

Fostering Stewards

*People who care for each other
and the Earth we share*

ANNUAL REPORT

2024





"The best education does not happen at a desk, but rather engaged in everyday living - hands on, exploring, in active relationship with life."

-Vince Gowman (author)

About Camp Kawartha

Camp Kawartha is a non-profit organization dedicated to inspiring environmental stewardship and fostering meaningful connections with nature. Through year-round programs including camps, outdoor education programs and workshops, we engage children, youth, and adults in hands-on learning, environmental education, and leadership development. By nurturing empathy, curiosity, and respect for the natural world, Camp Kawartha empowers individuals to become lifelong stewards of the environment.

Our Mission

Camp Kawartha inspires environmental leaders and stewards of all ages through dynamic, accessible, year-round outdoor programming and powerful partnerships to create meaningful change.

Our Vision

That Camp Kawartha will be recognized as a national leader in the delivery of high quality and inspirational outdoor and environmental programming; practicing, teaching and promoting sustainable living practices to children and adults of all ages and abilities.

Just a few of our many testimonials

“My son was delighted to visit Camp Kawartha. This camp gave him **confidence** before the start of the new school year, since we communicate in our native language in the family, he received the practice of English-speaking communication among his peers. Long after the camp, he dreamed of boating, campfire songs, and various activities organized by “the **best counselors in the world.**”

“Camp Kawartha is an educational field trip **unlike any other.** The students learn about environmental sustainability, they build **social skills** and develop a sense of independence and accomplishment. Most of all, they are **making memories** that will remain with them for a lifetime.”

“Camp Kawartha continues to provide the most thoughtful, challenging, inclusive, and engaging programming. Their knowledgeable staff never fail to **thoroughly engage** our students in ways that are considerably more challenging to execute in a traditional classroom setting. The location provides ample opportunities for students to disconnect from the myriad distractions of life at school, while simultaneously allowing them to **connect** with each other on a deeper and more **meaningful** level. Given all of this and the proximity to our school, we aim to return every chance we get.”



Camp Kawartha Impact by Numbers



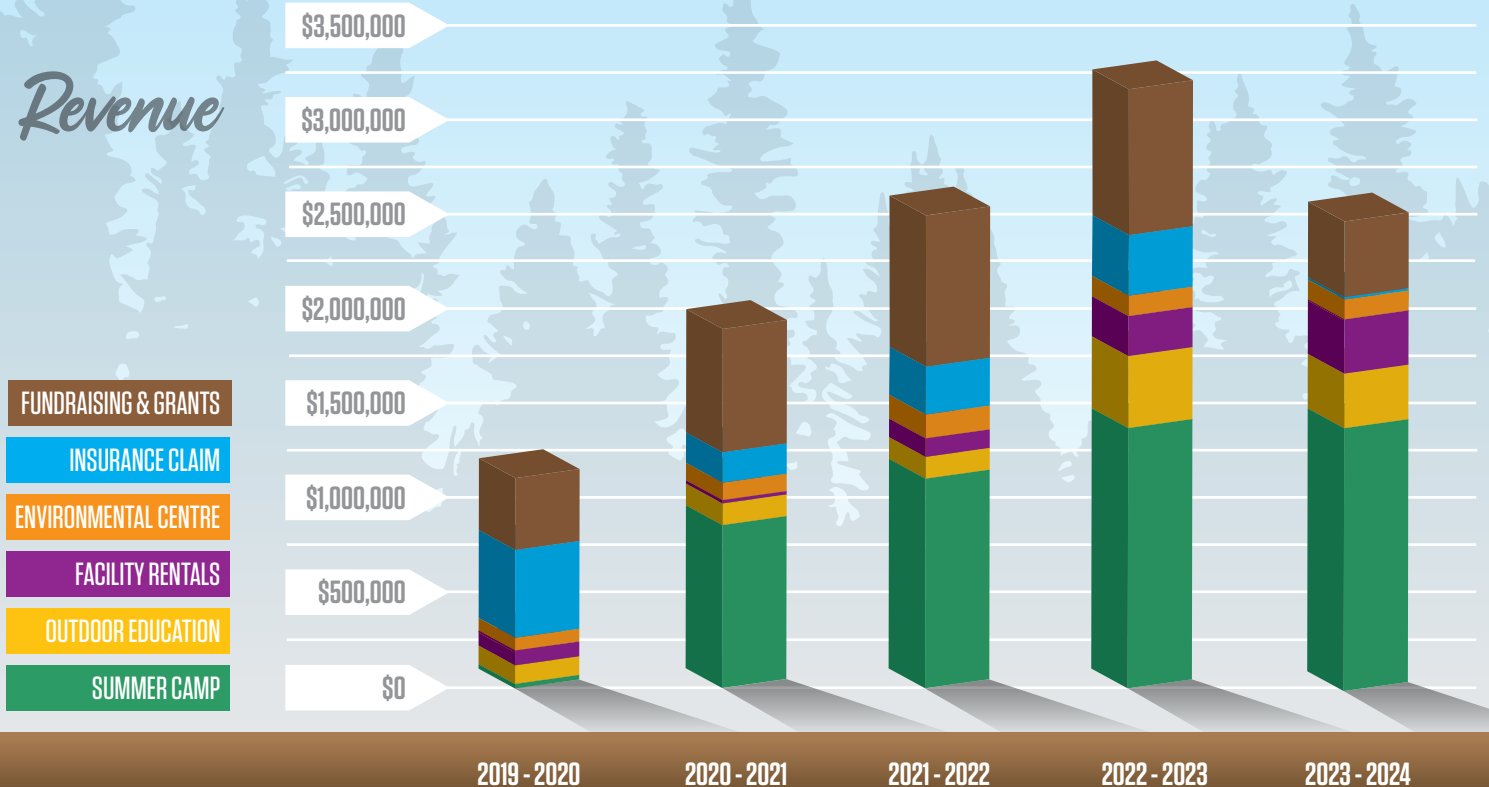


In Praise of Our Friends

As the years go by, we are profoundly thankful to everyone who has helped shape Camp Kawartha into the award-winning organization it is today. This special place thrives because of the passion and dedication of so many volunteers, staff, and board members who work tirelessly to advance our mission: inspiring children to grow into compassionate and engaged stewards of the world.

Our mission wouldn't be possible without the incredible people who have supported us along the way. We honor the vision of the Rotary Club of Peterborough, which founded Camp Kawartha in 1921, believing in the power of camping to build resilience and inspire youth. We celebrate the countless counselors and educators who have delivered life-changing programs and the hardworking support staff- maintenance teams, housekeepers, food services, office workers, and health care providers-who ensure campers are safe and cared for behind the scenes. A special thanks goes to our board members, who navigate the challenges of keeping Camp Kawartha relevant and impactful in a changing world. To everyone who has been part of this journey, we offer our deepest gratitude. You are the heart of Camp Kawartha, and your contributions inspire and nurture the stewards of tomorrow.

Revenue



Please note: the 2022-23 Fiscal Year included an insurance claim and a major grant which ended in 2023-24

From the Executive Director

Are we raising a generation of indoor children? In a world where we have lost more than half of our biodiversity since the 1970s and where the human population has surged past 8 billion, the need to reconnect with the natural world has never been more urgent. Yet, despite the mounting evidence of its importance, it has become increasingly challenging to convince administrators, educators, and parents to prioritize time spent outdoors for children.

Research consistently highlights the profound benefits of time in nature: it reduces stress, improves focus, and fosters emotional well-being. Studies show that children who spend regular time outdoors are healthier, more resilient, and more creative. Nature-based experiences have been linked to improved academic performance, better social skills, and a deeper sense of stewardship for the planet. Adults, too, experience lower rates of anxiety and depression, better physical health, and increased life satisfaction when they engage with natural spaces.

At Camp Kawartha – this is what we do - reconnecting children (and adults) to the very life systems that nourish us. We bear witness every day to the transformative impact that being outdoors has on all those who visit us.. Please read through this report to learn more about how, through our summer camps, our outdoor education programs, teacher training, workshops and environmental stewardship initiatives, we are showing our community and beyond how to overcome the “nature-deficit disorder.” Our work is not just about helping individuals; it’s about cultivating a generation that connects to, values, protects, and restores the natural world we all depend on. We hope you’ll join us in supporting this important work in whatever way you can.

From our Summer Camp Director

Surrounded by the beauty and wonder of the natural world, Camp Kawartha’s summer camp season of 2024 offered a wonderful opportunity for over 1,000 campers and staff to connect with each other and the earth we all share. Through coming together in community, our summer camp season was filled with joy, laughter, wonder, and summer camp magic. Highlights of the 2024 summer season include increased nature connectivity through partnerships with local environmental and community organizations including Nature Canada, TRACKS, the Canadian Canoe Museum, the Peterborough Petroglyphs, and the New Canadians Centre. As each child entered into the summer camp community this summer, they had the opportunity to create new friendships, memories, and connections - all while exploring and learning about both themselves, and the natural world. Camp Kawartha’s Summer Camp was proud to have a successful summer in 2024 and is looking forward to inspiring environmental leaders and stewards for years to come.



“When I see you through my eyes, I think that we are different. When I see you through my heart, I know we are the same.”

— *Doe Zantamata (author)*





"It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are."

-E.E. Cummings (poet)

Awards 2024

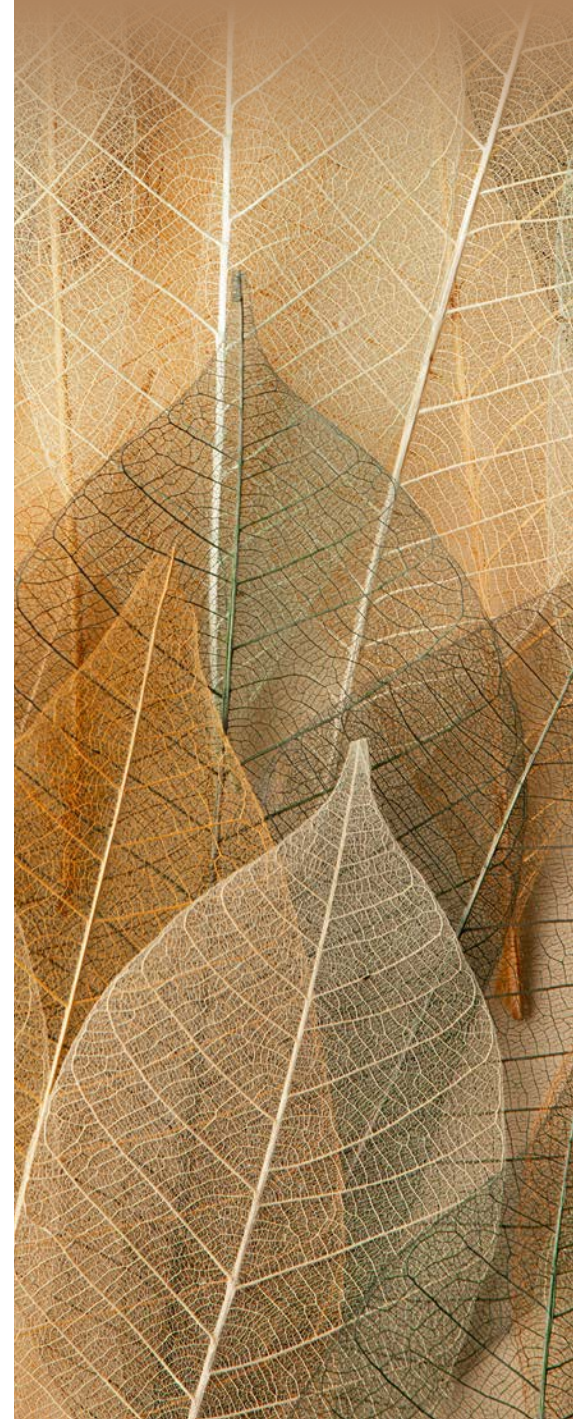
Rotary Health Centre: Camp Kawartha received national recognition from **Clean50's Top Project Award** as one of the **best sustainable projects** in Canada for its negative carbon Rotary Health Centre – an exemplar of sustainable building in action. Also, Strawworks received the **Ontario Embodied Carbon Award** in the Small Buildings category for the design and construction of the Rotary Health Centre.

Camp Kawartha received the **Green Initiatives Award** from the Peterborough and the Kawarthas Chamber of Commerce Business Excellent Awards for recognizing our dedication and commitment to environmental sustainability.

Jacob Rodenburg, Executive Director of Camp Kawartha received the **Robin Dennis Award** from the **Council of Outdoor Educators** of Ontario for his "outstanding contributions to the promotion and development of outdoor education in Ontario."

Camp Kawartha was a **Diamond Winner** for **Best Learning Centre** Reader's Choice Award in the Peterborough region.

The New Canadians Centre honoured Camp Kawartha with the **Becky Rogers Community Partner of the Year** Peterborough "in recognition of your wonderful contribution to the work of the New Canadians Centre and to enriching the lives of newcomers to Canada."





Facility Updates:

Camp Kawartha is committed to continually enhancing its facilities to support sustainability and provide exceptional experiences for our visitors. Thanks to the generous support of the Williams Wilson Sherport Foundation, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, and our dedicated donors, our fully operational green Waste-Water Management System is now complete—allowing us to “flush with confidence” while protecting the environment.

A significant grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation is also enabling us to replace one of our oldest cabins with a state-of-the-art strawbale, negative carbon cabin. The new Birch Cabin, featuring innovative sustainable design, will be ready to welcome campers by summer 2025.

Additionally, we’ve completed our Kinder Hub, which now includes a nature playscape and gathering area to inspire outdoor learning and play. Looking ahead to summer 2025, we’re expanding our Day Camp area with the construction of two platform tents and another engaging nature playscape—designed to encourage imaginative play through the organic forms of nature.

Summer Camp

Our 103rd summer camp season was an incredible success, thanks to the strong leadership of Emma Robert and her team. We welcomed over 1,000 children to experience the joy of camping, the wonder of connecting with nature, and the bonds of fellowship. Campers discovered the beauty of the outdoors, built lifelong friendships, and gained a deeper understanding of the world around them. A highlight of the season was the participation of 54 young leaders in our leadership programs: Leaders in Training, Counselor Skills Development, and Wilderness Skills Development. These programs are designed to foster confidence, teamwork, and a sense of responsibility, equipping participants with valuable life skills. From learning how to guide and inspire others to learning how to teach outdoor skills, these young leaders grew into positive role models ready to make a difference in their communities. This summer reaffirmed our mission to inspire stewardship, resilience, and a love for the natural world in the next generation. We are incredibly proud of the campers and young leaders who embraced every moment, making this season one of our most memorable yet.



Outdoor Education: Reconnecting Students with Nature

This year, we welcomed over 4,000 students from 76 schools across Southern Ontario, marking a steady recovery from the challenges of the pandemic. Students participated in more than 60 curriculum-linked programs, with highlights including team building, Wetland Wonders, traditional skills, and animal adaptations.

For schools unable to visit our facilities, we brought the learning to them—reaching over 750 students through engaging on-site programming. We also provided teacher training on how to transform school grounds into vibrant, hands-on extensions of the classroom, helping to inspire meaningful connections to nature close to home.

Environment Centre - Inspiring Sustainable Living

The Camp Kawartha Environment Centre continues to lead by example, showcasing sustainable living in action and fostering a deep connection to the natural world. This year, over 2,600 students engaged in immersive, nature-based and environmental programs, fostering curiosity and ethic of environmental stewardship. Our Nature School flourished, with 232 children enrolled in innovative programs such as Forest Explorers, Root Wood, and Woodsy Wednesday, where hands-on learning brings nature to life.

We are proud to inspire the next generation of educators through our Eco Mentor Program, supporting Teacher Candidates from Trent University and Fleming College's Early Childhood Program. Additionally, we welcomed a record number of visitors who rented our facilities, further solidifying Camp Kawartha as a hub for sustainable education and community engagement.





Adventure in Understanding and Cultural Connections

Camp Kawartha, in partnership with the Rotary Club of Peterborough/Kawartha, Curve Lake First Nation, and the Canadian Canoe Museum, helped to organize the 9th annual 'Adventure in Understanding' program, which brought together Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth to explore reconciliation and cultural exchange. Led by Glen Caradus, this six-day, five-night canoe journey engaged 20 youth (ages 16-18) in an immersive experience along the Trent Severn Waterway from Peterborough to Curve Lake First Nation. Participants connected with Indigenous culture, the environment, and each other, fostering respect and understanding. The canoe became a symbol of unity, providing a space for reflection and personal growth, and encouraging youth to become leaders committed to reconciliation. Over 180 youth have participated in this program so far.

Camp Kawartha also contributed to the Cultural Connections program, which focused on building meaningful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth. In partnership with the Rotary Club, Curve Lake First Nation, and Thomas A. Stewart Secondary School, the program brought together 20 students to explore governance, land stewardship, and leadership. The May 27th forum fostered rich dialogue on consensus-based decision-making and cooperative leadership, encouraging students to develop skills for collaborative community engagement.

Both programs reflected Camp Kawartha's commitment to nurturing youth leadership, reconciliation, and fostering inclusive, respectful communities. Our thanks to Don Watkins who made both of these programs possible.

Make Peace with Winter

For the second consecutive year, Camp Kawartha proudly hosted the Make Peace with Winter Conference in partnership with the Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario at its main site, bringing together over 100 outdoor educators from across Ontario. This gathering provided a valuable platform for experts to share innovative strategies and practical approaches to connecting people with nature during the winter months. The conference underscored Camp Kawartha's commitment to fostering environmental stewardship year-round. Building on this success, Camp Kawartha is excited to announce it will once again host this impactful event in January 2025.

Opening Doors: Sponsoring Children

Thanks to the incredible generosity of our donors and funding from foundations, \$90,000 was raised this year, enabling 535 children to experience the magic of Camp Kawartha's award-winning camps and outdoor programs. Their support made it possible for children from families in need to connect with nature, build friendships, and create lasting memories—experiences that foster a lifelong love of the outdoors and a sense of belonging.

Schoolyards as an Act of Reconciliation

In collaboration with Curve Lake First Nation, the PVNC Catholic School Board, GreenUP, Monarch Ultra and First Nations educators, Camp Kawartha secured funding to help three schools, including Curve Lake First Nation School, restore nature to their school grounds. This initiative also provides students with opportunities to learn about First Nations Ways of Knowing and Anishinaabemowin, the original language of this land within Williams Treaty 20, the traditional territory of the Michi Saagiig.

A Fresh Digital Presence: Connecting More People to Nature

This year, we launched our new and improved website at www.campkawartha.ca, offering a more user-friendly and engaging experience for visitors. The updated site makes it easier than ever to explore our programming, register, make bookings and learn about our commitment to environmental stewardship. With strong visuals, streamlined navigation, and enhanced resources, the website reflects the heart of Camp Kawartha—inviting more people to connect with nature, discover sustainable living, and join us in fostering a love for the outdoors.





“You can learn so much from animals. They have this wonderful quality of being in the moment, and they help you spend time there.”

– Emmylou Harris
(singer-songwriter)

Award-Winning Documentary:

Filmmaker Anne Marie Jackson beautifully captured the essence of Camp Kawartha’s Pathway to Stewardship and Kinship Project in her inspiring documentary. The Wild Path Home (www.wildpathhome.ca). The film has been celebrated at several festivals, including a feature at Peterborough’s ReFrame Film Festival, showcasing the powerful impact of connecting children and youth to nature and community.

Upcoming Book: The Wild Path Home

Executive Director Jacob Rodenburg and past Pathway Coordinator Cathy Dueck have co-authored a book called the Wild Home: A Guide to Raising the Earth Stewards of Tomorrow. Designed for communities across North America, this book offers practical guidance and inspiration for fostering a culture of stewardship through collaboration and connection. Scheduled for release in fall 2025, it promises to be an invaluable resource for anyone committed to raising the next generation of environmental leaders.

Sharing Knowledge and Inspiring Change

This year, Executive Director Jacob Rodenburg presented at numerous conferences and workshops across the province. Highlights included the Outdoor Learning Conference, Make Peace with Winter Conference, Ontario Camps Association, Toronto Botanical Gardens, Ontario Society of Environmental Education, Trent University, GreenUP, the Ottawa Catholic School Board, and the Early Childhood Community Development Centre. Jacob’s expertise also reached an audience across North America through the creation of an online learning course called Nature Activities for Learners presented through the Outdoor Learning School, inspiring educators and leaders far and wide.



Camp Kawartha's Board of Directors 2023-2024

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Author of Women on the Ballot

Mike Richardson, Manager of Recreation Services,
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Trinity College School

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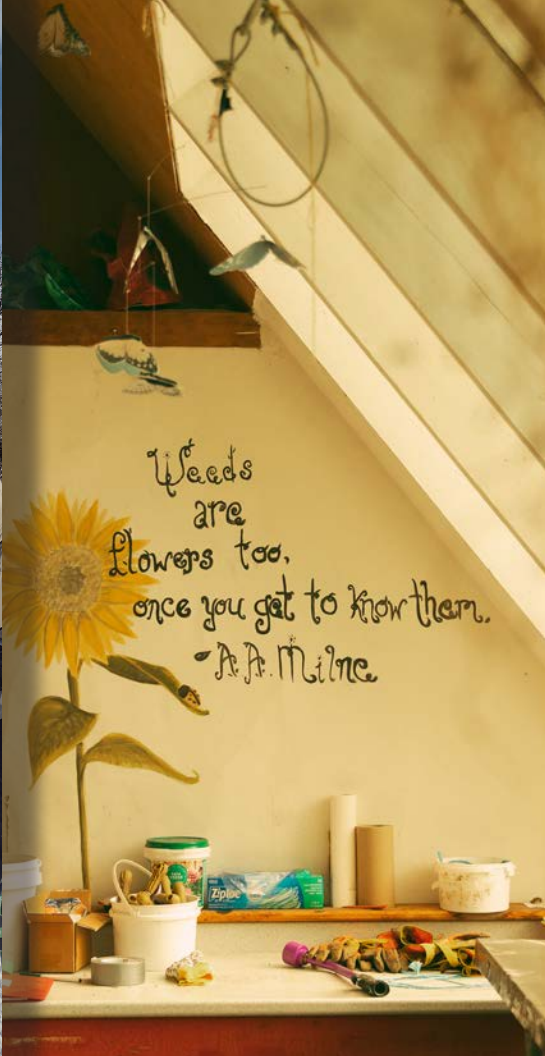
Honorary Directors

John Cockburn, Retired Field Service Manager,
Ontario Ministry Agriculture Food & Rural Affairs



"We must teach our children to smell the earth, to taste the rain, to touch the wind, to see things grow, to hear the sun rise and night fall – to care."

– *John Cleal (artist)*



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Community Foundation of Greater Peterborough
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Child and Family Services
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