

## Dear Camp Kirk Community,

I'm writing to share that I will be stepping away from my role as Camp Director, with my last day being December 19th.

This is a hard note to write. Over the past two years, it has been an incredible privilege to get to know your kids, to see their humour, their courage, and the way they slowly (and sometimes very quickly) find their footing at camp. I have been genuinely grateful for the trust you've placed in us by sending your children to Camp Kirk and allowing us to be part of their story.

When I think back on my time here, it's the specific moments that stand out. I will never forget seeing parents' faces beam with unhindered pride when, at Camp Kirk, we are able to see the amazing, incredible child you have always seen, the child that others have sometimes missed. I will miss the face paint that somehow turns into body paint during camp-wide games, the laughter and singing and maybe even the piano playing around the dining hall, and our summer staff who tirelessly give of themselves to campers, through silliness, through quiet presence, and through steady care. I will miss the transformation between drop-off and pick-up, watching campers arrive unsure and then leaving a little more confident in who they are.

Last summer, one of my favourite reflections was about the baby birds outside my cabin learning to fly. At first, those birds mostly looked like they were doing a lot of falling rather than flying. Over time, the falling became shorter and the flying became longer, until it was clear they were going to make it far beyond the nest, and one day there were no more birds in the nest above the light. I have often thought about your children in the same way, trying new things, wobbling, getting back up again, and slowly discovering that they can, in fact, fly farther than they ever thought possible, especially when they are surrounded by people who believe in them. It has been a gift to watch that process up close.

As I prepare to step back, the Board and leadership team are working on what comes next for Camp Kirk's year-round and summer leadership. They will be in touch with more information about future plans, and about how camp will continue to be led moving forward.

What I can say with confidence is that the heart of Camp Kirk does not belong to any one person. It lives in the staff who show up for your children day after day, in the routines and traditions that make camp feel familiar and safe, and in the way this community believes that neurodivergent kids deserve spaces where they can be fully themselves.

Even as I move on from my role, please know that from a distance I will be cheering your children on, carrying their stories with me and hoping they continue to find spaces where they are deeply seen and celebrated for who they are.

Thank you for the privilege of getting to know your children. It has truly been an honour to serve in this role and to walk alongside your families for this season.

With gratitude,

**Kristen Jackson-Dockeray**