

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

---

As Taylor and Kuo (2006, p. 136) argue in their literature on the importance of nature for healthy child development, “until proven otherwise, we can continue to assume, that just as they need good nutrition and adequate sleep, children may very well need contact with nature.” In acknowledging the need for contact with nature, scholars have been dedicated to studying the child–nature relationship as it has been shown that children’s experiences in nature are rapidly declining (Wells & Lekies, 2006). The lives of children are progressively becoming more structured and programmed with activities. Increasingly, their ‘free’ time is being consumed with play that is limited to the indoor environment and entails sitting for a considerable amount of time using computers, the Internet, and video games (Taylor & Kuo, 2006). Whether this is a result of the child’s interest, the safety of unsupervised outdoor play, the unavailability of working parents to engage in outdoor activities with their child, or many other possible reasons, the end result is the same. Children are spending less time outdoors (Taylor & Kuo, 2006). The progression of a child’s development can be difficult and for children living with a disability, the challenge is considerably increased. For this reason, it is imperative that these children receive equal treatment and have the opportunity to experience equal access to green spaces and outdoor activities (King, Law, King, Rosenbaum, Kertoy & Young, 2003). The concept of disabilities has been largely ignored in the study of geography. This critical social issue has led to the necessity of research on the geography for and of disability. Geographer Reginald Golledge’s positivistic view sees disability as resulting from oppression that has been caused by socio-spatial, not natural, factors (Gleeson, 1996). Individuals with disabilities often suffer oppression from society based exclusively on their physiological impairment. Ignorance of the disabling

condition is principal and the state of disability represents a prime concern in the study of geography (Gleeson, 1996).

## 1.1 Research Problem

This thesis focuses on the area of Human Geography with a concentration on Recreational Geography, the Geography of Disabilities, and Health Geography. It addresses the accessibility of the natural environment and the activities that take place at outdoor camps and analyzes the positive benefits that this outdoor environment and the activities have on children with special needs. While the requirements of special needs children in an indoor classroom setting have been examined in past literature, there has been less research performed on the effects of outdoor settings. Health-related quality of life (HRQoL) is a tool that is used to determine the effects of an illness in order to comprehend how that illness interferes with the patient's daily life, allowing for a more complete analysis of how the disease and treatment affects the overall sense of well-being (Rentz, Matza, Secnik, Swensen & Revicki, 2005). The impact that outdoor camps have on the HRQoL of special needs children must be examined in order to fully understand the importance of the use of land for recreational purposes in urban planning issues (Kuhlthau, Orlich, Hall, Sikora, Kovacs, Delahaye & Clemons, T.E, 2009).

## 1.2 Goals and Objectives

The goal of this thesis is to explore and better understand the experiences a child with special needs can have at an outdoor camp from the perspective of the child's parents, as well as from the opinions of the camp staff. The specific research objectives are to: (1) identify the range of activities available at two outdoor camps; (2) examine how outdoor recreational activities can benefit children with special needs; (3) analyze the benefits that the camp experience has offered

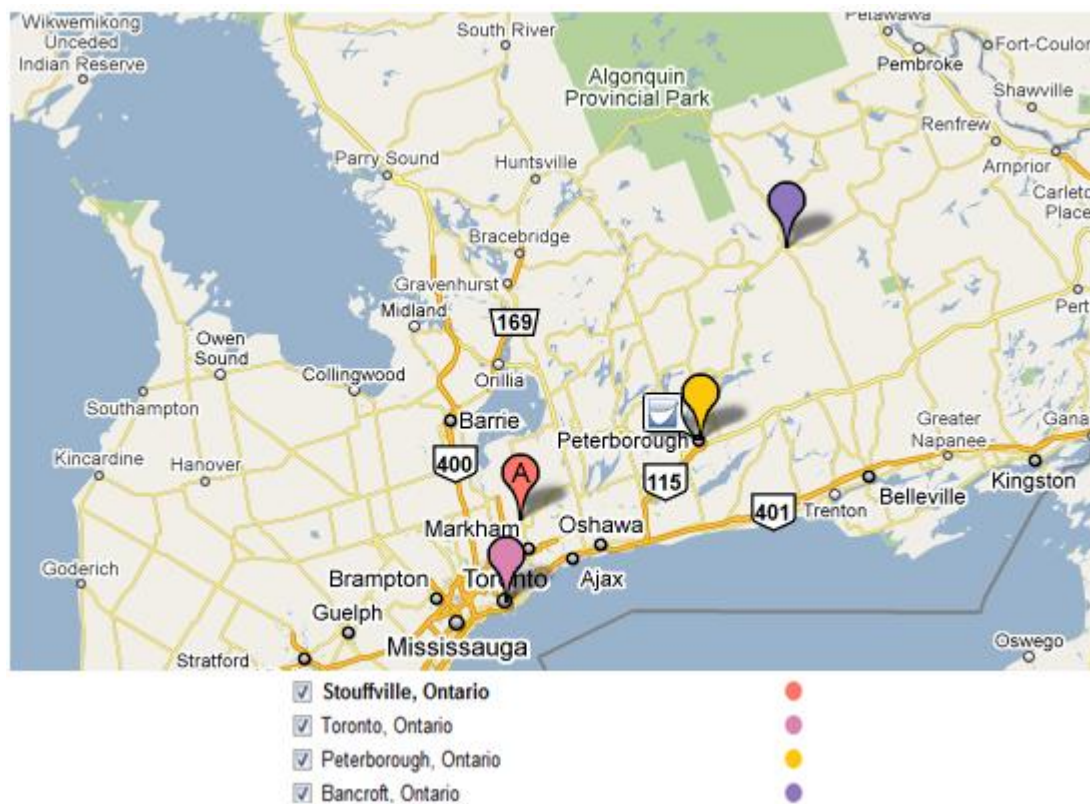
the child with special needs with respect to their personal growth and development; (4) identify the health benefits associated with exposure to natural spaces and time spent in an outdoor environment for children with special needs; and (5) determine whether there is an inequality in access to natural and green spaces for children with special needs.

It is important that these time sensitive questions are investigated and answered because growing populations of children are being diagnosed with some form of a ‘special need’.

Literature interchangeably uses the terms disabilities and special needs. Even though literature is beginning to use the term disabilities more frequently, for the purpose of this paper, the term special needs will be used in conjunction with the present study’s participants’ use of the terminology in their responses. Special needs, for the purpose of this paper, will be defined as: individuals who experience a delay in one or multiple areas of development which incorporates motor development, speech and language development, cognitive development, emotional and social development, sensory dysfunction, and coping skills (Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates, Inc., 2005). In past studies, it has been established that “exposure to nature has physical, mental, emotional and cognitive benefits that not only buffer the symptoms of disorders, but positively affect children’s overall development” (Strife & Downey, 2009, 104). The literature reveals the positive effects that nature has profoundly had on the mental well-being and physical health of these children. The positive consequences that the natural environment can offer includes improved motor coordination, a higher level of cognitive functioning which embraces a greater capacity for attention and a higher level of academic performance, a reduction in stress levels, improved motor coordination, better social skills, and an increase in the amount of social interaction with other children and adults (Wells & Evans, 2003).

### 1.3 Research Approach

In order to understand and explain the outlined goals and objectives, the research involves a collective case study (Stake, 1994) of two summer recreational camps, one located in Stouffville, Ontario and the other located in Bancroft, Ontario (Figure 1.1). The child's experiences, as seen from the perspective of each child's parent or guardian, were obtained through the use of a survey, containing both qualitative and quantitative methods. In order to specifically examine objectives one, two, and five, dialogues with camp staff at the two locations were held in the form of interviews to best understand the operation and philosophies of the outdoor facilities and what they offer to children with special needs.



*(Source: Google Maps, 2010)*

Figure 1.1: Map of Camp Locations Compared to Toronto and Peterborough, Ontario

## 1.4 Thesis Organization

This thesis is organized into five chapters. The first chapter examines the need for the present research study and outlines the objectives required to fulfill this gap in the geographical literature. It examines this research in regards to the broader geographical context. The second chapter provides a review of the current literature as it relates to the key themes of this research. This academic work grounds the research approach within the growing fields of Recreational Geography, Geography of Disabilities and Health Geography. After exploring the past literature, the third chapter outlines the current study's research design and study area. Chapter four defines the results and discussion of the research performed. The final chapter summarizes the findings, discusses the limitations, and explores future research possibilities in this field. Past research has shown that recreational activities in the outdoor environment can be positive for the general population, however, this research study and further investigations should examine the benefits to populations with special needs.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

---

This study examines the accessibility of the natural environment and the activities that take place at outdoor camps and analyzes the positive benefits that this outdoor environment and the activities have on children with special needs. It is focused on three major themes: disabilities, health, and recreation. A review of the recent literature in Health Geography, the Geography of Recreation and Geographies of Disabilities will be examined to explore these themes that represent important areas of interest to geographers. This chapter will begin by placing health within geography by directly examining the location of the two camps and the impact of the landscape of these camps on children with disabilities. The benefits of outdoor green space will be explored with a focus on the social inclusion of children with special needs and their access to nature. The literature review will conclude with an assessment of the manner in which the outdoor recreational activities benefit these children, as well as, the positive effect on development the natural environment has on the lives of the children. All of the themes mentioned above are interrelated and come together to help explain the importance of outdoor summer camps on children with special needs.

### 2.1 Health in a Geographical Context

‘Health’ and ‘place’ are two concepts that are becoming increasingly more interrelated. The World Health Organization (WHO) examines health as being not simply the absence of disease but more accurately, as a state of complete mental, physical and social well-being (Mohan, 2000). Place is defined as a subjective social and cultural construct, a location that has personal meaning for individuals or groups (Knox, Marston & Nash, 2004). Likewise, the environment in which people live plays a large role in determining their state of health.

A 2004 scholarly article by Verheij, Maas and Groenewegen (2008) focused attention on the exploration of natural environments. The researchers found evidence to support the concept that natural environments are healthier for people than non-natural environments. In the past, children have spent much of their youth playing in natural outdoor settings. More recently, they have developed a new relationship with nature. Through higher levels of education and increased awareness, children are more conscious of global threats to the environment and overall concepts of nature in the biosphere. Yet, their actual personal exposure to the natural environment is far from what it once was. Children now experience little exposure to the outdoor environment in close physical contact with nature and are rarely even aware of the clouds above them, the forests and greenery that surround them, and the wind that encompasses the world they live in (Louv, 2006).

Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) found that, in accordance with the Attention Restoration Theory, natural environments play key roles in distancing individuals from routine activities and also in increasing one's attention, with little to no effort. The relationship between place and health is becoming of greater importance in determining health related issues. This study will examine the perceptions of the geographical landscape and nature in relation to children's health.

## 2.2 Natural Landscapes and Health

Studies have found that with all demographic factors remaining constant, people residing in urban areas are 17 percent more likely to feel unhealthy than those living in rural areas (Verheij et al., 2008). Recent United Nations' reports show that there has been a rise in the amount of people living in urban regions. It has been predicted, that by 2030, approximately 75 percent of the population will reside in urban, rather than rural, areas (Cohen, 2006). The greater

the population of people living in urban, rather than rural, regions is, the more distant they will become from nature and green spaces (Verheij et al., 2008). This drastic increase emphasizes the importance of the present research in realizing the impact that natural landscapes have on people's health and well-being. The importance of children's exposure to the natural landscapes will be studied through the examination of the two summer camps that clearly portray this landscape. Kellert and Wilson (1993) state that contact with natural landscapes provides individuals with stress reduction, as well as enhanced high-order cognitive functioning. These are two areas that are often deficient in children with special needs.

Verheij et al. (2008) has examined the differences between urban and rural health. He found that one of the main determinants of health that has been associated with city life is the exposure to environmental factors. Such determinants include pollution, busy traffic, and poor housing quality. With the increase in citizens living in urban areas rather than rural areas, this has become a major concern at many levels. Urban designers and planners are being challenged to follow the philosophy of green urbanism by ensuring that cities are designed with open green spaces that are accessible to all. In the fields of education and health, nature experiences and therapy involving nature are being integrated into the classrooms, as well as into the health care system (Louv, 2006). With more people choosing to reside in the larger cities, camps that are located in regions outside of the city core are important for allowing urban children to experience the benefits of natural landscapes.

### 2.3 Geographies of Disabilities

The geography of disabilities examines the experiences of disabled people in relation to geographical factors. Of particular interest is the debate on whether or not the disabled are

limited or denied access to areas as a result of their disabilities. The concepts of place, health and disabilities are closely related. Health has been defined as being both physically and mentally fit and capable of functioning effectively in society (Gatrell & Elliot, 2009). In analyzing this definition, would those who are deemed physically or mentally disabled be limited in their access to society because they are not fully capable of functioning effectively in society? More specifically, would these individuals also be excluded from activities in the outdoor environment and with age-appropriate social groups based on their mental and physical health?

The WHO examines the current shift in the definition of disability from a focus on a ‘medical model’ to a more inclusive ‘social model’ (Gannon & Nolan, 2007). Until recently, limited research on the relationship between disability and social inclusion had been studied. In today’s changing society, there has been an increase in the concern and also in the struggle to achieve the integration of disabled individuals into society (Gannon & Nolan, 2007). In recent years, the amount of children affected by a diagnosis of various special needs symptoms has grown. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, one disorder among many that children live with, affects more than two million school age children and is becoming one of the most prevalent neurobehavioral disorders found in children (Center for Health, Environment and Justice, 2001). This increase in the identification of a special needs diagnosis is an area of study that this current research will consider in the further investigation of the integration of special needs children into outdoor summer camps. The ‘medical model’ of disability did not fully engage individuals with disabilities into mainstream social activities. It was believed that because of their disability, it was not possible for this identified population to be active members of social activities (Gannon & Nolan, 2007).

In the 1980s, the WHO defined disabilities in medical terms by creating the International Classification of Impairment, Disability and Handicap (ICIDH-1). The social theory of disability emphasizes the discriminatory barriers that society has created in relationships with individuals with disabilities. Disability is often based on social attitudes and structures and entails the manner in which a person interacts with his or her environment and its factors (Gannon & Nolan, 2007).

## 2.4 Benefits of Outdoor Open Space

One important factor in explaining the differences in health between urban and rural regions involves the availability of green space (Verheij et al., 2008). Minimal research has looked at environmental inequalities in regards to children's access to nature and green space. For this reason, access to nature is being examined in the present study to shed light on concerns with these issues. Empirical evidence found that there is likelihood that an individual's demographic factors might influence their access to nature and green space (Hood, 2005).

The availability of green space in recent times has been of great concern due to its scarcity in the high density urban form of large cities. Since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, urban planners have begun to acknowledge the importance of green space and therefore, the maintenance of access to green space for all is a fundamental concern in policy and development plans (Verheij et al., 2008). The main issue that arises, in terms of green space, is whether or not it offers accessibility to all people and what characteristics limit or affect one's use of the space (Thompson, Aspinall & Montarzino, 2008). However, the responsibility may not lie with the children for this lack of experience in nature. Our society is structured in a manner that is subliminally portraying the outdoors as a place of fear and limited in terms of fun and happiness

(Louv, 2006). The safety of children to enjoy the outdoor environment unsupervised has become a concern.

Studies have shown that children are at an increased risk of developing psychological problems if they suffer from chronic illnesses. These children tend to have an increased incidence of behavioural problems, reduced self-confidence and often experience a withdrawal from social situations (Briery & Rabian, 1999). Access to green places and both passive and active involvement with this physical environment have been seen to offer a range of social, economic and environmental benefits (Thompson et al., 2008). Research by Maas, van Dillen, Verheij and Groenewegen (2009) has shown that people who have strong social interactions are both physically and mentally healthier. The majority of social interactions take place in public places or parks. Green spaces that have trees and grass may increase the likelihood that people will interact as these features make the areas more appealing (Maas et al., 2009).

Children with special needs frequently experience attention fatigue and have trouble establishing social interactions with others. Research has found that open green space has many health benefits including decreasing stress, increasing attention, facilitating social interactions and encouraging physical activity (Verheij et al., 2008). Kuo and Taylor (2004) found that children exhibiting impulsive, hyperactive and attention deficit behaviours experienced a reduction in the severity of their symptoms if they engaged in after school and weekend activities involving a green outdoor environment. Summer outdoor camps in rural areas have immense open green space and the health benefits associated with this access to the physical environment positively affects the children attending those camps.

Louv (2006) explains his concept of the “nature-deficit disorder” that has been described as a reduced exposure to nature and the ensuing health consequences associated with a lack of

outdoor experience. The reality of many children's daily activities is evident in surveys performed by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Centers for Disease Control. Their research found that, on any given day, a child is six times more likely to use their play time for video games than to ride a bike (Cauchon, 2005). Further studies have suggested that many children are not permitted to play outside and freely explore natural areas close to their residences because of parental concerns about the safety and crime in their neighbourhoods (Valentine & McKendrick, 1997). Consequently, the mounting evidence has led children and youth to become "de-natured" (Louv, 2005). Louv (2006) views this in the terms of a "nature-deficit disorder" that is damaging to children and to also be the cause of attention difficulties, increased physical and emotional illnesses, and a lack in the use of the senses. This deficiency in exposure to nature is also detrimental to communities at large and the future of nature itself (Louv, 2006). Furthermore, recent research suggests that exposure to nature provides individuals with biological, cognitive and spiritual benefits. More than 100 studies in recent years have proven that exposure to nature is associated with stress reduction and lower levels of obesity (Louv, 2006).

## 2.5 Why Recreation Activities Matter

There are many health concerns involved with the extent of an individual's use of outdoor green spaces. In the developed world, high levels of obesity and limited involvement in physical activity are health consequences that are often associated with limited access to green space and participation in outdoor activities (Thompson et al., 2008).

Research states that children's exposure and access to the outdoors has been limited to backyards and areas in close proximity to the home due to growing fears in today's society of the

children's safety. Decades ago, children spent a considerably larger amount of time in natural green spaces. Currently, children are being denied these outdoor physical experiences with their environment. (Thompson et al., 2008). The Kaiser Family Foundation conducted a survey in 2005 on the experiences of children ranging in age from eight to 18 years and their findings illustrate that, with the exclusion of the time spent sleeping, the children's longest activity period in any given day is spent engaged in some form of electronics (eg., video games, computers, televisions). This dramatic increase in time where children are occupied with technology leaves very little, if any, opportunity for their involvement in outdoor activities involving nature (Louv, 2006).

Hood (2005) examined the inequalities surrounding access to outdoor recreational activities and found that youth from economically disadvantaged families have limited access to sport fields, trails, and green spaces that encourage recreational activities compared to families with higher incomes. Studies have shown that access to outdoor recreational activities is an important aspect of a child's healthy growth and development (Thompson et al., 2008).

## 2.6 Fresh Air and Positive Development on Children

Outdoor summer camps offer a range of activities for all children, however some of the most rewarding involve the personal goals they offer special needs children. These camps represent a place where children with disabilities can feel 'normal' and also a place that is overflowing with opportunities to both gain social relationships with peers and achieve a new skill (Briery & Rabian, 1999).

Scientific evidence has supported the belief that an individual's exposure to nature has positive effects on their mood, concentration, self-discipline, and physiological stress. This

research is particularly significant for the present study, as children with special needs often struggle with the above difficulties. These findings show that outdoor camps offering a connection to nature will positively influence many factors in the children's lives (Verheij et al., 2008). Further research has also stated that other health benefits supplied by access to nature include stress relief and increased mental well-being (Thompson et al., 2008).

Camps change children's lives. They provide these young individuals with experiences that supply them with a greater sense of knowledge of their surroundings and consequently, make them more self-sufficient (Briery & Rabian, 1999). Louv (2006) found that childhood experiences in regards to nature have been associated with increased creativity. An individual's lifelong use of green space is often determined by their level of use as a child. If children are exposed to outdoor activities and green spaces when they are young, this interaction will become a part of their lifestyle as an adult (Thompson et al., 2008).

Since research has shown that exposure to nature has positive effects on children's attention spans and concentration, scholars are taking the initiative in their studies to examine if there are similar results found in children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Only two studies have examined this concept; however, both have concluded that recreational activities in green spaces reduce the symptoms of ADHD (Kuo & Taylor, 2004). Kuo and Taylor (2004) conducted a study of children aged seven to twelve living in urban areas diagnosed with ADHD to see if various activities, indoor and outdoor, positively impacted the children's concentration levels. The study found that the concentration levels of children with ADHD improved while playing outdoors in natural settings more than was observed while playing indoors and in built environments.

Outdoor education camps focused on the experiences that children have in nature are seen to have therapeutic benefits in their lives (Louv, 2006). Recent studies at the University of Illinois by the Human-Environment Research Laboratory have found that the symptoms of Attention Deficit Disorders (ADD) have been alleviated by direct exposure to nature (Kuo & Taylor, 2004). In contrast, participating in activities in indoor spaces or on paved, non-green areas outdoors leaves children with ADD functioning less efficiently (Louv, 2006).

## 2.7 Social Inclusion and Access to Camps

The analysis of data compiled from a National Survey of Recreation and the Environment study in 2001 of 17 216 Americans found that people with disabilities were not limited access to outdoor recreation activities (Louv, 2006). In fact, they experienced levels of participation equal to, if not greater, than those without disabilities (Louv, 2006). Arguably, most outdoor summer camps have barriers that inhibit children with special needs and do not offer inclusive programs for children with disabilities. The Ontario Camps Association (OCA) has over 300 camps registered in Ontario and only 110 of those offer inclusive day and/or residential camp programs (OCA, 2010). However, some camps are places that do not exclude children with special needs. These facilities are created with the children's specific disability and needs in mind and they work towards offering an outdoor camping experience that is as "normal" as possible for special needs children (Briery & Rabian, 1999).

Outdoor summer camps have been in operation for decades but with technological advancements, the shift away from outdoor recreational camps has been increasing. However, in recent years, it has been determined that contact with green spaces and outdoor recreational activities is associated with healthy childhood development. The market for outdoor camps

offering experiences in nature should continue to expand as the needed exposure to the outdoors and nature is explored and better understood (Louv, 2006). Some children who have never experienced outdoor summer camps have never seen the brilliant glow of the rural night sky. There is no appreciation for the effect that nature and the physical environment can offer children, with or without disabilities, in creating a changed individual after attending camp. With the recent trend in a 'nature deficit', camps should focus their attention on offering more opportunity for experiences with direct contact to nature. It is time for the revival of outdoor nature based camps (Louv, 2006). The research involved in the current study will further examine this lack of direct contact with nature.

## 2.8 Contextual Literature

This thesis examines two outdoor summer camps whose aim is to provide outdoor nature activities and to provide a place where children can have the opportunity to interact with the natural landscape while participating in recreational activities.

Glenbrook Day Camp, one of the camps being examined in the present study, was chosen for this research based on the special needs integration program they offer and also for the physical landscape the camp is situated in. The camp offers many outdoor recreational activities as shown on Figure 2.1. This facility is an outdoor summer recreational camp that is located in Stouffville, Ontario (see Figure 2.2) and whose 100-acre site blends nature, recreation and conventional farm activities. This camp was created with the goal to bring city children to the country to experience the essence of nature. This camp is inclusive and no child is limited access to experience Glenbrook Day Camp; children with disabilities and of varying socio-economic backgrounds are brought to Glenbrook through the support of grants and bursaries. Glenbrook

Day Camp allows children of less fortunate families the ability to participate in camp through their 'Hand-in-Hand' program which offers financial assistance to families in need (Dougald, 1999-2010).

Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
9:30 - 10:30	1 <sup>st</sup> Day Tour	9:30 - 10:00	Wagon Ride	9:30 - 10:15	Bikes	9:30 - 10:30	Swim Sunscreen	9:30 - 10:10	North Creek
10:30 - 11:30	Swim Sunscreen	10:00 - 10:30	Peace	10:15 - 11:00	Sports	10:30 - 11:00	Halftime	10:10 - 10:50	Swim Sunscreen
11:30 - 12:30	Mini Golf	10:30 - 11:30	Swim Sunscreen	11:00 - 11:45	Arts & Crafts	11:00 - 11:45	Climbing Gym	11:00 - 11:45	Nature
12:30 - 1:15	Lunch & Tuck	11:30 - 12:00	Lunch	11:45 - 12:30	Lunch Sunscreen	11:45 - 12:30	Arts & Crafts	11:45 - 12:30	Lunch
1:15 - 2:00	Climbing Gym	12:00 - 12:30	North Creek	12:30 - 1:30	Outdoor Cooking	12:30 - 1:15	Lunch Sunscreen	12:30 - 1:15	Bikes
2:00 - 2:45	Nature	12:30 - 1:30	Barn	1:30 - 2:30	Swim Sunscreen	1:15 - 2:00	Canoeing	1:15 - 1:30	Tuck Sunscreen
2:45 - 3:30	Sunscreen Sports	1:30 - 2:30	Tuck & Sing Song	2:30 - 2:45	Tuck	2:00 - 2:30	Wagon Ride	1:30 - 2:00	East Hayloft
		2:45 - 3:30	Canoeing	2:45 - 3:30	Woodlot	2:30 - 3:30	Tuck & Sing Song	2:00 - 3:30	SPECIAL EVENT

(Source: Dougald, 1999-2010)

**Figure 2.1: Sample Schedule of a week at Glenbrook Day Camp**

Similar to Glenbrook Day Camp, Fraser Lake Camp was also chosen for its integration program which allows children with special needs the chance to experience nature through a variety of activities in a residential outdoor camp setting. This camp, which is located in Bancroft, Ontario (see Figure 2.3), has the objective to teach children outdoor skills and to appreciate all of God's creations. The individualized weekly programming at this facility allows each camper to choose activities that best suit their personality, needs and desires while giving them a chance to experience new opportunities and achieve new goals (Musselman, 2000-2010).

Outdoor summer camps offer children the ability to explore the green environment and reconnect with nature. In today's world, children are limited to play in planned landscapes that limit their ability to run freely and experience the beauty of the outdoors. The technology of the current time captures children's attention and is often believed to be safer, however it is also responsible for causing them to be captivated in an 'imaginary world'. Outdoor summer camp provides 'real-life' experiences in the natural environment. Nature based camps allow children to get their feet wet and their hands dirty again. Nature is free, yet often forgotten, and children are amazed and can be just as easily captivated by simply observing insects in the ground or building sand castles in the sun (Fine, 2009).



## 2.9 Discussion

Nature has been seen to have therapeutic effects on people by aiding in their focus and by reducing the stress levels that can be caused by urban environments. Children with special needs often experience increased stress levels due to the over stimulation of their senses and time spent interacting with the outdoor environment, away from the hectic built environment associated with city life, can positively impact their physical and emotional well-being. Human geography has, in the past, found little room for studies of disability (Park, Radford & Vickers, 1998). In recent years, the discipline of Geography has expanded and the field of the Geography of Disabilities has begun to develop. Gleeson (1996) states that ‘geography of the disabled’ should entail the geographers’ research on the abilities and competencies of the disabled population. It should explain how to more effectively use this information to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities. Focusing and exploring more directly on outdoor recreational activities and exposure to nature provides insight on the health benefits for special needs children, as well as the access of these activities in outdoor summer camp settings. Changes in the behaviour and health of children have guided scientists and environmental psychologists’ area of study to further examine children’s decreasing health trends to investigate if they are in part due to an increased lack of exposure to nature and outdoor recreational activities (Strife & Downey, 2009). As Taylor and Kuo (2006, p. 136) concluded “until proven otherwise, we can continue to assume, that just as they need good nutrition and adequate sleep, children may very well need contact with nature.”

### 3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND STUDY AREA

---

As the literature review suggested, children's exposure to the outdoors and recreational activities is diminishing. Urban children spend a very limited amount of their time in natural outdoor settings. With this in mind, the investigation of urban children's exposure to green spaces in natural settings was an appropriate area for study. This research explored the positive benefits of exposure to green spaces in natural settings on children with special needs as seen from the perspective of their parents and those in contact with these children at the camps. In order to investigate the objectives mentioned at the beginning of this study, surveys and key informant interviews were conducted. The comparison of the two camps ensured that comparison in the field of study was obtained. Qualitative methods have been explored in order to determine the experiences of the children. Interviews were useful as they provided insight into the complex behaviours and motivations, as well as offered the informant the ability to reflect on the questions in more depth than if a questionnaire had been completed. Interviews were a method of gaining access to the opinions and experiences of the informant by allowing an open response to the questions being asked (Hay, 2005). Surveys obtained from the parents of the children with special needs attending the above mentioned camps provided important qualitative and quantitative data on the positive experiences that their children obtained while being involved in outdoor recreational activities at camp.

#### 3.1 Study Area

For the purpose of this research camps located in, two geographical settings were examined: Whitchurch-Stouffville, Ontario and Bancroft, Ontario. Whitchurch-Stouffville was described as being 206.74 square kilometers in area with a population of 24,395 people (Statistics Canada, 2006). Whitchurch-Stouffville was referred to as being located just north of

the City of Toronto. This town was bounded by Davis Drive in the north, Regional Road 30 in the east, the town of Markham in the south and Highway 404 in the west. Eighty-two percent of Whitchurch-Stouffville residents were reported as being over the age of 15 years. The large percentage of residents represented in the over 15 years of age category indicated that there is a smaller proportion of children growing up in natural rural landscapes like Whitchurch-Stouffville (See Table 3.1).

Bancroft, Ontario was described as a more rural region on the York River Valley and consisted of 3 838 residents. The physical area, however, was defined as larger than that of Whitchurch-Stouffville with 227.84 square kilometers (Statistics Canada, 2006). The geographical description of Bancroft stated that it is located in Ontario’s Haliburton Hills and the southern part of the Canadian Shield and, thus, contains very unique land forms not found in urban city centers. A large portion of the homes in Bancroft were depicted as family cottages that are only occupied in certain months of the year, primarily the summer months, and for short periods of stay (see Table 3.1).

	<b>Whitchurch-Stouffville</b>	<b>Bancroft</b>
<b>Land Area (square kilometers)</b>	206.74	227.84
<b>Population (in 2006)</b>	24,390	3,835
<b>a) Males</b>	11,970	1,785
<b>b) Females</b>	12,425	2,050
<b>Population over 15 years of age (in 2006)</b>	19,950	3,250

**Table 3.1: Statistics Canada (2006) Data on Whitchurch-Stouffville and Bancroft, Ontario**

The exploration of outdoor summer camps in these two towns allowed the study to examine the relationship between outdoor green spaces and recreational activities in relation to the health of children with special needs. Glenbrook Day Camp (Camp A) was located in

Whitchurch-Stouffville, Ontario. Glenbrook Day Camp began operations in 1968 and was described as a private, not-for-profit organization that offered male and female campers aged three through 15 years of age an outdoor summer camp experience. It prided itself on its unique natural features that included a clean-flowing stream and forests on a 100-acre working farm (Dougald, 1999-2010) (Figure 3.1). The camp offered 100 acres of rural adventure including various geographical forms, a creek, a pond, sports fields, and plenty of natural green space.

Fraser Lake Camp (Camp B) opened to the public in 1955 and was located in Bancroft, Ontario. Fraser Lake Camp was described as a residential outdoor summer camp for boys and girls eight to 16 years of age. This camp was situated on the waterfront of Fraser Lake and offered a natural landscape with an abundant amount of open green space and forests (Musselman, 2000-2010) (See Table 3.2 and Figure 3.2).

	<b>Glenbrook Day Camp (Camp A)</b>	<b>Fraser Lake Camp (Camp B)</b>
<b>1. Location</b>	Stouffville, Ontario	Bancroft, Ontario
<b>2. Area</b>	100 acres	257 acres
<b>3. Natural features</b>	40 acres of crops, 2.5 acre pond, lush open green spaces, creek, dense forests, biking trails and sports fields.	Lake with 0.5 miles of shore, Biking trails, ponds and marshes, dense forests, lush open green spaces, sports fields,
<b>4. Camper Enrollment (Summer 2009)</b>	972	
<b>a) Males</b>	535	
<b>b) Females</b>	437	
<b>5. Special Needs Camper Enrollment (Summer 2009)</b>	34	
<b>a) Males</b>	28	
<b>b) Females</b>	6	

**Table 3.2: Camp’s Features and Enrollment data**



### 3.2 Qualitative Methods

The research of the current study examined the perceptions of parents of children with special needs in regards to their child's experiences at one of the mentioned outdoor summer camps. The study looked at the experiences of health and the impact of the environment on these children. Qualitative methods were an appropriate research method for this study as one's opinions and the quality of health are not easily quantifiable (Hay, 2005). Communication from the parents of children with special needs was vital in understanding the child's perceptions, roles and needs with reference to outdoor recreational activities and green spaces. Dialogue with camp staff at the two camp locations took place on site. Interviews with the staff were used to provide a greater understanding of the facilities, green space availability, and the outdoor activities offered to children with special needs at these camps. The interviews were conducted with camp staff that had direct knowledge of the facility, programming, and improvements or changes that may have been observed in the children's daily lives. Given that children with special needs were not effectively able to read and answer the questions provided on the survey, the parents' responses were acquired to provide a comprehensive understanding of their perceptions of the impact outdoor summer camps had on their child's health and development. These methods were only used after being approved by the Trent University Department of Geography Research Ethics Committee. Surveys were administered by mail and included a pre-paid postage self-addressed envelope inside to ensure that the surveys were returned and remained anonymous. The participants of the surveys and the interviewees signed and returned consent forms before beginning the participation in the present study (Appendix A). To protect the identity of the participants of the survey, neither their name nor their child's name was disclosed in any part of this thesis.

### 3.3 Data Collection

#### 3.3.1 Surveys

Primary research began with the administration of surveys to families at Glenbrook Day Camp in late September 2009. Surveys were then administered to Fraser Lake Camp in late October 2009 (Table 3.3). All surveys were mailed directly to the participants' home addresses that had been provided to the researcher by the Camp Directors of both camps. A letter of information was provided with the survey and consent form to give the participant a greater understanding of the scope of the current research (Appendix B). Surveys were generally anonymous although some participants included their child's name in the open-ended questions. The survey was structured with a mix of open and closed ended questions, as well as questions with responses being on a 5-point Likert scale (Appendix B). All surveys were returned by mail to the Geography Department at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario in the prepaid envelope provided in the survey package.

#### 3.3.2 Interviews

Through communication with the Camp Directors during the summer months of 2009 (June, July and August), it was asked if they would be willing to participate in an interview at a later date. Both Camp Directors eagerly expressed an interest in participating in the interview process and recommended other individuals on staff at their camps who would be ideal interview candidates for this research. A letter of information was provided before conducting the interview to give the participant a greater understanding of the scope of the current research (Appendix C). The interviews with both Camp Directors were held on site in their camp office. Two of the interviews with staff at Glenbrook Day Camp were also conducted in the camp office

and one interview for that camp took place via e-mail. The two camp staff interviews for Fraser Lake Camp were completed via e-mail. The interviews conducted in person were recorded using a personal recording device. The in-depth interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and was conducted in January and February of 2010 (Table 3.3). The first section of the interview was designed to collect background information on each of the camps. The second section involved an in-depth examination of the integration program at each of the camps and the benefits believed to be associated with the program. Furthermore, the third section explored the benefits of the outdoor green space and recreational activities at each facility (Appendix C). The interview participants were also given time at the conclusion of the interview to make any further comments or to elaborate on any aspect of their camp that they perceived to be strongly related to the current thesis study.

	Surveys	Interviews
Glenbrook Day Camp (Camp A)	28 administered by mail on September 12, 2009; 13 surveys returned	4 staff interviewed in January, 2010
Fraser Lake Camp (Camp B)	9 administered by mail on October 27, 2009; 6 surveys returned	3 staff interviewed in February 2010

Table 3.3: Distribution and Collection of Surveys and Interviews

### 3.3.3 Recruitment

The two outdoor summer camps were contacted through prior interactions with the Directors, as well as recommendations by other Camp Directors due to the physical nature of their site and their integration program. The participants of the survey were found through contact with the Camp Directors. The parents and/or guardians of a child(ren) with special needs who had attended either of the camps during the summer of 2009 were the participants. In two cases for Camp B, the individuals were no longer campers and had become either volunteers or staff at the facility.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The observations and perceptions of the camp staff were recorded and transcribed with the interview participants' permission. Thematic analysis was used to interpret the interview dialogue and to provide a method for the interviewer to understand the experiences and opinions of the interviewees (Wiles, Rosenberg & Kearns, 2005). Once transcribed, the interview data was coded by themes and organized into templates according to the five objectives.

The perceptions and experiences retrieved from the surveys were put into a data archive. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the information and the transformation of raw data into usable information was employed by transposing the survey information into the computer software program- Excel (Statistics Canada 1998, 62). A thematic approach was used for the open ended questions and the information was coded based on themes and put into templates categorized based on the five objectives.

Direct quotes from the interviews and surveys were identified and used to create a better image of the lived experiences and the effect of the natural landscapes. The interview participants were distinguished based on their affiliated camp, as well as by the order that the interviews took place. Table 3.4 shows the corresponding letter and number given to each interviewee (i.e., A1). The parallels found between the interviewees' perceptions, as well as the surveyed participants, portrayed common themes and a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the outdoor environment and children with special needs.

Glenbrook Day Camp (Camp A)	Interview 1	Camp Nurse (A1)
	Interview 2	Head Counselor (A2)
	Interview 3	Camp Director (A3)
	Interview 4	Special Needs Counselor (A4)
Fraser Lake Camp (Camp B)	Interview 1	Special Needs Counselor (B1)
	Interview 2	Special Needs Counselor (B2)
	Interview 3	Camp Director (B3)

Table 3.4: Coding of Interviews and Staff Interviewed

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were given in that all of the participants' information was confidential and anonymous (Hay, 2005). No vulnerable populations were contacted as research participants for this study. This study took precautions to ensure that there were minimal to no risks to the participants' physical or mental health, reputation in the community, and personal privacy.

The research was prone to personal subjectivity as the researcher was previously employed at one of the camps, permitting the researcher direct contact with the Director and allowing for in-depth information to be acquired in the time frame necessary for this study (Hay, 2005). A prior working relationship with the Director can lead to possible source of bias; however, efforts were made to eliminate bias in this research by using direct quotes in the analysis of the interviewee participants. As well, an in-depth checking process was done by the researcher's Supervisor to read and analyze for bias. The strength of having this direct contact and rapport with the Director was the ability to deliver the results directly back to the parents and Camp Directors.

## 4.0 RESULTS

---

The themes and opinions analyzed in this research reflect the participants' perceptions of outdoor recreational camps and outdoor activities on their child's growth and development. The value of both quantitative and qualitative research was imperative in this study. The research methods focused on the perspectives of the parents, the campers as perceived by their parents, and the camp staff directly involved in the interaction between the special needs children and their experiences with nature while participating in camp activities. Both through the use of the survey questions and the open-ended interview questions, critical data was obtained that offers further insight into the value of outdoor recreation in a camp setting for the special needs child. The participants voiced the impact that these outdoor summer camps had on their children. The interviewees provided opinions on how their workplaces (i.e., outdoor summer camp locations) offered benefits for the special needs children and described how they felt the outdoor environment impacted these children. The present chapter examined outdoor activities at the two camps to identify if the camps or the activities offered limits or positively impacted the lives of children with special needs. To thoroughly examine these camps and the effects on children, the scope of the campers was first identified before examining the limitations perceived by the children's parents, the range and benefits of the camp activities, and the impact and health benefits of these activities.

### 4.1 Scope of Campers

The scope of the 19 campers associated with this study was examined through the comparison of the gender, ages, transportation method employed to attend camp, and varying diagnosed disabilities. The respondents children involved in the study were representational of

society: 1) Four percent of children (aged five to 14) in society are deemed disabled and both camps had approximately five percent of their campers each week display some form of special need, and 2) disabilities are more prevalent among males than females and in the present study, as can be seen in Figure 4.1, there were 15 males compared to only four females. This information represented the concept that disabilities, in particular autism, are more prevalent in boys than girls.

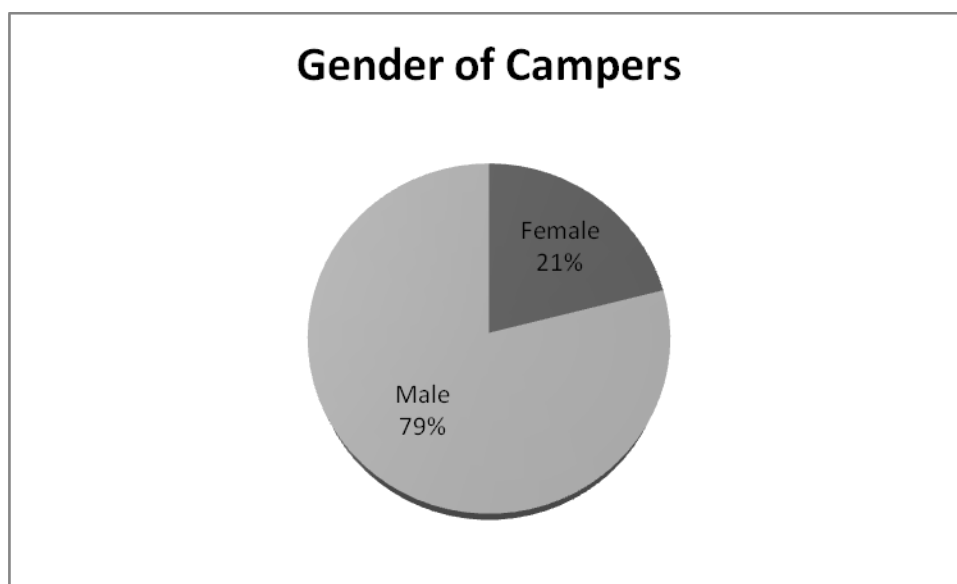


Figure 4.1: Gender of Campers (n=19)

The surveys completed by the parents of the 19 campers illustrated the varying ages of the children. Three of the children had reached beyond the age limit that is typical in the regular camp integration program (over the age of 16 years) and were in an integration program that was designed for young adults (ages 16-25 years). The ages of the children were a factor in the types of outdoor recreational activities that were available to these individuals at both Glenbrook Day Camp and Fraser Lake Camp, as well as their ability to participate fully in them (Figure 4.2).

Two of the children, due to their age being under seven years, were also limited in being able to participate in some camp activities.

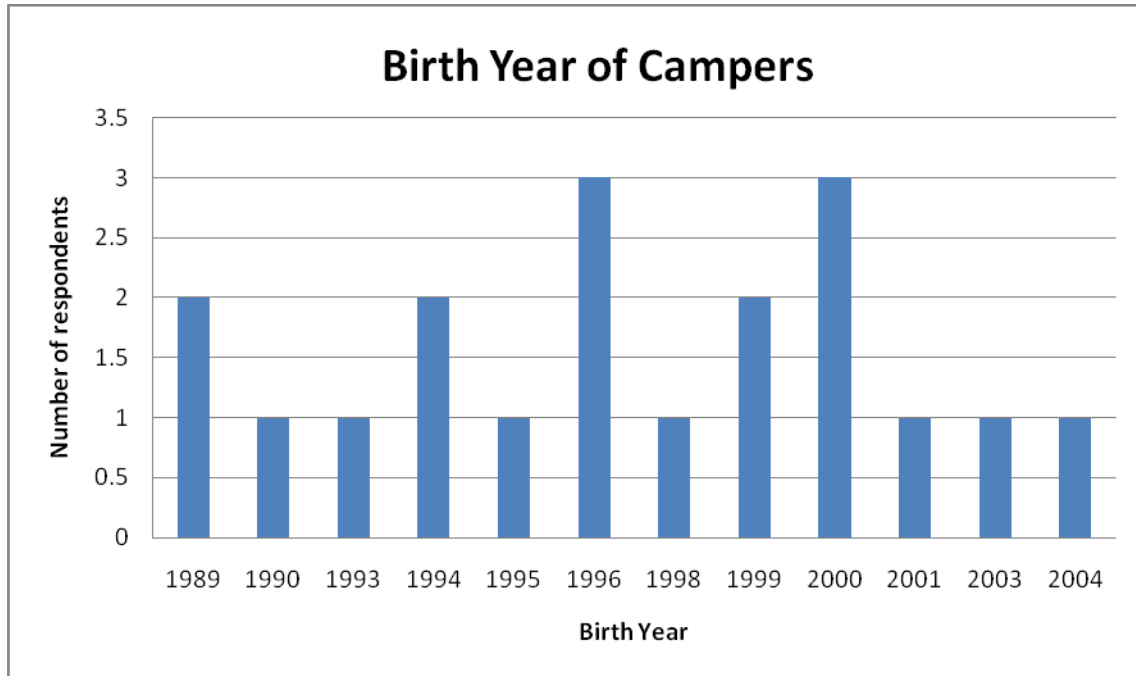


Figure 4.2: Varying Ages of Campers (n=19)

The spectrum of disabilities that the children have been diagnosed with was quite diverse. As seen in Figure 4.3, the majority of the campers were on the Autism Spectrum. Another key element portrayed here was the prevalence of co-occurring disabilities. One quarter of the campers had a dual-diagnosis including, Autism and Down syndrome, Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and ADHD and Autism.

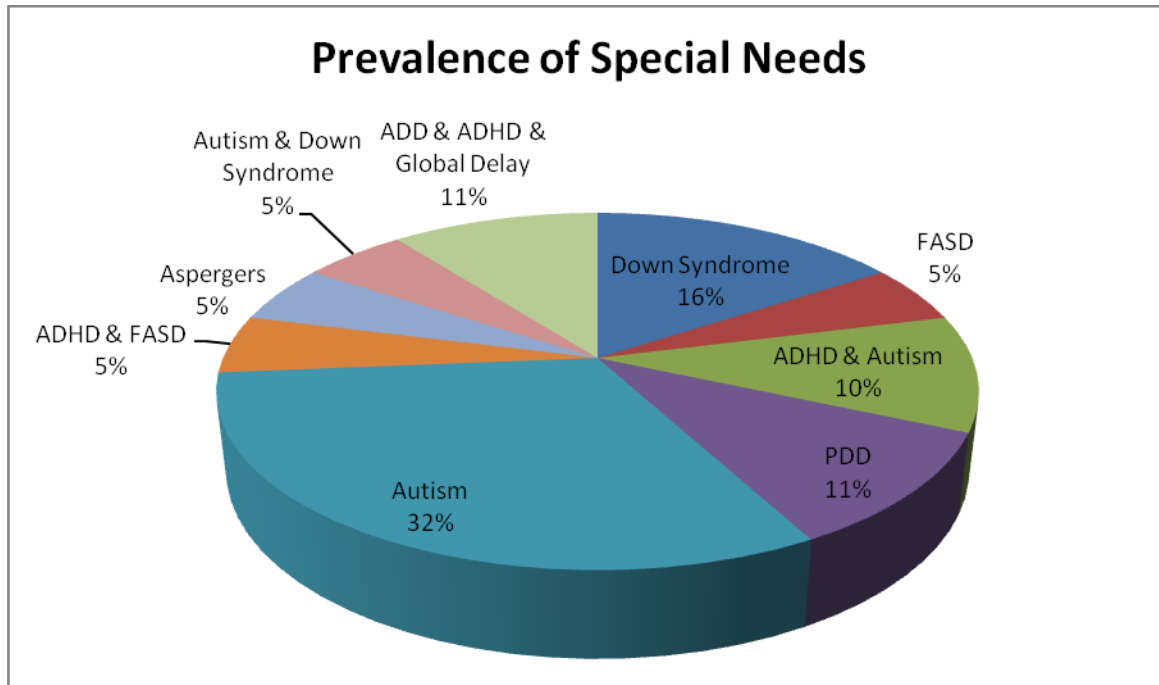


Figure 4.3: Campers' Diagnosed Disabilities (n=19)

Of particular interest were the places of residence of the campers and the method of transportation they used to reach each of the camps. Nearly half of the children resided in Toronto and most of the campers were from an urban environment. Due to the location of the two camps, 89% of the campers were bused to the camp they attended (Figure 4.4). This represented a significant factor as both camps were created with the mission of bringing city children out to experience the rural, natural landscape. As one participant from Toronto, whose child attends Camp A, explained, “*One of the reasons I send my child to an outdoor camp is because it promotes a connection to the natural environment and farm animals*”. This personal account emphasized the importance the parents place on having their children exposed to a natural environment that is separate and away from the city life.

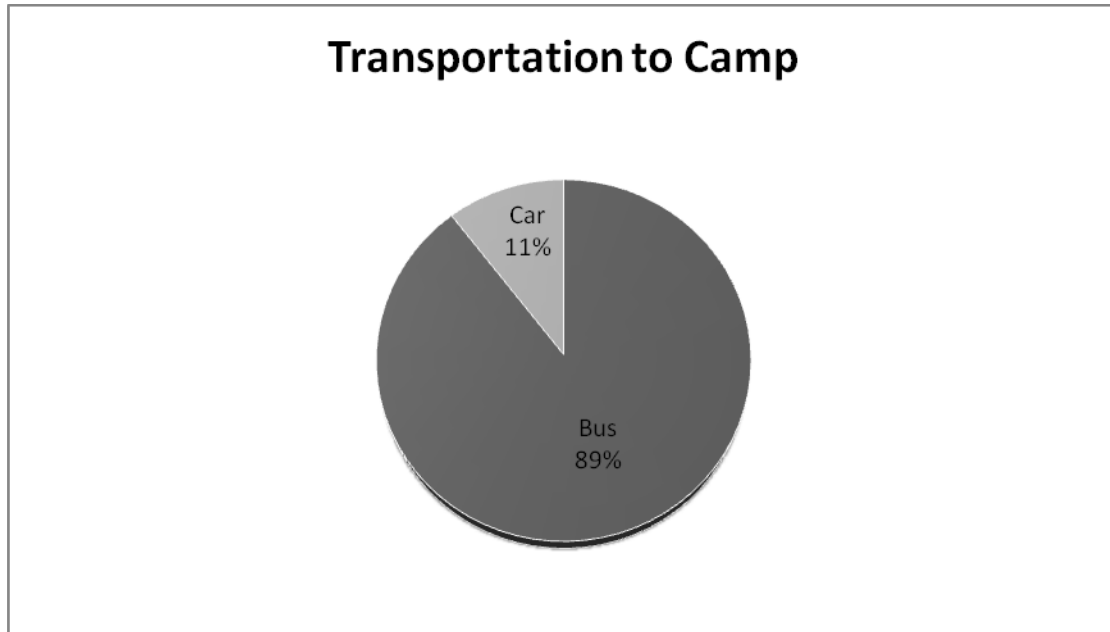


Figure 4.4: **Campers'** Method of Transportation to Camp

#### 4.2 Parents' Perceptions of their **Child's** Limitations

Children diagnosed with a special need are often marginalized and limited in their ability to participate in society. Of the parents surveyed in this study, 90% felt that their child's diagnosis with their specific disorder limited their child in some way. Some of the limitations noted by parents included poor social skills, underdeveloped motor skills, speech delay, intellectual disability, inability to be self-sufficient, requiring help with daily tasks, and being academically challenged (i.e. required an Individualized Education Plan). Other barriers included limited communication skills that were not age appropriate, a lack of safety knowledge (i.e., bolting or wandering off), a lack of sports available for children with special needs, extreme anxiety, and being developmentally delayed. Overall, 90% of the survey participants felt that camps offering an integration program, where special needs children are fully integrated into age based groups of children who are typically developing, were very important and represented one

of the reasons they chose the camps in this study. Parents viewed these integrated outdoor summer camps as offering a sense of place and a sense of belonging, a place where their children feel safe, at ease, and free of the stereotypes of their disabilities commonly experienced in the ‘outside world’. This sense of place was reinforced through the amount of years that many of these children had returned to the camp.

### 4.3 Camp Activities

The range of activities available to campers, with and without special needs, was diverse at both of the camps. As an interview respondent stated, “*Almost all of the activities at the camp are outdoor oriented*” (B1). The activities that were offered indoors included arts and crafts, music, drama, and dance. However, it was noted that on many occasions these indoor activities that the campers participated in were, in fact, moved outside. The outdoor activities at Camp B included rock climbing, biking, sports, survival skills, swimming, kayaking, canoeing, sailing, dragon boating, archery, and low ropes. In particular, the children with special needs were fully included; they attended the different sessions at each activity throughout the day and were treated in a manner similar to the other children without special needs in their group. There were instances where a child with special needs chose not to do an activity. On these occasions, the child’s counselor was required to make changes to the schedule. The special needs children were also housed in cabins with the other non-special needs campers. Similarly, another interviewee described the camp activities as “*basically taking place outdoors and included swimming lessons, nature activities, playing in the creek, barn experiences, biking, sports, wagon rides, and hikes*” (A3).

The survey participants were asked what activities their child preferred doing while at the camp as a step in examining the depth of activities available, as well as to determine if outdoor activities were favoured over indoor activities. The range of answers not only demonstrated individuality in the campers, but more significantly, the importance of all of these activities in the development of each camper (Table 4.1). According to the results, the children strived to participate in activities that they excelled at or were able to achieve their goals in. The variety of activities provided illustrated that these activities were different for every child with special needs.

Not all of the participants stated that nature based activities were ones that they viewed as important for their child; however, ten of the participants noted the significance of these as one of their child's primary favourite activities. It was of importance to note the high response rate to activities that took place in the outdoor environment. Of the activities mentioned in Table 4.1, the top three preferred activities were swimming lessons, music and lastly, water sports and nature activities. Nature activities at both of these camps included: pond and creek activities, exploring ecology, catching insects, and learning about nature and the environment. These responses correlated with the parents' view as to their reasons for having their child attend an outdoor camp. Over 50% of the survey participants viewed fresh air, exposure to nature, and exercise as their primary reasons for choosing to register their child at an outdoor camp. One parent surveyed stated that her son "*is indoor all winter, it's great to be outside during the summer*". As one Camp Director explained,

*Most of our program is focused outdoors. I feel that exposure to the outdoors and exposure to nature is very beneficial to kids because they don't get that much anymore. Kids are very programmed and at school most of the day and aren't allowed to just discover nature and play in nature in a one-on-one environment so that is why we really push that here, and focus on that in a huge way (A1).*

In this description of Camp A, the Director emphasized the importance of exposure to nature for children, in contrast to the lack of discovery children were normally subjected to. The Director expressed the challenges of exposing the children to nature due to individuals' busy lifestyles and children being programmed with limited time just to relax, explore, and enjoy the natural world around them.

Camp Activity	Number of respondents reporting activity as preferred by their child	Percentage of respondents reporting activity as preferred by their child
Archery	2	12
Arts & Crafts	3	18
Barn	8	47
Biking	4	24
Drama	1	6
Hayloft	7	41
Leadership	1	6
Low Ropes	3	18
Mini-golf	5	29
Music	11	65
Nature Activities	10	59
Outdoor cooking	7	41
Peace	5	29
Rock Climbing	4	24
Sing Song	8	47
Sports	4	24
Swimming Lessons	14	82
Wagon	6	36
Water Sports	10	59

Table 4.1: Camp Activities Preferred by Campers

The issue of ability and age was taken into account for the activities that lacked respondents reporting it as a preferred activity by their child(ren). Leadership and archery were two of the activities with low percentages of reported camper preference; however, nearly three-quarters of the children were too young and were not allowed to be involved in these activities.

Similarly, a lack of campers reported activities such as sports, rock climbing, biking, low ropes, and arts and crafts as preferred and this was suggestive of the dislike based on inability. Children with special needs lack gross motor skills and coordination, abilities that are vital in that list of activities. Thus, the survey participants viewed them as non-preferred outdoor recreational activities by their child.

#### 4.4 Benefits of Outdoor Recreational Activities on Children with Special Needs

Children's relationship with the natural landscape was an integral part of the outdoor recreational activities at both of the camps. The survey respondents did not feel that their children participated in many of the activities that they were involved in at camp outside of their time at camp. Whether this occurrence was due to a lack of resources, a lack of programs available to those with disabilities, or purely a lack of available time, the survey participants' children did not experience the outdoor recreational activities that they took part in while attending the summer camps throughout the remainder of the year. One interviewee explained the benefit of being outside in the lives of children with special needs,

*I think that they do benefit from being outside more than inside. The point of camp is to get away from the city life and be able to run around and have fun. Inside activities are good when it is raining or too hot, however being outside allows for more activities and exercise (B1).*

The interview participant's perceptions portrayed a stronger need for activities to be outside rather than indoors. For special needs children, interacting in the outdoors allowed them to get a feel for the environment and the country, something that was completely different from their lives in the city. Children experienced new things and tried new activities that they could not do in the city. Being outside often eliminated the barriers that frequently stigmatize children with special needs. According to the camp staff, the children were able to yell, run, and simply enjoy

the open space which frequently offered opportunities for the campers to interact together and build strong friendships.

The tendency for children to participate in nature is dwindling in today's society and many children are faced with a lack of exercise. Several participants interviewed described the benefit that the outdoors had on children by stating the two top reasons why children should be outside rather than inside. As an interviewee stated,

*The top 2 that I can think of, off the top of my head, would be exercise and to experience nature. Exercise, in this day and age, where technology and computers are so prevalent in our society I feel that kids are spending more and more time inside playing video games, or on computers. One of the biggest benefits of coming to an outdoor camp would be exercise, because you are constantly moving, walking around, and you're always involved in an activity. I think that's really key, getting fresh air, being active and just being outside. Number two would be to experience the nature, experiencing the natural world, and seeing the way that farms work, and the way nature just works in itself (A2).*

The participant believed that the natural environment, the ability to perform a considerable amount of physical activities, and having the opportunity to try and experience new activities that the campers would not routinely get to do closer to their homes were of great importance for children with special needs.

Another element of the benefits of outdoor camp activities was the sense of freedom these children felt (A2). The outdoor activities instilled in campers a sense of independence and offered these children the ability to have unstructured play while being supervised yet still being independent of their parents (A2). The most frequent response by camp staff emphasized how the integration program affected the special needs campers' independence because the children were able to do activities at camp that they most likely would not be able to do anywhere else. The special needs campers were able to play in the creek by themselves or go in the barn and hold a farm animal, with supervision, while not requiring direct intensive supervision (A2). The

campers had the opportunity to do things for themselves while experiencing nature at camp. One interviewee stated:

*Our camp one-hundred percent definitely encourages children to play, and be in nature, and breathe in fresh air, and that is important. Being outside, and being with nature, and breathing in fresh air, and just being free; it instills a sense of freedom, and it's a very relaxed atmosphere. You're just enjoying yourself; you're enjoying the weather, and enjoying what our world has to offer. And that's something special, for me it means a lot, and breathing in the fresh air and just being in the nature is really important to the campers (A2).*

Another interviewee reaffirmed this in her explanation of the sense of place that children feel when at camp and how being outdoors in a new environment put all the campers “*at an equal level*” (A4). Regardless of limitations in the child’s daily life, like academic ability, at camp it is about having fun. It is not about what a child cannot do, but about what he/she can do. Another interviewee explained this feeling by saying:

*I think it's a great jump out of their comfort zone for a lot of kids, I think it's a great place for them to meet friends and you know a lot of people not necessarily like themselves. The campers learn about differences and see the differences there are between different people and begin to not necessarily recognize it as a difference anymore. It gives the campers the chance to meet new people and experience new things while maintaining equality among all (A1).*

This interviewee’s comments highlighted a sense of place and belonging among all. At camp, everyone excelled at something different and the campers loved to meet others like themselves but also those unlike themselves. The outdoors, unlike an indoor classroom or activity, offered a place where there were no right or wrong answers, the sky was the limit, and the possibilities were endless (A1).

While the survey participants acknowledged that the outdoors positively impacted their children, they had difficulty identifying in which ways due to the fact that they were not at the outdoor camps with their children. An interviewee explained, from personal experience, the

impact that the outdoor environment had specifically on children with special needs. This interviewee stated:

*Special needs kids that I have worked with have always enjoyed the nature playing in the sand, or looking at rocks, or studying bugs, or looking at the way the water runs, or the grass (A2).*

It was evident from this statement that children with special needs felt at ease when interacting with the outdoor environment. Their sense of imagination and desire to explore the outdoors through their senses was explained in their perceived enjoyment of the various elements of nature and the landscape, like the sand, rocks, bugs, water, and grass.

This information brought to light questions of which outdoor camp activities most benefited these children. As the interviewees and the participants surveyed suggested, swimming which took place outdoors required the children to practice safety skills; however, it also enabled the children to feel equal and less aware of their disability while in the water. An interviewee explained the campers' enjoyment in swimming by stating:

*I think that swimming kind of gives the camper a sense of freedom. Being in the water and being around everyone in the pool and splashing and just having fun, just brings a smile to the special needs campers' faces. I have worked with them and been with special needs campers in the pool and I think definitely swimming is one of the areas around camp where they are happy and they allow themselves to have fun, and there's nothing there to scare them, and they want to have fun, and the water and the pool allows them to (A2).*

In this description of the sense of place and freedom that the campers experienced while in the pool, the interview respondent emphasized how the outdoor camp activity of swimming was a place where this freedom was reinforced.

The disparity between indoor and outdoor activities on children with special needs was seen in the barriers that these children faced when indoors. With the lack of space and the high volume of noise often experienced in indoor activities with children, many survey participants

stated that their children did not feel at ease and, due to communication limitations, were unable to act in the appropriate manner while participating in indoor activities. One Camp Director explained these difficulties experienced by the children with special needs by stating,

*Often times at camp the children with special needs struggle with indoor activities. The campers get too loud and the children with special needs cannot handle the loudness and the indoor enclosed space with the number of kids. That would be times when these children struggle and just need quiet and structured time. Often times if the kids are inside at camp, it is because it is a rain day and unstructured, and the kids with special needs just cannot handle that. However, there are disadvantages to being outside as well. There is the factor of unpredictability and sensory issues that some children with special needs cannot handle in the outdoors. Mostly, campers with special needs though struggle with indoor rather than outdoor camp activities (A3).*

Providing the campers with the resources to positively benefit whether they are outdoors or indoors was of great importance to this Camp Director. The interviewee strongly expressed the benefit of the campers being outside as they learned more about the environment and their own skills that were applied when outside interacting with nature. The Camp Director also believed that the campers' development of skills on how to be flexible when subjected to being in the indoors for activities was important and stated that:

*Having to change from outdoor to indoor activities, learning that if you are swimming outdoors and there is a thunderstorm that is coming along, that you need to plan for all those eventualities, because life is unpredictable and nature and the weather is unpredictable, so I think it's a great learning curve for those children with special needs (A3).*

The experience of being able to be outdoors and become more accustomed to nature and the sounds that nature makes was a positive occurrence for children with special needs. It was perceived by the Camp Director that there was more capability for the campers to learn about themselves and to be more physically active in an outdoor environment (A3).

#### 4.5 Impact of Camp Experience on **Children's** Personal Growth and Development

The parents' perceptions on the benefits of outdoor camps were seen in their child's personal achievements and development. The growth and development of the campers was critical for a better understanding of the role that outdoor camps play in these children's lives beyond their years as campers, as well as in explaining the impact these campers had on the systems that they depend on at camp (i.e., the other campers and the staff).

Survey participants described camp as benefiting their child both physically and socially, as well as giving their child a sense of confidence. In other camp settings and areas of society, children with special needs are "confined: and believed to be *unable to participate with typically developing children*" (A3). At outdoor summer recreational camps, like Camp A and Camp B, the children were not segregated or confined to the labels of their disabilities. Campers were integrated into a group of their peers and had the opportunity to have a special needs counsellor to help them integrate. The one counsellor for every two special needs children ratio allowed the campers to be supported where necessary, yet still feel like a part of the bigger group and no different than the other campers. One interviewee gave the example of rock climbing and how it was beneficial because *"it teaches the camper to be patient and wait their turn to go; yet it also gives the camper self-confidence, as it is upon them to make it as high as they want up the wall"* (B1).

Through the support of the camp staff and the positive peer support from the other campers in the group, children with special needs were able to achieve their goals and become more independent. One Camp Director explained the achievement of two campers learning to ride a bike for the first time,

*With the necessary encouragement and support from the camp counsellors, the positive peer influences, and from watching the other campers in their group, they were physically able to learn to ride a bike on their own. The growth and development in those campers to achieve their goals was a huge accomplishment for the families and for the children themselves (A3).*

While children are structured and programmed during the school year, the integration program at camp allowed the special needs children to continue on their learning journey throughout the summer months. The campers learned to maintain their daily schedules at camp so they were able to remain in a routine focused atmosphere. For many campers, once school is done, their parents enrolled them in camp for the full eight weeks (A3). Having the campers integrated, rather than segregated, aided them in further developing their social skills. Camp specifically helped the children to boost their self-confidence, increase their independence from their parents, and allowed them to put themselves in a different and natural environment where they gained knowledge from the other campers in the group who are typically developing and served as models for them. The campers with special needs pushed themselves in a physical way (A3). The participants' surveyed viewed the integration program as providing their child with other campers who acted as good role models, which, in turn, taught their child appropriate social interactions, teamwork and how to build friendships.

The continued social support from the other campers provided the children with special needs with a sense of belonging. One survey participant said, *“It gives my child a sense of belonging, a creation of a community, a building of friendships and the growth of self-esteem and learned skills from his peers.”* Similarly, another parent captured the sense of belonging by saying,

*Being with other campers provided my son with the encouragement to try new things, to participate in activities and provided more opportunities for him to use and learn to use language. On this level he gets an opportunity to share some time with his own age group- and children at “Camp A” are very encouraging and inclusive of special needs campers (Survey Participant).*

These feelings clearly depicted the impact that outdoor summer camp had on the personal growth and development of a child with special needs.

Children with special needs not only achieved personal growth and development while at camp, they also offered those who worked with them a sense of personal growth as well. These children noticeably affected the staff employed at these camps because they did not suppress their emotions and were so full of joy. The young adults who worked as integration or special needs counsellors developed through their own experiences with these campers, watching how the children reacted to different settings and situations and working with these children who had handicaps but were so full of life and simply processed information differently in some situations. An interviewee stated,

*It’s just enlightening and heartwarming to see the kids go through their days at camp. In relation to that, its heartwarming for the staff to see the integrations and the friendships built between the special needs campers and the other campers that are at camp because the friendships and the bonds that they make, regardless of any differences physical or mental, are just incredible to see and heartwarming (A2).*

The interview participant’s comments highlighted the support networks in place at camps to ensure that inclusion was in play in all aspects of the camp. Social and physical benefits seen through the campers’ experiences while attending camp and the natural environment have also been seen to offer health benefits to these children.

#### 4.6 Health Benefits Associated with Exposure to Natural Spaces

As exhibited in the analysis of camps with regards to the growth and development of children with special needs, another major influence on their improvement concerned the general well-being that comes from the health benefits related to the children's contact with nature.

The integration program at Camp A and Camp B offered children the opportunity to be away from home and allowed them to experience something new. Many of the children who attended camp resided in the city and, thus, spent minimal time in natural rural areas experiencing nature. The programs at these two camps focused on exposure to fresh air and the natural outdoor environment while keeping the children physically active and experiencing enjoyment.

Most of the camps' activities and programs were focused outdoors, allowing the children exposure to the outdoors and also exposure to nature which was very beneficial to the campers. Another important issue to be considered was that special needs children require supervision when they do have the opportunity to play in an outdoor environment and many families do not have the time or willingness to offer this constant supervision on a consistent basis. These children lacked this exposure to nature because they were programmed in their daily lives, including being at school for most of their day, and were not allowed to just discover nature and play in the outdoors in a one-on-one environment. This information was the basis of the philosophies at both Camp A and Camp B and it supported their reasoning for focusing on that concept. One staff member stated:

*From experience, being outside, with a special needs camper, being in nature and being in the country is way more relaxed. The campers tend to be able to explore and enjoy the full experience and are not in a controlled indoor space where they are required to focus and not develop through hands-on learning from the environment (A1).*

One Camp Director reiterated this feeling by saying,

*The benefits are numerous; the campers are healthy because they are running around outside all day long, they are physically active, in fresh air, learning about the environment, learning about nature. This whole notion of actually being in nature and learning about it and having a relationship with it, I think helps kids to understand how not to destroy it later on in life and how to preserve that. That's a huge benefit (A3).*

The perceptions of health benefits from the parents surveyed are seen in Figure 4.5.

Most participants perceived camp as a healthy space, particularly in terms of the outdoors and referred to the “sunshine” and the exposure to “fresh air.” Unanimously, all survey participants felt that camp provided their child with a healthy amount of exercise and physical activity.

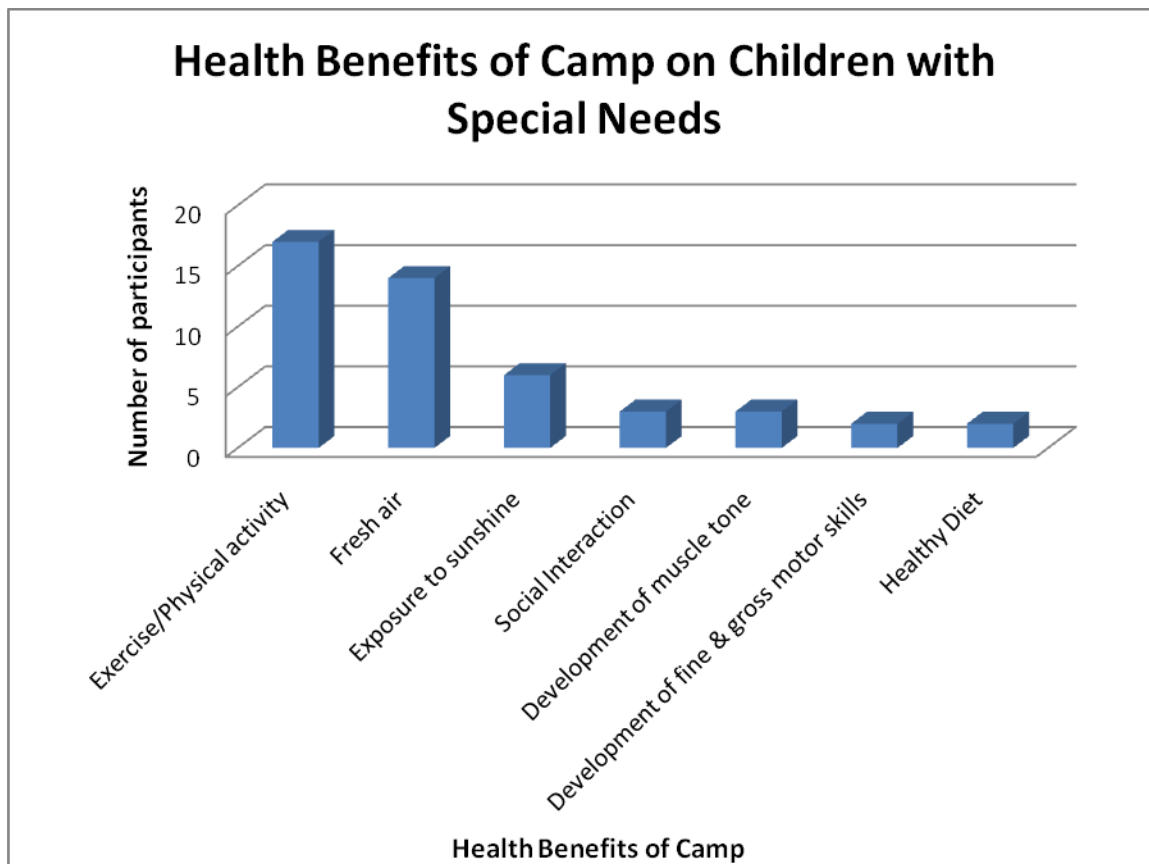


Figure 4.5: Health Benefits Associated with Participation in Outdoor Camp Activities

## 4.7 Inclusion and Lack of Information

Inclusion involves not just welcoming disabled children into a program. It must involve changes at every level so that these children are truly included in the program and facility and not just being accommodated into a pre-existing format (Swain & Cook, 2001). As one Camp Director stated,

*Our goal for all the kids that come is that we try and remove any social or racial or physical barriers, and say that we are all the same. So with the integration of the kids with special needs, as much as possible we put them in there with all the other kids. They don't need to wear a special shirt or be in a special cabin, they are just part of the cabin. I think and hope that for them, it's a chance to be 'normal', whereas they go to school and they are in a special needs class, with other kids with special needs, at camp they are not in a special needs cabin, so hopefully the impact on them is that they feel like just one of the regular campers. Their exceptional needs or special needs are not highlighted in any way. For the staff and the other campers, the campers without special needs, same thing it's a chance to have a kid with special needs with them in the everyday and they can begin to see that these kids are the same. They have some advantages and disadvantages just like they do. (B3)*

The lack of knowledge on disabilities suggested that individuals in society may be less accepting of people with special needs simply because of a lack of communication on disabilities and how to be inclusive. One parent surveyed explained that this lack of knowledge may be what causes her child to be ostracized by saying, “*people are often misinformed about what autism is and may be afraid to include him as a result.*”

The details about personal experiences reflected a lack of resources for children with special needs and an immediate need for greater awareness and inclusion in all of society. As another parent explained her view on the need for more inclusive camps and settings for children like her own, she said, “*Only special places like Camp A are really inclusive and truly open-minded*”. She identified the absence of not only inclusive camps that offer integration programs, but a lack of inclusion for these children in society as a whole. Prior literature speaks to this

absence and the need for the emergence of information on the importance of 'inclusion' and policies that seek to protect the disabled are key to improving the lives of those with special needs (Holt, 2003).

#### 4.8 Discussion

The findings from the present research fulfilled the research objectives. The range of activities was identified at the two outdoor camps, including the distinction between the activities that took place in the outdoor environment versus the indoor environment. The benefits of the camp experience were reported by parents as giving their child a sense of place and a sense of belonging. Parents felt that their child, while at camp, was free of the stereotypical definition of their disability that they have to live with during their daily lives.

The present research found outdoor recreational activities to benefit children with special needs in providing them with a chance to experience discovery of the natural world and learn new skills that they were often unable to experience at home. Similar to the literature by Verheij et al., (2008) on the positive benefits that outdoor camps offer such as the connection to nature, the present findings showed the health related benefits of outdoor activities at the camps, including fresh air, exercise, and exposure to nature.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

---

Despite the research that has been conducted on the benefits of outdoor recreational activities on typically developing children, little research has been conducted involving children with special needs. This thesis addressed the need for examining this subject matter in relation to individuals with special needs. The study not only recognized the fundamental need for research on outdoor recreational activities and special needs children, but also examined the importance of integrated camps for these individuals. With this knowledge of the importance of the outdoors, the experiences of children with special needs, in the form of equal access to natural landscapes and outdoor recreational activities, can be improved. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research, in the form of interviews and surveys, information on the perceived effects, benefits, and needs of children with special needs was obtained. Based on the information provided, the perceptions of the camp staff interviewed and the parents surveyed were collected, analyzed, and represented in these findings.

### 5.1 Summary

The importance of these findings for meeting the key research objectives can be summarized from the information provided by the parents and staff at Glenbrook Day Camp and Fraser Lake Camp. In identifying the range of activities available at the two outdoor camps, the activities included both indoor and outdoor themes; however, the majority of the activities involved interacting with the outdoor environment. More specific outdoor activities such as swimming, canoeing, and creek activities offered equal opportunities for participation and a sense of belonging for children with special needs. In examining the effects that outdoor recreational activities had on children with special needs, many benefits were reported by survey respondents

and camp staff. Experiencing and interacting with the outdoor environment allowed these children to run, yell, and enjoy the open landscape. This liberating experience often eliminated the barriers that separated the children with special needs from those children who were typically developing. The natural landscape and the freeness of it allowed the campers, with and without special needs, to interact together and build strong friendships and social networks. The outdoor recreational activities also aided in the development of muscle tone and fine and gross motor skills in children with special needs.

The growth and development of children with special needs was seen in the perceptions of the benefits of the child's camp experience. The participants surveyed felt that, during their child's time at camp, they were able to achieve goals and develop a sense of independence. Often this growth and development was seen as occurring because of the integration of campers both with and without special needs. The support networks established through the relationships of campers with special needs and fellow typically developing peers and staff allowed the campers to put themselves in a different and natural environment where they learned from those around them.

In identifying the health benefits associated with the exposure to natural spaces and time spent in an outdoor environment for children with special needs, the surveyed participants shared in their views of benefits. These benefits included exercise and exposure to fresh air, as well as, exposure to sunshine, physical activity and social interactions. The research participants believed that children were often limited in their access and exposure to natural landscapes due to time restraints and supervision. A lack of resources was also identified as a restricting issue for offering children with special needs access to nature, thus placing full responsibility on the parents. With the hectic time stressed lifestyles of most parents surveyed, the lack of available

time for adequate supervision often resulted in their children being constrained to playing indoors, where they were confined to a safe-controlled environment.

## 5.2 Discussion of Key Findings

Outdoor environments are less restricting for children with special needs than indoor environments. They allow children with special needs to feel less restricted and more equal to their peers because the activities that normally take place outdoors are often easier for them to participate in. Integrated outdoor summer camps strive for inclusion. Children with special needs are constantly faced with exclusion in society and are faced with being segregated into special classrooms or groups based on their disability. However, outdoor summer camps like Glenbrook Day Camp and Fraser Lake Camp endeavor to include children with special needs in a fully-integrated setting with their typically developing peers. This creates a sense of belonging for these children. For the first time in many of their lives, they become part of a group. This sense of inclusion can increase their levels of self-esteem, independence and happiness, as well as offer these children a greater sense of health and well-being. Inclusion in the camp activities allows these children the opportunity to develop relationships with the camp, the other campers, the staff members, and the physical environment and to develop a connection that results in a sense of place within the camp.

At outdoor camps, like Glenbrook Day Camp and Fraser Lake Camp, the children with special needs are not segregated or confined to the labels of their disabilities. The lack of knowledge on disabilities suggests that individuals may be less accepting of special needs simply because of a lack of communication on disabilities and how to be inclusive. One parent explained that this lack of knowledge may be what causes her child to be ostracized, by saying, *“people are often misinformed about what autism is and may be afraid to include him as a*

*result.*” The present study can improve the knowledge of disabilities and may increase the participation of other camps to develop an inclusion program. It clearly demonstrates the need for children with special needs to experience the outdoors and participate in outdoor recreational activities.

The present study further supports Taylor and Kuo’s (2006, p. 136) statement that “until proven otherwise, we can continue to assume, that just as they need good nutrition and adequate sleep, children may very well need contact with nature.” The results of the current research show that the parents, as well as camp staff feel that contact with nature offers many benefits, physically, socially, and mentally for children with special needs. The present study also further demonstrates Louv’s (2006) research on the “nature-deficit disorder” that has been described as the reduced exposure to nature and the health consequences associated with a lack of outdoor experiences. Interviewee A3’s response supports Louv’s article by stating that “*children’s exposure to nature is diminishing and that kids are becoming increasingly programmed*”.

As can be seen in the parallels between the prior literature and the present study, the information attained is very pertinent to the current situation with children’s limited interaction with the outdoor environment and can provide information for many individuals. Both the parents of children with and without special needs can use this information to realize the importance of green spaces and outdoor recreational activities that are offered at integrated outdoor summer camps. The benefits these offer the children are vital to improving their health, well-being and the characteristics of their disabilities. Camp directors can utilize the findings of the present study to realize both the value of the camp activities that both take place in an outdoor environment and use the physical environment at camp. Also, this research portrays the importance of inclusion for children with and without disabilities. With the findings mentioned

above, other camp staff can use the information to better understand the abilities of these children and how they are able to participate in and benefit from outdoor camp activities. They can understand the importance that their roles as counsellors play in these children's lives and in their growth and development. Regional and urban planners should consider this study as a resource in understanding the importance and necessity of outdoor green land for recreational use. In issues concerning land zoning and rezoning, recreational land is necessary for the health and well-being of all people and the maintenance of therapeutic landscapes. While land zoned for recreational purposes often does not provide economical benefits for the community or region, the health, social and psychological benefits it offers children, and more specifically those with disabilities, is vital.

### 5.3 Critical Reflection

While the current study was successful in exploring exposure to the outdoor environment, integration camps for children with special needs, and the perceptions of staff at these camps, it also had its limitations. One limitation that was encountered involved the small number of integration camps available for research. Many camps either offered a setting where only those with special needs were accepted or where the program was designed for only typically developing children. Very few camps offered an integration program where the child with special needs is fully immersed with typically developing peers. Other issues that limited the current research included the unavailability of some camp staff due to the time constraints of the present study. The methodological approach to this study was beneficial in gaining the perceptions of the parents of children with special needs, however having the ability to personally survey the diagnosed campers themselves would have aided in accessing the first

hand experiences and opinions of the child. While surveying the participants was effective in reaching a large number of people and did offer a better understanding of their perceptions, this focus could have limitations in that the participants may have misinterpreted the questions being asked. Surveys do not allow for further explanation of the question and this could have led to disruptive results.

A further limitation of the present study, that occurred after the project had been initiated, was the unanticipated loss of a third camp that was planned for inclusion in the research. Due to the time restraint of the present study, the third camp was no longer able to be used in the analysis due to a lack of data retrieved from the Director to administer the research method and fulfill the research objectives.

On a personal note, one limitation in completing the research through interviews was the time restraint caused by the researcher being ill with pneumonia. The planned interviews had to be postponed and due to a lack of time, some potential interviewees could not be included in the study.

#### 5.4 Future Research

In the course of this study, linkages were found between the participants surveyed as well as the camp staff interviewed in their opinions on the value of outdoor recreational activities for children with special needs at integration camps. However, in the future, to attain representational data, research should include an increase in both the number of camps studied as well as the number of participants, both in the parents surveyed and the staff interviewed. Similar to this, future research could examine a comparison study between camps located in the city and camps located in rural areas. Both of the camps used in the present study were located in

rural areas and, thus, the findings cannot be used to illustrate the impact of non-rural landscapes on children with special needs (e.g., within Metropolitan Toronto). Another possible research study could examine a more representational selection of children with physical disabilities, rather than only developmental disabilities to see if the same effects are found for those children. The research methods used in future research could include interviewing the parents, surveying the camp staff, or conducting focus groups comprised of either the parents and/or the camp staff. Furthermore, future research could examine a longitudinal study of the effects of outdoor recreational activities to see if the experience remains beneficial as the child ages.

## 5.5 Concluding Comments

Support and improvement in the ability of children with special needs to be included in outdoor recreational camps can only be achieved through a greater awareness and understanding. This research gives light to the perceptions of the parents of the campers with special needs, as well as camp staff, on the impact that outdoor camps have on the growth and development of children with special needs. The details about personal experiences reflected a lack of resources for children with special needs and a need for greater awareness and inclusion in all aspects of society. As one parent explained her view on the need for more inclusive camps and settings for children like her own, she said “*Only special places like Camp A are really inclusive and truly open-minded*”. She identified the absence of not only inclusive camps that offer integration programs but a lack of inclusion for these children in society as a whole. Being in nature has been shown in both past literature and in the present study to be positive in the development of children. . More natural exposure would be beneficial because it could serve as a balance with the current society’s focus on big cities and their sources of entertainment (A4). One Camp Director further emphasizes this point by stating,

*I think it's important for kids to be outside. When you're inside, things tend to get sanitized and there is a disconnect with the natural world. In many ways it's an artificial environment, the temperature is always the same, and it's always dry and the lighting is good, unless you don't want it, you just turn it off (B3).*

Holt (2007), states that childhood is when socialization begins and the concept of being the same or an 'other' begins to develop. If children are taught to accept people who are considered to be 'others' and learn to accept 'inclusion', the future society will consider those with special needs in an accepting way.

The present research has shown how outdoor recreational activities at integration outdoor summer camps offers children with special needs a sense of belonging, a sense of place, and a feeling of inclusion.

## REFERENCES

---

- Briery, B.G., & Rabian, B. (1999). Psychosocial changes associated with participation in pediatric summer camp. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology, 24*, 183-190.
- Cauchon, D. (2005, July 11). Childhood pastimes are increasingly moving indoors. *USA Today*. Retrieved April 3, 2010, from [http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-07-11-pastimes-childhood\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-07-11-pastimes-childhood_x.htm)
- Center for Health, Environment & Justice. (2001). *Poisoned schools: Invisible threats, visible actions. A report of the child proofing our communities*. Virginia: The Campaign.
- Cohen, B. (2006). Urbanization in developing countries: Current trends, future projections, and key challenges for sustainability. *Technology in Society, 28*, 63-80.
- Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates, Inc. (2005). *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act 2004*. Retrieved April 5, 2010, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.copaa.net/pdf/IDEACOMP.pdf>
- Dougald, S. (1999-2010). *Glenbrook Day Camp*. Retrieved October 18, 2009 from the World Wide Web: <http://glenbrookdaycamp.com>
- Fine, Stephen. (2009). *What are the benefits of summer camp?*. Retrieved October 20, 2009 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.tvo.org>
- Gannon, B., & Nolan, B. (2007). The impact of disability transitions on social inclusion. *Social Science and Medicine, 64*, 1425-1437.
- Gatrell, A.C., & Elliot, S. J. (2009). *Geographies of Health: An Introduction*. (Second edition). United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Gleeson, B.J. (1996). A geography for disabled people? *Royal Geographical Society, 21*, 387-396.

- Google Maps. (2010). *Google Maps Canada*. Retrieved from the World Wide Web:  
<http://maps.google.ca/maps>.
- Hay, I. (Ed.). (2005). *Qualitative research methods in human geography*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Holt, L. (2003). (Dis)abling children in primary schools micro-spaces: geographies of inclusion and exclusion. *Health & Place, 9*, 119-128.
- Holt, L. (2007). Children's sociospatial (re)production of disability within primary school playgrounds. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 25*, 783-802.
- Hood, E. (2005). Dwelling disparities: How poor housing leads to poor health. *Environmental Health Perspectives, 113*, 310-319.
- Kaplan, R., & Kaplan, S. (1989). *The experience of nature: A psychological perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kellert, S. R. & Wilson, E.O. (1993). *The Biophilia Hypothesis*. Washington: Island Press.
- King, G., Law, M., King, S., Rosenbaum, P., Kertoy, M., & Young, N. (2003). A Conceptual Model of the Factors Affecting the Recreation and Leisure Participation of Children with Disabilities. *Physical & Occupational Therapy In Pediatrics, 23*, 63-90.
- Knox, P.L., Marston, S.A., & Nash, A. E. (2004). *Human geography: places and regions in global context*. Toronto: Pearson Education Canada Inc.
- Kuhlthau, K., Orlich, F., Hall, T.A., Sikora, D., Kovacs, E.A., Delahaye, J., & Clemons, T.E. (2009). Health-related quality of life in children with autism spectrum disorders: Results from the autism treatment network. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, no page numbers, pre-print edition.

- Kuo, F., & Taylor, A. (2004). A potential natural treatment for Attention Hyperactivity Disorder: Evidence form a national study. *American Journal of Public Health, 94*, 1580-1586.
- Louv, R. (2005). *Last child in the woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin.
- Louv, R. (2006, January). Camp revival. *The Camping Magazine*, pp. 28-30, 32-33
- Maas, J., van Dillen, S. M., Verheij, R. A., & Groenewegen, P. P. (2009). Social contacts as a possible mechanism behind the relation between green space and health. *Health & Place, 15*, 586-595.
- Mohan, John. (2000). Health and health care, geography of. In *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, R.J. Johnston et al. (eds), Malden, MA: Blackwell, pp 330-332.
- Musselman, E. (2000-2010). *Fraser Lake Camp*. Retrieved October 18, 2009 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.fraserlakecamp.com>
- Ontario Camps Association (2010). *OCA camps guide 2010*. Retrieved April 5, 2010 from the World Wide Web: [http://www.ontariocamps.ca/documents/2010\\_OCA\\_guide.pdf](http://www.ontariocamps.ca/documents/2010_OCA_guide.pdf)
- Park, D. C., Radford, J. P., & Vickers, M. H. (1998). Disability studies in human geography. *Progress in Human Geography, 22*, 208-233.
- Rentz, A.M., Matza, L. S., Secnik, K., Swensen, A., & Revicki, D. A. (2005). Psychometric validation of the child health questionnaire (CHQ) in a sample of children and adolescents with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. *Quality of Life Research: An International Journal of Quality of Life Aspects of Treatment, Care & Rehabilitation, 14*, 719-734.
- Stake, R. E. (1994). Identification of the case. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 236-247). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Statistics Canada (2006). "Bancroft," *Community Profile*. Retrieved February 4, 2010 from the World Wide Web: <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dppd/prof/92591/details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=3512061&Geo2=PR&Code2=35&Data=Count&SearchText=Bancroft&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&Custom=>
- Statistics Canada (2006). "Whitchurch-Stouffville," *Community Profile*. Retrieved February 4, 2010 from the World Wide Web: <http://www12.statcan.ca/censusrecensement/2006/dppd/prof/92591/details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=3519044&Geo2=PR&Code2=35&Data=Count&SearchText=WhitchurchStouffville&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&Custom=>
- Statistics Canada (1998). *Statistics Canada Quality Guidelines* (3rd ed.), 62.
- Strife, S., & Downey, L. (2009). Childhood development and access to nature. *Organization & Environment, 22*, 99-122.
- Swain, J., & Cook, T. (2001). In the name of inclusion: 'We all, at the end of the day, have the needs of the children at heart'. *Critical Social Policy, 21*, 185-207.
- Taylor, A., & Kuo, F. (2006). Is contact with nature important for healthy child development? In Spencer, C., & Blades, M. (Eds.) *Children & Their Environments: Learning, Using & Designing Spaces*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Thompson, C. W., Aspinall, P., & Montarzino, A. (2008). The childhood factor: Adult visits to green places and the significance of childhood experience. *Environment and Behaviour, 40*, 111-143.
- Valentine, G., & McKendrick, J. (1997). Children's outdoor play: Exploring parental concerns about children's safety and the changing nature of childhood. *Geoforum, 28*, 219-235.

- Verheij, R. A., Maas, J., & Groenewegen, P.P. (2008). Urban-rural health differences and the availability of green space. *European Urban and Regional Studies, 15*, 307-316.
- Wells, N. M., & Evans, G. W. (2003). Nearby nature: A buffer of life stress among rural children. *Environment and Behavior, 35*, 311-330.
- Wells, N. M., & Lekies, K. (2006). Nature and the life course: Pathways from childhood nature experiences to adult environmentalism. *Children, Youth and Environments, 16*, 1-25.
- Wiles, J. L., Rosenberg, M.W., & Kearns, R. A. (2005). Narrative analysis as a strategy for understanding interview talk in geographic research. *Area, 37*, 89-99.

## Appendix A: Informed Consent Forms

---

TRENT UNIVERSITY  
Department of Geography  
(705) 748 1011 ext. 7686  
1600 West Bank Drive  
Peterborough ON, K9J 7B8



### HUMAN RESEARCH CONSENT FORM - INTERVIEWS

The “Effects of Outdoor Day Camp Settings and Activities on Children with Special Needs” project examines the range of outdoor activities available for children with various disabilities. The project looks at the effect of taking Special Needs “city” children away from city life and bringing them to outdoor camps to experience the natural surroundings of the land.

The project focuses on health geography in relation to the positive effects and the primary source of information will be obtained through interviews with Camp Directors and Staff and surveys to be completed by the parent/guardian of the Special Needs child.

I will be conducting interviews with Directors and Staff at two outdoor camps, Glenbrook Day Camp, and Fraser Lake Camp, in order to collect a range of activities available to Special Needs children and to explore all of the positive aspects of those outdoor activities.

The project has been approved by the Trent University Research Ethics Board.

Researcher: Kristen Gage (Undergraduate Student)

Researcher Contact Information: Telephone: (905) 666-3043, E-mail: [kristengage@trentu.ca](mailto:kristengage@trentu.ca), I can also be reached through the Geography Department at Trent University (email: [geography@trentu.ca](mailto:geography@trentu.ca)).

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (please insert your name) have read the attached Letter of Information and have had all questions answered to my satisfaction and I agree to participate in an interview under the following conditions:

- (1) I understand that my involvement in the project consists of a 1 to 2 hour interview.
- (2) I understand that the purpose of the project is to examine the social care of special needs children in camp settings. As well, the effects that outdoor recreational activities have on a child’s self-esteem, motor skills and social relationships will be examined.
- (3) I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can refuse any question at any time.
- (4) I understand that I can terminate the interview at any time and any information provided by me to the research project will be destroyed.
- (5) I understand that my name and identifying information including that of my organization and any contextual information or commentary likely to identify me or my organization will not be used in any presentation or publication of the research.
- (6) I understand that all information from the interview will be kept in a secure location restricted to Kristen Gage and Dr. Mark Skinner (Thesis Supervisor) and destroyed after five years.
- (7) I understand that I can contact Kristen Gage ([kristengage@trentu.ca](mailto:kristengage@trentu.ca)) or Dr. Mark Skinner (705-748-1011, ext. 7946; [markskinner@trentu.ca](mailto:markskinner@trentu.ca)) with any questions or concerns about the research project.

I agree that:

(1) This interview may be recorded. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

(2) My responses in this interview may be quoted verbatim in the presentation and publication of results with the use of a pseudonym and without attribution to me personally. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Interviews Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## HUMAN RESEARCH CONSENT FORM - SURVEYS

The “Effects of Outdoor Day Camp Settings and Activities on Children with Special Needs” project examines the range of outdoor activities available for children with various disabilities. The project looks at the effect of taking Special Needs “city” children away from city life and bringing them to outdoor camps to experience the natural surroundings of the land.

The project focuses on health geography in relation to the positive effects and the primary source of information will be obtained through interviews with Camp Directors and surveys to be completed by the parent/guardian of the Special Needs child.

You are being contacted to participate in this survey study because your child recently attended Fraser Lake Camp or Glenbrook Day Camp. Your participation will assist in examining the range of activities available to Special Needs children and to explore all of the positive aspects of those outdoor activities.

The project has been approved by the Trent University Research Ethics Board.

Researcher: Kristen Gage (Undergraduate Student)

Researcher Contact Information: Telephone: (905) 666-3043, E-mail: [kristengage@trentu.ca](mailto:kristengage@trentu.ca), I can also be reached through the Geography Department at Trent University (email: [geography@trentu.ca](mailto:geography@trentu.ca)).

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (please insert your name) have read the attached Letter of Information and have had all questions answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in a survey under the following conditions:

- (1) I understand that my involvement in the project consists of a 10-20 minute survey.
- (2) I understand that the purpose of the project is to examine the social care of special needs children in camp settings. As well, the effects that outdoor recreational activities have on a child’s self-esteem, motor skills and social relationships will be examined.
- (3) I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can skip a question at any time.
- (4) I understand that I can terminate the survey at any time and any information provided by me to the research project will be destroyed.
- (5) I understand that my name and identifying information including that of my child will not be used in any presentation or publication of the research.
- (6) I understand that all information from the survey will be kept in a secure location restricted to Kristen Gage and Dr. Mark Skinner (Thesis Supervisor), and destroyed after five years.
- (7) I understand that I can contact Kristen Gage ([kristengage@trentu.ca](mailto:kristengage@trentu.ca)) or Dr. Mark Skinner (705-748-1011, ext. 7946; [markskinner@trentu.ca](mailto:markskinner@trentu.ca)) with any questions or concerns about the research project.

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**LETTER OF INFORMATION - SURVEYS**

Dear Participant:

I am writing to request your participation in an Undergraduate thesis research project entitled **Effects of Outdoor Camp Settings and Activities on Children with Special Needs**, based out of the Department of Geography at Trent University.

The importance of this project is that it will examine the benefits that outdoor summer camps can offer children with Special Needs. The project will focus on how activities based in an outdoor environment can affect the Special Needs campers. It will also centre on how the interaction between the Special Needs campers and the other campers can influence the Special Needs child. The research will be obtained both through the distribution of surveys to the parents/guardians of Special Needs campers and through interviews with Camp Directors of one day camp located near Toronto, Ontario and one residential camp located near Bancroft, Ontario.

In collaboration with the Director at (Fraser Lake Camp/Glenbrook Day Camp) you are being contacted because your child recently attended the camp. Your participation is completely voluntary and will require approximately a 10-20 minute survey. During the survey if you no longer wish to participate or answer any question, you have the right to refuse and may end the survey at any time. The above mentioned project has the approval of the Trent University Research Ethics Board and this research has no known risks associated with it.

Information from the surveys answered by you will be used to better understand the range of activities available at outdoor camps for children with special needs and the benefits of these activities on your children. If you desire, the findings of the research can be made available to you via an electronic e-mail copy of the final report. Furthermore, the name of your child will remain undisclosed for the privacy of your child.

Attached are two copies of an Informed Consent Form, one for you to complete and return with your completed survey. Please keep this Letter of Information and the second copy of the Informed Consent Form for your records.

Thank you, sincerely, for your consideration.

Kristen Gage  
Trent University, Undergraduate Student

## A Survey of the Effects of Outdoor Activities on Children with Special Needs

### **General Instructions:**

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain information from parents of children with special needs about how camp has affected the lives of their children. Please answer each of the questions completely and follow the directions provided for each part. It should take between 10-20 minutes to complete. Please return the questionnaire in the enclosed prepaid envelope. Thank you in advance for taking the time to complete this survey.

### **Part I: Background Information**

*Please answer each of the following questions about your son or daughter in the space provided or check the most appropriate answer.*

1. Sex:            Male                      Female

2. In what year was he/she born? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Hometown: \_\_\_\_\_

4. How does your child get to camp? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Please circle the diagnosis which applies to your child:

Autism	Down Syndrome	Cerebral Palsy	Asperger's
ADD	ADHD	PDD	Global Delay

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

6. At what age were they diagnosed with this disorder? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Has this diagnosis limited your child in any way?      Yes                      No

7a) Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Part II: Camp Information**

*Please answer each of the following questions about your son or daughter in the space provided or check the most appropriate answer.*

8. Has your child attended this camp before?      Yes                      No

8a) If yes, for how many years has your child attended this camp? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Did you choose this camp because it offers an integration program where special needs children are fully integrated into age based groups of children without special needs?

Yes                      No

**Part II: Camp Activities**

*Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability about your son or daughter.*

**10. What activities does your child enjoy the most at this camp? Please circle all that apply.**

- |              |                 |            |                   |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|-------------------|
| Sports       | Arts and Crafts | Wagon      | Rock Climbing     |
| Water sports | Peace           | Sing Songs | Nature Activities |
| Leadership   | Outdoor Cooking | Biking     | Mini Golf         |
| Low Ropes    | Hayloft         | Music      | Swimming Lessons  |
| Barn         | Archery         | Pottery    | Other: _____      |

**11. Why do you think your child enjoys these activities the most?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**12. Does your child get to participate in these activities outside of their time at camp?**

Yes                  No

**13. Are there any activities that your child is unable to take part in because of his/her limitations?**

Yes                  No

**14. Does your child have difficulties with indoor activities?**          Yes                  No

**15. If you answered yes to Question 14, please describe in what manner indoor activities are difficult for your child?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**16. During the school year (September to June) does or has your child taken part in any organized group activities that are held outdoors?**          Yes                  No

**17. If you answered yes to Question 16, please describe these activities?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Part III: Ranking**

Please list, from greatest to least importance, the top five reasons you chose to send your child to an outdoor camp.

- 18. \_\_\_\_\_
- 19. \_\_\_\_\_
- 20. \_\_\_\_\_
- 21. \_\_\_\_\_
- 22. \_\_\_\_\_

**Part IV: Importance of Camp Activities**

The following questions provide you with a number of the attributes or activities that your son/daughter may have participated in at their camp. Each is followed by a continuum ranging from 0 to 10, with 0 representing the feeling of “not important to the development of your child” to 10 being “very important to the development of your child”. N/A (Not applicable) is an option found on the right hand side of the continuum for options that your child has not experienced at their camp.

Please circle the number along the continuum which best reflects your feeling about how the activity or attribute of camp has affected your child’s life.

	Not important		Somewhat Important			Very Important		
	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
23. Size of camp	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
24. Ratios of counselor to campers	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
25. Ratios of counselors to special needs campers	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
26. Integration of special needs campers	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
27. Activities using the outdoor environment	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
28. Activities held in buildings	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
29. Optional activities when your camper cannot participate in an activity	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
30. Variety of activities offered	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
31. Rock climbing	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
32. Sports	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
33. Canoeing/Kayaking/Dragon Boat	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
34. Wagon	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
35. Peace	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
36. Outdoor cooking	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
37. Biking	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
38. Mini golf	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
39. Low Ropes	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
40. Hayloft	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	

41. Music	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
42. Swimming lessons	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
43. Arts and Crafts	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
44. Barn	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
45. Nature	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
46. Archery	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
47. Pottery	0	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

48. Do you think your child benefits more from outdoor activities than he/she would from camp activities held only within buildings? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

49. In what ways do you feel your child benefits from camp activities that use the outdoor environment? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

50. In what ways do you feel your child benefits from interacting socially with other campers?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

51. What health benefits does camp offer your child? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

52. What social benefits does camp offer your child? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

53. Has your child achieved any accomplishments while at camp (i.e. learned to ride a bike, independence, improved motor skills, or the ability to spend the night away from home)?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey.

**LETTER OF INFORMATION - INTERVIEWS**

Dear Participant:

I am writing to request your participation in an Undergraduate thesis research project entitled **Effects of Outdoor Camp Settings and Activities on Children with Special Needs**, based out of the Department of Geography at Trent University.

The importance of this project is that it will examine the benefits that outdoor summer camps can offer children with Special Needs. The project will focus on how activities based in an outdoor environment can affect the Special Needs campers. It will also centre on how the interaction between the Special Needs campers and the other campers can influence the Special Needs child. The research will be obtained both through the distribution of surveys to the parents/guardians of Special Needs campers and through interviews with Camp Directors and Staff of one day camp located near Toronto, Ontario and one residential camp located near Bancroft, Ontario.

You are being contacted because of your knowledge of and/or involvement in caring for children with special needs in an outdoor camp setting. Your participation is completely voluntary and will require approximately a one hour interview conducted by myself. During the interview if you wish to no longer participate or answer any question, you have the right to refuse and may end the interview at any time. With your written consent, the interview will be recorded. The above mentioned project has the approval of the Trent University Research Ethics Board and this research has no known risks associated with it.

Information from interviews with you and other camp directors will be used to better understand the range of activities available at outdoor camps for children with special needs and the intended benefits of these activities. If you desire, the findings of the research can be made available to you via an electronic e-mail copy of the final report. Furthermore, if you choose, the name of your camp can remain undisclosed.

Attached are two copies of an Informed Consent Form, one for you to complete and return at the time of the interview. Please keep this Letter of Information and the second copy of the Informed Consent Form for your records.

Thank you, sincerely, for your consideration.

Kristen Gage  
Trent University, Undergraduate Student

# The Effects of Outdoor Green Space and Activities on Children with Special Needs at Summer Camps

## Director Interview Guide

### Part I: General Questions and Background Information

1. What is the physical size of this camp?
2. How many campers do you accept per week?
3. What year did this camp open?
4. How long has your camp offered a special needs program?
5. What is the history behind your organization and the special needs program?

### Part II: Integration Program and Benefits

6. What is the goal or objective of your camp program?
7. For how many years has your camp offered an integrated program to include special needs campers?
8. Why did this camp make the commitment to offer a program for Special Needs campers?
9. Why did you choose to offer an integrated program instead of a totally separate program for special needs campers?
10. How many special needs campers do you accept per week?
11. How are the special needs campers integrated into the camp group?
12. What are the benefits of having special needs campers integrated into groups with other campers?
13. How do you think the integration program impacts the campers themselves, the staff and the other campers in the group?

### Part III: Benefits of Outdoor Camp Activities

14. What activities does your camp offer that take place in an outdoor environment?
15. What activities does your camp offer that take place in an indoor environment?
16. Does your camp focus on ensuring that children have adequate exposure to fresh air?
  - a. Why do you feel this is important?
17. Are there any activities that the special needs campers are not allowed to take part in? Please explain.
18. What do the special needs campers do when their group is doing an activity that they cannot take part in?
19. Do you feel that children benefit more from outdoor camp activities than from camps and activities that are totally held inside of buildings? Please explain.
  - a. Can you give an example of special needs children struggling with indoor activities?
  - b. Can you give an example of special needs children struggling with outdoor activities?
20. Can you give a specific example of one outdoor activity and how it benefits a special needs child?
21. What are the benefits (health, social, personal) of outdoor camp activities for children?
22. Are there any additional benefits of outdoor camp activities that would specifically help special needs campers? Please explain.
23. Do you feel that children are exposed to an adequate amount of exposure to the outdoor environment on a regular basis? Please explain.

24. Do you feel that special needs children are exposed to an adequate amount of exposure to the outdoor environment on a regular basis? Please explain.

Part IV: Wrap Up

25. What are the top 3 reasons you feel that children should attend outdoor recreation camps?
26. Are there any additional materials you have such as brochures that are available?
27. Is there anything that we haven't covered today that you feel is important for the research topic?
28. What has working with special needs children taught you?

## Staff Interview

### Part II: Integration Program and Benefits

1. Why did you choose to work as a counselor in an integrated program for special needs campers?
2. How are the special needs campers integrated into the camp group?
3. What do you see as the benefits of having special needs campers integrated into groups with other campers?
4. How do you think the integration program impacts the campers themselves, the staff and the other campers in the group?

### Part III: Benefits of Outdoor Camp Activities

5. What activities does your camp offer that take place in an outdoor environment?
6. What activities does your camp offer that take place in an indoor environment?
7. Do you believe that your camp focuses on ensuring that children have adequate exposure to fresh air?
  - a. Why do you feel this is important?
8. Do you feel that children benefit more from outdoor camp activities than from camps and activities that are totally held inside of buildings? Please explain.
  - a. Can you give an example of special needs children struggling with indoor activities?
  - b. Can you give an example of special needs children struggling with outdoor activities?
9. Can you give a specific example of one outdoor activity and how it benefits a special needs child?
10. What are the benefits (health, social, personal) of outdoor camp activities for children?
11. Are there any additional benefits of outdoor camp activities that would specifically help special needs campers? Please explain.
12. Do you feel that children are exposed to an adequate amount of exposure to the outdoor environment on a regular basis? Please explain.
13. Do you feel that special needs children are exposed to an adequate amount of exposure to the outdoor environment on a regular basis? Please explain.

### Part IV: Wrap Up

14. What are the top 3 reasons you feel that children should attend outdoor recreation camps?
15. What has working with special needs children taught you?
16. Is there anything that we haven't covered today that you feel is important for the research topic?
17. What has working with special needs children taught you?

## Appendix D: Transcripts of Interviews

---

### Interview A1 (Staff Interview):

3. What are the benefits of having special needs campers integrated into groups with other campers?

“I think it gives them all a chance to interact with people, I know we are all in a society where people seem different so we don’t know how to interact with them. The kids get an opportunity at this age, to know maybe learn a bit more about other kids, specifically some of the kids with special needs. And what it means to have special needs. They learn how to interact with them in a normal setting, where they can have some fun, and it’s not a judgment setting. It’s a great way for them to kind of all to interact together and not have to be separated out in order to have a little bit of fun. “

4. How do you think the integration program impacts the campers themselves, the staff and the other campers in the group?

“I think specifically for the staff it gives them a good realistic view of how many different things they have to deal with, how many different people and how many different aspects they have to consider when they are dealing with kids. I think it makes you realize that there are quite a few things that goes into integrating every kid, whether they have special needs or not, into a group and the special considerations you have to have. They all are capable of quite a few things, and that they don’t really have to be singled out, and they can all be integrated in together.”

8. Do you feel children benefit more from outdoor camp activities than camps and activities that are totally held inside of buildings? Please explain.
  - a. Can you give an example of special needs children struggling with indoor activities?
  - b. Can you give an example of special needs children struggling with outdoor activities?

“I think children benefit a great deal more from outdoor camp activities you know its something that’s sometimes a bit out of their comfort zone, so at first its kinds of something that they are at first a little timid to try, I think its something that they might not ever get the opportunity to do anywhere else.”

- a) “Indoor activities you can do just about anywhere. But camp activities seem to be kind of special to that atmosphere and more specifically outside so I think there’s a lot of things that they can benefit. I worked with a special needs kid once at an outdoor camp, and they struggled a bit with climbing, you know outdoor climbing. And you know that struggle was frustrating for them and it was something that they worked through. But the joy that you see when they actually work through that struggle, so at the end of the week they can actually climb that climbing wall. Its something that really sets the tone for that week. It’s something that you know you can see they’ve worked past that frustration and worked towards something that they wanted to do. And that’s something that climbing

an outdoor climbing wall, with a harness, and helmet and all that stuff is not something that they would get to do on a normal basis so its kind of nice to see them to get that opportunity to try something different and work through an inability to do it at first, to a point to where they can get to a point to where they can do it its pretty amazing to watch.”

10. What are the benefits (health, social, personal) of outdoor camp activities for children?

“I see kids they are lot more alert, a lot more awake. You see them needing a little bit less of the medications they are taking for certain ailments. You see they are a little bit less sick, they seem to, you know they are tired at the end of the day, but they come back the next day after a good nights sleep and they are rested so I would say that they seem to just be happier, I don’t know whether that’s necessarily a health benefit, but when people describe health, its kind of a bunch of different things, so I think that’s probably one of the things you see. They also seem to be a bit more confident in themselves, then they do the first day. And maybe its just the first day kind of jitters, but I think a lot of kids, seem to be, you know they get the regular bumps and scrapes but they take them in strides and want to get back out there and stay doing what they are doing and have some fun.”

12. Do you feel that children are exposed to an adequate amount of exposure to the outdoor environment on a regular basis? Please explain.

“I would say no, I would say kids are kept inside way too much. I mean I think when they get ot camp, half the kids don’t even know how to react to being outside all the time. They’re tired, a lot of parents say that their kids barely make it out of the driveway when they go home; the kids are falling asleep in the back of the car. It’s just because they are physically exhausted I think because they have been spending so much time outside. And its not that its detrimental to their health that they are that tired but I think that its just so much activity all at once that they aren’t used to and I think kids are generally are kept inside more you know We all say that we need that 30 minutes outside, and I think kids don’t get that on a daily basis so when they come to camp and spend the entire day outside it’s a really fun to see they have a lot of fun and you know they are exhausted at the end of the night, but then they go to sleep and see you them back the next day and I think that chance in the summer to be outside, consecutive days in a row for the entire day is really great. But on a regular basis I think kids just spend way too much inside.”

13. Do you feel that special needs children are exposed to an adequate amount of exposure to the outdoor environment on a regular basis? Please explain.

“I would say probably, I am not really sure about the evidence on that. But I would say that they are probably are more tend to be kept inside or within a controlled environment which usually tends to be inside. I really don’t think there’s any harm to them being outside just as much or if not more than other kids. I think kids in general need to be outside more often then they are, at this point.”

14. What are the top 3 reasons you feel that children should attend outdoor recreation camps?

“I think it’s a great jump out of their comfort zone for a lot of kids, I think it’s a great place for them to meet friends and you know, a lot of people not necessarily like themselves. The campers learn about differences and see the differences there are between different people and begin to not necessarily recognize it as a difference anymore. It gives the campers the chance to meet new people and experience new things while maintaining equality among all.”

17. What has working with special needs children taught you?

“When I worked at FLC I had the opportunity to be a special needs counselor for 2 girls. It was challenging they were 2 different girls, very different personalities from each other, but best friends. Dealing with them fighting w/ each other, dealing with their differences in what they wanted to do, as I was their only counselor at that point. But I think it had the greatest impact on how I saw my job that summer and it was one of the most rewarding counseling situations I have ever had to work through those challenges with them. It was exhausting, and definitely worthwhile. When I look back on the summer those are definitely the girls I remembered the things that we did together, and the little fights that we worked through. The amount of exhaustion I had and the number of people who wanted to give me some time off, to kind of recharge my batteries but I felt that I needed to work it through with them, they weren’t getting a break, so I didn’t feel I wanted a break. I also didn’t want to miss out on anything I didn’t want to be taking an hour off to take a nap and something happen and I missed it. That was one of the most rewarding things I ever had being a counselor.”

Interview A2 (Staff Interview):

2. How are the special needs campers integrated into the camp group?

“Campers are integrated into groups through the special needs program. They are given a special needs counselor the ratio is usually 1 counselor- for every to-2 kids. Through that they are integrated, the special needs counselor tries to integrate the 2 special needs kids into the group. Attempt their best to involve the campers in the activities just like everyone else.”

4. How do you think the integration program impacts the campers themselves, the staff and the other campers in the group?

“The integration program affects the kids themselves, because they are probably able to do things at camp that they probably wouldn’t necessarily be able to do anywhere else. They can play in the creek by themselves, or go in the barn and hold a barn animal, with supervision, but not direct intensive supervision. They can do things for themselves, and experience nature at camp. It affects the staff that work with them because the kids are just so full of joy all the time. And getting different experiences and seeing how kids react to different things and working with these kids who have handicaps but are just so full of life, and just work differently with other things. It’s just enlightening and heartwarming to see the kids go through their days at camp. In relation to that, its heartwarming for the staff to see the integrations and the friendships built between the special needs campers and the other campers that are at camp because the friendships and the bonds that they make, regardless of any differences physical or mental, are just incredible to see and heartwarming”

7. Does your camp focus on ensuring children have adequate exposure to fresh air?  
a. Why do you feel this is important?

“Our camp one-hundred percent definitely encourages children to play, and be in nature, and breathe in fresh air, and that is important. Being outside, and being with nature, and breathing in fresh air, and just being free; it instills a sense of freedom, and it’s a very relaxed atmosphere. You’re just enjoying yourself; you’re enjoying the weather, and enjoying what our world has to offer. And that’s something special, for me it means a lot, and breathing in the fresh air and just being in the nature is really important to the campers.”

8. Do you feel children benefit more from outdoor camp activities than camps and activities that are totally held inside of buildings? Please explain.  
a. Can you give an example of special needs children struggling with indoor activities?  
b. Can you give an example of special needs children struggling with outdoor activities?

“I think its both; I feel like specifically here at Glenbrook, having some special needs children inside for an activity for example music. Instruments are banging, and kids are yelling and singing, that’s not the best environment for most kids with special needs, that I have worked with

in the past. I think that if a day camp that is centralized inside all day and special needs children attended, it probably wouldn't be the best thing. From experience, being outside, with a special needs camper, being in nature and being in the country is way more relaxed. The campers tend to be able to explore and enjoy the full experience and are not in a controlled indoor space where they are required to focus and not develop through hands-on learning from the environment."

9. Can you give a specific example of one outdoor activity and how it benefits a special needs child?

"I think that swimming kind of gives the camper a sense of freedom. Being in the water and being around everyone in the pool and splashing and just having fun, just brings a smile to the special needs campers' faces. I have worked with them and been with special needs campers in the pool and I think definitely swimming is one of the areas around camp where they are happy and they allow themselves to have fun, and there's nothing there to scare them, and they want to have fun and the water and the pool allows them to."

12. Do you feel that children are exposed to an adequate amount of exposure to the outdoor environment on a regular basis? Please explain.

"I think it depends on the child, it depends on where they live. If they live in the suburbs than probably yes, but if they live in the city, than probably not, I guess because there is more to protect them from or shelter them from. I think it totally depends on where they live, and the family situation that the special needs camper is in."

14. What are the top 3 reasons you feel that children should attend outdoor recreation camps?

"The top 2 that I can think of, off the top of my head, would be exercise and to experience nature. Exercise, in this day and age, where technology and computers are so prevalent in our society I feel that kids are spending more and more time inside playing video games, or on computers. One of the biggest benefits of coming to an outdoor camp would be exercise, because you are constantly moving, walking around, and you're always involved in an activity. I think that's really key, getting fresh air, being active and just being outside. Number two would be to experience the nature, experiencing the natural world, and seeing the way that farms work, and the way nature just works in itself."

17. What has working with special needs children taught you?

"Working with special needs campers, has changed my life. I have been working with them for 5 years now, when I started I was 15 when I started working with them and I was extremely apprehensive and nervous, and honestly I don't think I was as accepting of people as I am now. Working with special needs kids has shown me that no matter what difficulties or challenges you have you can totally overcome them, and just live life the best way you can and accept the cards that you have been dealt. It has changed the way that I think about things, and view people and life on a larger scale. It has been one of the best experiences of my life working with them for the last past years. Every child that I have worked with has touched me or changed me in some way,

and it's a really cool experience and not something that you can really get someplace else, except for camp. Specifically working at camp, with special needs campers has just been such a cool experience and I think that everyone should maybe have the chance to do it, because it really kind of gives you a different outlook on your life, and the way you do things, and I think that it's just been life changing working with them."

Interview A3 (Director Interview):

1. What is the physical size of this camp?

“The camp is 100 acres.”

2. How many campers do you accept per week?

“Our maximum is 300 campers per week; we usually have around 250 per week.”

3. What year did this camp open?

“It opened in 1968.”

4. How long has your camp offered a special needs program?

“Since the mid-70s (although not certain), also one of the first to offer a special needs program.”

5. What is the history behind your organization and the special needs program?

“Glenbrook’s philosophy is to provide campers with experiences that they wouldn’t get at home, with all the camp activities, so the special needs program came in line with that, serving a diverse population, and not segregating children with special needs, but including them in all camp activities and also teaching other kids and other staff about children with special needs we felt was very important.”

6. What is the goal or objective of your camp program?

“The goal of the camp program is to provide kids with experiences and activities that they wouldn’t necessarily get at home. And providing them with a safe environment to learn.”

9. Why did you choose to offer an integrated program instead of a totally separate program for special needs campers?

“When I first started we had already been running the program for 15 years or so. But because we want to serve a diverse population we don’t want to segregate those campers, so including them was always very important to what society did or should have done at the time and what society does now.”

10. How many special needs campers do you accept per week?

“3-5% of camper enrollment is special needs, around 18 campers every week”

11. How are the special needs campers integrated into the camp group?

“The kids are integrated into a group of their peers on a 1 counselor to 2 camper ratios; the counselors are there to support the kids with the special needs into a group of their peers.”

12. What are the benefits of having special needs campers integrated into groups with other campers?

“It’s a learning process for everybody, the children with special needs their families really like the integration program, because they are modeling their behaviour after typically developing children, as opposed to children in other only special needs camps would then model their behaviour after other children with special needs. That inclusion aspect for the parents and families is very important. Also the other kids in the group also have a huge learning curve, with the kids with special needs, they learn from them, they understand what the needs are and the staff understand and learn as well and it is a very inclusion program.”

14. What activities does your camp offer that take place in an outdoor environment?

“Basically all of the activities take place outdoors and including swimming lessons, nature activities, playing in the creek, barn experiences, biking, sports, wagon rides, and hikes.”

15. What activities does your camp offer that take place in an indoor environment?

“Indoors would be arts and crafts, and peace, and rock climbing.”

16. Does your camp focus on ensuring children have adequate exposure to fresh air?  
a. Why do you feel this is important?

“Most of our program is focused outdoors. I feel that exposure to the outdoors and exposure to nature is very beneficial to kids because they don’t get that much anymore. Kids are very programmed and at school most of the day and aren’t allowed to just discover nature and play in nature in a one-on-one environment so that is why we really push that here, and focus on that in a huge way.”

17. Are there any activities that the special needs campers are not allowed to take part in? Please explain.

“All of the programs would be at their own abilities, so any camper can participate in any activity based on their age limitations. It’s just based on their abilities, so if a child doesn’t know how to bike ride, whether they have special needs or not, we will try and help them teach to bike ride, but we would not limit their involvement in anything based on their diagnosis.”

19. Do you feel children benefit more from outdoor camp activities than camps and activities that are totally held inside of buildings? Please explain.

“I think that in my experience I have only known camps to be outdoors, and so I would say that they do benefit more, from the kinds of activities that we do, in the sense that they learn more about the environment and their own skills outside perhaps as opposed to just stuck indoors,

participating in craft type activities. There's more ability for kids to learn about themselves outside and for them to be more physical in an outdoor environment."

- a. Can you give an example of special needs children struggling with indoor activities?
- b. Can you give an example of special needs children struggling with outdoor activities?

"Often times at camp the children with special needs struggle with indoor activities. The campers get too loud and the children with special needs cannot handle the loudness and the indoor enclosed space with the number of kids. That would be times when these children struggle and just need quiet and structured time. Often times if the kids are inside at camp, it is because it is a rain day and unstructured, and the kids with special needs just cannot handle that. However, there are disadvantages to being outside as well. There is the factor of unpredictability and sensory issues that some children with special needs cannot handle in the outdoors. Mostly, campers with special needs though struggle with indoor rather than outdoor camp activities."

20. Can you give a specific example of one outdoor activity and how it benefits a special needs child?

"We had 2 campers a couple of summers ago, that actually learned how to bike ride. With the necessary encouragement and support from the camp counsellors, the positive peer influences, and from watching the other campers in their group, they were physically able to learn to ride a bike on their own. The growth and development in those campers to achieve their goals was a huge accomplishment for the families and for the children themselves"

21. What are the benefits (health, social, personal) of outdoor camp activities for children?

"The benefits are numerous; the campers are healthy because they are running around outside all day long, they are physically active, in fresh air, learning about the environment, learning about nature. This whole notion of actually being in nature and learning about it and having a relationship with it, I think helps kids to understand how not to destroy it later on in life and how to preserve that. That's a huge benefit. Also the social benefits of being in a group, being part of the peer mentoring, that happens at camp is also positive for any kids. Also, the positive peer pressure that go on, and lets the kids learn in a leadership environment and positive leadership growth in anything. With their counselors who can mentor them and with other campers."

22. Are there any additional benefits of outdoor camp activities that would specifically help special needs campers? Please explain.

"Yes I think that just being able to be outdoors, and become more accustomed to nature, and the sounds that nature makes, and that it's a bit messy and that it's okay to learn about the sights, sounds, and smells of nature is a great positive thing for kids with special needs. Having to change from outdoor to indoor activities, learning that if you are swimming outdoors and there is a thunderstorm that is coming along, that you need to plan for all those eventualities, because life

is unpredictable and nature and the weather is unpredictable, so I think it's a great learning curve for those children with special needs."

23. Do you feel that children are exposed to an adequate amount of exposure to the outdoor environment on a regular basis? Please explain.

"Nope, I don't think that kids in this 2010 are exposed enough to outdoor activities; I think that by society's nature, we have become more protective of our children, which means that we keep them inside. More parents are afraid of 'stranger danger' and all that kind of stuff, and so the opportunity to play freely in nature and build forts and collect bugs, and that type of thing is far too scary for a lot of parents. So having an experience in an outdoor camp is very positive."

24. Do you feel that special needs children are exposed to an adequate amount of exposure to the outdoor environment on a regular basis? Please explain.

"I would think that parents and families that I know with children with special needs, are trying to expose their children to outdoor experiences, outdoor environments. However, that is just a very small percentage of families with children with special needs. My guess is that a lot of families are very protective of their children with special needs and don't let them go outside. Because outside has no boundaries, the limitations are endless, as to what kind of trouble they could get into, so they want to protect them from that, which is not necessarily a bad thing. But it's not giving them the exposure that they should have."

25. What are the top 3 reasons you feel that children should attend outdoor recreation camps?

"The relationship with the natural environment, the ability to perform a lot of physical activities (running off a lot of energy), trying a lot of activities they wouldn't get at home (rock climbing, mountain biking, or wagon rides)."

26. Are there any additional materials you such as brochures that are available?

"Yes"

28. What has working with special needs children taught you?

"Working with children with special needs has really enhanced my learning. I have taken additional courses to ensure that we are supporting them better at camp. I probably look forward to seeing our campers with special needs far more than any other campers because I think they have far more to offer me, and far more to offer our campers and staff than any other campers. They are full of life and full of learning and full of fun and innocent enjoyment and I love their outlook on camp and the world."

Interview A4 (Staff Interview):

1. Why did you choose to work as a counselor in an integrated program for special needs campers?

“I wanted to learn and expand my knowledge for the real world. I wanted to go beyond the common strict definition of their differences.”

2. How are the special needs campers integrated into the camp group?

“They are given their own schedule but some programs are combined between groups, so still accommodating to their needs but also integrating them.”

3. What do you see as the benefits of having special needs campers integrated into groups with other campers?

“Shows the other children that special needs kids are not as isolated and different as they are stereotypically seen. Opens the mind of children, and gives kids an overall sense of equality.”

4. How do you think the integration program impacts the campers themselves, the staff and the other campers in the group?

“It shows the special needs characters that they are not as isolated and segregated from society as it sometimes is presented. It shows equality and integration to teach kids that they are all the same, and all have equal difference.”

5. What activities does your camp offer that take place in an outdoor environment?

“Nature, wagon, hayloft, woodlot, swimming, campfires”

6. What activities does your camp offer that take place in an indoor environment?

“Nature (at times), barn, arts and crafts, peace.”

7. Do you believe your camp focuses on ensuring children have adequate exposure to fresh air?

“Yes.”

- a. Why do you feel this is important?

“It allows the kids to get away from the busy city days and just enjoy simple activities. It allows children to learn the importance of enjoying the world around them, without material things for entertainment”

8. Do you feel children benefit more from outdoor camp activities than camps and activities that are totally held inside of buildings? Please explain.

“Yes, because again they are able to explore the world around them and learn through experience. They are able to have fun and stay healthy and active all at camp.”

- a. Can you give an example of special needs children struggling with indoor activities?

“At Glenbrook, some special needs campers seemed to feel confined when they were told that they all needed to stay within one room. It limited the variety of the activity and the movement capability.”

- b. Can you give an example of special needs children struggling with outdoor activities?

“At Glenbrook, many special needs campers often took advantage of the opportunity to run away from the group when placed in an outdoor environment. It can be almost too much open space, enabling them to run.”

10. What are the benefits (health, social, personal) of outdoor camp activities for children?

“Kids are given fresh air, are able to interact with whoever they want (unlike indoors where they may be forced to only interact with those in the room), they would be able to learn for themselves through exploring, rather than in a classroom setting – they are able to learn for themselves.”

11. Are there any additional benefits of outdoor camp activities that would specifically help special needs campers? Please explain.

“Special needs campers seem to enjoy the ability to be outside, free from space limitation. It enables them to feel that they can enjoy the world just like everyone else, they can feel that they are able to explore and not be instructed or taught.”

12. Do you feel that children are exposed to an adequate amount of exposure to the outdoor environment on a regular basis? Please explain.

“Yes but I feel that many kids would benefit from more outdoor exposure, so much of the world today revolves around technology and material wealth, which is why camp should be a place to escape that focus and enjoy nature. More natural exposure would be beneficial because it could serve as a balance with the current society’s focus on big cities and their sources of entertainment.”

13. Do you feel that special needs children are exposed to an adequate amount of exposure to the outdoor environment on a regular basis? Please explain.

“Not really – I feel that they should be exposed to more of the outdoor environment. I think it is very easy for them to recognize when others place restrictions and limitations on them, and that

emphasizes their differences from others in society – who may not be under as watchful an eye. They should be able to go out and enjoy the environment just like any other child, although they obviously need more supervision, it is better than keeping them confined.”

14. What are the top 3 reasons you feel that children should attend outdoor recreation camps?

“Escape the big city entertainment/technology, learn and interact with others, make new friendships through common bonds, focus on friendships and experiences – not material wealth or entertainment”

15. What has working with special needs children taught you?

“Our “major” problems are miniature in comparison – we will complain endlessly about a broken phone or laptop, and yet they cannot even make a simple statement without being the centre of weird looks, misunderstanding, and isolation.”

16. **Is there anything that we haven’t covered today that you feel is important for the research topic?**

“Just that the most important thing for special needs kids is to remove that wall of differences, allowing them to feel some relations to other children, regardless of their condition(s).”

Interview B1 (Staff Interview):

1. Why did you choose to work as a counselor in an integrated program for special needs campers?

“I worked at FLC as a counselor, at one point there was a girl who needed a ‘one-on-one’ counselor and I was asked if I wanted to do it. I thought that it would be a good opportunity and experience for me to learn and grow as a person and agreed to do it.”

2. How are the special needs campers integrated into the camp group?

“They attend the different sessions throughout the day and are treated like any other camper. There are instances where if they don’t want to do something you need to change things up. They are also in cabin with all the other campers.”

3. What do you see as the benefits of having special needs campers integrated into groups with other campers?

“I think that it is a good thing having the special needs campers with other campers as it shows the other campers to be patient and kind. It also shows them how not everyone is the same and how to handle that.”

4. How do you think the integration program impacts the campers themselves, the staff and the other campers in the group?

“I think the integration program impacts the campers in a good way. It gets them away from their life at home, which generally is not the best situation, and allows them the experience something new. For the other campers and staff it impacts them in a positive way, however it can be stressful.”

5. What activities does your camp offer that take place in an outdoor environment?

“Almost all of the activities are outdoor oriented, they include: rock climbing, biking, sports, survival, swimming, kayaking, canoeing, sailing, dragon boating, archery, and low ropes.”

6. What activities does your camp offer that take place in an indoor environment?

“The activities that are offered indoors include: arts and crafts, drama, music, dance – however a lot of the time the campers take what they are playing with outside to do it.”

7. Do you believe your camp focuses on ensuring children have adequate exposure to fresh air?
  - a. Why do you feel this is important?

“Yes I believe my camp focuses on exposure to fresh air. I think it is important to be outside as much as possible, especially in an area up north away from the city. It provides exercise and

helps to keep them healthy.”

8. Do you feel children benefit more from outdoor camp activities than camps and activities that are totally held inside of buildings? Please explain.

“I think that they do benefit from being outside more than inside. The point of camp is to get away from the city life and be able to run around and have fun. Inside activities are good when it is raining or too hot, however being outside allows for more activities and exercise.”

- a. Can you give an example of special needs children struggling with indoor activities?

“With my experience being inside can sometimes be boring for a special needs camper or can irritate them with the amount of people in the building. Other instances would be if they were not capable of doing the same thing as the other campers, it can put them in an upsetting mood.”

- b. Can you give an example of special needs children struggling with outdoor activities?

“Outdoor activities go hand in hand; it is when they are not capable of doing things like the other campers that can upset them.”

9. Can you give a specific example of one outdoor activity and how it benefits a special needs child?

“A specific example would be rock climbing. It is beneficial because it teaches the camper to be patient and wait their turn to go, it also gives the camper confidence as it is upon them to make it as high as they want up the wall.”

10. What are the benefits (health, social, personal) of outdoor camp activities for children?

“The benefits of outdoor camp activities for children health wise, allow them to get fresh air and exercise. Socially allow for teamwork activities that make friends. Personally allow them to do what they want to do, as there are multiple things for them to choose and try.”

11. Are there any additional benefits of outdoor camp activities that would specifically help special needs campers? Please explain.

12. Do you feel that children are exposed to an adequate amount of exposure to the outdoor environment on a regular basis? Please explain.

“No I don’t think children are exposed to an adequate amount of exposure of the outdoor environment. While at home they go from school back to their house always inside doing something. Along with the technologies that amuse children they tend to stay in watching TV, playing videogames, or on the computer.”

13. Do you feel that special needs children are exposed to an adequate amount of exposure to the outdoor environment on a regular basis? Please explain.

“I think that the programs they are in at school do take them outside almost every day in the summer, however for the most part especially in the winter months, they are not exposed to nearly enough time outdoors.”

14. What are the top 3 reasons you feel that children should attend outdoor recreation camps?

“It is a good way to experience new things that you cannot do in the city. It brings kids together and makes strong friendships. It allows them to get a feel for the environment that is completely different from the city.”

15. What has working with special needs children taught you?

“It has taught me that I have a lot more patience than I thought. Also, that I can still handle things when they get extremely stressful.”

16. **Is there anything that we haven't covered today that you feel is important for the research topic?**

Interview B2 (Staff Interview):

1. Why did you choose to work as a counselor in an integrated program for special needs campers?

“The camp that I worked at was not a solely camp for kids with special needs, which I believe is a large benefit because of the power of integration. I wanted to be a part of normalizing socialization and promoting coping within a larger camp setting for children with special needs. I was interested in being a part of the one-on-one program at Fraser Lake.”

2. How are the special needs campers integrated into the camp group?

“At Fraser, we believe in full integration within the camp setting. This means that campers with special needs are in cabins with campers their age. They participate in daily activities, special events, meal times and camper of the day responsibilities.”

3. What do you see as the benefits of having special needs campers integrated into groups with other campers?

“The benefits of integration are well documented in literature. By being with other campers that are typically developing, children with special needs can benefit from normalcy. Many of the other campers act as peer support, and are interested in helping their fellow cabin mate. By integrating all children, you create an accepting environment where all parities; staff, campers of special needs and typically developed campers can support and encourage one another.”

4. How do you think the integration program impacts the campers themselves, the staff and the other campers in the group?

“I have been in many cabins where there is a camper with special needs, and I always believe that typically developing campers can benefit from this as well. They can see and often learn (if they have not been exposed or around a child with needs), that they are human, and often like the same activities as them. They can learn to accept and help out fellow campers, creating a positive environment for all.”

5. What activities does your camp offer that take place in an outdoor environment?

“Some activities include: swimming, kayaking, canoeing, survival, fishing, overnights, sports, biking, rock climbing, sailing, wide game, cook-outs, and overnights.”

6. What activities does your camp offer that take place in an indoor environment?

“Rainy day activities/games are conducted in the dining hall, drama, music, cabin time.”

7. Do you believe your camp focuses on ensuring children have adequate exposure to fresh air?

“Most of the campers day is spent outside. Beginning at morning watch by the lake and ending at campfire.”

a. Why do you feel this is important?

“Most children do not experience pure and fresh air that is all around them at camp. Life in larger cities is much different. Providing a time where they are given opportunities and encouraged to participate in outdoor activities and games can promote healthy development in children.”

8. Do you feel children benefit more from outdoor camp activities than camps and activities that are totally held inside of buildings? Please explain.
  - a. Can you give an example of special needs children struggling with indoor activities?
  - b. Can you give an example of special needs children struggling with outdoor activities?

“Some children with special needs can struggle with kayaking and canoeing for example. However this does not mean that experiencing and trying it was not positive. It is important for them to experience hard work, and realizing when something is difficult.”

9. Can you give a specific example of one outdoor activity and how it benefits a special needs child?

“Cabin barge rides on the lake is a popular cabin activity, where whole cabins can come together, go for a ride and jump into the middle of the lake. Some kids with special needs have difficulties with kayaking and canoeing, which is why barge rides can be positive. As a cabin, they are participating in something together, without having to paddle.”

10. What are the benefits (health, social, personal) of outdoor camp activities for children?

“Time spent outside is beneficial in many different aspects. It can contribute to spiritual, mental and emotional health.”

11. Are there any additional benefits of outdoor camp activities that would specifically help special needs campers? Please explain.
12. Do you feel that children are exposed to an adequate amount of exposure to the outdoor environment on a regular basis? Please explain.

“I believe that outside of summer overnight camps, children are not exposed to enough outdoor time. I have seen positive aspects of having most of a camp day structured around outdoor activities, therefore city camps can spend too much time inside. It is important to provide outdoor time with many different activities, more than just walks outside.”

13. Do you feel that special needs children are exposed to an adequate amount of exposure to the outdoor environment on a regular basis? Please explain.

14. What are the top 3 reasons you feel that children should attend outdoor recreation camps?

“To promote normal peer interaction, to encourage normalcy and positive structured activities throughout the day and to allow children of special needs the same opportunities given/provided to typically developing children, as camp has many positive benefits.”

15. What has working with special needs children taught you?

“That every child is different, and it is about focusing on the positive aspects of the child you are working with. Remembering that some children of special needs can do almost anything, sometimes with some accommodations.”

**16. Is there anything that we haven't covered today that you feel is important for the research topic?**

Interview B3 (Camp Director):

1. What is the physical size of this camp?

“The camp is about 260 acres.”

2. How many campers do you accept per week?

“We have about 120-130 campers per week.”

3. What year did this camp open?

“The camp opened in 1955.”

4. How long has your camp offered a special needs program?

“I can’t give you an exact date; I know that the camp was founded or for many years right back to at least into the 60s, where the camp is operated bringing kids with special needs, like juvenile delinquents and those with emotional needs, so for many years we have wanted to have special needs involved in camp.”

5. What is the history behind your organization and the special needs program?

6. What is the goal or objective of your camp program?

7. For how many years has your camp offered an integrated program to include special needs campers?

8. Why did this camp make the commitment to offer a program for Special Needs campers?

9. Why did you choose to offer an integrated program instead of a totally separate program for special needs campers?

10. How many special needs campers do you accept per week?

“Two special needs campers per week, but sometimes we have had as many as 6 at one time.”

11. How are the special needs campers integrated into the camp group?

“The special needs campers are integrated in that they are in a cabin, with kids their own age. What we do is we have a one-on-one counselor with that camper, and they will stay in the cabin with that camper as well. So in a sense cabin group will have one less camper, and one extra staff. Otherwise, that camper takes part in regular camp activities, and gets a chance to take part in the regular program; they just have a one-on-one counselor that does the activities with them.

And if there is anything that they can't or unable to participate, or need some time alone, they can go off on their own, but otherwise they are integrated, and they are one of the campers, they aren't given any special designation."

12. What are the benefits of having special needs campers integrated into groups with other campers?

13. How do you think the integration program impacts the campers themselves, the staff and the other campers in the group?

"Our goal for all the kids that com, is that we try and remove any social or racial or physical barriers, and say that we are all the same. So with the integration of the kids with special needs, as much as possible we put them in there with all the other kids. They don't need to wear a special shirt, or be in a special cabin, they are just part of the cabin. I think and hope that for them, it's a chance to be 'normal', whereas they go to school and they are in a special needs class, with other kids with special needs, at camp they are not in a special needs cabin, so hopefully the impact on them is that they feel like just one of the regular campers. Their exceptional needs or special needs are not highlighted in any way. For the staff and the other campers, the campers without special needs, same thing it's a chance to have a kid with special needs with them in the everyday and they can begin to see that these kids are the same. They have some advantageous and disadvantages just like they do."

14. What activities does your camp offer that take place in an outdoor environment?

"Pretty much every activity we have is in the outdoor environment at Fraser. Basically our indoor buildings are our cabins where people sleep and the dinning hall. Other than that, all our programs are outdoors. Again we are on 250 acres, with forests (pine, maple), grass fields, swamp, and on a large lake. Wide range of terrain and everything we do is outdoors."

15. What activities does your camp offer that take place in an indoor environment?

16. Does your camp focus on ensuring children have adequate exposure to fresh air?  
a. Why do you feel this is important?

"Well again there in fresh air, pretty much 100% of the time, even the cabins aren't insulated they are pretty much just tents with walls. Yes- the reason why we haven't focused on building indoor facilities, and we rely on everything outdoors is because we think its important being outside, and interacting with nature, chance to be running around and active. There is so much of their lives, that is go to school, come home and be inside. Outside play is decreasing I think, just in general, so this we go the opposite then in which 95% of a kids day is outdoors, and like 5% is indoors, so they have a chance to see bugs, and see sunsets, and get muddy and those kinds of things, things they don't necessarily get a chance to do at home."

17. Are there any activities that the special needs campers are not allowed to take part in? Please explain.

18. What do the special needs campers do when their group is doing an activity they cannot take part in?
19. Do you feel children benefit more from outdoor camp activities than camps and activities that are totally held inside of buildings? Please explain.
  - a. Can you give an example of special needs children struggling with indoor activities?
  - b. Can you give an example of special needs children struggling with outdoor activities?

“No I don’t think you can qualify and say that one is better than the other. I think there’s a place for both; I think you can’t just be exclusive. I think it’s important for kids to be outside, for those things I mentioned before. When you’re inside, things tend to get sanitized and there’s a disconnect with the natural world. In many ways it’s an artificial environment, the temperature is always the same, and it’s always dry and the lightening is good, unless you don’t want it, you just turn it off. This way the kids have to deal a little bit more with understanding and adapting to the environment around them, rather than controlling it, so if its raining what do we do, if its late august it gets dark soon after supper, so you have to adjust what your doing. It teaches kids a little bit more to deal with the unexpected and how to deal with that, and those are some of the benefits of being outdoors, but being outdoors has it’s drawbacks too, and having indoors is important too. Having a balance is important for kids too.”

20. Can you give a specific example of one outdoor activity and how it benefits a special needs child?
21. What are the benefits (health, social, personal) of outdoor camp activities for children?
22. Are there any additional benefits of outdoor camp activities that would specifically help special needs campers? Please explain.
23. Do you feel that children are exposed to an adequate amount of exposure to the outdoor environment on a regular basis? Please explain.
24. Do you feel that special needs children are exposed to an adequate amount of exposure to the outdoor environment on a regular basis? Please explain.
25. What are the top 3 reasons you feel that children should attend outdoor recreation camps?

“Is to balance the culture we have developed, especially in Ontario and North America were kids grow in an urban or city environment, and are pretty much exclusively doing things indoors. It’s even rare for kids to walk to the activities. The second reason the outdoors, gives kids that unpredictability, because even just walking outdoors is different than walking indoors, the ground is uneven, the weather elements you might have to deal with. It is fundamentally different, they are problem solving throughout their day just by being outdoors. Thirdly, I think

being outdoors, you get an appreciation and playing in the creek, and turning over rocks, to catching frogs, to walking through piles of leaves, or through the forest and just interacting with nature and if kids are out in a stream or playing in trees, then when issues like deforestation or overfishing issues that are 'adult things', that are world is dealing with, I think if they have connection to nature I think it's an important first step for them to understand to where we live and the need for natural resources, and that we cant just pave everything and hope to survive that way."

26. Are there any additional materials you such as brochures that are available?

27. **Is there anything that we haven't covered today that you feel is important for the research topic?**