

Abstract

A growing number of children are being diagnosed with special needs and it has been acknowledged that access to the natural landscape and recreational activities for these children is limited. Children with special needs have been identified as being restricted in their involvement in outdoor recreational activities due to both societal barriers and personal barriers. Despite some efforts to achieve equality and inclusion, many activities are not designed for individuals with special needs. Transportation and equipment are often limitations that restrict children with special needs from accessing outdoor green spaces and from participating in activities with typically developing children in recreational camp settings. The effects of outdoor recreational activities and the accessibility of natural landscapes for children with special needs requires further study. This thesis explores the perceptions of parents of children with special needs, as well as camp staff, to better understand the impact that recreational activities and the outdoor environment in camp settings have on the development and well-being of children with special needs. The analysis is based on nineteen surveys completed by parents and guardians of children with special needs whom attended two summer camps, one located in Stouffville, Ontario and one located in Bancroft, Ontario, as well as, seven interviews with Camp Directors and other summer camp staff at these locations. The results voice the need for greater access to the natural landscape and for more inclusion in society for children with special needs.

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