



Camp Ten Oaks Feedback and Recommendations Report

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Introduction

Camp Ten Oaks 2018 was magical, as always, as well as a year of growth and connection. For the first time, we were able to run two weeks of Camp Ten Oaks, furthering our community reach to not only support our campers and volunteers from all over Ottawa and Toronto but from South Western Ontario as well, to allow more kids access to the intentional magic that is Camp Ten Oaks. Camp Ten Oaks was held again this year at two sites; RKY Camp, and Camp Woodeden. Each site brings character, beauty, and fun in its own way. Our campers enjoyed the water activities, high ropes, archery, and the many other things that our host sites have to offer. Our wonderful staff 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 156 campers and 45 staff members, our biggest season yet!

In the spring of 2017 we hired 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 very much still on the path to creating safer and more inclusive volunteer program for BIPOC folks. We continue to implement recommendations from the consultant's work, as well as working with members of our community to provide feedback around where there is still more work to be done and changes to be made. This year we have invited some experienced facilitators to host some Anti-Racism training for our staff team so we can continue working on making our camp culture a safer and more supportive one. The recommendations in the report ranged from things that we were able to implement for the 2017 season (such as revising our application forms, interview guides, and volunteer selection process) to things that are a process that we continue to work 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 2019!

Olivia Fogel
Programs Manager

Demographics

We had the capacity to host 170 campers. We had a total of 156 campers and 45 staff attend Camp Ten Oaks in 2018.

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: 26%

Gay, lesbian, bi, queer, etc. (i.e. not straight): 49%

Trans and Non-binary: 31%

Queerspawn: 71%

Volunteers:

Black, Indigenous and People of Colour: 15%

Gay, lesbian, bi, queer, etc. (i.e. not straight): 90%

Trans and Non-binary: 41%

Queerspawn: 15%

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 plan to return for the year 2019
- One of the main things folks loved about camp is the people and the community that it brings together
- Folks continue to 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.
- This year we moved counsellors into the cabins to sleep in the same room with their cabin groups. Most campers have identified that they feel safer and more supported having more consistent access to their counsellors.

Kitchen:

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

Staff and Orientation:

- The staff team worked well together under the guidance of our leadership team members. The staff appreciated the work put in by the whole leadership team
- We held a longer staff training in the spring, which created lots of good opportunity to build strong community and relationships within the team
- It was a year of welcoming lots of new folks into the community, which was lovely
- The following were the most useful parts of the volunteer orientation:
 - Running emergency procedures
 - Team specific program planning time
 - Team bonding and relationship building

- A “Day in the Life”
- Session around understanding and supporting Neurodiversity

Programming:

- Most folks loved all the activities they did at camp and the following were the most popular:
 - Caucuses (discussion groups for people of a particular identity)
 - Fire building
 - High ropes
 - Drag
 - Table top role playing games
 - The talent show
 - Binding 101

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 2019 and beyond, dependant on Ten Oaks' staff capacity and budget.

Bunking Arrangements:

- Some folks requested choosing their own bunks one the first day of camp. We have not been able to come up with a way to do this without excluding newer campers or campers who have not formed strong bonds at camp yet.
- Some campers indicated that they would prefer to have their counsellor sleep in another cabin. Though we recognize that this change may be difficult, it is in the interest of making sure all campers feel safe and have access to their counsellor any time they may need it.

Programming:

- It's recommended that the leadership team continue to review all-camp activities and brainstorm ideas to make them more engaging and accessible for all ages
- 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 was requested by some 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, and we continue to do so.
- As we grow older as a camp, our campers age as well and have become interested in working at camp. It has been recommended by folks who moved on to being staff from the Oak Tree program to encourage a year away from camp to develop some additional skills and perspective before being ready to move on to support campers. This brings up the opportunity to enhance the Oak Tree program to better prepare participants to work with campers if it something they are interested in.

Staff:

- Staff meetings should be structured, and facilitated by Camp Director to ensure clear communication across entire staff team
- Continue prioritizing BIPOC and transfeminine folks when hiring staff

Staff Orientation:

- More time should be spent on role expectations and camp rules and camp structure (camper cleanliness, whereabouts, safety, etc.)
- More ideas around games / ice breakers with campers
- Continue setting expectation that camp is camper centered during the hiring process
- Staff identified a need to include some foundational social justice theory into our training process, as well as tools of how to recognize and respond to microaggressions (and overt discrimination) if and when they occur

2018 Feedback Action Plan

Action/Deliverable	Details	Resource	To be completed by
Continue to 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	Summer 2019
Identify point person to increase efficiency and accountability in staff meetings	Aim to improve adherence to scheduled timelines	Camp Director & Leadership Team	Summer 2019
Build resource tool kit around supporting more socially conscious content into basic programs	Aim to deepen understanding of colonial roots of camping and to help remove elements of cultural appropriation	Camp Director & Leadership Team	Will be ongoing but can start Summer 2019
Hold anti-racism training for staff	Aim to build tools among staff to improve cultural safety of camp	Camp Director and all Staff	Spring 2019
Include time for sharing of back-pocket games in Staff Training	Developing counsellors personal tool kits	Camp Director & Leadership Team	Spring 2019

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 staff member, 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 2018 Camp Ten Oaks feedback process has now been closed, and we look forward to connecting and hearing from you after the 2019 session. 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 2019!