

# 75 YEARS OF CAMP BICKELL

Camp Bickell has been a summer retreat for children from Schumacher and the surrounding area since 1940. The camp's roots trace back to the summer of 1939 when Percy Boyce (principal of Schumacher Public School) took a group of boys camping on Barber's Bay. With only tarps to sleep under in heavy rain, the outing was somewhat miserable. Upon learning of the boys' plight from McIntyre Mine Manager RJ Innis, mine president JP Bickell stepped in to help.

By the time summer 1940 rolled around, two retired McIntyre Mine machine shop buildings were relocated to a campsite on a 240 acre farm on Chapman Lake near Iroquois Falls. Nate Adams (underground superintendent) had arranged to lease this land from the Caron family. One building became the kitchen/dining hall and the other the community centre. Mr. Bickell also consented to the construction of five sleeping cabins and an ice house. The campsite was named in honour

of JP Bickell's ongoing support.

In the following years, an infirmary and two more sleeping cabins were added. When the lease came up in 1949, the Caron family suggested an outright purchase instead of a renewal. At that time, JP Bickell donated \$5000 (an extremely generous amount for the day) to purchase the property outright. In 1950, Camp Bickell was officially incorporated as a non-profit, non-denominational children's charity – a status it still holds today. (Continues on page 2.)



An aerial view of Camp Bickell shows new buildings mixed in amongst some of the original structures. The camp has been in operation since 1940 and underwent renovation and expansion in 2000. (Photo used with permission from Camp Bickell.)

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# 75 YEARS OF CAMP BICKELL

(Continued from page 1.)

The JP Bickell Foundation was created in 1951 upon the death of John Paris Bickell. Since his initial gift of \$5000, the JP Bickell Foundation has donated in excess of \$1 000 000 to support the expansion and improvement of the facility that bears his name. The camp remained largely unchanged from 1940 until the year 2000, when the Board of Directors embarked on a massive expansion and renovation project. The result is the Camp Bickell /JP Bickell Outdoor Centre of today.

To commemorate its 75th

season, the Camp Bickell Board of Directors hosted a gala evening on Saturday, July 25, 2015. In attendance were former campers and counsellors, including one of the first official Camp Bickell campers, Lou Battochio. Dinner was prepared by Anthony Dal Pai of Kirkland Lake, a former camper and counsellor who has gone on to become a Cordon-Blue certified chef. A congratulatory plaque was presented to the Camp Bickell Board of Directors on behalf of the City of Timmins.

Current camp staff and guests found themselves comparing

their camp experiences. Guests were struck by the modern amenities that the camp now boasts while current staff were surprised to learn how structured camp life once was. One thing that has not changed over the years is the tendency for campers to come back as counsellors.

To conclude the evening, Joe Campbell, current Chair of the Camp Bickell Board, and his wife Barbara were honoured for their years of dedicated volunteer service. A camp building will be named in their honour. (Please visit [www.campbickell.com](http://www.campbickell.com) for more information.)



Above left: The marks of campers and counsellors from earlier times were preserved during renovations. Centre: Campers have access to 12-person voyageur canoes. (Photos by Benjamin Dunkley.) Above right: The new JP Bickell Lodge includes a covered front porch. (Photo used with permission from Camp Bickell.) At Right: Members of the Camp Bickell Board of Directors (from left: Ed Pupich, Barbara & Joe Campbell, Darrell MacGregor, Lou Battochio, Lorenzo Melchiorre and Bob O'Connor) show off the wooden plaque that will be hung on a camp building in recognition of the tremendous volunteer efforts of Joe and Barb. (Photo courtesy of Joe Campbell.)





## ITALIAN CONNECTION

Growing up in the small town of Schumacher had many advantages, such as knowing and trusting your neighbors, having many friends because we all knew each other, and people pitching in without a second thought when help was needed. Growing up in an Italian household was all about food, wine, and friendships. The Italian men were known for the wine made in their basements. My dad made his own crusher; it was primitive to be sure, but it certainly did the job. On warm summer days, there were lavish picnics by the lake and the Italian ladies would unashamedly strip down to their slips and bask in the sun's rays. There was a lot of "loud talking" in an Italian household; my buddies used to ask if the adults were fighting. Thinking about that now, I'm pretty sure they just wanted to make sure they got their points across! Looking back, what great times those were!

In particular, I remember that when a fellow Italian was getting married, everyone pooled together to make some of the food for the occasion. A caterer couldn't possibly do justice to treats such as biscotti, and many hands made light the work of wrapping coloured almonds in colourful nylon to distribute to all the guests. Italian weddings were known not only for the food but also for the dancing. I fondly remember seeing my dad dance the "tarantella" at a wedding and thinking to myself "Who knew my dad could dance?"!

Easter and Christmas were the best times of the year. My mother was up at dawn getting the sauce simmering and the chicken boiling for the soup. That was always the first course: chicken soup with greens and homemade croutons. The second course was homemade pasta with meatballs. The main course was a roast of meat and potatoes, followed by the salad.

(I still prefer my salad last to this day.) Dessert was usually biscotti & Neapolitan ice cream. As some of you know, and the rest of you can surely imagine, such feasts took several hours to both ingest and digest!

Although I left Schumacher at age 17, when I return for a visit, I can still sense the small town closeness. After spending my adulthood living and working in San Francisco, I retired to a small town where I once again feel the wonderful community camaraderie of my youth.

Ida Cicci,  
SOS Contributor



Gioconda & Isadoro Cicci raised their family of four children in Schumacher. Photo courtesy of Ida Cicci.

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## A DECADE LATER

It would be an understatement to say that the 2005 closure and sale of St. Alphonsus Parish caused an uproar in the community. Even now, a decade later, people remain emotional about the issue. It may bring a measure of comfort to know that although the building has been sold three times in the past ten years, and undergone numerous renovations in the process, it has retained much of its charm and a certain welcoming spirit.

About a year ago, Northern Windows & Doors owners Mark and José Duquette purchased the building from the Timmins Gracie Jiu Jitsu Academy. They moved their family into the rectory, and began the lengthy process of rezoning the property from institutional to commercial. At the same time, they began some ambitious renovations including the installation of a new metal roof, windows, and exterior doors.

Inside the main hall, the choir loft (previously converted to a men's shower room) has been turned into an apartment for a family member. The back of the main hall is now a showroom and office area, while the former altar area is currently used for storage. In both the main hall and house, care has been taken to preserve the building's character. All the stained glass was removed by previous owners, but the house's hardwood floors, built-in cabinets, and back staircase have been preserved and new items have been selected to complement existing features. In a nod to the building's history, a wall display of church artifacts is planned for the showroom entrance and the metal cross will remain atop the bell tower. Additional renovations are planned for the future.

Mark and José have nothing but positive things to say about relocating their business and family to Schumacher. They look forward to becoming a permanent presence in the community and are eager to show off their new space to new and existing customers. You can also find them online at [www.northernwindowsanddoors.ca](http://www.northernwindowsanddoors.ca).



The last Mass at St. Alphonsus Parish was celebrated on Sunday, April 3, 2005. (Photo courtesy of Tara Rogers.)



Eventually, the Timmins Gracie Jiu Jitsu Academy purchased and renovated the building, but operating costs were high and so they opted to relocate. (Photo courtesy of Kris Ratte.)



Mark and José Duquette welcome you to the new home of Northern Windows & Doors at 88 Father Costello Drive in Schumacher. (Photo by Lisa Romanowski.)



# NORTHERN DEMOCRACY

Back in 2012, Lloyd Salomone (documentary filmmaker and SACHA board member) contacted me about my research and doing a documentary film related to Schumacher and its amalgamation into Timmins. Out of those discussions, and other work I was doing on resource communities, came the decision in June 2014 to submit a grant application to the JP Bickell Foundation.

We are pleased to announce that our Northern Democracy Project has received a generous grant from the Foundation. We hope this will be the first of several grants to complete this project over a three-year period. All grants received for the project are held and administered by Laurentian University with the support of the Office of Research Services.

In late April of this year, we made our first research trip to Timmins to survey key groups and document sources of information. We met with community leaders and representatives from the Museum, Library, Northern College, and the City. These visits and communications will continue over the next three years as we go more deeply into the history of amalgamation.

A graduate research assistant, Rick Duthie, has supported the research over the spring and summer months. This spring Rick completed a Masters degree in History from Laurentian University and in the fall begins work towards a PhD in History at Carleton University. Rick's work is

focused on archival research and documentation.

The Northern Democracy Project is focused on the 1973 amalgamation. We are studying the experience of Schumacher and other communities in the Timmins region before, during and after their amalgamation into Timmins. The project combines academic research (a book or monograph) and a documentary film and interactive website.

The project is motivated by concerns about the loss of economic opportunities and community engagement in Timmins and other Northern communities. Among the signs of social deficit and decline are the continuing out-migration of the younger generation, low levels of civic participation, and a loss of vitality and interest in the downtown core areas of many Northern towns and cities.

The focus on the municipal amalgamation of Timmins is a means to look more deeply at long-term economic and political changes that have been going on in many Northern communities, especially the conflicts of vision and voice in development that impact future successes or failures of these communities.

We think the experience of communities such as Schumacher can say a lot about the changing conditions of local democracy and socioeconomic development in mining and other resource communities in Northern Ontario since the 1960s. We are committed to leaving a legacy

in the research and film which will give greater attention to the history of Schumacher and Timmins, and provide evidence and insight to stimulate discussions around the future development of Schumacher/Timmins and other Northern communities.

We would like to hear your thoughts about the Schumacher/Timmins amalgamation or suggestions you have for our research. If you have letters, articles or documents you think might be useful to help us understand why amalgamation happened and its consequences, these would be welcomed. I can be reached at: [dleadbeater@laurentian.ca](mailto:dleadbeater@laurentian.ca) or by phone at 705-675-1151 ext 4330 (please leave a message).

Dr. David Leadbeater,  
Northern Democracy Project Lead



David Leadbeater is Associate Professor in the Department of Economics at Laurentian University in Sudbury. He has done substantial research on the economic and social development of mining communities, particularly in Northern Ontario. He was a senior researcher in the Elliot Lake Tracking and Adjustment Study (1990-08) and edited the book *Mining Town Crisis* (Fernwood, 2008). David grew up in a former mining and forestry community in British Columbia and has lived and worked in Sudbury since 1989. He has studied and visited mining communities worldwide.





# EDITORIAL

☐ Congratulations are extended to the past and present members of the Camp Bickell Board of Directors - it is no small feat to keep a summer camp running for 75 years! Sincere appreciation is extended to Mark and José Duquette for the tour of the old St. Alphonsus Church building. Best wishes for the continued success of Northern Windows & Doors! Thank you to Dr. Leadbeater, Ida Cicci, and Archdeacon Lonergan-Freake for your contributions to this issue.

It's been a busy summer that kicked off with a family Disney Cruise through Norway and Iceland. We had a blast, but have decided that our next adventure needs to be somewhere warmer!

Stayed tuned for a feature article about the Schumacher music scene in the November issue!

Until next time,  
*Lisa Romanowski,*  
SOS Editor



In acknowledgement of being SACHA's 100th supporter, the Skrtic family of Schumacher was presented with one of Mira Buchar's handcrafted mugs featuring the McIntyre headframe. The family (from left: Emily, Niki, Allison, and Nikolas) took a break from picking berries in their garden on Dwyer Avenue to pose for a picture. (Photo by Lisa Romanowski.)

## SACHA MILESTONE

The Schumacher Arts, Culture & Heritage Association reached a significant milestone in July when the Skrtic family became the group's 100th supporter. The family consists of lifelong Schumacher resident Niki, his wife Allison Hobin, and their children Nikolas and Emily. The financial support of numerous individuals, families, and businesses has kept this newsletter in production for almost four years and is a testament to the enduring Schumacher spirit and pride.



Summer vacation of a lifetime: cruising through Norway and Iceland on the Disney Magic, pictured here on its inaugural stop in Akureyri, Iceland. (Photo by Lisa Romanowski.)

# NOVEMBER READER POLL

**Please share stories and photos of Thanksgiving, Halloween, and Christmas traditions from the past and present!**

Please identify individuals in photos.  
Responses will be shared in the November edition!

Email your response to [schumachergirl@gmail.com](mailto:schumachergirl@gmail.com) or send it by regular post to **PO Box 13, Schumacher, ON, P0N 1G0**

### Interested in Supporting SACHA?

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1. Choose your support level:  
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3. Mail the form and payment to  
PO Box 13, Schumacher, ON, P0N 1G0.

Receipts will be issued and acknowledgement given via the SOS newsletter and website.





# THE LIVINGROOM

*There's a new place in Schumacher just for you!*

The LivingRoom is located at 21 Father Costello Drive, Unit 5 (the building where The Trophy Shoppe is located). The LivingRoom is a gathering place for people of all ages. It's a safe place where Schumacher residents can come just to hang out. It's a place that is free of drugs, alcohol and cold shoulders. It's a place to talk and chat, form connections, establish relationships, and get to know your neighbours. It's a place to play games, make puzzles, learn to do crafts, and enjoy a coffee or tea. It's a place to bring your children and a place for seniors to gather.

The LivingRoom is open to everyone from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM every Wednesday. It becomes a teen-only space every other Wednesday from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM. The LivingRoom is a ministry of the Anglican Diocese of Moosonee; it's all free and is run by Catherine Murkin. Drop in and check out The LivingRoom - it's here for you!

Archdeacon Deborah Lonergan-Freake,  
SOS Contributor



Schumacher residents of all ages are invited to hang out in The LivingRoom, located at 21 Father Costello Drive, each Wednesday from 10 AM to 5 PM. (Submitted Photo.)



**Linda and Rob Knox**  
Timmins, Ontario



## UPCOMING EVENTS

September 5, 12, 19, 26 and  
October 3, 10, 17, 2015

### Mountjoy Independent Farmers' Market

8:00 AM to 12:00 PM  
Centennial Hall, 782 Park Road, Timmins  
705-268-5068 for more info.

September 9, 2015

### Welcome to Timmins Night

6:30 PM to 8:30 PM  
McIntyre Curling Club  
Annual community information showcase.

September 11 to 13, 2015

### Timmins Fall Fair

Mountjoy Arena, 814 Park Avenue, Timmins  
For more information: [www.fallfair.info](http://www.fallfair.info)

September 12, 2015

### Timmins Rock vs Kirkland Lake Goldminers

7:30 PM to 9:00 PM  
McIntyre Arena  
For info and schedule: [www.timminsrock.com](http://www.timminsrock.com)

October 31, 2015

### Children's Halloween Carnival

11:00 AM – 4:00 PM  
École Secondaire Catholique Thériault  
705-288-1720 for more info.

November 7, 2015

### Annual Santa Claus Parade

Parade starts at 6:00 PM  
For more info and route map, visit:  
[www.downtowntimmins.com/santa-claus-parade/](http://www.downtowntimmins.com/santa-claus-parade/)



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Businesses are invited to purchase business card ads in upcoming issues. Cost is \$25/issue or \$90/year. It is estimated that 5000 people read each newsletter in either its print or online form.

Contact us for more information.

## CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

For consideration in future editions, readers are invited to submit (by email or regular post) announcements, stories, photos, or songs/poems celebrating Schumacher's past, present, or future. Please include the creator's full name and the full names of anyone pictured.

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The Spirit of Schumacher community newsletter is published quarterly (February, May, August, November) by the Schumacher Arts, Culture & Heritage Association, a not-for-profit organization. Printed newsletters are distributed free to all postal boxes in Schumacher.

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