the journey behind CLDC is that many times during the early years the dream did not seem to make sense. There is no doubt that God was taking us on a journey. Our faith was tested in any number of ways throughout this process." In retrospect, what was experienced as stumbling blocks at the time, such as Ray of

"One highlight of camp for me was when I caught, cleaned, cooked and ate a bass." —Clayton



Hope “releasing CLDC into independence” in 2006, the need for rezoning in 2007 or the requirement to install a bridge following the ministry’s cutting of the wing wall of the dam, turned out to be building blocks in a carefully orchestrated plan that reveals itself when looking back at the gradual evolution of camp over the course of ten years.

The core aspiration of Board members is to never lose touch with the heart and spirit of camp. The CLDC Board is not a passive Board, but a group of people truly dedicated to the mission of camp who would rather be on the ground helping boys and volunteer staff than sitting in the Board room. Board members naturally feel drawn to camp, resulting in personal involvement during camp season at many different levels, whether it is driving boys to camp, visiting camp or individual Board members filling in as chiefs and temporary relief for camp staff or committing vacation time to serve as support staff during camp season.

The original Board that signed the application for incorporation of CLDC in 2004 consisted of Jeremy Horne, Steve Tullock, Dale Horst and Bernia Wheaton. Over the years, the following people have served as CLDC Board members: Jeremy Horne, Bernia Wheaton, Kevin Martin, Marcus Good, Tim Metzger, Don Weber, Jon Staken Jr., Trevor Martin, Ulli Frisse, Norma Martin, Terry Kraemer. The Board has been chaired by Jeremy Horne, Kevin Martin and Don Weber. At present, CLDC’s Board of Directors consists of Don Weber (Chairman), Norma Martin, Trevor Martin, Terry Kraemer and Ulli Frisse.

Partnerships

Home-cooked meals are a key component of campers’ experiences. Together with the fishing, the food at camp is one of the things that campers rave about the most. Throughout the camp season, CLDC’s freezers are filled with beef, pork and turkeys that have been donated to camp. Fresh fruit, vegetables and real Canadian Maple Syrup are supplied at no cost as well.

The donated camp tractor, the truck, the ATV, and the pontoon boat are more than just pieces of equipment that perform certain tasks. At CLDC, donated equipment becomes an integral part of campers’ daily experience. Imagine the glow in the boys’ eyes when pulling trees behind the tractor through the woods to campsites for the construction of a new camp structure? Imagine the joyful sound of kids following the tractor while going into the woods to cut down trees? Imagine kids enjoying a ride on the trailer behind the ATV when taking material and tools out to the campsites? These are more than just imaginations. These are daily realities at CLDC. Financial and in-kind donations by our individual and corporate partners not only enable us to keep operating camp, but they are the source of inspiration and encouragement for the volunteers who are investing their time into CLDC. Many times the CLDC team has experienced that deeper value of knowing that partners are “buying into” the mission behind camp. Whether it is the employees of a car repair shop donating their bonus

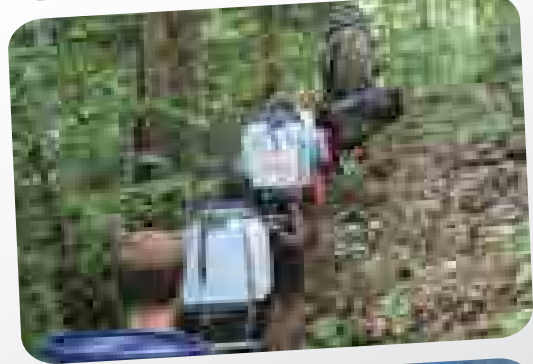
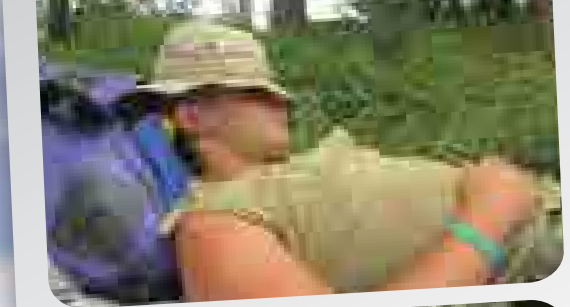


to CLDC, the owners of a fire extinguisher company servicing CLDC's emergency equipment at no cost, or people and businesses making multiple-year financial commitments towards camp - knowing that God is spreading the message about camp and working through the hearts of an ever-growing number of people keeps fueling the fire at camp.

Every year, there are a number of fundraising initiatives to help provide for the ongoing financial needs of camp. For several years, Jon Staken has put together a team of cyclists that rides for CLDC as part of Ride for Refuge, an annual community fundraising event. Since 2005, CLDC has hosted an Annual Fun Day with Dutch oven cook-offs, face painting, jumping castles, pony rides and many more activities to reach out to the larger community. Fun Day is a great way for chiefs, volunteer staff, campers and supporters of camp to connect with each other and with the community in Waterloo Region. Over the years, the following people have been members of the Fun Day Committee: Rachel Frey, Rick Frey, Angela Good, Marcus Good, Becky Kroeker, Pedro Kroeker, Gary Martin, Gavin Martin, Kevin Martin, Mel Martin, Norma Martin, Shannon Martin, Jon Staken, Juanita Staken, Lisa Staken and Brian Stubbs. In organizing the event, they have been supported by countless other volunteers.



"I love chuck wagon food the best because the cooks always cook something delicious. You never know what it is going to be. I loved fishing because the feel of a bass pulling on the end of your fishing line is the best feeling in the world. I love Paul's jumping rock because Paul's jumping rock is high and give you a rush when you jump off. I love Crane Lake!!!" -Logan



CLDC Today and Goals for the Future

CHAPTER NINE



"The best thing about camp was we had a lot of fun swimming and making good choices, doing our best work and helping each other solve problems and have a good attitude."

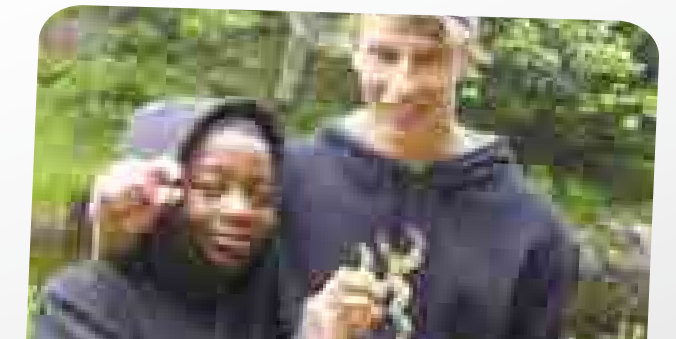
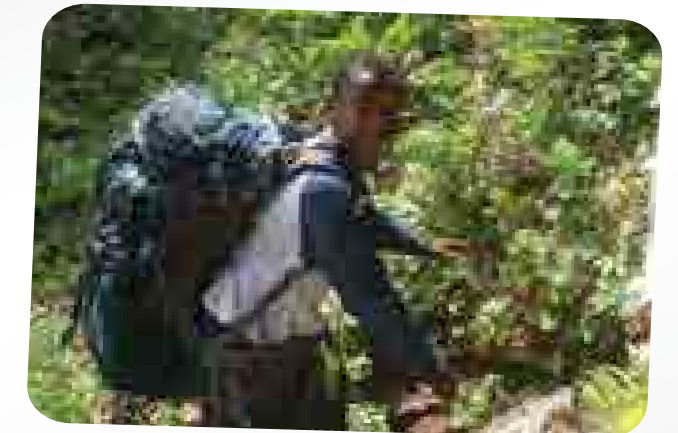
—Lionnel



“Camp is my next home away from home in Canada where I feel the real love I need as a kid who is trying to start a new life in another country. At camp I always meet new people and learn new things that we need for the real world. They give us a second chance, they love us, they help us think, and they cry with us.” —Yemeri

The 2014 launch of the CLDC Crisis Intervention Program combined with the ongoing construction of the new maintenance building at camp are significant stepping stones in the gradual process of extending camp in support of our ongoing long-term partnerships with CLDC boys and their families. The first phase of the building project including the excavations and foundations was completed in the fall of 2013. Framing, closing in of the building and installing in-floor heating marks the second phase which will begin in the fall of 2014. The third and final phase will commence in the fall of 2015 and will include electrical work.

When reflecting on the ongoing story of camp, its impact on the boys, peoples’ generosity and the unique physical setup of the property, Ron cannot but look at camp as a gift from God: “It’s never been just a maybe of camp; it’s always been the mandate of doing camp. We have been called. Everything is there: the vision, the property, and the people.” It is in this strong confidence in God’s plan that Crane Lake Discovery Camp keeps moving forward to become an ever-stronger partner of boys and young men **TO SUCCEED IN LIFE BEYOND THE CHALLENGE.**









Lesley Warren and her team at **Lesley Warren Design Group Inc.** (www.lwdg.ca) and Ulli Frisse and his team at **Historical Branding Solutions Inc.** (www.historicalbranding.com) have once again pooled their resources to capture the fascinating story of Crane Lake Discovery Camp through text and images. Ulli and Lesley's shared passion for helping not-for-profit organizations tell their story in ways that truly matter and reflect their unique brand through creative and innovative designs, have been the driving force behind this truly collaborative effort. As happy parents of six boys (two for Lesley and her husband Jules and four for Ulli and his wife Sarah), creating **BEYOND THE CHALLENGE** has been close to the heart of everyone involved in this process.



“Camp—Camp is a simple word, but what it means to me is that it made a huge difference in my life, and in so many other lives as well.”

—Matthew