

Dear Widji Community Member,

We are almost halfway through 2024—an important year for us here at **Camp Widjiwagan** as we celebrate our 95th anniversary! And while that milestone in and of itself is incredibly significant, there are many other successes that we are celebrating, as we pause and appreciate where we have been and where we are going.

A lot has changed since I first arrived at Widjiwagan in 1996 as an intern with the Outdoor Learning Program, but what hasn't changed is the transformative growth, connection, and discovery that we witness year after year, program after program, camper after camper. While maintaining our core values and traditions, we have been able to continually meet the evolving needs of those we serve—and the steadfast support from partners like you continues to be the cornerstone making it all possible.

So, as we conclude a successful spring season of outdoor learning and prepare for the summer months, I'm eager to share with you some exciting highlights and updates from Burntside Lake!

- Our **Outdoor Learning Program** celebrates 50 years! In January of 1974, the first school groups attended Widjiwagan's Northwoods Resource Center for a week of winter in the northwoods. As we look to the next 50 years of what is now the Outdoor Learning Program, we're building on the success of the
- Bridge Program, which aims to introduce more students of diverse backgrounds who have successfully participated in the Outdoor Learning Program to our summer wilderness trips. We partner with students, teachers, and families to build familiarity and trust in our programs and reduce barriers to participation. We are beyond grateful to have the resources to **expand our reach** and welcome more youth to Widjiwagan.
- Our **new paddle-making program** is making a splash! We recently offered our second paddle workshop in our Canoe Shop. We provide campers with a hands-on experience to learn about the design of a canoe paddle, working with hand tools that foster an appreciation for this special kind of outdoor craftsmanship. The best part is that campers go on to participate in one of our summer canoe trips and get to use the paddle they made!
- Joe Smith, who has been our beloved caretaker since 1986, will soon be retiring from this role. Joe has been a significant figure here at camp, making a lasting impact on Widjiwagan culture and every camper and staff person he has crossed paths with. His departure marks a very **bittersweet transition** for our community. We are fortunate that Joe won't be too far away as he and Lindsay move into their house in Ely, and Joe will also be continuing in a part-time capacity to help with managing the woods in and around our property.



- We are excited to celebrate all these milestones and many more this fall at **Widjiwagan's 95th Reunion** taking place **September 13th-15th**. I encourage you to register for the weekend and join us to celebrate 95 years of Camp Widjiwagan, 50 years of the Outdoor Learning Program, and the legacy of Joe Smith! Registration can be found on our website.
- Ensuring Widjiwagan remains accessible for ALL continues to be a key priority, as the **need for year-round scholarship support** continues to grow. We see the far-reaching impact of these dollars each day, whether it's with summer campers or school groups, and we hope to expand this assistance with ongoing donor and grant support so that financial circumstances are never a barrier.

I want to extend my deepest gratitude to you for your generosity that has helped us accomplish so much this year and is positioning us for a successful summer ahead.

There's no doubt it will be another unforgettable one for campers and staff alike. We eagerly anticipate the laughter, friendships, and memories that await us all.

THANK YOU for being an integral part of our Widjiwagan community!

With gratitude and excitement,



Matt Poppleton
Executive Director