



FOOTSTEPS
Christmas 2015 Newsletter



Camp Fircom Responds to the Refugee Crisis

Because We Can. Because We Should.

Introducing summer camp to young survivors of political conflict

Camp Fircom is pleased to announce it is moving quickly to find funding for 25 camper spots for refugee children escaping the conflict in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere. Each child or teen will experience a week of camp in summer 2016 and go on a shopping trip to equip them with the proper clothing and gear needed for camp.

We hope you will include this initiative in your seasonal givings this year.

To us, this opportunity represents the best of what BC can provide: a sanctuary in nature, and a chance to connect with a diversity of new peers, in a safe, vibrant setting. Other campers, too, will learn about their new friends' experiences. We believe that relationships like these build peace and understanding. As a camp, we are so pleased to be a part of this effort.

We are proud of our long history of including children and teens from diverse backgrounds, regardless of their ability to pay.

We are challenging ourselves and our network of justice-seeking families,

friends, partner agencies and congregations to raise \$25,000 for this mission.

To make this campaign ripple farther, Camp Fircom is also encouraging other Canadian summer camps (including day and overnight camps) to stand together and offer free registration for refugees to their programs.

Over the next 25 days, Camp Fircom's goal is to raise \$25,000. Please consider donating to this important cause on behalf of yourself, or as a gift in someone else's name.

We will be pleased to mail or email a card announcing your gift. Any amount \$20 or over gets a tax receipt.

All proceeds will go directly to the refugee campership campaign.

Need a compelling reason to donate?
[Click HERE.](#)

Please donate.



fircom.ca

CAMP FIRCOM
OF THE UNITED CHURCH
OF CANADA



Summer Camp 2016



KIDS CAMP

When: Sunday to Friday

Session 1: July 24-29
Where the Wild Things Adventure

Session 2: July 31 – August 05
Islanders Revenge: Return of Peter Pan

Ages: 7 to 13 years



SCAMPER CAMP

When: Sunday to Tuesday;
Wednesday to Friday

Session 1: July 25-27

Session 2: July 27-29

Ages: 5 to 7 years



MOM & KIDS CAMP

When: Sunday to Friday
July 18-22

Ages: 3 to 12
+ moms/aunts/female caregiver



POLARIS C.I.T PROGRAM

Counselor In Training Program

When: July 11-August 5

Ages: 16 to 17



JUNIOR POLARIS YOUTH

When: July 24-29 & July 31 - August 5

Ages: 13 to 15

POLARIS OUTSIDERS

Expedition Based

When: July 10-16

Ages: 13 to 16

GAMBIER GRIND

When: June 4

Location: Local North Shore
Mountain (TBD)



Dear Fircom Friends and Families,

The past five years as General Manager have gone by at a whirlwind speed. It's truly remarkable how much Fircom has grown from our challenges, matured as a social enterprise, given back to our community and changed to become stronger; all for the purpose of providing a sanctuary in nature for children, youth and families.

As I reflect upon 2015, highlights were reopening the rebuilt dining hall, hosting 11 weddings, growth in our outdoor school program, selling out Mom & Kids camp, and forging many new partnerships: David Suzuki Foundation, UBC Architecture program and Lynn Valley United. These are just a few of the notable achievable highlights at Fircom.

What's ahead next year?

We are pleased to announce our intentions to build a deeper relationship with the Squamish First Nations, support 25 refugee children to come to camp, improve our cabin stock and activity areas, and continue further growth in our summer camp.

The next five years will be guided by the 2016 – 2020 Business and Strategic Plan – a huge accomplishment this year. This will help us as we strive towards being a sustainable organization and to remain relevant to our community. We continue to aim at being one of the best summer camps and eco-retreat centres in BC.

Fircom is an inclusive summer camp and catalyst for community support. With your continued support, we can do more.

Enjoy your holidays and please connect with us regarding all the exciting things happening in 2016. Fircom is here for you.

With Respect,

Jeff Willis, Executive Director

Micro-hydro

Building a sustainable electrical system at Fircom has taken a series of cumulative steps. Fircom is making strides in learning about living off-grid and being good stewards to the environment. It's all about reducing our carbon footprint, and saving money in the long-term, to run the most efficient and green operation possible.

In the first year of re-opening, 2011, we spent \$53,000 on diesel. The hard work put into installing renewable energy (solar) has paid off. In 2015, Fircom spent only \$33,000 on fuel. This annual savings can now be put towards other improvements to the energy system to continue advancing our goals. So what is the next step in this incremental process?

Aside from maintenance and upkeep (no small feat!), the next plan is to install a 5.5 kilowatt turbine on Fircom Creek to capture the energy of the rushing water in the wet winter months.

Based on Fircom & Viridian Energy Cooperative studies, this could supply 75-100% of Fircom's winter-time electrical needs.

Micro-hydro could replace an average of 10 generator hours per day.

That's 50 litres of diesel per day for 180 days = 9,000 litres not burned up!

That's 24 tonnes of CO2 emissions saved!

This will be a beautiful complement to our summer-use of solar panels. Fircom estimates that completing this project will save \$8,000 to \$10,000 in fuel annually.

The project will cost around \$35,000 - \$45,000 to complete and so far the Nickle Family Foundation has generously donated for the first \$7,200 to get it going. **THANK YOU!**

With these funds, Fircom is getting started on the engineering and permitting processes. Onwards!!



Relmagine

For the second year in a row, Fircom's Relmagine program took ladies out into the wild and gave them a memorable, skill-building, confidence boosting, outdoor experience.

Twelve intrepid women took off for the Sunshine Coast to enjoy a four-day outdoor trip to learn their canoe strokes and explore the gorgeous Sechart Inlet. It was a weekend of fun adventure: high winds, hitching rides, and teaching our German friend to make Jiffy Pop. There was even an impromptu rap battle as the group rafted-up on the water to watch the sunset. A huge thanks to the incredible women who took part. We hope to see you on more adventures in the future. Also a big shout-out to Half Moon Bay Kayak Rentals in Sechart for helping us with our storage and canoe launch! They run a great business.

Look for more details of the 2016 Relmagine trips coming out soon and gather a woman in your life (mom, daughter, aunt, friend) you've been wanting to spend some quality time with and sign yourselves up!



Summer Camp

Camp Fircom is an exciting and fun place full of friends, adventures, and opportunities to develop new skills. This summer over 200 campers enjoyed everything camp had to offer. They were found paddling canoes, kayaks, paddle boards and swimming in canoe cove enjoying the cool ocean waters of the Howe Sound. With our new dining hall up and running campers loved all the kid-friendly, but nutritious food that was coming out of our kitchen. Lunches in the breezeway, made for meals full of songs and always ended in a dance party. Campers could be found around camp participating in archery, arts and crafts, drama games, group building games, frisbee golf and field games. Every evening at camp we would play an all-camp wide-game where campers would be running through the woods and fields joyously playing together. After that, as a community we would gather for evening campfire, vespers and the final singing of MLK.

Scamper Camp was a new offering for campers aged 5 to 8 and was the perfect trial run for little kids to experience sleep-away camp for the first time. For three days and two nights, Scampers were able to tap into their creative side, get active, foster independence, make new life-long friends and discover the wonder of the outdoors in a safe, supervised and fun environment. It was exciting to see these little campers running around camp, joining into campfire, swimming at canoe cove and soaking up everything camp had to offer. We are excited to offer this program again in 2016.

Thank you to all the unbelievable staff who put their energy, dedication and love into Fircom this past summer; without you, it would not have been such a huge success. To the campers and families thank you for believing in the magic of summer camp and in trusting Fircom to provide the best summer camp experience for your child. As we look ahead to the Summer of 2016 we are even more excited with the direction of our Summer Camp Programs.



Mom & Kids Camp

2015 was the 6th year that Fircom hosted a Mom & Kids camp session since it re-opened. The Mom & Kids camp has become a corner stone program defining what Fircom wants to give to its community. It is so rewarding to see moms making meaningful connections – and developing friendships – with other moms. It is also uplifting to see moms and their kids enjoying time together with no stress for moms like cooking or cleaning – just pure fun, quality time together. The staff, volunteers, mom and kids have all come together to create a beautiful example of what community can be. A huge thank you to all the moms and kids campers who so willingly participated in everything that was offered, and to the staff and volunteers who make the magic happen. We hope that our 2015 campers (and campers from years previous) will join us again ... after all, **WE ARE FAMILY!**

Polaris Youth Leadership

This past summer the Polaris Youth Leadership Program was one for the history books! The two week program started with a week at Fircom to build a strong group dynamic and then finished with a stunningly beautiful out-trip that few British Columbians have experienced.

While at Fircom, a unique opportunity arose to join in on events hosted by the David Suzuki camp which was on site. Elders from the Squamish nation were sharing their songs, stories and dances – the Polaris youth felt honored to witness these traditions. Inspired by these learnings, the youth decided to start a new Polaris tradition by hiking Bert's bluff. The hike was steep and challenging and the group learned all about perseverance! At the top, they were rewarded with a stunning view of every bay on Gambier Island.

The youth also had some good, old fashioned camp fun like capture the flag, dock jumping, tie dying, and sleeping in the tipis. They prepared for their expedition through activities such as knot tying, no-trace camping, meal planning, and canoe workshops. Even the smallest campers wowed themselves by flipping a canoe over their heads and portaging it into Canoe Cove!

The group then embarked on a seven-night canoe trip up the Howe Sound on the new Sea to Sky Marine trail – it just opened this past spring. They explored camp sites that were newly created and felt the land and water open up before them. By the end of the trip, each camper's paddling skills had improved greatly and they had gained competency in preparing meals, setting up camp and loading the canoes.

The Polaris program offers new challenges and experiences for BC youth. All of the campers shared with us the profound things they learned about themselves through the program. We can't wait for next summer to keep creating these amazing learning experiences for youth by building their leaderships, group, and wilderness skills.

The Polaris Program is made possible by the Vera Radcliffe Thompson Memorial Fund through Ryerson United Church.



Winter Hosts

Every fall as Fircom starts getting ready to endure the wind and rain, we wonder what the winter will hold. Fircom is an entirely different place in the winter time. It is quiet, peaceful, wet, windy and dark. It's cozy inside and the jobs move from outdoor projects to inside repairs, grant and report writing, planning our next moves, fixing broken bits and pieces, and keeping the gutters clean and the ditches running.

This winter we are very excited; for the first time we have a Winter Host family staying with us. Kelly, Aaron, Dylan, Sylvie and Vaughn Woods are living here for 6 months. They are home-schooling (and homestead-schooling), getting a VERY different life experience, helping out around the site, hosting groups, exploring the beauty of Gambier in the

winter, documenting all the seashells on our beaches, and enjoying a quieter pace of life.

“As homeschoolers and nature lovers, we can't imagine a better way for our kids (and ourselves!) to learn about and connect to the earth. We have spent a fantastic first few weeks getting to know the site, and exploring the beaches, forests and ecosystem around us.

We are so excited to be able to practice sustainable, off-grid living, while contributing to such an amazing organization, and can't wait to see what the winter holds.”

With any luck, the Woods will be the first of many Winter Hosts to join the Fircom community in the years to come. Kelly will be sharing their experiences on her blog, seaandforest.com for anyone who'd like to check in and follow their journey.



Roger Burgess

(June 1947 - October 2015)

A member of the Fircom community passed away this past fall. Roger Burgess died peacefully on October 19th, 2015, after a short battle with brain cancer. Roger volunteered at Camp Fircom over the spring and summer of 2015 and was instantly a huge part of the community. His dry wit and friendly personality made him fast friends with the staff and in no time at all you'd see Roger zooming around camp on a bike, spotting problems and solving them, like he'd been here for years. Roger spent much of his retirement volunteering and his skills were put to great use as he was an accomplished builder. The quality of his work will make his gifts to camp last a lifetime. He is thoroughly missed by the Fircom community. Roger thank you for all you did for camp!



Welcome back Ana-Luz!

Ana-Luz is rejoining the Fircom team as the Food & Farm Manager starting in March 2016. She has been off enjoying some great adventures and picking up new recipes and skills that will help shape the food experience at camp. Fircom is excited to have this key team member enacting our food philosophy around people care, earth care and fair share all season long. We are all looking forward to Ana-Luz's delicious camp food, salad bar, and of course, the cinnamon buns!

We are also hoping to make a Fircom Recipe Book (a long held dream) come true for the Winter 2016 so everyone can bring a little Fircom food stylings home with them!

Donors 2015

\$1 - \$499

Aaron Woods
Alison Atkinson
Amelia Gubana
Andrea Potter
Ana Luz Cobon
Annika Jung
Anita Georgy
Anne Blair
Barbara Menzies
Bethany Hotke
Breagh Menzies
Brenda Chenosky
Caitlin Mason
Carol Saxon
Casey Miller
Charles & Isabel Powell
Charlotte Benser-Lochner
Christiane Schwiersch
Christin Söhnchen
Colby Brose
Craig Burns
Creative Toolbox
Daria Polansky
Deborah Maclean
Dunbar Heights United Church
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Margo Dunnet
Marilyn Harrison
Marilyn Thorsteinsson
Marguerite Ford
Maria Nim Chi Lee
Meghan Pritchard
Melanie Beggs-Murray
Melanie Schwiersch
Michael Carbonnier
Najib Alami

\$500 - \$1000

Nancy Knickerbocker
Natalie Phillips
Neil Fawdry
Nicholas Phillips
North Lonsdale United Church
Perry Ragoobar
Peter & Heather Scholefield
Peter Brand
Peter Wood
Pouya alagheband
Preston Parsons
Priscilla Rivas
Rachel Caulfield
Rachel Jonat
Rachel Phillips
Richard Dunsterville
Richard Overgaard
Ron Injates
Ronald & Sharon Injates
Rosemary Williams
Sam Harrap
Sarah Powell
Shauna Grinke
Simon k Lisaingo
Sophia Ducey
Taryn McLagan
Taylor Hamilton
Terra Mackenzie
Tobias Kruppa
Todd Alexander
Trevor Prince
Trish Varao Sousa
Troy Tenney
Ursula Hennig
Valerie Overgaard
William Clark

\$500 - \$1000

Craig Burns
Brian Biddlecombe
Joan Ford Charitable Society
Lynn Valley United Church
Margaret Savigny
STAT Search Analytics Incorporated
West Vancouver United Church

\$1,000+

Mike Bliss \$1,000
Susan and Robert Burns \$2,000
CKNW Orphans Fund \$3,000

\$5,000+

Hugh and Jean Gabrielse \$5,000
Nickle Family Foundation \$7,200
Ryerson United Church for the wonderful golf carts! \$9,000

\$10,000+

Vera Radcliffe Thompson Memorial Fund through Ryerson United Church \$15,000
Capilano United Church \$20,000



Introducing Abbie!

Abbie joined the Fircom team in late spring working part time as their bookkeeper extraordinaire, and will be coming on board full time in the New Year as Program and Finance Manager.

Abbie studied marketing and tourism at BCIT and graduated from Royal Roads University with a Bachelor of Commerce in Entrepreneurial Management. As an avid outdoorswoman, her adventures have taken her far and wide with travels in North America, Europe, and the South Pacific. She's even handled over 60,000 sheep working in the Australian Outback – she's no stranger to getting her hands dirty in order to have a little fun!

With her strong business background and limitless love for the outdoors, Abbie is a great fit for the Fircom team. She's beyond excited to be a part of something bigger – helping people connect with nature in today's ever changing world. She strongly believes that everyone should experience the benefits of summer camp and is looking forward to working with Terra with the Mom and Kids camps in 2016.



Giving Group

Join our new "Giving Group" to support summer camp!

At this year's incredibly successful Camp Fancy gala fundraiser, Fircom launched a new campaign to help reduce the cost of summer camp and keep it accessible for more children and families.

The new online giving group, called "Fircomites! Friends of Camp Fircom", uses a newly made-in-Vancouver platform called CHIMP to collect monthly donations in a social and interactive way.

Our goal over the next year is to recruit 200 members of the Fircom community who

can commit to giving \$20 per month. If we can achieve that, we will be able to raise enough money through the year to ensure we have a Camp Director working year-round to build our community, reach out to congregations and other community groups, apply for new grants, and build up our summer camp registrations.

In turn, that will help us reduce the cost of camp for everyone! Please consider joining our giving group and help us make an even bigger impact on the lives of children and families in our community.

[Click here to sign up.](#)



I want to ensure that camp keeps going for another 90 years.

- Mr. Mrs. Ms. OTHER

Full Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Province _____ Postal Code _____

Email _____

Phone _____

- Home Work Cell

My reason for donating to the Camp Fircom Society:

- You may publish my name and reason in donor lists & other publications.
 Please keep my donations and reason anonymous.
 Please do not share my reason at all.

My Gift

Please circle one: \$25 \$50 \$10 \$200 OTHER _____

- I have attached a cheque, payable to Camp Fircom Society.
 Please charge my credit card for this donation.

Direct my donation to:

- Refugee Camperships General Camperships As Needed

Credit Card Information

Please choose one: VISA MASTERCARD AMEX

Card # _____

Expiry _____

Cardholder Name _____

Signature _____

Mail to: Camp Fircom Society, 2776 Semlin Drive, Vancouver, BC V6B 1R6

- Please send me information on making a legacy gift in my will.
 I have included a legacy gift to the Camp Fircom Society in my will.

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