



**Project Acorn
Feedback and Recommendations Report**

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Introduction

Project Acorn was held again in 2017 after taking a break in 2016 and it came back in all its magical glory. Our Leadership Team and the Youth Advisory Committee worked extremely hard over eight months, meeting weekly in addition to all the off-line work, creating sub-committees, making decisions big and small, and overall being a dream team to work with. Our Roots of Our Communities volunteers came in near the end of the planning and provided the grounding and support that was crucial to our volunteers and participants. Our participants came from all over Ottawa, Toronto, and surrounding areas with a broad range of backgrounds and experiences and made Project Acorn even better. The result was a program that was sustainable, had solid support structures, included a diverse range of programming, and contained just enough glitter to make everyone happy (although, let's face it, there can never be too much glitter at one of our programs).

We held Project Acorn at the Terry Fox Canadian Centre in Ottawa this year, which is a fully physically accessible facility. This was a key change at Project Acorn this year, after taking a break from programming in 2016. Having a fully physically accessible site that was accessible by public transit also meant that more people were able to attend Project Acorn, both as participants and as volunteers. The program had to be adapted to be more of an urban camp, but our magic committees were phenomenal in coming up with creative ways to bring some camp magic to this urban setting. We had slip and slides, a giant inflatable pool, bonfires (no, that's not a typo!) at night, marshmallows, s'mores, femme sleepovers, moonrock painting, and little groups of participants and volunteers hanging out singing songs and playing ukuleles, guitars and the grand piano. The variety show brought out some amazing talent and the brunch on the last day of camp in the beautifully decorated dining hall with a photo slideshow was a great way to end camp.

We also learned about running a program in this new location as well as the hopes and expectations of our participants and volunteers at Project Acorn. 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 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 participants, volunteers and staff. This report is based on all the feedback we received through our camp evaluation forms filled out by our participants and volunteer staff as well as the in-person de-briefs that took place with the Leadership Team, the Youth Advisory Committee and the Roots of Our Communities volunteers. We are sharing this report with our communities as part of our commitment to continual learning and to ensure transparency in our programming development and improvement. We hope to see you at Project Acorn 2018!

Parnian Baber
Programs Manager

Demographics

We had the capacity to host four LT members, ten YAC members, eight ROCs and up to 45 participants. We had a total of 61 participants and volunteers attend Project Acorn.

In our participant and volunteer registration forms, 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.

Black, Indigenous and People of Colour: 36%

Gay, lesbian, bi, queer, etc. (i.e. not straight): 82%

Trans and Non-binary: 48%

Queerspawn: 19%

Recommendation:

In the past few years, we've seen gaps in representation when it comes to BIPOC, transfeminine, and queerspawn folks at Project Acorn. 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 participants and volunteers include a variety of questions around programming, support, volunteers, workshops, POD arrangements and more. We hope that by including prompting questions, our participants 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 Project Acorn.

Centered Spaces:

- The centered spaces were appreciated by most folks
- Folks appreciated the unstructured nature of these spaces

Kitchen:

- Folks appreciated the food and had good interactions with the kitchen staff

Location:

- Folks appreciated the fully physically accessible site
- Folks appreciated the way the site was adapted to have some outdoor elements, like the campfire, inflatable swimming pool, and other lawn games

Pre-camp Information Distribution:

- The frequency and content of the emails pre-camp was appreciated by most folks
- The accessibility information as well as the support calls made to participants pre-camp were appreciated

Programming:

- All three all-camp activities (Across the Grass, the decolonization workshop, and the transmisogyny workshop) were appreciated and well-liked by most folks
- All workshops had mostly positive reviews from the surveys.
- The variety show was liked and enjoyed by most folks

POD Environment:

- The POD environment felt supportive, respectful and fun to most folks
- Folks generally liked the PODs they were in and formed meaningful connections with their POD mates

Support:

- The support structures were great and folks were able to access them when needed
- Folks appreciated the thumbs up / thumbs down approach for quick check ins
- Volunteers appreciated the detailed participant support needs documents provided to each POD
- Folks appreciated the medicine reminders during the day

Quotes:

- “Yes, because we had great group leaders”
- “The variety show!!!!!! Was amazing!!!! I loved having song lyrics and poems projected above performers! I feel like the content was also well balanced and nothing was too heavy that we weren't warned about.”

Feedback – Areas for Growth

Based on the feedback provided by our participants 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. Since Project Acorn is a program led by youth for youth, the application of some of these recommendations will depend on the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) for the 2018 camp session.

Camp Atmosphere and other General Feedback:

- Continue prioritizing BIPOC and transfeminine folks when hiring volunteers
- Bring back happy boxes instead of happy jars to avoid glass breakage

Centered Spaces:

- Continue having the spaces unstructured, and place a facilitator/vibe minder at each timeslot if there are staff resources available.
- Suggest running a centered space for questioning folks during the YAC planning process.

Kitchen:

- Have more snacks available in between meals
- Continue discussing dietary requirements and allergies with the site staff prior to camp.

Pre-camp Information Distribution:

- Making support calls to participants 4-5 weeks before camp
- Send participants camp arrival and departure times 4-5 weeks before camp
- Discuss the possibility of sending the program schedule to the participants prior to camp with the 2018 YAC.

Programming:

- Continue finding ways to support and debrief with folks after the Across the Grass activity. Also continue trying to find new ways for folks to connect to each other without having to participate in “coming out” culture
- Encourage facilitators for the decolonization activity to have a more interactive workshop
- Encourage facilitators for the transmisogyny workshop to have a more structured workshop. Also ensure that vibe minders are stepping in to facilitate prioritizing transfeminine voices in the room.
- Continue informing all facilitators of any support needs in the room and encourage them to use the tools available
- Discuss the possibility of starting the following practices with YAC 2018:
 - Running a LGBTQ+ 101 all-camp on the first day of camp
 - Having all-YAC meetings at camp
 - Running an anti-blackness all-camp
 - Scheduling a visit from the NESI van

- Reconsider the location for the craft table, and have clear expectations around cleaning up

POD Environment:

- Having a more structured POD time with listed activities and prompting questions by the leaders
- Continue encouraging participants to take turns speaking and letting the quieter folks speak up

Support:

- Continue posting support staff information in main areas of the site for folks to access
- Continue doing medicine reminders, and include one for breakfast as well
- Discuss how participant can be supported during the night with YAC 2018
- Make a community care plan for the ROCs similar to the one made for the LT and the YAC

Quotes:

- “Yes! The updates were fun, and I felt like I got all of the information I needed. The only thing I wish was getting the schedule a day or two before camp to check it out beforehand!”
- “I think the all-camp across the grass is a great activity, but I am not sure how useful it is in the context of just how much things we need to pack into the weekend. I think it could possibly be useful to reframe the activity as a discussion about privilege, marginalization and intersection of identity to provide folks with more of a context”

2017 Feedback Action Plan

Program	End Date	Action/Deliverable	Details	Resource
PA	Summer 2018	Explore adding a centred space for questioning folks		YAC & Programs Manager
PA	4-6 weeks before camp	Support phone calls to each participant around a month before camp		YAC, Leadership Team, & Programs Manager
PA	4-6 weeks before camp	Communicate camp logistics and details more than a month before camp		YAC, LT, & Programs Manager
PA	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
PA	Spring/Summer 2018	Explore tools and facilitators for transmisogyny workshop	Including allocating vibe-minders familiar with the topic	YAC, LT, & Programs Manager
PA	Summer 2018	Discuss how participants can be supported during the night		YAC, LT, & Programs Manager
PA	2-4 weeks before camp	Make a community care plan for the ROCs similar to ones made for the LT and the YAC		LT & Programs Manager

Closing Remarks

Whether you were one of the respondents of our survey, someone who attended or hopes 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 three 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 a new feedback processes. The feedback process can be reviewed in detail at this link. Please note that the Project Acorn 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 participants, staff, volunteer staff and the Terry Fox Centre management and staff for making intentional magic happen at Project Acorn!

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