



Eagle Island News

December 2021

Eagle Island, Inc.

Vol. 11 Issue 4



Camp Is Just Around the Corner

It may feel cold outside, but camp is just around the corner! After completing a successful full summer of programming in 2021, we are now better able to plan and prepare for summer 2022. We will offer all of our programs from last summer, but each has been reassessed and revamped with lessons learned to make them even better so Eagle Island can best serve our campers, participants, volunteers, and staff.

For example, in 2021 we navigated COVID protocols and safety measures by keeping our campers in the same small, stable groups for all of their activities throughout the day. We created these groups based on campers' preferred housing accommodation, as we felt this would be important to campers and families. However, we learned that it was not their top priority. So in 2022, we will focus our groupings and programs based on shared interests and activities. Campers and families can now register for a program that interests them, such as sailing, paddling, nature, or crafts. All groups will rotate through many fun activity options in the morning, and in the afternoon will focus on skill development for their chosen program. Make sure to visit eagleisland.org to check out all our great program offerings!

We are also thrilled to reintroduce sailing back into our programming in 2022. Our Mercury boats will be back in the water with COVID safety protocols in place. Sailing campers will learn more about wind direction, knots, and rigging, and develop the skills to confidently navigate the waters of Upper Saranac Lake. Not signed up for sailing? Don't worry: all overnight campers will have the option to try sailing once while at Eagle Island.

And we're hiring! We need to expand our team with dedicated and passionate summer staff, especially those with background sailing Mercury or other smaller sailboats, and those with lifeguarding certification. Please help us by directing potential staffers to eagleisland.org/jobs to learn more and apply.

Katrina Dearden
Camp Director



2022 Programs

Overnight Camp for Girls

ages: 9-15

July 10 – August 5

(one & two-week sessions)

All-Gender Day Camp

ages: 7-11

June 27–July 1

(one week session)

Alumni & Friends

Women's Retreat

August 12–August 15

Women's Wellness Weekend

August 19–August 21

Family Camp Mini Session

July 5–July 8

Family Camp Full Session

August 7–August 12



A View from the Boathouse Porch

by Janne Roehm
EIC Camper, 1960s; Yoga Instructor

I am so very impressed and happy with all that Eagle Island was able to pull off this summer, and I am thrilled to have experienced THREE different programs. I jumped at the chance to be on Eagle Island at long last and attended the Alumni & Friends Women's Retreat, Family Camp, and the Women's Wellness Weekend.

Each was so very different—intentionally—and each so well run.

I loved Alumni & Friends Weekend: time with old friends, the campfire on the beach, the swim around the island, the relay races, the times before dinner at the Lodge . . . all of it.

I returned with some of those same friends for a week of Family Camp with my husband, daughter Nicky, and granddaughter Lena. We loved the Olympic-style evening sessions, thoroughly engaging and fun for everyone from little kids to us older adults.

Women's Wellness Weekend was my third Eagle Island program of the summer and completely different from the other two—fabulous! The sessions were varied and interesting. I loved meeting and connecting with women who live in the North Country and farther away. My favorite sessions were the book talk, early morning silent paddle, forest bathing, meeting a yoga teacher from Saranac Lake, a history talk . . . well, actually all of it! And of course, Marina's Greek cooking: I went back for seconds, it was so delicious.

The Island has come back to life, in traditional and innovative new ways. Eagle Island has meant so much to me through the decades, and I am so grateful that our beloved Island is in good hands with so much hard work and vision, even in these difficult COVID times.

Staff Spotlight

My Summer (and Fall) at EIC
by Hanna Sue Percy



(Hanna Sue, pictured far right)

In late February of 2021, I was reading the Upper Saranac Lake Association newsletter. At the bottom was an ad that Eagle Island had placed about hiring staff for the 2021 camp season. I was in the process of accepting a camp job for a sleepaway summer camp for children with ASD in Canada. But once I read the newsletter and read through the EIC website, I just knew this was where I was meant to be. My great-grandparents bought a house on Upper Saranac Lake in the 1960s. My mum was born and raised in Connecticut and spent her summers here on the lake, and as an adult moved to Bermuda where I was born and raised. Every summer we spent a couple of weeks here at our camp on the lake. This summer was a dream, being able to work on the lake all summer! For the majority of this summer, I was a camp counselor, lifeguard, and licensed public vessel (boat) driver. My favorite part of being a counselor was when a camper noticed that they had learned a new skill and could actually do it all on their own. Whether it was learning to make friendship bracelets, mastering hula-hooping, or learning a new stroke in swimming, it was so rewarding to be part of them growing and becoming more independent. I loved seeing the switch when they actually believed in themselves and knew they could do it.

Toward the end of the summer, I transitioned over to the property team, doing the water and septic testing. When I found out that my first semester of third year was going to be online, I extended my contract here to the end of October. Throughout my time here, I was able to learn so much about myself and what I am capable of. I was able to meet like-minded people who were open and accepting to every human being that set foot on the Island. I was able to experience what it truly felt like to belong somewhere. We have just shut down the island for the season, a process that was both sad and promising. Sad as it is a final reminder this summer has come to an end, but a promising sign we will have many more summers like this for years to come. Eagle Island, you felt like home and I can't wait to be back.

Outdoor Afro Unplug and Rejuvenate Weekend

Benita Law-Diao, Outdoor Afro Leader



Outdoor Afro is the nation's leading, cutting-edge network that celebrates and inspires Black connections and leadership in nature. There are more than 100 leaders in 56 cities around the country who connect thousands of people to nature experiences and are changing the face of conservation. Benita is the Leader for the Albany network, which covers the Capital Region. Participants refer to themselves as Outdoor Afros, or "Afros" for short.

Whenever I'm driving to the Adirondacks with passengers in my car, I'm usually disappointed and dumbfounded when they don't acknowledge the magnificent mountain views around them as we drive deeper into the higher peaks. How could they be so indifferent and unmoved by lush green peaks, topped off by perfectly blue skies and powder puff clouds? Are they asleep? Or just numb?

When Eagle Island invited Outdoor Afro to spend a weekend on the island, I started to wonder how I could attract people of color who would not normally consider venturing into the Adirondacks. As I prepared a posting to promote the event, I hoped the photos of Saranac Lake, the historic Great Camp boathouse with views of Ampersand and the Seward Mountain range, and stunning forest greenery would entice potential visitors to register. It worked! This past year, dealing with COVID has taken its toll on communities in ways yet to be fully understood. An opportunity to unplug and rejuvenate in this serene location away from the hustle and bustle of the city had significant appeal.

Outdoor Afros from the Capital Region, and one intrepid Afro from Florida, chose to venture into the Adirondacks to spend the weekend. Participants enjoyed the 15-minute calming cruise across the bay to Eagle Island. You could see several of the Afros just exhale and begin to unwind as they inhaled the pine fragrant air and heard the waves lap against the pontoon boat.

After everyone settled in, they were oriented to the Island and headed to the beach. Spending time on Eagle Island afforded the perfect opportunity to expose the neophytes to the flora and fauna of the Adirondacks in a quiet, non-threatening environment. Most of the participants did not know each other, but they felt comfortable and secure because they were with people who had similar experiences and apprehensions about being in remote places that have few or no people of color. After dinner, the Afros sat around a campfire as the sun set and got to know each other, as they roasted marshmallows and popped popcorn. The Afros played Bird Bingo, where they learned about birds around the world, and won Adirondack prizes. Over the course of the weekend, they learned about loons and experienced their hauntingly beautiful call. They enjoyed birdwatching, mushroom hunting, and learning about the flora and fauna of the Island as they participated in several hikes. Canoeing to Eagle Island's neighboring little sister islands, Big Watch and Little Watch, was an absolute thrill because most of the Afros had never been canoeing before. Time seemed to slow down as each Afro found their groove and participated in activities that fulfilled their needs. An evening of yoga in the rustic Main Lodge soothed their hearts.

A weekend at Eagle Island was the escape that the Outdoor Afros said they really needed to reset and face their daily challenges. Connecting to nature, and learning about the Adirondacks, climate change, and the value of places like Eagle Island has inspired the Afros to want to share this kind of experience with others through Eagle Island's camp, retreats, paddle-ups, open houses and future Outdoor Afro rendezvous on the island. Thank you to everyone at Eagle Island who has made this opportunity possible!

Featured Alum Ellen Gagne

I attended Eagle Island Camp in the early 1960s—one summer as a Gypsy (backpacking) and two summers as a Mariner. I was thrilled to earn my skipper pin in 1962. Starting at Eagle Island as a young teen, I was socially awkward. But I always felt totally accepted and valued at Eagle Island. I learned many camping, sailing, and collaboration skills and my self-confidence grew. The values that I learned in my family were reinforced and deepened during my EIC experiences, which led me to work in the civil rights movement and join the Peace Corps in the 1960s, and to my current work with Afghan refugees.

Since the beginning of the efforts to win back Eagle Island for children, I have provided financial support. I also helped with a recent Eagle Island D.C. reunion and I volunteered on the island the first summer after the purchase—scraping old paint, hauling wood, etc. It was wonderful to be back on the island again. Walking around the rim of the lake and hearing the lapping of the lake water on the shore reminded me of sleeping to that sound on the Mariner Boathouse deck.

I am grateful for the efforts of so many to make Eagle Island a place for happy campers once again!



Ellen at the helm of Cox'n sailboat 1962



Ellen Gagne
Camper, 1960-62
Retired teacher

Overnight camping returned to Eagle Island this year!

Your support made this happen. Your financial contributions, coupled with tremendous leadership by our professional staff and countless hours logged by our incredible volunteers, made our dream come true. Less than 6 years from the time we purchased the Island, Eagle Island Camp is back!

What's next? We need to build upon this success and expand! We were full this year—every camper bed in Main Camp was taken, and we had to turn a few away. We know that the demand is there.

Your donations are needed to complete the expansion to the Adirondack/Islanders area. From the refurbishment of the wash house, to new electric and water hookups, to Unit House repairs, to new tents—there's still a lot to do. We've had a great start, and we're ready to jump back in after the ice is out next spring . . . with your help.

You support Eagle Island because you know that our Unplugged Island Experience inspires and empowers girls and young women to be confident, collaborative, and courageous. You know that boating, swimming, crafts, nature hikes, and simply living outdoors builds crucial skills in our youth—and it's also a huge amount of fun!

Please give generously this year to support our growth and operations, as we continue to work toward our vision.

Zoom with us as we Celebrate
Paula Michelsen's
6 Awesome Years of EI Leadership



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2021

1 pm to 3 pm (ET)

Register at eagleisland.org/events

give back to the place that gave to you...

eagleisland.org/donate

SHARE Eagle Island happenings with your friends!

Please LIKE, and FOLLOW us on social media



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