

# Lumsden Beach Camp

## Minute for Mission 2020

### “Camping Lessons From COVID19”



It was a surprisingly cold day for August. It was the 31<sup>st</sup>, but still, there was a whole week left of summer. Campers arrived outside Westminster United Church in Regina around 8:30am, some not realizing that autumn was creeping in and they would be freezing in their tank tops and shorts. The bus hadn't arrived yet, and due to COVID-19 precautions, no one was going inside. Lumsden Beach Camp's staff warmly welcomed the campers and offered suggestions of jumping jacks, running laps, or wrapping up in their towel.

Lumsden Beach Camp is located 50km northwest of Regina, and this chilly day heralded the last week of Day Camp, the seventh week long session that LBC had run this summer. Like every other organization, spring 2020 was a roller-coaster for the camp. The unknowns and anxiety of March and April, turned into the disappointment and grief of cancellation for overnight camps in May. With no rental income, no campers, and a number of fixed costs, things looked gloomy for this United Church Camp marking its 115 summer in 2020.

The Board of Directors and Executive Director met frequently during that time. Imagining creative ways to meet their mission—how could a camp connect young people to nature and to each other during this time of worldwide **dis**-connection? Doing nothing was never an option, but safety and community-mindedness were always top of mind. When the provincial government declared that Day Camps would be allowed to operate, LBC's leadership kicked into high gear.

Sixteen, mostly youth and young adults, worked together to create week-long day camp programs that would engage and delight campers ages 5-15. Sessions were kept small, cleaning was amped up, masks were worn, and so much joy was experienced. Throughout the summer 243 campers connected with each other and the land. They canoed, swam, crafted, hiked, played and more.

While the smiles and laughter were a good indication that campers were having a good time, we also heard from dozens of parents and caregivers. Messages like, *"I really enjoyed seeing my eldest child come back to life after many months of the pandemic monotony. They were all smiles and enthusiastic, enjoying each day more than the last."*

And, *"I am very thankful for the feeling of safety that we experienced during this difficult time, as well as just the opportunity for him to be able to be a part of something that felt sort of normal in these very not normal times!"*

In May, when things were the bleakest, a few United Communities of Faith and dozens of individuals stepped up and made financial gifts to the camp. Their generosity ensured that we could act quickly and create meaningful summer experiences when the opportunity arose. It also gave LBC leadership a morale boost. People care deeply about this place.

We are learning a lot of lessons through COVID, but one is that Lumsden Beach Camp profoundly matters to many. People, young and old, want this place to be around when we can all safely gather again. They know that camp changes lives—it builds resiliency, fosters relationships, and provides an inclusive place for all to experience the sacred.

While we are still basking in the glow of a successful summer and reaffirmation of Lumsden Beach Camp's value to so many, there is still much more work to do. The site is in desperate need of updated kitchen and dining facilities, and there is still much uncertainty about summer 2021. If you would like to support the important work of Lumsden Beach Camp, consider giving monthly through our Sustainer program or making a one-time capital donation. You can check us out at [www.lumsdenbeachcamp.com](http://www.lumsdenbeachcamp.com) or contact Executive Director, Vicki at [info@lumsdenbeachcamp.com](mailto:info@lumsdenbeachcamp.com) or 306-539-7772.