



**Camp Ten Oaks
Feedback and Recommendations Report**

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Introduction

Camp Ten Oaks 2017 was magical, and we can see that from the overwhelmingly positive feedback we received from our camper families and volunteers. Once again, our campers and volunteers came from all over Ottawa and Toronto as well as communities far away from the camp site just to experience the intentional magic that is Camp Ten Oaks. Camp Ten Oaks was held again this year at RKY Camp, a partnership that continues to grow in a sustainable way. Our campers enjoyed the beautiful site, the waterfront, high ropes, archery, and the many other things that this site has to offer. Our wonderful volunteers came up with some amazing programming ideas that our campers raved about in their evaluations. Overall, this was an amazing year of camp where we hosted a whopping 100 campers and 41 staff members, our biggest camp yet!

We started the 2017 camping session preparations by hiring a consultant to review the recruitment, retention, and support of BIPOC volunteers at Camp Ten Oaks so we can grow as an organization and do a better job of examining and confronting our racism and white privilege. We know this journey of (un)learning is a continuous one, and we are excited to say that this year, we implemented many recommendations from this report, and will continue to take steps to creating a safer and more inclusive volunteer program for BIPOC folks. The recommendations in the report ranged from things that we were able to implement for the 2017 session (such as revising our application forms, interview guides, and volunteer selection process) to things that are a process that we are currently working on (such as building new relationships with community organizations) and which will develop and grow with time and investment from the Ten Oaks Project. To read the full report, please follow [this link](#).

As always, we learned new things about running a camp as unique as Camp Ten Oaks as well as the hopes and expectations of our campers, camper families, and our volunteers. We heard them appreciate many things, and also provide recommendations for how we can make camp even more magical. We value this feedback with all our hearts. Fundamentally, we are an organization that is built around people: their hopes, their abilities, and their uniqueness. Ten Oaks, at its core, is motivated by the needs of folks from LGBTQ+ identities, families, and communities. Moreover, we are an organization built on the strength of our community and we would not exist without the valuable contributions of our campers, volunteers, and staff. This report is based on all the feedback we received through our camp evaluation forms filled out by our campers, camper families and volunteers. We are sharing this report with our communities as part of our continual learning and to ensure transparency in our programming development and improvement.

We hope to see you at Camp Ten Oaks 2018!

Parnian Baber
Programs Manager

Demographics

We had the capacity to host 45 volunteers and 100 campers. We had a total of 141 campers and volunteers attend Camp Ten Oaks.

When requesting registration information from our campers and volunteers, we ask for a bit of demographic information to make sure our programming is reflective of our diverse communities. It is completely optional to provide this information and the numbers below are based only on the folks who chose to respond.

Campers:

Black, Indigenous and People of Colour: 22%

Gay, lesbian, bi, queer, etc. (i.e. not straight): 37%

Trans and Non-binary: 28%

Queerspawn: 42%

Volunteers:

Black, Indigenous and People of Colour: 15%

Gay, lesbian, bi, queer, etc. (i.e. not straight): 98%

Trans and Non-binary: 40%

Queerspawn: 9%

Recommendation:

In the past few years, we've seen gaps in representation when it comes to BIPOC, transfeminine, and queerspawn folks at Camp Ten Oaks. It is recommended that we also gather specific data around transfeminine identities. It is recommended that we continue the practice of gathering demographics data as an option to avoid enforcing coming-out culture.

It is also recommended that the program management continue to prioritize BIPOC and transfeminine folks on the waitlists.

Feedback – Areas of Strength

Our standard feedback forms for campers and volunteers include variety of questions around programming, food, volunteers, training, bunking arrangements, and more. We hope that by including prompting questions, our campers and volunteers will be reminded of aspects of camps they enjoyed the most as well as the gaps in services. Below are some of the most popular aspects of Camp Ten Oaks.

Camp Atmosphere and other General Feedback:

- Overall, most folks had a positive experience at camp and most folks will be returning for the year 2018
- One of the main things folks loved about camp is the people and the community that it brings together
- Folks also love how the camp is a safe space where they can be whoever they want to be
- One of the hardest parts of camp for a lot of folks was going back home

Bunking Arrangements:

- Most folks loved their cabin arrangements and made meaningful connections with their groups

Kitchen:

- Folks loved the kitchen crew and the food at camp, some of the most favourite meals were:
 - Tacos
 - Breakfasts
 - Pizza
 - Mac & Cheese
 - Burgers

Volunteer Orientation:

- The following were the most useful parts of the volunteer orientation:
 - Running emergency procedures
 - Harm reduction information
 - Meeting other team members
 - Camper briefings
 - Decolonization workshop
 - Clearly defined staff roles
 - Brainstorming games for campers

Programming:

- Most folks loved all the activities they did at camp and the following were the most popular:

- The waterfront
- Craft shack
- High ropes
- Out-trip
- Archery
- The talent show
- Feelings club
- The new activity sign-up method was appreciated by volunteers

Volunteers:

- The volunteer team worked well together under the guidance of our Camp Director and the rest of the leadership team members. The volunteers appreciated the work put in by the whole leadership team
- Volunteers felt that the break times were reasonable
- Having volunteer meetings during the day instead of in the evening was appreciated
- Volunteers appreciated the laid back closing fire and ice cream treats at the end of camp

Quotes:

- “I love the magic this place creates and I felt challenges to do my best, but felt that I learned so much that I could do even better next year”
- “I have no suggestions for the kitchen staff other than I hope they got all the breaks they deserved, and I'm glad they got to go swimming together after doing the seemingly endless pile of dishes. My suggestion would be for other staff - to help out the folks in the kitchen when possible - even if that's just going around and picking up dishes/cups left all over camp, or if it means being scheduled to help them out at times. I know I wanted to be able to help out with dishes, but felt like I had no time to really do so.”
- “Marcus, you are fantastic and just the right person for this role. I will miss you tremendously as Camp Director but hope you join the Board so you're still involved in camp life. I love you with all my heart!”
- “Cabin groupings. The cabins we were in was amazing. Also I really loved how we had some more independence as SACs. If we needed a rest, we could stay back and recharge”
- “24/7 access to snacks -- that was AWESOME!”
- "The people are so nice and I couldn't live without the craft shack."
- “Feelings was F-ing LIT”
- “Cupcake making. Because I got to eat a whole lot of candy! (Eek says moms!)”
- "My least favorite was probably sleeping because there were so many fun things to do during the day."
- “Tacos were so good! Also I LOVED having the salad bar available, it had so many different options and was really good”

Feedback – Areas for Growth

Based on the feedback provided by our campers and volunteers, the following is recommended by the Programs Manager to be implemented in the year 2018 and beyond, dependant on Ten Oaks' staff capacity and budget.

Camp Atmosphere and other General Feedback:

- We had many requests for later bedtimes and wakeup times, however, program times have to work with staff schedules, staff breaks, and the kitchen schedule. It is recommended that the leadership team take these requests into account as much as they can when setting up program, while also ensuring that camp is sustainable for all.

Bunking Arrangements:

- Some folks requested choosing their own bunks one the first day of camp. It is recommended that the leadership team look into if this could be done without excluding newer campers, or campers who have not formed strong bonds at camp yet.

Kitchen:

- Some folks recommended having more desserts, the program management should consider discussing food with host site prior to camp and including a few more dessert options

Programming:

- It's recommended that the leadership team review all-camp activities and brainstorm ideas to make them more engaging and accessible for all ages
- The week-longs were hard for the younger campers, it's recommended that they be split into shorter periods
- Activities that involved a lot of sitting down were hard on some of the younger campers, it is recommended that the leadership team re-evaluate the workshop structures to cater to all ages
- It is recommended to have longer travel time in between activities to give campers and staff to get to their next activity on time
- Continue posting schedule for the day in the dining hall
- It was requested by many campers and staff to bring back Across the Grass activity as an all-camp. However, the equity consultant we had hired for Camp Ten Oaks in early 2017 recommended not having an activity that promotes 'come out' culture which privileges those who are socialized, rewarded, and encouraged in space-taking. Coming out is part of institutionalized LGBTQ+ organizing which relied on ideologies of difference, which may not be conducive to BIPOC communities. Instead, it is recommended that the leadership team brainstorm other meaningful activities we can do to connect with each other.
- The following are some new ideas for programming:
 - A drag weeklong

- Drama
- Music related activities

Volunteers:

- Volunteer meetings should be facilitated by a senior volunteer to ensure they start and finish on time
- Depending on the budget, consider having more floaters available to give counselling volunteers time to have cabin group meetings
- It's recommended that a volunteer should be designated to keep track of all campers' choice and weeklong activities and document them to make it easier for counsellors to fill out their camper dailies
- Continue prioritizing BIPOC and transfeminine folks when hiring volunteers
- Volunteers recommended having counsellors sleep in the cabins to make sure the campers sleep at night

Volunteer Orientation:

- More time should be spent on role expectations and camp rules and camp structure (camper cleanliness, whereabouts, safety, etc.)
- Information about counselling volunteers sleeping in camper cabins should be added to job description and communicated to the volunteer team prior to camp
- More training on how to deal with campers with high support needs, as well as provide more information on disclosures
- More ideas around games / ice breakers with campers
- It is recommended that the volunteers have a longer training in May to cover all key aspects of camp and campers
- Designing more activities that will bring the leadership team and the rest of the volunteers together
- Setting expectation that camp is camper centered during the hiring process
- Including training for volunteers for respecting our host site (not going into the kitchen unless you are kitchen volunteer, not opening a locked kitchen, not taping posters up on painted walls, etc.)

Quotes:

- "Love the kitchen crew <3 I definitely observed a lack of responsibility/understanding of the kitchen by fellow staff. I noticed this with the use of the kitchen food/milk/stuff after the kitchen staff had left. Having worked in a kitchen I understand that you leave your work ready for the next day (levels of cereals, milk, etc.). To have people come in after you've left and eat food/move things around is quite disorientating and can give you more work in an already busy morning."
- "The campout because of the tents and the bugs"
- "Cabin clean-up it is NOT fun"
- "All-camp activities (mainly because they were geared towards the younger campers)"

- “Fix the changing sheets/hoops so we can actually use them (I.e., top bunks can't see in, they actually close reliably, etc.)”
- “The hardest thing for us was having our child come home and talk about transitioning without any report of how camp went or how we could support this process as it begins. Some kind of follow-up about supports or next steps would have been amazing. Overall, though, the phone call during the week was a huge help and we felt that staff and volunteers went above and beyond in their standard of care. Thank you so much!”

2017 Feedback Action Plan

Program	To be completed by	Action/Deliverable	Details	Resource
CTO	Spring 2018	Explore adjusting length of activities for week-longs	attempt to increase engagement for younger campers	Camp Director & Leadership Team
CTO	Spring 2018	Explore adapting activity schedule to increase travel times between programs	Needs for travel times may change based between our two camp facilities	Camp Director & Leadership Team
CTO	Summer 2018	Develop alternative "get to know you" program	Aim to connect campers with each other early on in camp without promoting coming out culture	Camp Director & Leadership Team
CTO	Summer 2018	Identify point person to increase efficiency and accountability in volunteer/staff meetings	Aim to improve adherence to scheduled timelines	Camp Director & Leadership Team
CTO	Summer 2018	Record campers' weeklong choices from a programming level to reduce workload of recording campers' daily notes	Maintain working list of all campers and cabin groups to take this responsibility away from counsellors	Assistant Director Programming

CTO	Spring 2018	Clearly communicate expectation for counsellors to sleep in cabins with campers at camp training, include expectation in job descriptions	Addressing challenges from last year where campers didn't get enough sleep	Camp Director, Leadership Team
CTO	Summer 2018	Build resource tool kit around supporting high needs campers	Acknowledging and supporting a wide range of needs campers may have	Camp Director & Leadership Team
CTO	Spring 2018	Include time for sharing of back-pocket games in Staff Training	Developing counsellors personal tool kits	Camp Director & Leadership Team
CTO	Fall 2017	Lengthen staff training	Staff training is five days in 2018 to support growth of CTO	Executive Director, Programs Manager, Board of Directors
CTO	Spring 2018	Incorporate concepts and strategies to improve camper-centred attitudes within staff team into interview process and staff training		Programs Manager, Camp Director, Leadership Team

Closing Remarks

Whether you were one of the respondents of our survey, attended or hope to attend one of our programs in the future, or a past, present or future volunteer, we appreciate the time you took to read this feedback and recommendations report in its' entirety.

The Ten Oaks Project is a small non-profit run by a team of 3 full-time staff. To ensure that our staff has the time and capacity to run our growing programs and community events, maintain a healthy work-life balance, and avoid getting emotionally or physically burnt out, we have implemented new feedback processes. The feedback process can be reviewed in detail at [this link](#). Please note that the 2017 Camp Ten Oaks feedback process has now been closed, and we look forward to connecting and hearing from you after the 2018 season. We would like to thank all of our camper families, staff, volunteers, and RKY Camp management and staff for making intentional magic happen at Camp Ten Oaks!

We look forward to seeing you at one of our programs in 2018!