

100 Years of Keewaydin on Lake Dunmore
Salisbury, VT
Founded in 1910

Keewaydin on Lake Dunmore had its first official season one hundred years ago, but it truly began twenty years before that, in the frontier spirit of one A.S. Gregg Clarke. Clarke, known in Keewaydin lore as the Commodore, started leading boys' canoe trips in Maine in 1893. He had been inspired by his years at The Gunnery School, where founder Frederick Gunn would take his students out into the wilderness to improve their physical and mental toughness. After ten years of successful tripping on the Allagash River in Maine, the Commodore set out to find wilder territory on which to camp. He found the perfect spot on Lake Temagami in Ontario in 1903, and called his new camp Keewaydin. It wasn't long before the camp's leaders decided they needed a satellite camp, somewhat closer to civilization, at which to train young boys to prepare them for the wilds of Canada. Thus, Keewaydin on Lake Dunmore was born in 1910.

In that first year, the Dunmore camp was known at the Waramaug Wigwam and had only six campers and a few staff under the directorship of George Wilson – known to all as “Caruso” or “Bull Moose.” The first few summers were spent not only learning wilderness survival skills, but setting up the campus itself, building many of the buildings which still stand today.

The campers took their first canoeing trips south to Lake Bomoseen and west to Lake Champlain – setting off from Dunmore itself in canoes. By the 1920s, the camp expanded, bringing in close to one hundred campers every summer. The Waramaug wigwam for 10-12 year old boys was joined by Wiantinaug and Moosalamoo for the next two oldest groups of boys, and Annwi, for the youngest. These four groups remain today the units of Keewaydin, still in their original locations on campus.



More importantly, the traditions and ethos of Keewaydin have stood the test of these one hundred years' time. Boys today still learn the powerful, efficient canoe stroke taught to the original Temagami campers by the Ojibway tribe of Ontario. The stern paddler's “K stroke” – once called the “J” for its shape but renamed for Keewaydin – has become the hallmark of the

camp's legendary canoeing program. Consistent, too, throughout Keewaydin's years, are the camp creeds of "Help the Other Fellow" and "Leave Your Campsite Better Than You Found It." As boys learn to canoe and cook in the wilderness, they also learn to respect their surroundings and take care of the land and water. Sid Negus, director from 1926 to 1939, worked hard to make "Help the Other Fellow" not merely a nice saying but a way of life for everyone at camp. As camp historian Michael Vorenberg put it, Sid imbued "Help the Other Fellow" with the meaning it has for campers and staff today – "It meant that as a Keewaydin camper or staffman, you looked around for the person who might seem glum or frustrated, and you helped him out. If your tent-mate needed a little assistance at inspection, you gave it without being asked or expecting special praise. On a trip, you looked around the campsite for ways to help without being told to do so." Keewaydin continues to honor those who go the extra mile to help others with the Sid Negus awards every summer.

Keewaydin faced dark times after Sid stepped down as director, for the nation headed straight into World War II. Enrollment was at rock bottom, many staff had been enlisted, and most worrisome, the Keewaydin Corporation had dissolved, leaving Speedy Rush sole owner and director – and looking to sell. Alfred Hare, Abbott Fenn and Harold Curtiss – known to Keewaydineesi simply as Waboos, Abby, and Slim – had become fast friends as young staffmen working under Sid, and even while fighting for the Allies, they had not forgotten camp. Waboos and Abby found themselves stationed together serendipitously one night in Paris in 1945. They had heard rumors that Speedy wanted to sell and that Keewaydin was in danger of closing its doors permanently. They talked into the wee hours and when the war ended a few months later, they returned home secure in their plan: they were going to buy Keewaydin. With their friend Slim, Waboos and Abby took over camp operations and had it running at full capacity again in no time.



For the next four decades, the three pioneered an expanded, more challenging tripping program, built new facilities, and started a successful environmental education program in the spring and fall. Senior campers began a tradition of two-week whitewater canoe trips in Canada to culminate their Keewaydin careers. The three worked as a team, but Waboos was the public face of summer. Waboos had been at camp the longest of the

three, since 1923, when he came as eight-year-old Alfie Hare and was given the nickname meaning "white rabbit" because of his bright blond hair and last name. He led the camp in song almost every night after dinner, and continued the tradition he had started as a young staffman – the "Friday Night Frolics," a weekly show of plays and skits ranging from slapstick to occasional forays into real drama. This tradition continues today, Keewaydin's own answer to Saturday Night Live.

The 1980s and 90s brought more change to Keewaydin. As Waboos, Abby, and Slim grew older, they knew their golden years as Keewaydin's leaders would not last forever. With the help of some eager alums, they relinquished their ownership of the camp to create the Keewaydin Foundation, a non-profit which ensured the survival of the camp into perpetuity. The Board of the Foundation soon found it fit to expand the Keewaydin family, and in 1999 re-opened Keewaydin's girls' camp, Songadeewin, across the lake. Just two years later, the Commodore's original camp on Lake Temagami called up the Foundation, looking to secure their future as well in Keewaydin's non-profit. Thus, the Keewaydin Foundation now serves as a hub for three thriving camps, as well as the continuing fall and spring environmental education program. Peter Hare, Waboos's youngest son, took over the camp directorship in 2001, and has successfully followed in his father's footsteps, leading Keewaydin triumphantly into its second century.