

## Riverside RV Campground offers more than hard wood TRAVEL / Tweed resort caters to nature-loving gay men

*Bradley Turcotte / Ottawa / Wednesday, June 13, 2012*

Nestled halfway between Ottawa and Toronto is an all-male getaway that recently celebrated its first anniversary.

The secluded attraction is cradled by vast swaths of pristine old-growth forest, and a hike on site will guarantee sightings of otters, wild turkeys and, of course, plenty of bears.

Riverside RV Campground pitched its tent just outside the village of Tweed last year, and this gay-owned and -operated camping destination has grown exponentially ever since.

Co-owners Derek Meade and Clint St Germain say they noticed a lack of options for homo-minded nature lovers on the route between the provincial and federal capitals. In June 2011 they lit Riverside's first bonfire in the Land O' Lakes region.

Although the site is located in a rural area, the founders say they have not encountered any homophobia or resistance from Tweed residents.

"The gay community brings something very different into the area," St Germain says. "We're quiet and respectful. Gay dollars go a long way, especially in a rural area where dollars really matter. The township of Tweed is very supportive."

The site Riverside occupies has been a campground for over 40 years. However openly gay Tweed town Councillor Don DeGenova says the previous owners of the camp irritated neighbours with loud partying and alleged drug trafficking activity.

DeGenova says the township of Tweed is very grateful to Meade and St Germain for transforming the troubled park.

"When they came in, they changed the whole venue. People were so relieved and pleased," DeGenova says. "They were saying they could actually sleep with their windows open now."

Riverside's breeze of fresh air for Tweed offers cottage rentals, campsites and RV docking stations as forms of accommodation and features an in-ground swimming pool, a baseball diamond and canoe rentals.

"It's geared towards the outdoorsy type," Meade says. "I find that's big in the Ottawa area. People from Ottawa really into nature."

Yet Riverside promises to be more than a refuge for active outdoorsmen. Themed weekends are a big draw with the hordes of gay men who frequent the grounds perched on the splendid Skootamatta River.

Sample weekends include a full-moon pajama party, a Mardi Gras-inspired parade and a military-themed MASH weekend, when helicopter rides will be available to those brave enough to take to the skies.

But you won't find Hot Lips Houlihan at the MASH weekend, since Riverside is an all-male facility.

Meade says the decision to create a men-only campground wasn't to be exclusionary; they were simply going by popular demand.

"The few gay campgrounds in Ontario seem to be targeting a very specific demographic. There's one campground that is gay and lesbian and allows children as well. There is one other all-male campground in Southwestern Ontario. We had received a large number of inquiries when we first opened to provide an all-male environment, which is why we are all-male," Meade says.

Riverside's "acceptable wilderness" is open to men looking to be surrounded by hard wood until Oct 8.

**Riverside RV Campground**  
Tweed, Ontario



*Gay campers take a hike at Riverside.  
(Courtesy of Riverside RV Campground.)*



*A rainbow arcs over the forest at Riverside.  
(Courtesy of Riverside RV Campground.)*