

# Knights of Columbus & Camp Cadicasu



Camp Cadicasu continues to provide life-changing experiences to children as a result of the generosity and dedication of the Knights of Columbus!

## Message from Margie Schuett - Board Chair

*"The purpose of this report is to provide an insight of where we have come from in the last 90 years and WHY we think it is imperative that Camp Cadicasu keeps going for decades to come.*

*In historical terms, a legacy is something that is handed down from one period to another period of time. Metaphorically, leaving a legacy is planting seeds in a garden you never get to see. In the case of Camp Cadicasu, we have seen an evolution of an idea from a tiny seedling where a boys' choir went for a week or so during the summer to enjoy an outdoor holiday into the best overnight camp in Alberta with 135 campers each week for eight weeks each summer. It grew and evolved dealing with social-economic challenges, changes in demographics, technology, and norms of behaviour.*

*As we move to an important benchmark in our history – our 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – the challenge for the next generation is to protect and serve the needs of the camp so it can continue to flourish.*

***For now, we have been challenged to protect the legacy of an idea that began 90 years ago.***

*The founders may have been far too humble to realize the brilliance of planting the first seed of creating a summer camp for children. Due to the changes in our society, environmental destruction, and financial crises, there is a widening in the gap between rich and poor. This spreads insecurity and fear in young people especially, so the need and the power of this institution is perhaps more important now, than it was at its birth.*

*As the gatekeepers of the camp today, the Board of Directors and the Staff of the camp are facing a time when we need help more than ever before! Rising costs, increased competition in attracting the children and youth from more expensive (and what may appear to be more compelling entertainment alternatives) challenges us to be more defiant in our protection of the franchise known as Cadicasu.*

*It is critical that we embrace innovation, furthering the development and capacity of the camp, because that is how fast the world we live in is moving. Being open-minded and receptive to thinking about 'why not?' as opposed to 'why?' is mandatory in keeping pace with the targeted audience.*

*It is essential to have partners who trust that those of us who are managing the daily operations of the camp have enough vision, and courage to take the next step to continue the evolution of the camp that will sustain it for the future generations of our community.*

*Without your financial support, inspiration, and encouragement, the job will not get done. **The partnership with the Knights of Columbus has been the single most important affiliation of the last 90 years for the camp.** This relationship must continue if the camp is to continue. What we do is totally aligned with the values of the Knights of Columbus: through charitable work, you seek to change lives, love your neighbor and protect those individuals or institutions who are on the margins of society."*

# 2020 Challenge: \$500

## Individual K of C Councils

We would like to offer a challenge to each Council in Alberta. If each of you could begin by sponsoring one child for a week of camp - \$500 per council, we will have a magnificent foundation on which to build the additional fundraising support we need to progress in our development of a secure business model for the camp that will be sustainable after we are all gone.

For others who have more, more is asked. If your council does have the capacity to offer additional support, so much the better. Our pledge to each of you is to value and protect your investment into making the camp more financially independent as each year passes. Our goal is to have a balanced budget each year with enough money in reserve to upkeep the maintenance of the facilities and protect the investment for future generations. It is also essential to have the assets to attract the quality of human resources who face the challenges of making a nickel be worth a dollar when it comes to providing an activity program to entertain, educate, motivate, and inspire the youth of today.

As always, the appreciation of the Board of Directors and the Management and Staff of the camp is humbled by the Knights of Columbus dedication to helping the camp. As we pass this 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, it goes without saying that we are blessed by your support and humbled by your generosity.

## Historical Connections - Knights of Columbus & Camp Cadicasu

1930

It was in 1930 that our camp first opened its doors. Between 1927 and 1930, the Whitney Family of Bragg Creek transferred the twenty-acre parcel of land to St. Mary's Parish. The name at the time was the St. Mary's Boys Choir Camp. This camp was managed by Monsignor Smith, Fathers Bolts, Clarence Lyons, Reg Sullivan, along with St. Mary's assistant priests. It was then that construction of the log cabin which stood until 2008, on the original Bragg creek property. This single building, constructed from local materials, served as the kitchen, dining hall, chapel and had bedrooms on the porch for the priests and kitchen help. The campers were housed in old army wall tents. Senator Patrick Burns had erected the cabin as a depression work initiative.

It was in 1951 at a priest retreat that Bishop Carroll asked three pastors of the Diocese if they would be interested in having a Diocesan Summer Camp for the children. They agreed, and he asked for their support. Under the inspiration of the Knights of Columbus and others, the **CA**tholic **DI**ocesan **CA**lgary **SU**mmar program (**CADICASU**) was born.

Messer's Joseph Commassotti, Joseph Oel and Len Rice, among others, were deeply committed to Camp Cadicasu's success as an outreach to Calgary area children aged nine to fourteen years. It was decided to set up a Cadicasu society, arm's length from the R.C. Bishop of Calgary. The reasons were not known, but later, it became a source of confusion and little bitterness. Undoubtedly, there was a need to have some firewall between the camp and the Diocese to protect the latter. The camp was run by priests, seminarians and Catholics loyal to the Diocese.

1951

In the two decades after World War II, from 1945 to 1965, overnight camping in Canada became a normal part of the cultural landscape for children growing up. The reasons for this post-war growth are not perfectly clear, but possible explanations include the adventuresome spirit of a relieved post-war society, a growing economy, and the baby boom, which all helped to make overnight camping part of the Canadian landscape.

Whatever the combination of factors, camping became a hugely popular summer activity for children. Nevertheless, only about sixteen percent of the camper-aged children attended camp each year. Unfortunately, the opportunity was apparently still not accessible to all.

1952

It's not fair, but boys got to go to the camp first. Fortunately, in 1952, more girls' camps had formed. The doors of the main camp opened and had specific weeks allocated to girls only. The girls would use the camp in July, and the boys would use it in August. Such was the pattern until the change in 1974 when a co-ed program was introduced.

In 1956, the official name of Camp Cadicasu was registered as a non-profit society. The camp was to be owned and operated by the Diocese but run by an independent board of elected directors.

During this time the board of directors was comprised of several groups, including the Knights of Columbus #1186, the Caliaman (a Catholic businessman's organization) and finally to an elected group of Catholic individuals, which included women.

1956

1950s

It was during the late 1950's and early 1960's the camp began a building campaign, which included the construction of a chapel, dining hall, chalets for sleeping with a water system and a swimming pool.

In 1961, Father Burke-Hoschka asked Mrs. Dorothy Violini to help in the kitchen until a cook could be engaged. This began a twenty-year relationship with "Mom", as Mrs. Violini came to be known. She was a wonderful lady and a fantastic cook and was loved by campers and staff alike.

1961

1965

In 1965, Father Eric Nelson was appointed by Bishop Carroll to serve as Chaplain to campers and staff which began an over fifty-year relationship in this capacity.

There were some other changes in the late 1960's to serve the campers and to better reflect the Camp Cadicasu philosophy, which remains almost identical and intact as we moved towards a new millennium. It was during this time that camps across the country began closing for a variety of reasons.

There was a sharp decline in the camper-aged population as the baby boomers grew up. Lower enrollments diminished revenue and forced some camps to close. Other camps sat on near or on real estate that was popular for vacation homes. For many, property taxes became unaffordable. Sadly, some outstanding camps could not survive the rising cost of staying in business of running a successful camp operation.

While some camps encouraged multiple week stays, thereby decreasing the total number of children who could attend summer camp, it has always been Cadicasu policy to encourage one-week stays to allow as many campers as possible participate in this fantastic outdoor experience. During the decline in enrollments however, Cadicasu remained steadfast in growth and development.

Coincidentally, it was during the 1980s and 1990s that the camp began to freshen itself up with the addition of some new buildings, upgrades to the septic system and replacement of the older bunkhouses.

1980s

1990s

Finally, in the 1990s, the traditions of segregated boys' and girls' weeks were dismissed to a co-ed program to reflect the changing demographics and cultural trends in society. As well, it made it much more economic sense to make this change a reality. There was an eight to ten percent increase in camp enrollment. Since summer camp programs like Cadicasu were more accessible to lower-income families, children were staying for limited amounts of time (one week) there was an upsurge of children wanting an affordable camping experience.

In 2006, an important part of the original Camp Cadicasu site in Bragg Creek burned down. The dining hall, which had been the focal point of the camp since the 1950s disappeared. With it came increasing challenges of operating in a community that was now becoming a suburb of Calgary. The decision was made to close the camp... BUT not for long!

2006

Under the direction of Frank Walsh, a local Calgary businessman and a board of directors which consisted of numerous Knights of Columbus, some local businessmen and representatives of the Calgary Separate School Board, a proposal to the Alberta Government was made to locate a new Camp Cadicasu in Kananaskis Provincial Park. Construction delays, along with fundraising challenges and a complete disassociation with the Diocese, the board experienced obstacles on more than one occasion. They had to dig deep with a lot of hard work to slowly raise the necessary funds to continue the 80-year legacy of the camp.

2010

On July 4, 2010, a new and improved Camp Cadicasu opened its doors to a new generation of campers. This came as a welcome and happy occasion for multiple generations of campers, as they came out to visit the new camp for the first time. To those who listened to the stories reminiscing the 'good old days' by a Grandmother, or in some cases a Great Grandparent telling their family about the Cadicasu summers they had with their friends there was an energy and a spirit that was palpable. It was something to behold for those who had worked so hard to bring back the camp to life.

In the ensuing years, the camp introduced a plethora of new programs and activities which re-energized the camp in a way not seen since the early days of its creation.

The board of directors was chaired by a woman for the first time, Mike Nelson who had masterfully guided the camp as Executive Director for 25 years retired, and the first female Executive Director, Heather O'Neill arrived who brought with her degrees in Education, Art, and Business to the table. The creativity and energy of these two women, along with the uncompromisingly supportive board of directors, saw a **rebirth of the camp**.

In 2013, Camp Cadicasu initiated programs about social skills, communication, character development, and emotional intelligence among others. These have enabled people to navigate the changes in our world of technology, family culture, gender identities, and ethical vagaries for a new generation. With a focus on teaching campers how to be caretakers of the earth, Cadicasu began building the vision of a sustainable future through learning the skills of our ancestors. Being "kind" was rewarded and leadership recognition was given to staff offering exceptional care, fostering a safe environment, selfless service, and going above and beyond what was expected to honour the best of the best.

2013

# Celebrating 90 Years

90 years of creative thinking has made this camp unusual and unique. It offers a combination of tradition and responsiveness to the needs and aspirations of the youth of the day. It embraces the differences and accepts unconditionally the qualities of individuals who enter the gates of the camp.

As we turn the page of a new decade in 2020 the Directors and Staff of the camp are indeed very proud of the programs being offered to the community. First and foremost, most of the community is still Calgary, but we have become more 'global' and have numerous campers and staff come from the four corners of the world including other parts of Canada, Mexico, Europe, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States.



## Cadicasu Highlights

All camper registration fees are subsidized.

Our Traditional Camp is consistently at 100% capacity with over 1,000 campers registered each summer. In addition to this, we have developed several complementary programs that embody the Cadicasu spirit.

### LIT Program

Personal development and responsibility are at the core of our transformative Leadership-in-Training program.

### Specialty Camps

These camps offer more experience with earth skills, bush craft, backpacking, and martial arts.

### Winter Camp

A week of Cadicasu in the middle of winter is the best way for campers to spend part of their holidays!

### Rentals & Schools

Our out-of-season rental program and school field trips to over 2,000 + people per year has allowed to cover the majority of our operational expenses and develop a more sustainable business model.

### Proprietary Programs

Our first proprietary program (Women's Wellness Weekend) launched in 2019. Based on its success, it will become an annual event and we are planning a Father / Son Weekend as well.

As a result of an extremely generous **\$100,000 from the Columbus Benefit Club of Calgary**, we have been able to increase our capacity and expand our reach!!

In 2020 and beyond, the long-term objective is to celebrate the magic of the founds in 1930. They chose to provide an alternative life experience to the young people of Calgary that would inspire them to want to make the world a better place by treating everyone with kindness and respect.

We continue to maintain the spiritual traditions of the legacy of the original Camp Cadicasu while staying relevant as society evolves. By increasing awareness of the world around us, we underline the importance of existing harmoniously with all of creation by virtue of honouring the earth and the natural world.