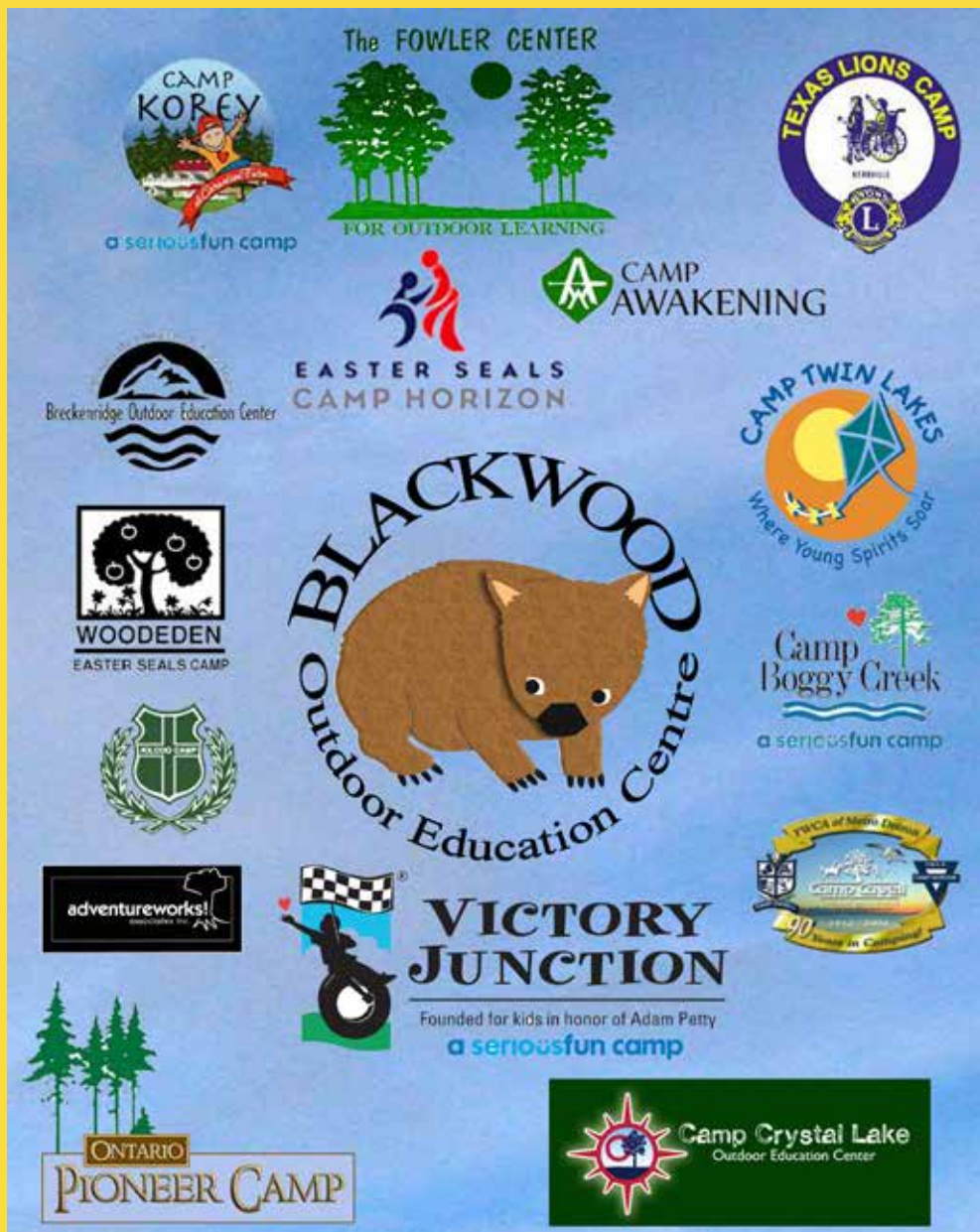


Proudly Sponsored by the Pratt Foundation

The 2012 Bella Irlicht Fellowship

Tony Bellette

Accessibilities and
Possibilities for those with Disabilities





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Specialised
Skills
Institute**

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Published by International Specialised Skills Institute, Melbourne

Extract published on www.issinstitute.org.au

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Executive Summary

Although simple, the following statements reflect the significant impact that the camps visited by the Fellow during his investigations have on those who attend them.

“Got a bullseye, got a bullseye, got a bullseye!”

“I’m having the best day of my life!”

“This is the best thing!”

“3 ... 2... 1 ... Zip away!”

“Watch me fly!”

and... ***“I knew I could do it!”***

These and many similar statements echo throughout all North American camps every summer. Young people challenge themselves in a huge variety of indoor, outdoor and expedition style experiences. They embrace the opportunities that are offered to them, opportunities beyond their day-to-day lifestyle.

Young people are free to be themselves, discover themselves, explore themselves and examine exactly who they are in a completely safe and supportive environment. They are free to make their own choices, decide their own destiny and create their own adventure for the duration of their Summer Camp. While this enhances their independence, self-development, growth, maturity, decision-making skills and self-reliance, the experience of a Summer Camp also challenges them to experience teamwork, co-operation, support, empathy, communication, cohesive community living and friendship.

For a short period of time every year, people from all over the world, are united by a single experience – Summer Camp. A destination where life stops and real living begins.

Summer Camp is a destination free of procrastination, negativity, bullying, peer pressure, put downs, expectations, roadblocks and the ‘tall-poppy’ syndrome.

Summer Camp is a destination bursting with joy, happiness, laughter, achievement, support, love, friendship, community, co-operation, impulsiveness, acceptance, understanding, clarity, challenge, ovation and inclusion.

As you walk through the gates you will be greeted by signs such as to the following:

‘Future world and local leaders at play – please drive slowly.’

Beyond the sign you are immediately immersed in a unique experience, an opportunity to revisit your childhood and live life free of all barriers in a cohesive community. Echoing through the wind in the trees you tune into laughter, celebration, song, cheering and encouragement.

Executive Summary

The deeper you immerse yourself into the Summer Camp environment the more you begin to discover the success of individual achievements:

- A young person scared of heights experiencing a high ropes course eight metres off the ground
- A shy individual singing on stage in front of everyone
- A non-swimmer paddling across the lake
- A person camping in a tent for the first time
- Language barriers broken down by laughter, smiles, high-fives and handshakes all around
- A campfire uniting the community in the common cause of fun.

The success of these achievements is then comprehended, and crystallised by the fact that you are in a camp for young people and young people at heart; many with special needs:

- The young person on the high ropes course is in a wheelchair
- The singer is a young person with a speech impediment
- The non-swimmer is a cerebral-palsy camper who relies on walking sticks to enhance their mobility
- The camper in the tent is aged 54
- While English may be their first language – communication cannot be expressed verbally.

With the glow from the campfire reflecting in their eyes, everyone openly enjoys laughter, smiles, cheers and celebrations as they individually and collectively review their achievements.

In the North American Summer of 2012, the Fellow experienced the joy, celebration and uniqueness of sixteen North American Camps.

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i. Abbreviations/Acronyms

| | |
|-------|---|
| AASE | Australian Association of Special Education |
| ACA | Australian Camps Association |
| SDS | Special Developmental School |
| DEECD | Department of Education and Early Childhood Development |
| PASS | Principals Association of Special Education |
| VOEA | Victorian Outdoor Education Association |

1. Acknowledgements

Tony Bellette would like to thank the following individuals and organisations who gave generously of their time and their expertise to assist, advise and guide his throughout the Fellowship program.

Awarding Body – International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute)

The International Specialised Skills Institute Inc is an independent, national organisation that for over two decades has worked with Australian governments, industry and education institutions to enable individuals to gain enhanced skills and experience in traditional trades, professions and leading-edge technologies.

At the heart of the ISS Institute are our Fellows. Under the **Overseas Applied Research Fellowship Program** the Fellows travel overseas. Upon their return, they are required to pass on what they have learnt by:

1. Preparing a detailed report for distribution to government departments, industry and educational institutions.
2. Recommending improvements to accredited educational courses.
3. Delivering training activities including workshops, conferences and forums.

Over 250 Australians have received Fellowships, across many industry sectors. In addition, recognised experts from overseas conduct training activities and events. To date, 25 leaders in their field have shared their expertise in Australia.

According to Skills Australia's 'Australian Workforce Futures: A National Workforce Development Strategy 2010':

Australia requires a highly skilled population to maintain and improve our economic position in the face of increasing global competition, and to have the skills to adapt to the introduction of new technology and rapid change.

International and Australian research indicates we need a deeper level of skills than currently exists in the Australian labour market to lift productivity. We need a workforce in which more people have skills, but also multiple and higher level skills and qualifications. Deepening skills across all occupations is crucial to achieving long-term productivity growth. It also reflects the recent trend for jobs to become more complex and the consequent increased demand for higher level skills. This trend is projected to continue regardless of whether we experience strong or weak economic growth in the future. Future environmental challenges will also create demand for more sustainability related skills across a range of industries and occupations.

In this context, the ISS Institute works with Fellows, industry and government to identify specific skills in Australia that require enhancing, where accredited courses are not available through Australian higher education institutions or other Registered Training Organisations. The Fellows' overseas experience sees them broadening and deepening their own professional practice, which they then share with their peers, industry and government upon their return. This is the focus of the ISS Institute's work.

For further information on our Fellows and our work see <http://www.issinstitute.org.au>.

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1. Acknowledgements

Fellowship Supporter

The Pratt Foundation was established in 1978 by Richard and Jeanne Pratt, with the shared vision of supporting charitable enterprises and adding value to philanthropy. The Foundation is now one of the largest private sources of philanthropy in Australia. In the words of its mission statement, it aims “to enrich the lives of our community” and, in the words of Jeremiah, it works to fulfil this aim in a spirit of “kindness, justice and equity”. Tony Bellette sincerely thanks them for providing funding support for this Fellowship.

Supporters

Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre Inc. is Australia’s only staffed Outdoor Education Centre run exclusively for students with special needs. Established in 1970, the Centre annually provides outdoor adventure activities for over 1,600 students from a variety of Victorian Government Special Schools. Since its inception, the Centre has continually evolved new programs, activities, experiences and opportunities for students. Through this evolution, the Centre continues to focus on creating accessible possibilities for all students.

Through their direct involvement with the Centre, the following Victorian Special Schools have helped create the opportunities for the development of this overseas program:

- Ascot Vale Special School
- Ashwood School
- Berendale School
- Bullen Heights School
- Concord School
- Croxton Special School
- Emerson School
- Frankston Special Developmental
- Glenroy Special School
- Heatherwood School
- Hume Valley School
- Jackson School
- Katandra School
- Melton Specialist School
- Monash Special Developmental School
- Mount Evelyn Special Developmental School
- Noble Park Special Developmental School
- Portland Bay School
- Rosamond School
- Sunbury & Macedon Ranges Specialist School
- Sunshine Special Developmental School

1. Acknowledgements

- Travancore School
- Vermont South Special School
- Waratah Special Developmental School
- Warringa Park School
- Yarrabah Special Developmental School.

While the outcome of the overseas program will have a direct impact on the Victorian Special Schools accessing and utilising Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre Inc. in the future, they have given complete freedom in the development and creation of the overseas program to the Bella Irlight Fellowship recipient.

By establishing contacts through personal conversations and email contact, the following North American camps and amusement parks were open to the overseas program and assisted in the outcome through direct invitation and involvement:

- Bradford Woods, Indiana, United States of America
- Camp Awakening, Ontario, Canada
- Camp Twin Lakes, Georgia, United States of America
- Eagle Valley Centre, Alaska, United States of America
- Easter Seals Camp Horizon, Alberta, Canada
- Easter Seals Camp Woodeden, Ontario, Canada
- Easter Seals Colorado, Colorado, United States of America
- Morgan's Wonderland, Texas, United States of America
- Ontario Pioneer Camp, Ontario, Canada
- The Fowler Centre, Michigan, United States of America
- Victory Junction, North Carolina, United States of America.

Employer Support

The Fellow would like to acknowledge and thank Mr Colin Schot, Principal of Warringa Park School who notified him of the Bella Irlight Fellowship, and the opportunities that the outcomes of this Fellowship will create for students in special schools. The Fellow would also like to thank the Blackwood Committee, the Blackwood Member Schools and Principal at Frankston Special Developmental School (SDS), who fully supported the overseas program. The outcomes and recommendations of this Fellowship will considerably enhance the future possibilities and opportunities for students accessing the Centre.

Through their committed support the Fellow has been given every opportunity to explore possibilities, establish business partnerships and create a unique opportunity for the Centre to grow, develop and flourish by establishing it as a leading outdoor provider for students with special needs; while, continually benchmarking itself against leading international providers of outdoor programs for young people and adults with special needs.

Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre Inc. is managed by a Committee, made up of staff from the Victorian Government Special Schools that access and utilise the Centre. Due to the Centre being managed by a Committee, not a School Council, the staff at the Centre are attached to Frankston SDS under the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) employment umbrella.

Organisations Impacted by the Fellowship

Government

- » Principals Association of Special Education (PASS)
- » DEECD

Industry

- » The Australian Camps Association (ACA)
- » Victorian Outdoor Education Association (VOEA)

Professional Associations

- » Australian Association of Special Education (AASE)

Education and Training

- » Ascot Vale Special School
- » Ashwood School
- » Berendale School
- » Bullen Heights School
- » Concord School
- » Croxton Special School
- » Emerson School
- » Frankston Special Developmental
- » Glenroy Special School
- » Heatherwood School
- » Hume Valley School
- » Jackson School
- » Katandra School
- » Melton Specialist School
- » Monash Special Developmental School
- » Mount Evelyn Special Developmental School
- » Noble Park Special Developmental School
- » Portland Bay School
- » Rosamond School
- » Sunbury & Macedon Ranges Specialist School
- » Sunshine Special Developmental School
- » Travancore School
- » Vermont South Special School
- » Waratah Special Developmental School
- » Warringa Park School
- » Yarrabah Special Developmental School.

1. Acknowledgements

Community

- » Children with Disabilities Australia
- » Autism Australia
- » Autism Victoria
- » Cottage by the Sea
- » Lord Somers Camp
- » ROSA – Residential Outdoor Schools Association
- » Scouts Australia
- » Girl Guides Australia
- » Interchange
- » Disability Services Australia
- » People Outdoors
- » Camp Quality
- » Challenge – Supporting Kids with Cancer
- » Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme
- » Learning Difficulties Australia
- » Australian Gifted Support Centre
- » Variety - A Children's Charity
- » Friends of Blackwood School (FoBS).

The Fellow would also like to acknowledge and thank the individuals from the following camps, universities, theme parks and organisations for their assistance and advice throughout the Fellowship. Their generosity, support, advice and expert knowledge shared with Bellette throughout this research has enhanced his professional knowledge of designing, implementing and co-ordinating adventure activities and programs for young people with special needs.

Contact: Brian Lisson, President Adventureworks Associates Inc.
Destination: Adventureworks
Location: Ancaster, Ontario, Canada

Contact: Greg Zwie, Program Coordinator
Destination: Brock University
Location: Brock, Ontario, Canada
Contact: Gwynn Powell
Destination: Athens University
Location: Athens, Georgia, USA
Camp Program: Half day

1. Acknowledgements

Contact: Tony Oyenarte – Camp Director
Destination: Camp Crystal Lake
Location: Starke, Florida, USA
Camp Program: Two day transition from Summer Camp to School Camp Programs

Contact: Cindy - Camp Tour Guide
Destination: Camp Boggy Creek
Location: Eustis, Florida, USA
Camp Program: Half day tour of the camp and facilities

Contact: Jamie Hawkins – Program Supervisor
Destination: Texas Lions Camp
Location: Kerrville, Texas, USA
Camp Program: Half day camp tour

Contacts: Ron Morander – General Manager
Anne Bristol – Director of Marketing & Communications
Destination: Morgan's Wonderland
Location: San Antonio, Texas, USA
Camp Program: Half day camp tour

Contact: Jonah Berger – Program Director
Destination: Easter Seals Colorado – Rocky Mountain Village
Location: Lakewood, Colorado, USA
Camp Program: Two day tour at the end of Summer Camps

Contact: Claire DiCola – Wilderness Associate Program Director
Destination: Breckenridge Outdoor Education Center
Location: Breckenridge, Colorado, USA
Camp Program: Half day tour at the end of Summer Camps

1. Acknowledgements

Contact: Cora Weed – Camp Director
Destination: Camp Korey
Location: Carnation, Washington, USA
Camp Program: Half day tour at the end of Summer Camp

2. About the Fellow

Name: Tony David Bellette

Employment: Manager, Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre Inc. (BSSOEC)

Qualifications

- Bachelor of Education, University of Melbourne, 1995
- Masters of Education (Special Education), Monash University, 2003.

Membership/s

- Australian Camps Association
- International Camping Fellowship

Through active involvement in the Scout Association, where Bellette achieved the Queen Scout Award and Cub Leader Wood Beads, his involvement in a School Cadet Unit and completing a Bachelor of Education with Outdoor Education as a teaching method, the Fellow has always enjoyed and excelled in being in the outdoors.

Upon the completion of his Bachelor of Education, Bellette spent eight weeks in Nepal and Bangladesh trekking and working with scout associations to strengthen international relationships, as well as assisting local communities in nature projects. During this time the 'seed', which developed into a passion for travel and exploration, was planted.

Bellette returned to Australia to be head of the Outdoor Education Program at Swan Hill Secondary College. Here he initiated a State Emergency Services (SES) Cadet Unit with a group of Year 9 students funded by the Kennett Government through its Victorian Youth Development Program (VYDP). While leading this Program, he integrated 12 students and a staff member from the Swan Hill Specialist School into the VYDP SES Unit; it is here that the Fellow developed a desire and passion to work with students with special needs.

After leaving Swan Hill and before leaving the country for two-and-a-half years where he was the Physical Education Teacher at the Robert Ogden School in Thurnscoe, England – a school for autistic students – for a period of six months, he worked on two camps with Swan Hill Specialist School. It is directly through conversations with the Swan Hill Specialist School Principal that the Fellow heard about BSSOEC and Special Education University courses.

Two days after returning from international travel - where he worked on three American summer camps, including a short ten day camp with adults with special needs and taught in England and Japan - Bellette saw the BSSOEC job advertised.

In 2002, he commenced working at BSSOEC. Over the years he has implemented new outdoor program opportunities and activities at the Centre including: overnight expeditions, archery, archaeological digs, initiative and leadership programs, adventure playgrounds, a liberty swing and increased mountain bike riding opportunities.

Within the Victorian Special Education community there is a very prestigious award known as the T.L.W Emerson Memorial Award that recognises outstanding commitment, dedication and contributions to educational development, needs, experiences and opportunities within Special Education. In 2010, the Fellow was nominated for the T.L.W Emerson Memorial Award by his colleagues; selected as a suitable recipient by a judging panel and ultimately had the award recognised and bestowed upon him by the Australian Association of Special Education for his commitment to special education in the field of outdoor education.

3. Aims of the Fellowship Program

"Studies show that people with disabilities participate in the most challenging of outdoor recreation activities; they seek risk, challenge and adventure in the outdoors just as do their contemporaries without disabilities.

Researchers have also found that people with disabilities gain enhanced body image and positive behaviour changes from their camp experiences."

(Richard Louv, Last Child in the Woods – Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2008, pp. 230–1)

By developing partnerships with a variety of North American camps, gaining a greater respect, insight and understanding of the programs, facilities, grounds and opportunities they offer their campers and learning from these global leaders of experiential education, the Fellow aimed to:

- Help students with special needs develop a greater sense of self-esteem, self-motivation, self-confidence, communication, leadership skills, interpersonal development and personal learning through alternative and experiential education programs
- Continue to become a leading provider of experiential education in Australia for students with special needs by developing similar, specific and unique programs at Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor education Centre Inc.
- Gain a greater understanding and insight into how to:
 - » plan
 - » budget
 - » develop
 - » construct
 - » implement
 - » process
 - » modifyhigh adventure experiential programs and activities specifically targeting the development, growth and experience of students with a variety of special needs
- Collaborate with the North American camps, to openly share best practices implemented at Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre Inc. and the North American camp, offering both the opportunity to enrich the experiences and opportunities offered to their campers
- Improve the programs, facilities, grounds and opportunities offered to students at Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre Inc. by implementing best practice ideas gained through the Fellowship experience
- Share, promote and support the growth of the camps and special education industries within Australia by promoting the findings of the Fellowship through report writing, presentations, conferences and site visits

3. Aims of the Fellowship Program

- Offer special needs students opportunities to:
 - » laugh
 - » play
 - » share
 - » smile
 - » develop friendships
 - » enjoy
 - » simply be kids
- in a safe, supportive and cohesive adventure-based environment.

4. The Australian Context

Australia is a country built on a camping and an outdoors background. The Indigenous people lived and survived through a nomadic life for centuries, prior to European settlement in 1788. Since European settlement, explorers, adventurers and outdoor enthusiasts of all experiences have and continue to enjoy exploring Australia.

Today, there are many opportunities for people to discover, explore and enjoy the outdoors. For young people, if not through family opportunities, most of their experience in the outdoors comes from a structured environment like, but not limited to, outdoor education centres, Scouts, Guides or Cadet Units.

While membership is not compulsory, the nationally recognised peak body within Australia for residential camps, as well as companies providing outdoor activities, is the Australian Camps Association (ACA). Prior to the establishment of ACA, each state had its own board that would oversee and direct residential camps within their state. However, due to discrepancies throughout the different boards, a National Standard was established and the ACA was created.

Through membership with ACA, each residential camp is required to meet strict standards, procedures, policies and guidelines helping to unite the industry and provide an excellent level of service and experiences for all clientele. ACA's mission is "to increase participation in high quality camps and adventure, environmental and cultural activities"

(ACA Website: <http://www.auscamps.asn.au/-> About Us).

In 1989 the ACA created a community-based non-profit organisation called People Outdoors. Their primary focus is to provide various types of programs to enable children, teenagers and adults with disabilities to participate in outdoor adventure programs and weekend camping experiences"

(ACA Website: <http://www.auscamps.asn.au/-> About Us/People Outdoors).

Through the evolution of the outdoor recreation industry, people of all ages, abilities, experiences and backgrounds have been able to, and continue to access, a huge variety of adventure, environmental and cultural opportunities and experiences within the outdoors. While it is widely accepted that not every adventure activity or experience is accessible to all, there are still opportunities beyond the reach of some people, primarily people with disabilities, simply due to the fact that adventure resources, especially high adventure resources, have not been made available to some people within our society.

"All men dream, but not equally.

Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of the mind wake in the day to find that it was vanity.

But the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dreams with open eyes, to make it possible."

(T.E Lawrence)

During the mid 1960s, the Principals' Association of the Schools for the Intellectually Handicapped became interested in extending their students beyond the traditional 'Three Rs' (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic) into the experiential 'Three Rs' within an outdoor educational setting: Relationship, Resilience and Reflection.

Through perseverance, determination, tenacity, hard work and dedication, the Principals' Association opened a residential camp exclusively for students with special needs in 1970. Over the years this camp has evolved into Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre Inc. (BSSOEC), the only staffed outdoor education centre run exclusively by special schools for special needs students within Australia.

4. The Australian Context

While many residential camps within Australia welcome and integrate students with special needs into their programs and facilities, BSSOEC is unique in the fact that it only provides programs for students with special needs.

Throughout its history, as with many residential camps, BSSOEC has created and modified many adventure activities and experiences to ensure they are accessible to all. With a focus on accessible adventure, many students have been able to actively participate in a variety of activities and adventure experiences that they would not be able to enjoy in their daily lives.

When it comes to high adventure activities, such as low ropes, high ropes, flying foxes, climbing and abseiling walls, lower functioning students and students with higher needs, are rarely given the opportunity to participate.

"To adventure in the natural environment is consciously to take up a challenge that will demand the best of our capabilities – physically, mentally and emotionally. It is a state of mind that will initially accept unpleasant feelings of fear, uncertainty and discomfort, and the need for luck, because we instinctively know that, if we are successful, these will be counterbalanced by opposite feelings of exhilaration and joy. This journey with a degree of uncertainty in the 'University of the Wilderness' may be of any length in terms of distance or time; in any dimension – above, on or below ground or water."

(Colin Mortlock, The Adventure Alternative, Cicerone Press, 1987, p.19)

As an industry, all outdoor adventure providers and residential camps need to consider the programs and experiences they offer, to determine, whether they are able to challenge students with special needs beyond their comfort zones by demanding the best of their capabilities.

Through this evaluation, the industry needs to remain focused on the efforts that students with special needs put into a program, or, adventure experience, is what will determine the overall success of the experience not the experiences, desired outcomes or aims. The industry needs to comprehend, implement and accept the concept of 'Challenge by Choice.'

"Challenge by Choice is a concept originated by Project Adventure. It asks that participants challenge themselves and participate fully in the experience at-hand. Recognizing that any activity or goal may pose a different level and type of challenge for each group member and that authentic personal change comes from within, Challenge by Choice creates an environment where participants are asked to search for opportunities to stretch and grow during the experience. The determination of what kind of participation represents an optimal learning opportunity and is the responsibility of each group member. All are asked to add value to the group experience by finding a way to contribute to the group's efforts while also seeking to find value in the experience for themselves."

Accepting Challenge by Choice encourages all to respect thoughtful choices. Its use provides a supportive and caring atmosphere in which participants can stretch themselves. It recognizes the need for individuals and the group to accept responsibility for decisions. It creates opportunities for learning about how to set goals that are in neither the comfort nor the panic zone, but in that slightly uncomfortable stretch zone where the greatest opportunities for growth and learning lie."

(Project Adventure: <http://www.pa.org/>– About Us/Glossary of Terms)

4. The Australian Context

Through the implementation of 'Challenge by Choice', residential camps and outdoor adventure providers will be able to broaden their horizons and deliver quality challenging adventure experiences for all.

When researching adventure opportunities and experiences for students with disabilities within Australia, the Fellow found that while many opportunities exist, there is still a large deficiency in high adventure activities and programs that are available to students with special needs. Currently in Australia there is no high ropes course that is wheelchair accessible, limiting the opportunity for some students with special needs to gain access to adventure experiences. However, when you look at the adventure opportunities offered to people with special needs on a global scale, you discover that there are opportunities, activities, programs and adventure experiences that exist that thoroughly include and challenge people with special needs.

A global leader in experiential education is North America. For decades, programs, activities and experiences within residential camps and outdoor adventure programs have been focused on providing for people with special needs. Through this focus, many accessible high adventure activities and experiences have evolved, including, but not limited to:

- High ropes courses
- Low ropes courses/elements
- Abseiling walls
- Rock climbing walls
- Aquatic experiences
- Flying foxes/zip lines.

To formulate, plan, design, fund, create and implement accessible high adventure activities, it is essential to establish partnerships with global leaders within the outdoor industry to enable everyone to have the opportunity to learn, grow and develop through the provision of innovative and inclusive programs within Australia.

By gaining an increased comprehension of how to formulate, plan, design, fund, create and implement accessible high adventure activities, students with special needs will be able to be challenged on a higher level, helping take them beyond their comfort zones. Through these experiences, not only will the students be able to grow physically, mentally and emotionally, they will also be offered unique opportunities and experiences to gain a greater sense of:

- Self-esteem
- Self-motivation
- Self-confidence
- Improved communication proficiency
- Leadership skills
- Interpersonal development
- Personal learning through alternative and experiential education programs.

Through strengthened relationships between Australia and North America within the outdoor industry and the development and implementation of accessible high adventure experiential programs and activities within Australia, students will be offered opportunities to develop:

4. The Australian Context

- Improved fine and gross motor skills
- Better thinking processes to ensure their own and others personal safety
- Beyond their comfort zones; creating life experiences which they can draw upon in the future, to further aid their growth, development and life skills.

Through their involvement and participation in accessible high adventure activities and programs, implemented within a safe, supportive and cohesive environment, students with special needs will be given opportunities to:

- Laugh
- Play
- Share
- Smile
- Develop friendships
- Enjoy
- Simply be kids.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Strengthen relationships within the outdoor industry between Australia and North America.
- Improved accessible high adventure activities and programs for students with special needs.
- Improved self-esteem, motivation, confidence and communication proficiency and leadership skills within students with special needs.
- Opportunities for kids to be kids through alternative experiential educational opportunities.

Weaknesses

- The lack of accessible high adventure activities for students with special needs.
- Minimal opportunities for students with special needs to be challenged beyond their comfort zones.
- Limited resources and experience in the development of accessible high adventure activities and programs.
- Funding.

Opportunities

- Establish long-term international relationships within the outdoor industry.
- Develop accessible high adventure activities and programs for students with special needs.
- Become an industry leader on accessible activities and programs within Australia.
- Improved opportunities to further challenge students with special needs beyond their comfort zones.

Threats

- Lack of funding.
- Economic downturns.
- Inability to develop infrastructure.
- Lack of resources.

5. Identifying the Skills and Knowledge Enhancements Required

There are examples of areas in Australian industry and education where there is an identified weakness in innovative skills, knowledge, experience, policies, and/or formal organisational structures to support the ongoing successful development and recognition of individuals and the particular sector.

The focus of ISS Institute Fellowships is on applied research and investigation overseas, by Australians. The objectives are to enable the required enhancement and improvement in the innovative skills and knowledge not currently available in Australia, and the subsequent dissemination and sharing of those skills throughout the relevant Australian industry, education, government bodies, and the community.

The areas of research for this Fellowship are therefore defined as follows:

1. Improve the limited accessibility to high adventure activities and programs for students with special needs in Australia.
 - » Learn through the programs in place in North America, how to:
 - » Plan
 - » Budget
 - » Develop
 - » Construct
 - » Implement
 - » Process
 - » Modify

high adventure experiential programs and activities specifically targeting the development, growth and experience of students with a variety of special needs.

Aim: Improve the accessibility to high adventure activities and programs for students with special needs in Australia to enable students to be challenged on a higher level, helping take them beyond their comfort zones. Through these experiences, not only will these students be able to grow physically, mentally and emotionally, they will also be offered unique opportunities and experiences to gain a greater sense of self in the Australian community.

2. Increase opportunities for students with special needs to participate in outdoor adventure activities and programs.
 - » Observe the opportunities and systems currently available in North America with the view to implementation here in Australia.
 - » Understand the methods of promotion for the inclusion of students with special needs in outdoor adventure activities.

Aim: Improve opportunities for students with special needs throughout Australia to be able to gain access to outdoor activities, programs and experiences through open communication between all industries that work with people with special needs promoting accessibilities and possibilities.

3. Improve the experience and knowledge base that exists within the Australian outdoor industry in regard to the implementation and use of accessible high adventure activities.
 - » Investigate the creation, use, implementation and modification of high adventure activities suitable for students with special needs in place in North America.

5. Identifying the Skills and Knowledge Enhancements Required

Aim: Promote how current activities, programs, opportunities and experiences within the Australian outdoor industry can be modified to improve accessibility. Through this promotion, detail the development required for students with special needs to access high adventure opportunities while also highlighting the benefits a high adventure experience offers the student, community and society.

4. Gain an understanding of the benefits students with special needs gain through participation and involvement in adventure activities and programs.
 - » Investigate the physical and emotional benefits that students with special needs gain through the opportunity to participate in accessible high adventure activities.

Aim 1: Investigate the desired learning outcomes of students with special needs experiencing high adventure activities with a focus on comprehending how these outcomes are established, monitored, assessed and measured.

Aim 2: Research if participation in a high adventure experience has a direct impact on the physical and emotional benefits of the participant and if those benefits can be linked directly to an improved wellbeing within that individual.

5. Investigate and promote the opportunities available for students with special needs within the North American outdoor industry.
 - » Gain an in-depth comprehension of what activities, opportunities and experiences are provided to young people with special needs at a range of North American camps.

Aim: Research the broad opportunities available to students with students needs throughout the North American outdoor industry. Compare the North American outdoor industry opportunities to Australia's and highlight how the Australian outdoor industry can better develop and utilise programs, experiences and activities to improve accessibility and the physical and emotional wellbeing of students with special needs.

6. Investigate the design, budget, development, construction, implementation, risk assessment and on-going appraisal of accessible adventure activities and programs.
 - » Gain access to a variety of resources to develop accessible high adventure activities and programs for students with special needs.

Aim: Discover the evolution of accessible high adventure activities and gain an in-depth comprehension and implementation of the current best practice standards within the North American outdoor industry, using this knowledge to design, establish, implement and promote accessible high adventure opportunities in Australia.

6. The International Experience

Destination One: Eagle Valley Center

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Location: | Juneau, Alaska, USA |
| Camp Program: | A sea-kayaking experience |
| Contact: | Nate Heck, Manager |

Objectives:

While the Fellow understood that EVC is not established to specifically cater for a special needs clientele, he was hoping to gain a greater understanding of what EVC provided its clientele as well as gaining an insight into whether there were outdoor programs, experiences and opportunities for people with special needs within Juneau.

Heck is a wealth of knowledge on the huge variety of outdoor programs, experiences and opportunities available to all people within the Juneau area.

The following highlights of this visit are listed below under the relevant overall objectives of the Fellowship research:

Gain a greater understanding of the accessibility to high adventure activities and programs for students with special needs.

While EVC does not specifically target programs to people with special needs, by supporting ORCA, EVC are able to adapt their high ropes course equipment and programs to make it accessible, thereby implementing a challenging program for ORCA participants.

Observe the opportunities and systems currently available in North America.

In the way of designing, building and implementing high adventure activities and programs for students with special needs, one of the leading global authorities is the Association of Challenge Course Technology (ACCT).

Understand the methods of promotion for the inclusion of students with special needs in outdoor adventure activities.

Most of the business generated and implemented by EVC is through word of mouth. However, within the city of Juneau, most of the not-for-profits, with the backing of the local government, support each other by connecting programs, resources, experiences and clientele.

The local government are actively involved improving accessibility and experiences in the outdoors to all residents. In winter, every fifth grade student is given a season pass to the ski fields, as well as some ski lessons to get the students, schools, parents and residents actively involved in outdoor pursuits – courtesy of the local government.

6. The International Experience

Gain access to a variety of resources to develop accessible high adventure activities and programs for students with special needs.

- Association of Challenge Course Technology (ACCT)
- Project Adventure (PA)

Outcomes:

Heck was a wonderful source of information. While the Fellow only intended to gain an insight into exactly what EVC provides Heck was able to provide a greater understanding into the overall support offered by not-for-profits within the city of Juneau.

Heck also put the Fellow in touch with Tristan Knutson-Lombardo at ORCA so that he could gain a real insight into how and what they do for people with special needs in the outdoors.

Concluding Remarks:

EVC is a wonderful facility that provides excellent and challenging outdoor programs, activities and experiences for a large variety of people across North America. While EVC operates on land owned by the city and their rent is paid by a trail group, they are a fee for service organisation. Through these fees they are able to maintain their staff facilities, programs and equipment while also expanding the opportunities and experiences for their clientele.

The Eagle Valley Center programs and activities include:

- Sea Kayaking – day trips and expeditions
- High ropes
- Orienteering
- Back country expeditions
- Service
- Environmental opportunities
- Corporate team building opportunities.

6. The International Experience

Destination Two: Outdoor Recreation & Community Access (ORCA)

(A section of the not-for-profit organisation known as Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL), an organisation that supports every aspect of the life of people with disabilities within Southeast Alaska)

Location: Juneau, Alaska, USA

Contact: Tristan Knutson-Lombardo – Director of Programs

Objectives:

Gain a greater understanding of the accessibility to high adventure activities and programs for students with special needs.

As a not-for-profit organisation, ORCA is consistently looking for funds to support their programs to ultimately make the experiences, activities and opportunities accessible to more people. Grants are becoming harder to obtain due to the large pool of grant seekers. The ORCA Winter program is subsidised by the City of Juneau through free ski passes and cheap ski gear rentals.

Observe the opportunities and systems currently available in North America.

The current opportunities ORCA offers their participants include:

- Half day experiences
- Day trips
- Overnight expeditions
- Longer expeditions.

Learn through the programs in place in North America, how to:

- Plan
- Budget
- Develop
- Construct
- Implement
- Process
- Modify

high adventure experiential programs and activities specifically targeting the development, growth and experience of students with a variety of special needs.

ORCA does its best to implement affordable programs, activities and experiences for its participants. Within some of the smaller programs they have limited funds they can allocate as mini scholarships to help participants reduce the cost of the experience by helping them out with US\$10-\$20. While ORCA can apply for very limited City and State Funds, most of their programs and all of their expeditions are 'Fee for Service' and the participant covers the full cost for participation.

6. The International Experience

Both SAIL and ORCA implement fundraisers throughout the year to subsidise programs and encourage participation.

Understand the methods of promotion for the inclusion of students with special needs in outdoor adventure activities.

- Word of mouth
- Recommendations
- Networking with other not-for-profits within Southeast Alaska and beyond
- Three after-school programs run fortnightly
- One senior meeting per month.

Investigate the creation, use, implementation and modification of high adventure activities suitable for students with special needs in North America.

Over the years ORCA has developed an extensive asset register of accessible activity equipment to ensure that the programs offered are suitable, affordable and provide a greater range of accessibility – thereby supporting the full needs and encouraging the full participation of the community within Southeast Alaska.

Due to the large expense involved in obtaining adaptive sports apparatus – especially in relation to skiing – most of the grant submissions completed by ORCA are focused on the attainment of activity equipment to better enhance their programs and therefore better enrich the lives of participants.

Investigate the physical and emotional benefits that students with special needs gain through the opportunity to participate in accessible high adventure activities.

ORCA does not keep tangible records on the physical and emotional benefits of being involved in their program/s for each individual participant. However, most participants are familiar faces.

ORCA does keep a record of who participated on each program and the level of participation that each individual chose to be involved in, therefore gaining an insight into the growth and development of the individual during their involvement with ORCA.

Investigate the desired learning outcomes of students with special needs experiencing high adventure activities with a focus on comprehending how these outcomes are established, monitored, assessed and measured.

ORCA does not keep tangible records on the physical and emotional benefits of being involved in their program/s for each individual participant. Participation and involvement are the key factors for ORCA as opposed to desired learning outcomes.

6. The International Experience

Research if participation in a high adventure experience has a direct impact on the physical and emotional benefits of the participant and if those benefits can be linked directly to an improved wellbeing within that individual.

ORCA does not keep tangible records on the physical and emotional benefits of being involved in their program/s for each individual participant.

Gain an in-depth comprehension of what activities, opportunities and experiences are provided to young people with special needs at a range of North American camps.

- Rock climbing
- Cooking classes
- Biking
- Carolling group
- Art and recreation
- Ski and snowboard lessons
- Transportations skills
- Kayak safety
- Young women's group
- Fitness classes.

Investigate the design, budget, development, construction, implementation, risk assessment and on-going appraisal of accessible adventure activities and programs.

Every program implemented by ORCA has specific guidelines and risk policies that must be strictly adhered too and implemented throughout every aspects of every experience.

Every expedition must also include a Wilderness 1st Responder

Outcomes:

While it was wonderful to see that there are organisations whose specific focus is to encourage, engage and improve opportunities for people with special needs to be more active in the outdoors, it was disappointing to see that funding issues are always a challenge.

ORCA is an impressive organisation that knows how to utilise and maximise their resources, funds, facilities and people to challenge participants beyond their comfort zones and have them actively engaged in outdoor activities, experiences and opportunities.

Through the support of the City of Juneau, other not-for-profits and other SAIL programs in Haines, Ketchikan and Sitka, people with disabilities of all ages are able to enjoy the outdoors to their level of enjoyment, comfort and experience.

6. The International Experience

The learning outcomes the Fellow gained from this visit included:

- Flexibility
- Creativity
- Ingenuity
- Persistence
- Passion
- Desire.

All of this will help create, support and continue an inclusive and active outdoors program that support all people with disabilities.

Concluding Remarks:

ORCA sets a benchmark for all local communities both within North America and Australia, highlighting that people with disabilities regularly need to experience and be engaged in the outdoors through activities, experiences and pursuits that take them beyond their comfort zones and offers them a unique opportunity to grow physically and emotionally.

6. The International Experience

Destination Three:

Easter Seals Camp Horizon

Location:

Calgary / Bragg Creek, Alberta, Canada

Camp Program:

'Camp Light Up a Life: Little Mermaid'. A camp experience specifically designed for young people with physical disabilities.

Contact:

Brandon Maclean, Director of Programs

Objectives:

Gain a greater understanding of the accessibility to high adventure activities and programs for students with special needs.

Easter Seals Camp Horizon utilises creativity and imagination when it comes to establishing and implementing programs, activities and opportunities for people with special needs. While adhering to best practices and high safety standards Easter Seals Camp Horizon currently implement:

- Accessible high ropes course and an adventure high ropes course
- Accessible low ropes course and a low ropes course
- Accessible giant swing
- Accessible bushwalking and rafting experiences
- Accessible swimming pool.



Easter Seals Camp Horizon 10m High Accessible High Ropes Course

6. The International Experience

Observe the opportunities and systems currently available in North America.

At Easter Seals Camp Horizon they implement best practice systems in relation to all aspects of adventure programming and rope courses:

- Construction
- Development
- Safety procedures
- Policies.

Throughout their history, Easter Seals Camp Horizon has utilised the company Challenges Unlimited to help them establish, implement and inspect their ropes courses. As Easter Seals Camp Horizon moves into the future they are using Adventureworks to help them re-develop their ropes course and adventure based activities.

Both Challenges Unlimited and Adventureworks are recognised as the leading providers of rope course development and safety within Canada.

Learn through the programs in place in North America, how to:

- *Plan*
- *Budget*
- *Develop*
- *Construct*
- *Implement*
- *Process*
- *Modify*

high adventure experiential programs and activities specifically targeting the development, growth and experience of students with a variety of special needs.

Easter Seals Camp Horizon is fully responsible for the future planning of all activities at the camp.

While Easter Seals Camp Horizon is responsible for all aspects of activity development, in relation to determining the budget and then the overall development and construction of the activities, it is the responsibility of the professional contractors.

Professional contractors work closely with Easter Seals Camp Horizon Staff in the aspect of implementing, processing and modifying activities as well as preparing the staff through training courses to ensure they are ready to implement, assess and prepare activities according to best practice.

Understand the methods of promotion for the inclusion of students with special needs in outdoor adventure activities.

6. The International Experience

Easter Seals Camp Horizon uses the following forms of promotion to increase its clientele:

- Word of mouth
- Printed advertisements
- Social Media – Twitter, Facebook, YouTube
- Website.

Easter Seals Camp Horizon is also a member of the Calgary Accessibility Network which directly targets people with disabilities within Calgary and the surrounding region.

Due to the specific nature of Easter Seals Camp Horizon's operations, there are no direct competitors within the immediate area.

Investigate the creation, use, implementation and modification of high adventure activities suitable for students with special needs in North America.

Easter Seals Camp Horizon, like all camps, is consistently evolving. Through evolution, new activities, experiences and opportunities are created for their campers. Some are created for high adventure while others have a nature, nurture or natural focus to their implementation.

While all aspects of modifications are completed to best practice standards, through usage, aspects of all activities, opportunities and experiences are modified according to the needs of the individual, group or overall implementation of that program. Through technology, equipment development, training, research and development things are created, modified and implemented as they are needed.

A 4:1 Pulley System which uses two double shive pulleys is currently used to help campers access the giant swing, high ropes course and zip line from their wheelchair.

Investigate the physical and emotional benefits that students with special needs gain through the opportunity to participate in accessible high adventure activities.



Accepting the Challenge

6. The International Experience

Easter Seals Camp Horizon implements a variety of Adventure Based Therapy Models throughout all of their programs. Through correct active use of these Models they are able to work on breaking down communication barriers and social barriers, for the better development of the individual as well as the group.

The programs they implement for youth at risk relies on these Models to ensure full participation, co-operation and implementation of all activities, experiences and opportunities; while simultaneously offering physical, social and emotional growth for each individual, relative to their level of involvement.

Investigate the desired learning outcomes of students with special needs experiencing high adventure activities with a focus on comprehending how these outcomes are established, monitored, assessed and measured.

Easter Seals Camp Horizon implements the 'Challenge by Choice' model. Through this model they are able to apply the 'Full Value Contract' where the campers are the ones who dictate the programs, outcomes and what happens throughout the camp experience.

While the 'Challenge by Choice' model is implemented throughout every program at Easter Seals Camp Horizon, the 'Full Value Contract' is primarily used during their Year Round Programs. This is primarily because during the summer, campers come from a variety of backgrounds to have fun; while during the Year Round Programs they are working with specific groups that will continue to work with each other beyond the program – school classes, church groups, community groups. Therefore, while Easter Seals Camp Horizon creates the programs for the Summer Camps, each specific group during the Year Round Programs design their own program catering to their needs within and beyond their Easter Seals Camp Horizon experience resulting in individuals and groups establishing their own standards for success. This is always respected by Easter Seals Camp Horizon.

Research if participation in a high adventure experience has a direct impact on the physical and emotional benefits of the participant and if those benefits can be linked directly to an improved wellbeing within that individual.

Easter Seals Camp Horizon does not have any specific documented research on the direct impact participation in a high adventure experience has on the physical and emotional benefits of the participant. However, Venture Society is a Calgary based community work program for people with disabilities. Through a set budget and according to their needs Easter Seals Camp Horizon utilises Venture Society to help throughout the year and four of the people involved in the Venture Society programs are also campers within the adult camps. Through working with these individuals on a camp programs as well as a work program they are able to witness the physical and emotional benefits of participating in a high adventure experience.

Gain an in-depth comprehension of what activities, opportunities and experiences are provided to young people with special needs at a range of North American camps.

6. The International Experience

The activities, opportunities and experiences provided by Easter Seals Camp Horizon to people with special needs include:

- Accessible high ropes
- Climbing wall
- Ga-Ga Ball and volleyball
- Giant swing
- Low ropes
- White water rafting
- Challenge course (fixed initiatives, challenge course elements)
- Archery
- Swimming
- Hiking
- Camping (fixed set-up camping and off-site camping)
- Snow-shoeing.

Investigate the design, budget, development, construction, implementation, risk assessment and on-going appraisal of accessible adventure activities and programs.

While staff at Easter Seals Camp Horizon are encouraged to dream big, use their imagination, implement creativity and investigate alternative or better practices, there is a process to go through to achieve their dreams. All major capital works has to go through the Board and a tender process which involves numerous meetings, discussion, plans, concepts and drafts. Smaller projects can be handled between the Director of Operations and the CEO.

As the Easter Seals Camp Horizon Year Round Programs are the only fee for service programs, they are the only programs that provide revenue that pays the salaries and operational costs. Summer programs are designed to break even, as campers only pay 50 per cent of their camp fees while the other 50 per cent is paid for by Easter Seals Alberta through donations, support and gifts in kind.

With very little Government funding, Easter Seals Camp Horizon relies on private, corporate and philanthropic support to continue their evolution; especially in relation to the upgrade or development of accessible adventure activities. There is no funding from the Easter Seals Alberta Board towards Easter Seals Camp Horizon.

Once funding is raised and accessible, adventure activities are created Easter Seals Camp Horizon, along with the contractors who develop the activities for the risk assessment and on-going appraisals to ensure best practice is always maintained.

Gain access to a variety of resources and best practice standards to develop accessible high adventure activities and programs for students with special needs.

The Association of Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) was established to bring the adventure based industry together and create a set of standards that would be recognised as best practice.

6. The International Experience

They were very specific in their delivery of how things should be done, limiting ingenuity and creativity. As standards evolved and more organisations became actively involved, while the ACCT Standards are recognised as the benchmark they are no longer the recommendations.

Today courses need to be built and inspected by professionals and staff must be professionally trained in rope courses:

- Level 1 Basic Ropes Course Practitioner
- Level 2 Advanced Ropes Course Practitioner
- Level 3 Challenge Course Manager.

In Canada the recognised Rope Course Professionals are Challenges Unlimited and Adventureworks. Today, camps are reminded to be safe, to never deviate from safety, and also be creative in dreaming, development and implementation.

Outcomes:

Easter Seals Camp Horizon has been a wealth of information and opportunities. Through networking with Brandon and the staff at Easter Seals Camp Horizon, the Fellow has gained a greater insight into how to further improve accessibility in a wide range of adventure activities, opportunities and experiences.

Easter Seals Camp Horizon runs impressive programs and understands how to challenge people with disabilities beyond their comfort zones, while also respecting the abilities, perceptions and perceived risk factors within each individual camper.

Through experiencing Easter Seals Camp Horizon, the Fellow has gained a greater insight into:

- Accessible adventure activity implementation
- The development of ropes course best practice
- An understanding of how to plan, budget, develop, implement and construct accessible adventure activities
- What adventure activity opportunities are available to people with disabilities with North America
- How to promote adventure activities, experiences, opportunities and programs
- How to sequence adventure activities, experiences, opportunities and programs
- How to modify adventure activities, experiences, opportunities and programs to ensure individuals are able to successfully participate.

Concluding Remarks:

Visiting Easter Seals Camp Horizon has been an amazing experience. The activities, experiences, opportunities and programs offered to campers are impressive and truly offer the camper the opportunity to challenge themselves physically and emotionally within a safe outdoor environment.

6. The International Experience

Destination Four: Camp Awakening

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Location: | Minden, Ontario, Canada |
| Camp Program: | Boys Camp at Kilcoo Camp |
| Contact: | Tracy Morley, Executive Director |

Objectives:

Gain a greater understanding of the accessibility to high adventure activities and programs for students with special needs.

While the young people involved in a Camp Awakening experience are challenged beyond their comfort zones to actively participate in most of the Kilcoo Camp activities and programs, neither Camp Awakening nor Kilcoo Camp have made specific equipment modifications to any activity to suit the Camp Awakening campers. However, rules and methods are often adapted (such as playing baseball on the tennis courts because it is easier for wheelchair users to move around independently).

Observe the opportunities and systems currently available in North America.

While no activities are specifically modified to suit young people with physical disabilities, the Camp Awakening campers are given every opportunity to participate and enjoy each activity. In relation to the high ropes and rock climbing walls, a 4:1 pulley system is used to lift and lower the campers onto and off the elements as needed. Once in the air the campers are given full access to the activity elements that they can do to the best of their ability.

Windsurfing has been modified to a uniquely Camp Awakening activity called 'crash surfing'. Rather than trying to lift a heavy sail, which is extremely difficult for kids with limited upper body strength, campers (accompanied by staff members) are towed on a windsurf board behind a small motorboat.

Also, over the past 30 years, Camp Awakening has learned to avoid common mistakes such as adapting an activity before you know it is needed (i.e. underestimating campers); assuming only one way works (get creative); and forgetting to ask campers and their parents (they are the experts).

Learn through the programs in place in North America, how to:

- *Plan*
- *Budget*
- *Develop*
- *Construct*
- *Implement*
- *Process*
- *Modify*

high adventure experiential programs and activities specifically targeting the development, growth and experience of students with a variety of special needs.

6. The International Experience

Host camp, Kilcoo, is fully responsible for the future planning of all activity areas at the camp property as Camp Awakening only leases a cabin. During the planning and implementation of activities there is little consideration for the creation of accessible activities, unless directed by Camp Awakening staff.

Professional contractors work closely with Kilcoo Camp in the aspects of implementing, processing, creating and assessing activities, as well as preparing the staff through training courses to ensure they are ready to implement, assess and prepare activities according to best practice.

Advice and resource sharing occurs between accredited member camps of the Ontario Camps Association and their Special Needs Resource Committee.

Understand the methods of promotion for the inclusion of students with special needs in outdoor adventure activities.

Camp Awakening uses the following forms of promotion to increase its clientele:

- Word of mouth
- Printed advertisements
- Social Media – Twitter, Facebook
- Website.

Investigate the creation, use, implementation and modification of high adventure activities suitable for students with special needs in North America.

Camp Awakening and Kilcoo Camp implement minimal modifications to suit the needs of the Camp Awakening campers. This allows for a greater level of integration and a heightened experience for the campers to challenge themselves beyond their comfort zones and truly experience camp life.

The main modification that both Camp Awakening and Kilcoo Camp have implemented is the wheelchair accessibility to both the Camp Awakening cabin and the dining hall.

Investigate the physical and emotional benefits that students with special needs gain through the opportunity to participate in accessible high adventure activities.

Through having the opportunity to challenge themselves beyond their comfort zones within a mainstream camping program, Camp Awakening campers are given the opportunity to grow, develop and extend their experiences and abilities beyond anything they would be able to access in their day to day lives.

Another benefit is the integration, understanding and friendships generated between the able-bodied campers from host camp Kilcoo and the campers with physical disabilities from Awakening.

6. The International Experience

Investigate the desired learning outcomes of students with special needs experiencing high adventure activities with a focus on comprehending how these outcomes are established, monitored, assessed and measured.

Camp Awakening implements the 'Challenge by Choice' model. Activities and programs are established for the campers; however the campers only participate to a level where they feel comfortable. While campers are encouraged to participate and all aspects of safety are implemented, campers only participate to a level where they feel comfortable.

Research if participation in a high adventure experience has a direct impact on the physical and emotional benefits of the participant and if those benefits can be linked directly to an improved wellbeing within that individual.

Camp Awakening does not have any specific documented research on the direct impact participation in a high adventure experience has on the physical and emotional benefits of their unique participants. However, thanks to researchers at the University of Waterloo and the Canadian Camping Association, the following benefits of a general summer camp experience have been proven:

1. Does camp help children build stronger social networks? Yes!
2. Does camp help promote and encourage healthy active lifestyles? Yes!
3. Can camp change how campers relate to the environment and their impact on it? Yes!
4. Can camp help children identify and positively deal with their own emotions and the emotions of others? Yes!
5. Do children grow in terms of personal development and self-confidence at camp? Yes!

Gain an in-depth comprehension of what activities, opportunities and experiences are provided to young people with special needs at a range of North American camps.

The activities, opportunities and experiences provided by Camp Awakening to people with special needs include:

- High ropes (aerial course)
- 40 foot climbing wall
- Canoeing, sailing, kayaking, windsurfing (aka 'crash surfing')
- Swimming
- Low ropes
- Canoeing
- Wilderness adventures
- Archery
- Sports – tennis, baseball, basketball, soccer, sledge hockey (inline)
- Handicrafts, ceramics, arts and crafts

6. The International Experience

- Drama, music
- All camp games and special events.

Investigate the design, budget, development, construction, implementation, risk assessment and on-going appraisal of accessible adventure activities and programs.

Kilcoo Camp is fully responsible for every aspect of all activities implemented at the camp for both Kilcoo Camp and Camp Awakening campers.

As a not-for-profit charitable organisation, throughout the year Camp Awakening is consistently seeking funding (primarily philanthropic funding) to keep the organisation running as well as providing financial assistance to all campers. Camp Awakening covers 50 per cent of the camping costs for all of its campers up front; greatly improving the opportunity for many young people to simply attend camp. They have never turned a camper away for a financial reason; though over 65 per cent of camper families require financial assistance.

Outcomes:

It has been wonderful to be given the opportunity to simply explore, enquire and gain an in-depth understanding of a unique camping model that works and continuously evolves to ensure that young people with special needs are given full access to adventurous camping activities, programs and opportunities.

Concluding Remarks:

Visiting Camp Awakening was a wonderful experience. The activities, experiences, opportunities and programs they offer their campers are great and offer the camper the opportunity to challenge themselves physical and emotionally within a safe outdoor environment.

6. The International Experience

Destination Five: Ontario Pioneer Camp

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|------------------|---|
| Location: | Port Sydney, Ontario, Canada |
| Contacts: | Jennifer Guest, Director of Programs Leigh Little, Director of Inclusion |

Objectives:

Ontario Pioneer Camp (OPC) is huge. The size, capacity, facilities, programs, staff, logistics, maintenance, catering and so on; every single aspect of the camp is huge.

The camp is overwhelming as everywhere you go, look and explore there is more. The only thing that doesn't seem to exist at OPC is boundaries! There seems to be no property boundaries, no physical boundaries, no ability boundaries and no boundaries on the potential to dream, challenge, explore, discover, persist, persevere, conquer and achieve.

OPC has been changing lives since 1929 and has been re-inventing itself since 1929 to offer unique, challenging and rewarding programs to all its campers. As a direct result of this evolution, an inclusion program was invented 35 years.

A camper with 'exceptionalities' was sent to the camp 35 years ago without notification. This camper was welcomed into the OPC community and activities, experiences and programs were modified to best suit the needs and abilities of the camper. Today, a fully inclusive program for campers and adults with exceptionalities exist.

OPC accepts and openly admits that it is impossible for them to be 100 per cent accessible in every aspect of the camp. However, as new developments become reality, accessibility is a priority.

The inclusion program implemented at OPC is available to a young person with exceptionality between the ages of five to 18. Most of the young people in this program have cognitive and social challenges.

The OPC Inclusion Program works on the following structure and processes.

Camp application:

1. Parents complete an OPC application
2. Parents complete a child reference
3. OPC request and receive a reference from an independent (non-family) member who is well aware of the young person's behaviour, social, personal, hygiene, language and independent living skills
4. Director of Inclusion personally interviews the campers and parents, face-to-face. Families are welcome to visit camp any time prior to camp
5. Campers are invited to OPC for a two week camp
6. Returning campers and parents are interviewed over the phone.

Prior to camp:

Staff working with campers with exceptionalities are given one and a half days training (during their week long training) on how to work with campers with exceptionalities. During this training they are taught about personal hygiene, behaviour, safety issues and the use of the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS).

6. The International Experience

At camp:

Each campsite has two Inclusion Coordinators. Their role is to support the 1:1 staff working directly with the campers, especially in relation to activities, as well as being advocates for the program and ensuring the paperwork is completed accurately and promptly.

1. The campers are fully integrated and included in all aspects of OPC day to day living, experiences and opportunities.
2. There are a maximum of ten campers with exceptionalities at each OPC campsite.
3. Campers with exceptionality work with a counsellor 1:1.
4. Each chalet accommodates five campers and one staff member. When a camper with exceptionality is in the chalet there are four campers and two staff in the accommodation.
5. Campers arrive on a Sunday. On Monday night Inclusion Co-ordinators ring all of the parents to discuss how the campers first full day at camp went.
6. Campers are free to choose the activities they wish to experience while at camp.

As with all campers, those with exceptionality, whenever they participate in an activity, are challenged to go beyond their comfort zones in a safe and supportive environment that implements a philosophy of 'Challenge by Choice'.

Work program:

OPC offers many of its campers the opportunity to go through a Leader in Training Program with a focus of supporting all aspects of OPC and ultimately returning as a Summer Staff Member. Many of the campers with exceptionalities are also keen to return to camp and continue their association and involvement. Therefore, over eight years a Work Program was established. The Work Program operates by:

- Each campsite has three adults with exceptionality on the work program
- Each adult as a job coach to teach them the job and to also teach them how to best utilise their non-work hours and how to get the best out of their experience
- Jobs include hospitality, postal, administration, cleaning and maintenance
- Due to a waiting approach, the duration of the program for each participant is two weeks
- Each participant can participate for a maximum of five years
- During this five year period the focus is to help them manage their job independently (as they are involved in the job area, every year) with the ultimate aim of supporting these adults into employment within the community
- Some participants who have fully completed the Work Program are now employed at OPC.

Gain a greater understanding of the accessibility to high adventure activities and programs for students with special needs.

OPC has a huge variety of activities available to every camper. Through the development of these activities they focus on challenge and experience. Therefore, activities are modified according to the abilities of the camper.

6. The International Experience

Every activity allows each individual camper to experience success during their involvement by adopting the philosophy of 'Challenge by Choice'; each specific activity can be adapted to ensure involvement, enjoyment and successful participation for each camper.

Observe the opportunities and systems currently available in North America.

OPC implements best practice and current industry standards and safety systems in relation to all aspects of adventure programming and rope courses:

- Construction
- Development
- Safety procedures
- Policies.

All of their activity equipment is continuously maintained, checked and documented to ensure it is safe, suitable and ready for use. Professional contractors annually check all aspects of their rope courses, mountain bikes and aquatic equipment to ensure it is maintained to a high industry standard.

Learn through the programs in place in North America, how to:

- *Plan*
- *Budget*
- *Develop*
- *Construct*
- *Implement*
- *Process*
- *Modify*

high adventure experiential programs and activities specifically targeting the development, growth and experience of students with a variety of special needs.

In conjunction with Intervarsity Christian Fellowship, OPC is fully responsible for all aspects of camp development; especially in relationship to the creation of new activities.

Throughout the process of activity development, professional contractors may be commissioned to do the work depending on the type of activity being including in the program, but ultimately OPC has the responsibility of this creation and development.

To help fund new developments at the camp, OPC are consistently fundraising through a variety of avenues and events. OPC holds an Annual Art Auction in October. Throughout each summer, campers with exceptionality are involved in an art program and in October their art is auctioned to help raise funds for OPC. OPC also receives numerous donations throughout each year which is also allocated to further developing the camp.

6. The International Experience

Understand the methods of promotion for the inclusion of students with special needs in outdoor adventure activities.

OPC promotes the camp and therefore its Inclusion Program through the following mediums:

- Website
- Word of mouth
- Brochures
- Facebook.

Through the successful implementation of all their programs and the excellent promotion of OPC, the Inclusion Work Program has a waiting list of adults with exceptionality who wish to be included in the Work Program experience.

Investigate the creation, use, implementation and modification of high adventure activities suitable for students with special needs in North America.

OPC implements all of their activities according to the abilities and involvement of each individual. Depending on what each individual camper is able to achieve physically and emotionally, the activity, environment and equipment is modified to ensure that each camper is challenged to participate to the best of their abilities. While a camper may participate in a higher adventure experience on a small scale – they may immerse themselves in other activities and experiences like video production, archery, low ropes or swimming.

Investigate the physical and emotional benefits that students with special needs gain through the opportunity to participate in accessible high adventure activities.

At the beginning of their camp experience, all campers are encouraged to set goals in relation to the duration of their stay at OPC. With counsellors working closely with campers with exceptionality (and their parents), appropriate goals are established.

Throughout their camp experience these goals are regularly evaluated and documented to ensure they are appropriate, accurate and achieved. While at camp counsellors along with Inclusion Coordinators write reports in relation to the campers achieving their goals throughout the summer. Through this documentation, the physical and emotional benefits each individual camper experiences throughout their involvement in the day to day programming at OPC is documented; highlighting positive or negative change within each individual.

OPC is focused on ensuring all their campers are welcome, safe and included in a positive outdoor environment where they are always accepted and encouraged to participate.

6. The International Experience

Investigate the desired learning outcomes of students with special needs experiencing high adventure activities with a focus on comprehending how these outcomes are established, monitored, assessed and measured.

Through goals setting and the monitoring of these goals, extensive reports are created on each individual camper with exceptionality. These reports are then kept by OPC, parents and campers and give a detailed insight into the development of the individual throughout their camp experience.

The goals are:

- Established through open consultation with campers, parents, directors, coordinators and counsellors. These goals then remain the focus for achievement throughout the camp experience
- Monitored very closely in relation to their validity with the support of 1:1 counsellors throughout their entire camp experience
- Continually evolved to ensure that they are ‘**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic and **T**imely’ (SMART) for each individual camper
- Assessed according to the criteria used to establish the goals at the beginning of their camp experience
- Documented and measured throughout the camper’s camp experience; helping establish future goals and specific programs for each individual within their daily lives as well as within their future camp experiences.

Research if participation in a high adventure experience has a direct impact on the physical and emotional benefits of the participant and if those benefits can be linked directly to an improved wellbeing within that individual.

Due to the nature of OPC’s programs and the high level of returning campers by setting, documenting and maintaining accurate goals throughout their camp experiences, OPC are able to utilise the experiences that campers with exceptionality gain through their adventure programs to ensure future daily and camp programs are suited to each individual.

OPC is able to utilise the physical and emotional benefits campers gain through their experience and directly link these benefits back into their daily routines to ensure that the wellbeing of each individual camper is improved.

Gain an in-depth comprehension of what activities, opportunities and experiences are provided to young people with special needs at a range of North American camps.

The activities, opportunities and experiences provided by OCP to people with exceptionality include:

- Archery
- Canoeing
- Pioneer skills
- Kayaking

6. The International Experience

- Sailing
- Mountain bike riding – mountain biking park experience
- Swimming
- Camp craft
- Arts and craft
- Expeditions
- Orienteering
- Initiative games
- Challenge course
- Low ropes
- High ropes
- Frisbee golf.

Investigate the design, budget, development, construction, implementation, risk assessment and on-going appraisal of accessible adventure activities and programs.

Through a chain of command, OPC are able to continually evolve and develop into the future to ensure that the camp is maintained, suitable and accessible for all of its campers and staff.

OPC continues to evaluate and prioritise the specific needs of the overall development of the camp. Through this prioritisation designs are created, budgets established, funds raised, development, construction and implementation initiated and completed, risk assessments investigated and on-going appraisals documented. This model and process is especially implemented in relation to the development of new high adventure activities and experiences at OPC.

Outcomes:

OPC is truly an amazing camp.

Through networking with Jennifer and Leigh, the Fellow gained an in-depth knowledge and understanding of exactly how and why the Inclusion Program works. It works as it truly is inclusion. Campers with exceptionality are challenged not only beyond their comfort zones when it comes to activity involvement, but also to become a member of the OPC camp community and immerse themselves in the full OPC experience. An opportunity that is enhanced by the fact that each year they are integrated with different campers, staff and chalet locations.

The model of inclusion that OPC continues to evolve is unique and a benchmark for other campsites around the world. Through the nomination of a parent, OPC's Inclusion Program has been acknowledged and awarded by the Downs Syndrome Society of Ontario and Canada.

The Fellow really appreciated the time and effort all the OPC staff made to ensure his visit was educational, rewarding and experiential. They all deserve a special thank you.

6. The International Experience

Concluding Remarks:

Visiting OPC was an amazing experience. The activities, experiences, opportunities and programs they offer their campers are impressive and truly offer the camper the opportunity to challenge themselves physical and emotionally within a safe outdoor environment.

6. The International Experience

Destination Six: Easter Seals Camp

Location: Woodedden, Ontario, Canada

Contact: Kim Vallieres Camp Director, Qualified Teacher
Program Director, Easter Seals Lake Wood
(camp now closed).
Program & Waterfront Director, Easter Seals, Merrywood.

Mission Statement:

We are dedicated to helping children with physical disabilities achieve their full potential and future independence. Easter Seal people make a difference in the lives of the children and their families by providing direct services, programs, research, advocacy and public education...

There is much more to do!

Easter Seals Camp Woodedden is a camp built to help people succeed with physical disabilities. Every aspect of the camp is accessible. During the evolution of the camp all considerations have been made to ensure accessibility is paramount to enable the campers to enjoy, experience and growth through active participation in all aspects of the camp.

The Fellow arrived at the tail end of a ten program where kids where actively engaged and challenged through a unique inclusive program. Every camper had the opportunity to experience and participate in all aspects of the program. No-one missed out, and no-one wanted to miss out. It was fantastic to simply observe and witness the opportunities and benefits the campers were gaining from their time at Easter Seals Camp Woodedden.

Objectives:

Gain a greater understanding of the accessibility to high adventure activities and programs for students with special needs.

Easter Seals Camp Woodedden designs all of their activities for accessibility. If an activity is not accessible they either modify the activity to make it accessible or they do not build it at all.

Some of the consideration of making their high ropes course accessible included:

- Making the course designed for their wheelchairs only so when a camper accesses the high ropes course, they use an Easter Seals Camp Woodedden wheelchair while their chair stays on the ground. This is done so that if anything happens to the chair it is the camps problem and the camper does not lose their independence due to a damaged wheelchair.



Easter Seals Camp Woodedden 13m High Accessible High Ropes Course

6. The International Experience



On Belay



Easter Seals Camp Woodeden Hydraulic Belay System

6. The International Experience

- Extra weight bearing cables were installed to allow for extra people
- A hydraulic belay system was installed to make it faster to belay campers on to and off the high ropes course
- Easter Seals Camp Woodeden also has an Accessible Giant Swing, Accessible Rock climbing Wall, Accessible Tree House and an Accessible Tent (Yurt) Experience
- Easter Seals Camp Woodeden would love to build a series of accessible low ropes initiatives for future campers.

Observe the opportunities and systems currently available in North America.

At Easter Seals Camp Woodeden, they implement best practice systems in relation to all aspects of adventure programming and rope courses (construction, development, safety procedures and policies).

Easter Seals Camp Woodeden as an excellent working relationship with Challenges Unlimited Inc. (CUI). CUI built and expanded their current high ropes course and designed the hydraulic belay system specifically for campers with disabilities to ensure the campers were lifted and lowered onto and off the course safely and smoothly. CUI annually document and inspect every aspect of Easter Seals Camp Woodeden high ropes course, giant swing and indoor rock climbing wall to ensure that they highest level of safety standards are maintained and implemented at all times.



High Adventure

6. The International Experience

Learn through the programs in place in North America, how to:

- *Plan*
- *Budget*
- *Develop*
- *Construct*
- *Implement*
- *Process*
- *Modify*

high adventure experiential programs and activities specifically targeting the development, growth and experience of students with a variety of special needs.

Easter Seals Camp Woodeden is fully responsible for the future planning of all activities at the camp. This camp works very closely with its contractors – like CUI – to ensure that every aspect of accessibility is given consideration and that the best available option is then implemented into the ultimate development of new activities. This working relationship also helps set budgets, timeframes, construction processes and responsibility into the overall development of the activity.



Ready to fly on the Giant Swing

Once the activity is completed and ready for implementation, professional contractors work closely with Easter Seals Camp Woodeden Staff in the aspect of implementing, processing and modifying activities as well as preparing the staff through training courses to ensure they are ready to implement, assess and prepare activities according to best practice.

Understand the methods of promotion for the inclusion of students with special needs in outdoor adventure activities.

Due to the size structure and public knowledge of Easter Seals, all of the promotion and fundraising required by the organisation is done through the Toronto Office. Methods of promotion and fundraising include word of mouth, website, E – blasts, Drop Zone (a fundraiser where people pay to have the opportunity to abseil down tall buildings in the Ontario Cities of Toronto, London, Ottawa, Peterborough, Kitchener, Kensington and Windsor) and four simultaneous telethons across Peterborough, Toronto, Windsor and Ottawa.

6. The International Experience

Investigate the creation, use, implementation and modification of high adventure activities suitable for students with special needs in place in North America.

Easter Seals Camp Woodeden only builds accessible activities to ensure that all of their campers are given every opportunity to fully participate, enjoy and experience each activity to the best of their ability. The way this is achieved on some activities include:-

- High Ropes
- A hydraulic belay system
- A wheelchair designed to access the course
- Full body harnesses and full body slings available for use



Enjoying the Experience

- Giant Swing
- Full body harnesses and full body slings available for use
- The course is designed to be able to swing four adults. While they would never put four adults on the swing, they are able to harness a camper and counsellor onto the swing to offer the camper more support, especially in relation to head, neck and spine support

6. The International Experience



Fly like a bird

- Rock Climbing Wall
 - » Full body harnesses and full body slings available for use
 - » There are large hand holes and well as artificial hand holds on the wall to enable campers to easily access the wall
 - » 4:1 pulley system is used to raise and lower the campers
 - » There are difference types of rock climbing walls offering a variety of challenges to all campers
- The Tree House
 - » An accessible ramp from ground level to the deck of the Tree House
 - » A large deck around the left hand side and front of the Tree House to ensure campers can get the full Tree House experience, as well as an area to storage wheelchairs to create more space within the Tree House



Accessible Indoor Rock climbing

6. The International Experience

- Yurts – Camping experience
 - » Two fully accessible Yurts built on one large accessible deck off the ground
 - » An accessible portable toilet.

Investigate the physical and emotional benefits that students with special needs gain through the opportunity to participate in accessible high adventure activities.

Easter Seals Camp Woodeden is focused on gaining a greater understanding of their campers; especially in relation to their feelings, emotions and thoughts of what they are doing and experiencing while at camp. Therefore – with the support of their counsellors – on a daily basis, campers:

- Write their own journals
- Draw their experience at camp
- Write letters detailing their experiences and their benefits from being at camp
- Campers are also given certificates for participating in the High Rope Course.

Investigate the desired learning outcomes of students with special needs experiencing high adventure activities with a focus on comprehending how these outcomes are established, monitored, assessed and measured.

Safety is paramount at Easter Seals Camp Woodeden and is the main focus when looking at desired learning outcomes – everything else simply flows from this focus.

When looking at the camper's outcomes, prior to each activity at Easter Seals Camp, Woodeden, counsellors will speak to the campers and ask a question like:

- What is their desired goal for this activity?
- Why are they participating in this activity?
- What do they hope to achieve from this activity?

Then while implementing the activity the staff will give each camper every opportunity to succeed and achieve their goal. At the end of each camper's participation in an activity, their goal is reviewed privately with a counsellor to see whether they have achieved their goal or not.

Research if participation in a high adventure experience has a direct impact on the physical and emotional benefits of the participant, and if those benefits can be linked directly to an improved wellbeing within that individual.

Easter Seals Camp, Woodeden is a huge experience for all who attend. Due to the length of the North American Summer School Holidays, a lot of kids are left to their own devices and achieve or experience minimal things during the holidays. For each camper at Easter Seals Camp, Woodeden – this is their story.

6. The International Experience

It is their opportunity to explore, discover, experience, enjoy, relax, choose and have fun in a very safe and nurturing environment and extremely positive and uplifting atmosphere. Campers feel totally free as they swing through the air on the giant swing, empowered to achieve anything as they complete the high ropes course and challenged beyond their comfort zones as they rock climb to new heights.

Parents constantly talk about how their child regularly communicates about camp throughout the remainder of the year – actively reliving each and every aspect of the camp, motivating them to achieve more in their day-to-day lives.

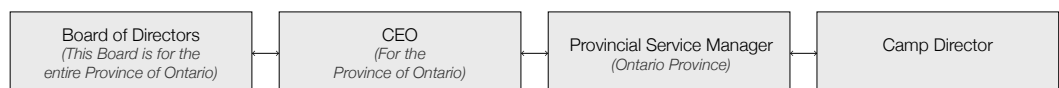
Gain an in-depth comprehension of what activities, opportunities and experiences are provided to young people with special needs at a range of North American camps.

The activities, opportunities and experiences provided by Easter Seals Camp, Woodedden to people with special needs include:

- Archery
- Accessible high ropes
- Sledge hockey
- Accessible giant swing
- Tree house
- Music
- Drama
- Life skills
- Accessible rock climbing
- Environmental activities
- Pottery
- Out trip
- Media
- Accessible swimming pool
- Art and crafts
- Sports.

Investigate the design, budget, development, construction, implementation, risk assessment and on-going appraisal of accessible adventure activities and programs.

Easter Seals Camp, Woodedden Hierarchy



6. The International Experience

All major capital works has to go through the Board and a tender process involving numerous meetings, discussion, plans, concepts and drafts. Smaller projects can be handled between the Camp Director and Provincial Service Manager.

As a large not-for-profit organisation, Easter Seals is constantly seeking funds through fundraising programs and events to further develop, expand and evolve each campsite. The Camp Director at each Camp seeks funding directly from Easter Seals to develop their camp. They also work closely with staff in head office to ensure funding that is being sorted within the philanthropic community is specific to the needs of the Camps and their grounds, facilities, accommodation and activities.

The fee for each camper to attend Easter Seals Camp Woodeden is US\$2,250. However, each family is only required to pay US\$125 – the remainder is funded by Easter Seals. These funds are obtained through fundraising events or from service clubs and other providers local to each camper.

Once funding is raised and accessible adventure activities are created Easter Seals Camp, Woodeden, along with the contractors who develop the activities design the risk assessment and on-going appraisals to ensure best practice is always maintained.

Gain access to a variety of resources and best practice standards to develop accessible high adventure activities and programs for students with special needs.

Resources and References

Camps / Organisations: Saugeen Shafts – Peterborough, Ontario, Canada

Contacts: Collie Patton, Easter Seals Camp Woodeden, Ropes Co-ordinator

Outcomes

Easter Seals Camp, Woodeden is a phenomenal camp. The design, creation, layout and implementation of the camp is amazing. Every aspect of the camp is accessible and nothing is built onsite unless it is fully wheelchair accessible. It is an amazing experience to witness the programs that are being implemented at Easter Seals Camp, Woodeden. The programs and opportunities offered here fully challenge the campers beyond their comfort zones and offer them amazing opportunities to grow and develop as individuals.

Easter Seals Camp, Woodeden runs impressive programs and understands how to challenge people with disabilities beyond their comfort zones, while also respecting the abilities, perceptions and perceived risk factors within each individual camper.

Through experiencing Easter Seals Camp, Woodeden the Fellow gained a greater insight into:

- Accessible adventure activity implementation
- The development of ropes course, rock climbing wall and tree house best practice
- An understanding of how to plan, budget, develop, implement and construct accessible adventure activities
- The adventure activity opportunities are available to people with disabilities with North America.

6. The International Experience

Concluding Remarks

Visiting Easter Seals Camp, Woodedden has been a truly amazing and rewarding experience. The activities, experiences, opportunities and programs they offer their campers are impressive and truly offer the camper the opportunity to challenge themselves physical and emotionally within a safe outdoor environment.

It has allowed the Fellow great insight into the creativity and imagination required to develop accessible high adventure activities – there truly is no boundaries, barriers and limits when it comes to developing accessible activities.

6. The International Experience

Destination Seven: The Fowler Center,

Location: Mayville, Michigan, USA

Contact/s: Kyle Middleton, Executive Director (Degree in Recreation Therapy)

Worked at a children's home in Detroit.

Continues to work at the Judson Centre supporting people with developmental disabilities and emotional impairments.

Accepted position of Executive Director, The Fowler Centre, 2009.

Lynn Seeloof, Assistant Director (Degree in Recreation Therapy)

Worked with a volunteer program for people with disabilities. Became a volunteer at The Fowler Center, 2004.

Employed as a Counsellor at The Fowler Center, 2004.

Became Assistant Director at The Fowler Center, 2007.

Mission Statement

The mission of The Fowler Center is to respect the individual gifts of each participant, to enhance personal growth and independence through outdoor adventures and activities and to provide opportunities for learning-by-doing.

The Fowler Center is a not-for-profit charity organisation that focuses on providing outdoor experiences for people with disabilities from the age of six years old. The Fowler Center is unique in the fact that there is no upper age limit on the campers – meaning some campers who have outlived the life span of other camps, come to The Fowler Center to continue their growth and development through outdoor experiences.

Established in 1957 by John (Jack) Fowler, the Center focuses on providing accessible activities and experiences to ensure that all campers are able to participate and enjoy all experiences to the best of their abilities. Through the history of the Center the activities and programs have grown and developed to the point where today's campers are able to challenge themselves on a fully accessible high ropes course, tree house and climbing wall.

The Fellow was at The Fowler Centre for the duration of one of their six day camp programs where they had a mixture of young people and adults with a variety of disabilities attending the camp. While at the Center, the Fellow was given complete freedom to enjoy, experience and discover every aspect of the Center in full operation. During this time he was honoured to be able to meet Dr Fowler (now aged 91) over lunch. It was great to listen to Dr Fowler and learn about the Center, as well being given the opportunity to explain Blackwood Special School's Outdoor Education Centre.

Bellette was also invited to sit in on an American Camps Association (ACA) re-accreditation site visit. It was wonderful to listen and openly discuss the accreditation process, which is very similar to the Australian Camps Association re-accreditation process.

6. The International Experience

Objectives

Gain a greater understanding of the accessibility to high adventure activities and programs for students with special needs.

The Fowler Centre implements programs, activities and outdoor experiences for children and adults with disabilities. With a focus on barrier free opportunities for the campers, everything built at The Fowler Centre focuses on accessibility. Their high ropes course starts at ground level and is 100 per cent accessible. The Fowler Center currently has the following fully accessible high adventure activities: high ropes, tree house and rock climbing.

Observe the opportunities and systems currently available in North America.

The Fowler Center implements best practice systems in relation to all aspects of adventure programming and rope courses such as construction, development, safety procedures and policies. Throughout their history The Fowler Center has utilised a variety of professional contractors with a history of providing and constructing outdoor adventure based activities to further develop their facilities and programs.

Learn through the programs in place in North America, how to:

- *Plan*
- *Budget*
- *Develop*
- *Construct*
- *Implement*
- *Process*
- *Modify*

high adventure experiential programs and activities specifically targeting the development, growth and experience of students with a variety of special needs.

Throughout the year The Fowler Centre is always fundraising and implementing events to help increase funds. However, most of these funds are raised primarily to cover operating costs and ensure they keep to budget. Some of the fundraising events include and ice fishing competition on Harmon Lake, 'Horror on Harmon Lake' and local program events.

Therefore, if they wish to build anything new at the Centre they need to seek grant money for this new development. The Centre will come up with the idea for a new high adventure activity and work with a construction team to establish a budget. Once the budget is established they then seek the funding. Once the funding has been obtained the Center then works closely with the contractors to ensure that the activity is built on time, on budget and with a focus on accessibility.

Understand the methods of promotion for the inclusion of students with special needs in outdoor adventure activities.

6. The International Experience

The Fowler Center uses the following forms of promotion to increase its clientele:

- Word of mouth
- Website
- Pamphlets
- School groups
- Camper fairs
- Parent groups
- Community Mental Health (CMH)
- Non-Special Education Groups
- Conferences
- Service clubs – i.e. Kiwanis, Optimist, Elks
- Partnerships with other non-profits
- Radio/TV.

Investigate the creation, use, implementation and modification of high adventure activities suitable for students with special needs in place in North America.

The Fowler Center builds everything to be accessible – especially their activities. When building new activities they research different camps, companies and contractors to ensure that what is built and implemented at the Center is appropriate for their campers. While The Fowler Center maintains best practice, modern equipment and high safety standards; through experience and continual implementation, occasionally appropriate modifications to activities and equipment are made, to ensure accessibility, while maintaining a focus on safety at all times.



Zip Away at The Fowler Center

6. The International Experience

Investigate the physical and emotional benefits that students with special needs gain through the opportunity to participate in accessible high adventure activities.

The Fowler Center does not specifically document or keep records of the physical and emotional benefits experienced by campers involved in high adventure activities. However, benefits of involvement include being outdoors, being physically active, campers facing their fears, being more involved in activities they do not have regular access to, confidence building and trying something new.

Investigate the desired learning outcomes of students with special needs experiencing high adventure activities with a focus on comprehending how these outcomes are established, monitored, assessed and measured.

Under their accreditation with the ACA, The Fowler Centre is required to provide goals, objectives and outcomes for the existence of the camp. These are written with a specific focus on the camps mission statement. Beyond this, specific learning outcomes for campers are not written.

Throughout program implementation, the focus is on the four cornerstones of the Center: safety, fun, challenging and learning experience. Through involvement in their programs, The Fowler Centre aims to challenge their campers with a new experience, or, provide them with an opportunity to progress from what they have achieved in previous camp programs.

Research if participation in a high adventure experience has a direct impact on the physical and emotional benefits of the participant, and if those benefits can be linked directly to an improved wellbeing within that individual.

The Fowler Center does not keep any formal documentation on the physical and emotional benefits of a camper's involvement in a high adventure experience. However, through parent expectations and evaluations, it is regularly highlighted that through their involvement in The Fowler Center's programs, campers have grown at Camp physically, emotionally and socially; created more independence; and developed more self confidence. This is where the campers get their opportunity to challenge themselves beyond their comfort zones as all campers are strongly encourage to be actively involved in all aspects of the program.

Through supported employment programs, past campers have worked at The Fowler Center. Through this participation, The Fowler Center has been able to offer some past campers employment.

6. The International Experience



Climbing to new heights

Gain an in-depth comprehension of what activities, opportunities and experiences are provided to young people with special needs at a range of North American camps.

The activities, opportunities and experiences provided by The Fowler Center to people with special needs include:

- Outdoor education
- Creative arts
- Barn (working with farm animals) and garden
- Sports and recreation
- Equestrian
- Challenge - accessible high ropes, accessible tree house and accessible rock climbing
- Waterfront
- Initiative team building / low ropes activities
- Campout
- Outpost.

6. The International Experience



The Fowler Center Accessible Tree House

6. The International Experience

Investigate the design, budget, development, construction, implementation, risk assessment and on-going appraisal of accessible adventure activities and programs.

- » Step 1: All major capital works go through the Board for approval.
- » Step 2: A tender process which involves numerous meetings, discussion, plans, concepts and drafts.
- » Step 3: Seeking grants.
- » Step 4: Construction and development.
- » Step 5: The Fowler Centre staff training.
- » Step 6: Risk assessment.
- » Step 7: Implementation.
- » Step 8: On-going appraisal, risk assessment and inspections.

Gain access to a variety of resources and best practice standards to develop accessible high adventure activities and programs for students with special needs.

The Fowler Center implements its own three-day high ropes course training sessions at the beginning of each summer.

S.T.E.P.S - A training provider in Michigan for High Ropes Courses.

Three Facilitation staff of the Fowler Centre, Lynn, James and Farrah attended a training course with S.T.E.P.S. They then trained The Fowler Centre Staff for the summer on:

- Knots
- Belays
- Ropes
- Harnesses
- Pulley Systems.

Resources and References

Books/Manuals:

The Fowler Centre for Outdoor Learning Procedural Handbook

The Story of The Fowler Center – 1957-1997; Written by Jack Fowler, 1997

Outcomes:

The Fowler Center was a wealth of information and opportunities. The Fellow gained a greater insight into how to further improve accessible in a wide range of adventure activities, opportunities and experiences.

The Fowler Center runs impressive programs and understands how to challenge people with disabilities beyond their comfort zones, while also respecting the abilities, perceptions and perceived risk factors within each individual camper.

6. The International Experience

Through experiencing The Fowler Center, the Fellow gained a greater insight into:

- Accessible adventure activity implementation
- The development of ropes course best practice
- What adventure activity opportunities are available to people with disabilities with North America.

Concluding Remarks

Visiting The Fowler Center was an amazing experience. The activities, experiences, opportunities and programs they offer their campers are impressive and truly offer the camper the opportunity to challenge themselves physical and emotionally within a safe outdoor environment.

6. The International Experience

Destination Eight: Camp Cavell

Location: Michigan, USA

Contacts: Jill Laidlaw, Camp Director

Tom Zaveta, Adventure Program Director

Camp Cavell is a co-educational YWCA Camp situated on Lake Huron, Michigan. Originally it was a girls camp but during the 1990s due to lack of numbers and failing facilities, it was opened up as a co-ed camp which helped bring in extra income to reinvest back into the camp.

One activity that makes the camp unique compared to others is their Tree Climbing Program where the campers have the opportunity to experience climbing American Beech Trees throughout the campsite.

Objectives

Gain a greater understanding of the accessibility to high adventure activities and programs for students with special needs.

Camp Cavell utilises a variety of methods to make its camp and some of its activities accessible to all campers:

- Wheelchair ramps to all cabins and buildings which therefore create deck walks throughout the Camp
- Floatable wheelchair and ramps on the beach to create accessibility to the waterfront programs
- Hay ride ramps
- Campers can be lifted out of the floatable wheelchair into kayaks
- Archery utilises adaptive equipment to make this activity accessible
- A stream hike which utilises ramps and wide paths to ensure everyone has access to Nature Study programs.

Observe the opportunities and systems currently available in North America.

While at Camp Cavell, the Fellow actively participated in the Tree Climbing Program. This program uses a variety of methods and equipment to ensure that it is available and accessible to all campers.

Tree Climbing Belay Systems:

- Single Rope Technique (SRT)
- Double Rope Technique (DRT)
- Super System (two Pulleys, Block & Tackle)
- Tree Climbing Saddle (Harness)

Tree Climbing Belay Systems used to improve accessibility:

- Pact System (four Pulleys, 5:1)
- Back Rest or Swing
- Saddle Harness, Back Rest and Swing make tree climbing fully wheelchair accessible.

6. The International Experience



Just hanging in the trees at YWCA Camp Cavell

6. The International Experience

Ropes:

- Safety Lines (Blue / White, Cream, Orange for a static set up)
- Lava or Poison Ivy Ropes
- XTC High wax content (Heavy, Bulky)
- Arborplex washed rope.

Safety Equipment:

- Safety Glasses utilised on wild trees
- Prussics utilised on Leg Ascenders, foot loops or foot locks.

Setting up Ropes for Tree Climbing:

- Slick Line utilised to establish ropes in the trees (14 – 16oz Throw Bag).

6. The International Experience

Destination Nine: Victory Junction

Location: Randleman, North Carolina, USA

Contacts: Jacob Byrd, Program Manager, Victory Junction Cabin Counsellor, 2008/09

Victory Junction Unit Leader, 2010

Victory Junction Entertainment Coordinator, 2011

Victory Junction Program Manager, 2011).

Mary Beth Fraley, Camp Director

(Since the age of 16 Fraley has been actively involved in traditional outdoor wilderness camps, worked with inner city youth and has been a Program Director and Outdoor Education Director).

Victory Junction Residential Life Director, 2006

Victory Junction Assisted Camp Director, 2006

Victory Junction Camp Director, 2009

Mission Statement

To enrich the lives of campers with chronic medical conditions or serious illnesses by providing life-changing camping experiences that are exciting, fun and empowering, in a safe and medically-sound environment.

"From the outside looking in, it is difficult to comprehend. From the inside looking out it is difficult to explain."

This is a very true statement. Victory Junction is an amazing facility – almost incomprehensible – that provides phenomenal experiences, opportunities and activities for all of its campers. Victory Junction has supported campers from all 50 American States as well as four other countries.

Victory Junction is Adam Petty's dream. Born into a NASCAR dynasty, Adam followed in his grandfather's and father's footsteps and became a NASCAR driver. As a young driver he began to dominate the sport at a very early age, when at the age of 19 tragedy struck and he was killed during a practice session in 2000.

Prior to his passing, Petty spent some time at Camp Boggy Creek in Florida where he was introduced to a new world – a world that provided amazing experiences for children with illnesses and disabilities. Petty began to dream.

He questioned why this couldn't be done in his home state, North Carolina. So, by challenging himself, he also challenged the NASCAR industry. He tirelessly promoted his idea, seeking support to develop a camp for kids in North Carolina. His grandfather, Richard Petty – a NASCAR Legend – donated 84 acres of his own property towards Adam's dream. Unfortunately, beyond this, Petty met with a lot of negativity, rejections and refusals. At the time of his death his dream was still a dream with minimal support and finance.

After his death support and finance for Petty's dream came from everywhere. Suddenly his family had access to US\$23 million dollars to create his dream. So as part of their healing process Petty's parents initiated and created Victory Junction.

6. The International Experience

Victory Junction is a NASCAR themed camp and every single detail is focused on racing, including a massive NASCAR building, racing car beds, gas tank cupboards, a racing tunnel entry into camp, stools that look like bolts and racing themed water park. Everywhere you look and every detail you discover it is NASCAR racing. To highlight the industry's support for Victory Junction, every Tuesday evening a NASCAR team visits the camp – primarily this is a pit crew, but occasionally the drivers themselves will visit the camp. During this time the campers get to explore a NASCAR and act as the pit crew. This night is also supported by the hot air ballooning community who bring in two balloons every Tuesday night for the campers to experience a tethered ride.

During the time the Fellow visited the camp, it was a shortened week: a week for siblings and where the brothers and sisters of kids with illnesses and/or disabilities had the opportunity to experience and enjoy Victory Junction. It was a wonderful time to explore and gain a full appreciation of how Victory Junction operates and implements programs for their campers.

Objectives

Gain a greater understanding of the accessibility to high adventure activities and programs for students with special needs.

With the focus of providing camp experiences for campers with illnesses and disabilities, Victory Junction has focused on accessibility throughout its creation. As a result of this the following accessible activities are available to campers at Victory Junction:

- Accessible Archery
- Accessible Alpine Tower
- Accessible Giant Swing
- Accessible Zip Line
- Accessible Water park
- Accessible Bowling.

To make these activities accessible, Victory Junction is continually implementing new equipment, methods and procedures to ensure each camper gets the full benefit from each experience.

6. The International Experience



Victory Junction Alpine Tower

6. The International Experience

Observe the opportunities and systems currently available in North America.

Victory Junction implements best practice systems in relation to all aspects of adventure programming such as construction, development, safety procedures and policies. As an American Camping Association (ACA) Accredited Camp, Victory Junction goes through a re-accreditation process tri-annually. This process establishes, updates and maintains a very high standard of policy, procedure, paperwork and performance in every aspect of the Camp.

Victory Junction is also a Serious Fun Children's Network Camp. Through this network, Victory Junction has to maintain a high standard under the Serious Fun criteria which is assessed and re-accredited bi-annually. Victory Junction also has its high adventure equipment (Alpine Tower, Giant Swing and Zip Line) assessed annually by Alpine Tower International, the company that built the activities. During this annual process, Alpine Tower International also train all of the Victory Junction Adventure Staff of how to prepare, implement and pack up each adventure element including how to harness, prepare, load and unload campers. By doing this all liability for these activities – unless something is done outside the realm of the Adventure Staff's training – is waived by Victory Junction and Alpine Tower International accepts full responsibility under their insurance policy.

Each year after the inspection and training – Victory Junctions Insurance Co. and Alpine Towers Insurance Co. negotiate to ensure everything is accurate, covered and clearly defined roles and responsibilities are established. Victory Junction also has this procedure in place for its swimming pool and catering facilities.

Learn through the programs in place in North America, how to:

- *Plan*
- *Budget*
- *Develop*
- *Construct*
- *Implement*
- *Process*
- *Modify*

high adventure experiential programs and activities specifically targeting the development, growth and experience of students with a variety of special needs.

Victory Junction is fully responsible for the future planning of all activities at the camp. While Victory Junction is responsible for all aspects of activity development in relation to determining the budget, the overall development and construction of the activities is the responsibility of the professional contractors.

Victory Junction has a Board of Directors and a Company Operations Officer (COO) who approve every aspect and development of Victory Junction. This is all coordinated through open communication with the Camp Director. Once projects are approved, Victory Junction has a team of fundraisers who are dedicated to raising funds for the operation and future development of the camp. Victory Junction also has a very unique relationship with NASCAR in the fact that a NASCAR team visit the camp every

6. The International Experience

Tuesday night during the summer – occasionally the driver will come to the camp along with the pit crew. One driver had an interest in archery and was happy to pay for the Archery Site to be upgraded and developed into a safe, appropriate and more accessible site for the campers.

The general public are also welcome to tour the camp. Occasionally through these tours, Victory Junction receives extra support. One man who toured the site had a passion for horse riding. When he discovered that their Equestrian Arena was not operational in winter, he offered to install roller doors to enclose the Arena and make it operational year round (he owned a roller door company).

Understand the methods of promotion for the inclusion of students with special needs in outdoor adventure activities.

Victory Junction uses the following forms of promotion:

- Word of mouth
- Printed advertisements
- Cable TV Commercials (implemented to fill up air time, public service announcements, broadcasts across USA)
- NASCAR events (booths at races, sponsorship on a car, receive national TV airtime)
- Charity fundraising events
- Newsletters
- Third party fundraisers (BBQ benefits, church fundraisers, church groups donating service hours)
- Team Victory Junction (an endurance race team, triathlons, marathons, bike events)
- Volunteers
- Hospital visits done by the Victory Junction Camp recruiting team
- Serious Fun.

Investigate the creation, use, implementation and modification of high adventure activities suitable for students with special needs in place in North America.

Victory Junction builds their activities to be accessible to campers with illnesses and/or disabilities. As the camp implements their programs and activities; if they need to modify, change or adapt equipment to enable a camper to access the experience, they are never afraid to ask.

At the beginning of the summer, they built a large platform at the base of their Alpine Tower to make it more accessible, as well as safer for all campers to participate in the activity. To help make their Alpine Tower accessible Victory Junction use a 4:1 pulley system, Misty Mountain Chair Harness and Halyard Clip (for Giant Swing Release).

6. The International Experience



Victory Junction Accessible Archery

Investigate the physical and emotional benefits that students with special needs gain through the opportunity to participate in accessible high adventure activities.

- Confidence
- Empowerment
- Communication skills
- An ability to express commands and feelings
- Challenge the perception of comfortableness by getting the campers actively involved in outdoor programs
- Cabin group unity
- Experience team climbing on the Alpine Tower
- Challenge themselves to work in teams by doing the Zip Line and Alpine Tower blindfolded, therefore focusing on the communication skills of their partners.

Through active participation in a camp at Victory Junction, campers with illnesses and / or disabilities are able to enjoy the same camp experiences as mainstream kids so that when they return to school at the end of summer, they will have something common to talk about with other kids who attend camps, as well as something to compare. This is a secondary result of participation.

Investigate the desired learning outcomes of students with special needs experiencing high adventure

6. The International Experience

activities with a focus on comprehending how these outcomes are established, monitored, assessed and measured.

Through their accreditation with the American Camping Association (ACA), Victory Junction sets desired camper outcomes on programs and activities. However, these outcomes are not explained directly to their campers at the beginning of each week; they are detailed through their staff training prior to the commencement of summer camps.

By training their staff, it is clearly evident to everyone at Victory Junction that their outcomes are easily being achieved. One camper, prior to camp, was reluctantly going through rehabilitation to help her to walk. While at camp she actively participated in archery, swimming and the zip-line and prior to leaving camp stated, "When I get home, I am going to walk!".

Through their association with Serious Fun, Victory Junction is currently involved in an extensive research program being conducted by Yale University. The researchers are looking at what kids are getting out of a camp experience at a Serious Fun Camp. The research includes medical staff, parents and campers:

- » Medical Staff (looking at the kids in hospital, as they go through a camp experience and after their camp experience)
- » Parents (pre-camp and post-camp survey)
- » Campers (pre-camp and post-camp survey).

Serious Fun Children's Network initiated the three year research and it is currently going through its third summer, with the findings expected to be released in 2013.

Research if participation in a high adventure experience has a direct impact on the physical and emotional benefits of the participant, and if those benefits can be linked directly to an improved wellbeing within that individual.

"This is the best day of my life" is a common statement made by Victory Junction campers. Victory Junction does not have any specific documented research on the direct impact participation in a high adventure experience has on the physical and emotional benefits of the participant. The campers who experience Victory Junction truly understand the importance it has on their lives and how it can improve your life. Victory Junction has a huge waiting list of campers and some campers who are on that list, but have previously attended a camp at Victory Junction, ask to be removed from the list to help others gain placement.

One previous camper – who started their Victory Junction camp experience at the age of ten – has now been employed at Victory Junction as an Adventure Staff Member. At the beginning of their employment the staff member was interviewed and will be interviewed again at the end of the summer to review the experience.

Camp is free for all campers. Some campers fundraise for Victory Junction. A bank donated piggy banks to the campers and once a camper fills up the piggy bank, they donate it to Victory Junction.

Gain an in-depth comprehension of what activities, opportunities and experiences are provided to young people with special needs at a range of North American camps.

6. The International Experience

The activities, opportunities and experiences provided by Victory Junction for its campers include:

- Alpine tower
- Zip line
- Giant swing
- Archery
- Boating and fishing
- Pool and water park
- Equestrian
- Arts and crafts
- Maze
- Mini golf
- Tree house
- Movie theatre and performing arts stage
- Indoor rock climbing
- Four lane ten pin bowling alley
- Sports and recreation
- Fab Shop – beauty parlour
- Adam's Race Experience (NASCARs, remote control race track).

Investigate the design, budget, development, construction, implementation, risk assessment and on-going appraisal of accessible adventure activities and programs.

While all of the staff at Victory Junction are encouraged to dream big, use their imagination, implement creativity and investigate alternative or better practices there is a process to go through to achieve their dreams. All major capital works has to go through the Board and a tender process which involves numerous meetings, discussion, plans, concepts and drafts.

Victory Junction relies on private, corporate and philanthropic support to continue their evolution – especially in relation to the upgrade or development of accessible adventure activities. As a member of the Serious Fun Network of camps – Victory Junction does receive annual financial support from Serious Fun.

Once funding is raised and accessible adventure activities are created, Victory Junction, along with the contractors that develop the activities, are responsible for the risk assessment and on-going appraisals to ensure best practice is always maintained.

Gain access to a variety of resources and best practice standards to develop accessible high adventure activities and programs for students with special needs.

6. The International Experience

Camps / Organisations:

Serious Fun Children's Network, Westport, Connecticut, USA

Camp Boggy Creek, Eutaw, Florida, USA

Alpine Towers International, Pineola, North Carolina, USA

Outcomes

Victory Junction has been a wealth of information and opportunities. Victory Junction runs amazing programs and understands how to respect the abilities, perceptions and perceived risk factors within each individual camper. Through experiencing Victory Junction, the Fellow has gained a greater insight into:

- Accessible adventure activity implementation
- An understanding of how to plan, budget, develop, implement and construct accessible adventure activities
- What adventure activity opportunities are available to people with disabilities with North America
- How to promote adventure activities, experiences, opportunities and programs
- How to modify adventure activities, experiences, opportunities and programs to ensure individuals are able to successfully participate.

Concluding Remarks

Visiting Victory Junction was a truly amazing experience. The activities, experiences, opportunities and programs they offer their campers are impressive and truly offer the camper the opportunity to challenge themselves physical and emotionally within a safe outdoor environment.

6. The International Experience

Destination Ten: Camp Twin Lakes, Georgia, USA

Contact: Dan Mathews, Director of Camping Services (worked for a partner organisation.

Worked at Camp Twin Lakes as a Program Staff Member;.

Appointed Program Director, 2000.

Appointed Director of Camping Services, 2009.

There are three separate camps in Georgia under the Twin Lakes name:

Location: Camp Twin Lakes, Rutledge (Established 1993)

Location: Camp Twin Lakes, Will-a-Way (Established 1971)

Location: Camp Twin Lakes, Dream (Established 1995)

Mission Statement

We provide places and paths for children with serious illnesses and life challenges to experience the joys of childhood and growth in their confidence and capabilities.

"When I'm at camp, I am no longer different from everyone else. At Camp Twin Lakes, different becomes normal, and for me, that's a dream come true."

This quote comes from a camper explaining why they considered the camp to be so successful. Camp Twin Lakes is a unique set up in the fact that it works with partner organisations to implement camp experiences for children with illnesses and disabilities. Both Camp Twin Lakes and its partner organisations are not-for-profit organisations.

The partner organisations that utilise Camp Twin Lakes are based in the state of Georgia – primarily Atlanta – and rotate camp experiences and programs through Camp Twin Lakes on a weekly basis throughout the summer and a weekend basis throughout the remainder of the year.

The partner organisations fundraise separately and coordinate their camp programs as a separate entity. During their planning they are the ones that establish the camp program with the support and advice of Camp Twin Lakes. During the camp experience, Camp Twin Lakes staff coordinate and implement all the activities while the partner organisation is responsible for the general day-to-day implementation of the camp.

The Fellow witnessed two weekend programs in operation Camp Twin Lakes:

- CTL Rutledge (Camp Sunshine Sibling – for siblings of kids with cancer)
- CTL Will-a-Way (No Limb-itations Family Camp – for kids with amputations and their families).

Objectives

Gain a greater understanding of the accessibility to high adventure activities and programs for students with special needs.

While Camp Twin Lakes uses a variety of common systems and operations to ensure that their activities and programs are accessible – they are also very creative and innovative. Current systems include

6. The International Experience

4:1 pulleys, chest harnesses, body harnesses and rescue harness (superman bag) for campers with minimal or no muscle control and cannot support their head – used on the zip – line.

However, through imagination and not being afraid to explore possibilities, Camp Twin Lakes have developed and are continuing to create unique operational and safety systems to ensure campers are able to access activities and given the full camp experience. The unique systems used and being developed at Camp Twin Lakes include:

- Implementing a seat into the rescue harness to give campers – especially campers with Spina Bifida – access to the climbing wall and zip line
- A hydraulic hoist on their zip – line to lower the campers at the end of their zip – line experience
- Camp Twin Lakes is currently making a proto – type seat harness using a NASCAR seat to create a safer and more stable harness system to ensure the safety of campers on high adventure activities
- Camp Twin Lakes is currently looking at creating a hydraulic system on their giant swings to attach and remove campers from the giant swing without the use of a ladder – making the swings easier and safer to access.



Observe the opportunities and systems currently available in North America.

At Camp Twin Lakes they implement best practice systems in relation to all aspects of adventure programming and rope courses such as construction, development, safety procedures and policies.

Camp Twin Lakes NASCAR Seat Proto-type Accessible Harness

Camp Twin Lakes is also ACA Accredited and therefore are required to maintain the high standards set by ACA in relation to all aspects of camping – especially activities and programming standards.

Camp Twin Lakes uses a company called Signatory Research to create, annual assess and train their staff in high adventure activities. However, Camp Twin Lakes now has two staff members who have completed enough operational hours and training programs with Signatory Research on high adventure activities that they are now able to train current and future Camp Twin Lakes in all aspects of high adventure activity implementation.

6. The International Experience

Learn through the programs in place in North America, how to:

- *Plan*
- *Budget*
- *Develop*
- *Construct*
- *Implement*
- *Process*
- *Modify*

high adventure experiential programs and activities specifically targeting the development, growth and experience of students with a variety of special needs.

Although there is a process to follow, the staff at Camp Twin Lakes are always encouraged to be creative, imaginative, inventive and given opportunities to apply their dreams.

Camp Twin Lakes required an annual income of US\$2.6 million to cover operational costs. The income raised through their partner organisation camps raises approximately 20 per cent of all costs. So in their Atlanta office, Camp Twin Lakes has a team of fundraiser who work exclusively to raise funds required to keep Camp Twin Lakes operational and provide exceptional services to their partner organisations.

Before dreams are implemented they must be approved by the Board of Directors, CEO, Development Director and Director of Camping Services.

Understand the methods of promotion for the inclusion of students with special needs in outdoor adventure activities.

Camp Twin Lakes uses the following forms of promotion to increase its clientele:

- Word of mouth
- Printed advertisements
- Social Media – Twitter, Facebook, YouTube
- Website
- Partner cards – shopping discount card for Atlanta
- Spin for Kids – a bike ride fundraising event – www.spinforkids.org
- External groups
- Radio-a-thon conducted at the Camp.

Camp Twin Lakes is in a unique situation in the fact that the partner organisations that they provide camps for are all not-for-profit organisations (like themselves). While Camp Twin Lakes are raising money to develop, maintain and expand their activities, programs and operations; at the same time their partner organisations are raising money simply to implement their camp at Camp Twin Lakes. This can sometimes be confusing for the philanthropic and corporate communities.

Therefore, Camp Twin Lakes has established a set of guidelines and protocols detailing how their partner organisations can use the Camp Twin Lakes name while raising funds for their camps – hopefully minimising confusion and maximising funds for both Camp Twin Lakes and their partners.

6. The International Experience

Investigate the creation, use, implementation and modification of high adventure activities suitable for students with special needs in place in North America.

While Camp Twin Lakes fully understands that every camper can succeed at some level, they also accept that not every activity can be accessible – therefore not everything at Camp Twin Lakes is 100 per cent accessible. Camp Twin Lakes teaches the campers to learn to adapt to achieve – helping them to discover creative and innovative methods that will help them to achieve their goals but may not give them 100 per cent accessibility to all experiences and opportunities.

While using a 4:1 pulley system, hydraulic lift and constructing the wall with an incline, the climbing wall becomes accessible. Their giant swing is accessible. However, the pamper pole is not accessible and is not designed to be all-accessible.

Investigate the physical and emotional benefits that students with special needs gain through the opportunity to participate in accessible high adventure activities.

Camp Twin Lakes implements a variety of Adventure Based Therapy Models throughout all of their programs. Through correct active use of these models they are able to work on breaking down communication barriers and social barriers, for the better development of the individual as well as the group. As a result this:

- Builds confidence and courage within campers
- Build independence
- Helps them realise what they can achieve
- Helps them look beyond their disabilities
- Learned helplessness within individuals is confronted and challenged.

Camp Twin Lakes recognises that Summer Camp is a rite of passage for a lot of young people throughout North America. By offering camp experiences to campers with illnesses and disabilities they are able to relate to their peers and openly discuss their camp experiences and achievements after summer.

Investigate the desired learning outcomes of students with special needs experiencing high adventure activities with a focus on comprehending how these outcomes are established, monitored, assessed and measured.

Through their accreditation with the American Camps Association (ACA), Camp Twin Lakes sets desired camper outcomes on programs and activities. However, these outcomes are not explained directly to their campers at the beginning of each week; they are detailed through their staff training prior to the commencement of summer camps.

By training their staff, it is clearly evident to everyone at Camp Twin Lakes that their outcomes are easily being achieved.

Camp Twin Lakes ACA desired camper outcomes are:

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Increase Independence

- Campers are given opportunities to challenge themselves through negotiating obstacles in their lives. Through independent decision making, self care and care for their environment, campers are able to increase their independence.

Improve Self Confidence

- Campers have opportunities to develop self confidence through skill based activities focused on success. Success focused programs teach campers the value of making mistakes and how they can use those mistakes to improve their success at assigned tasks.

Develop Leadership and Problem Solving Skills

- Campers are placed in leadership roles and taught leadership and problem solving skills through team based activities.

Improve knowledge about Environmental Awareness

- It is a camp tradition and responsibility to promote environmental ethics. Campers are introduced to various activities that teach them about being stewards of their environment.

Instil Values of Respect, Honesty, Empowerment, Community, Trust, and Growth

- Campers are exposed to these values in every activity at Camp Twin Lakes and encouraged to adopt these values. Campers learn the importance of these values by direct teaching, practice and role modelling.

Research if participation in a high adventure experience has a direct impact on the physical and emotional benefits of the participant, and if those benefits can be linked directly to an improved wellbeing within that individual.

At Camp Twin Lakes there is no specific research or documentation completed into the impact that a high adventure experience has on campers. Utilising the ACA desired camper outcomes, Camp Twin Lakes looks at the physical and emotional benefits the entire camp experience has on campers.

Gain an in-depth comprehension of what activities, opportunities and experiences are provided to young people with special needs at a range of North American camps.

The activities, opportunities and experiences provided by Camp Twin Lakes to include:

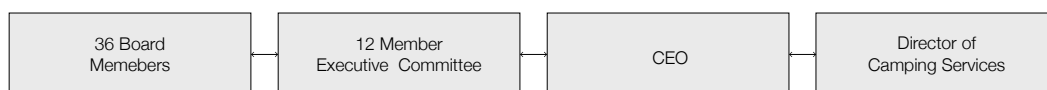
- Waterfront (canoes, kayaks, paddle boats, pontoon boat, swimming pool, fishing)
- Sports
- Mountain bike riding
- Horseback riding
- Animal farm
- The Farm
- Nature arts and crafts

6. The International Experience

- Tree house exploration
- Outdoor adventure (overnight camping, high and low ropes course, climbing tower, zip line, pamper pole, giant swing, group games archery)
- The arts (dance and movement, photography, ceramics, drumming, radio, improvisation and theatre games, puppetry).

Investigate the design, budget, development, construction, implementation, risk assessment and on-going appraisal of accessible adventure activities and programs.

Camp Twin Lakes Hierarchy



This is a very basic model of the extensive hierarchy in place at Camp Twin Lakes. All staff at Camp Twin Lakes are encouraged to dream big, use their imagination, implement creativity and investigate alternative or better practices. However, there is a process to go through to achieve their dreams.

All major capital works has to go through the Board and a tender process which involves numerous meetings, discussion, plans, concepts and drafts. Smaller projects can be handled between the Director of Operations and the CEO.

Once funding is raised and accessible adventure activities are created, Camp Twin Lakes, along with the contractors who develop the activities for the risk assessment and on-going appraisals, ensure best practice is always maintained.

Gain access to a variety of resources and best practice standards to develop accessible high adventure activities and programs for students with special needs.

Resources and References

Books: Super Staff Super Vision, 2002 (ISBN:- 0-9670321-1-3)
Skill of the Day, Volume 1
Training Terrific Staff, Volume 1 & 2, Michael Brandwein, Illinois, USA

Camps / Organisations / Contacts:

Camp Boggy Creek, Eutis, Florida, USA
Dr Gwynn M. Powell, The Univeristy of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, USA

6. The International Experience

Outcomes

Camp Twin Lakes has been a wealth of information and opportunities. Camp Twin Lakes runs amazing programs and understands how to respect the abilities, perceptions and perceived risk factors within each individual camper. Through experiencing Camp Twin Lakes, the Fellow gained a greater insight into:

- Accessible adventure activity implementation
- An understanding of how to plan, budget, develop, implement and construct accessible adventure activities
- What adventure activity opportunities are available to people with disabilities with North America
- How to promote adventure activities, experiences, opportunities and programs
- How to modify adventure activities, experiences, opportunities and programs to ensure individuals are able to successful participate.

Concluding Remarks

Visiting Camp Twin Lakes was yet another amazing experience. The activities, experiences, opportunities and programs they offer their campers are impressive and truly offer the camper the opportunity to challenge themselves physical and emotionally within a safe outdoor environment.

7. Knowledge Transfer: Applying the Outcomes

Through this experience the Fellow has come to understand the importance of uniting camps and working closer together to provide more professional and appropriate services for all users. The opportunity for the Fellow to visit camps throughout North America highlighted that we are all focused on delivering the best service possible for all users. The Fellow realised that while the industry is competitive, it is also unique in its ability to openly share, promote and unite its personnel and resources to ensure all providers are able to grow, learn and develop their facilities, programs and documentation to aid the implementation of best practice throughout the industry.

As a result of the Bella Irlicht / ISS Institute Fellowship, Bellette has returned to further develop and enhance programs implemented at Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre Inc. in the following ways:

- Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre Inc. staff are now challenged to connect with and visit a minimum of one camp per academic school term. The focus of this visit is to further learn and gain a better comprehension from the camp visited on how they manage, maintain, promote and implement their entire camp while simultaneously offering the same information and documentation from Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre Inc.
- The archery activity site at Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre Inc. was immediately and inexpensively modified upon the Fellow's return. While the site was built to be accessible, it was still a challenge for participants in wheelchairs to easily access and experience archery. By purchasing archery release aids in Canada, Bellette has been able to make the archery site fully accessible giving all students the opportunity to experience, enjoy and participate in archery.
- The Fellow has also enhanced the team building and leadership programs and activities conducted at Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre Inc. by introducing a variety of new initiatives and teamwork and leadership activities witnessed in North America.
- As Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre Inc. was reaccredited with the Australian Camps Association through the Australian Tourism Accreditation Program in 2013, the Fellow implemented new procedures, practices and policies adapted from camps visited in North America to further enhance best practices implemented at Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre Inc.
- In December 2012, the Fellow made a submission to The Newsboys Foundation for the development of Accessible Low Ropes Activities based on what the Fellow witnessed and photographed at Easter Seals Camp Horizon in Calgary, Canada. In March 2013, the Fellow received full funding from The Newsboys Foundation to develop these activities. In September 2013, everything came together for the project to be built. Throughout the development, plans were modified and adapted to ensure safety was paramount and that this unique experience was accessible to all participants.

7. Knowledge Transfer: Applying the Outcomes



Blackwood SSOEC Accessible Low Ropes

This project is complete and now being enjoyed by students accessing and utilising Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre Inc. It is also believed that this is the only accessible low ropes program in Australia – something that the Fellow promotes to help other camps in Australia develop similar unique programs to ensure access for all campers.

- The Fellow is currently in communication with three high ropes course building companies to obtain quotes to develop an accessible high ropes course in the future to further challenge students accessing Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre Inc. beyond their comfort zones and help them to grow, develop and learn through experiential education.

In November 2012, only weeks after returning from North America, the Fellow was contacted by Camp Manyung, the YMCA Camp in Mt Eliza. Camp Manyung is currently in the process of designing, developing and building an accessible high ropes course based on universal design. Through open discussion with Camp Manyung, the Fellow gave them full access to all the photos taken of accessible high ropes courses throughout North America. These photos were passed onto the course builder who briefly met with the Fellow in February 2013 to further discuss the Camp Manyung Project.

Camp Manyung have currently completed building a new tree high ropes course and are now turning their focus to the development of an accessible high ropes course.

In August 2013, the Fellow attended a Universal High Ropes Consultation Meeting attended by representatives from Special Schools, the disability sector, Department of Planning & Community Development, Latrobe University, High Ropes Building Developers and the Camp Sector at Camp Manyung to openly discuss, advise and support the development of an accessible high ropes course

7. Knowledge Transfer: Applying the Outcomes

at Camp Manyung. Through this experience the Fellow further promoted what was witnessed in North America as well as learning from industry experts and leaders on the development of high ropes courses in Australia. Through this consultation meeting, the Fellow looks forward to being a continued part of the development at Camp Manyung to further support their high ropes course development as well learning from the experience.

Through a chance meeting with Gwynn Powell (a member of the board of the International Camping Fellowship (ICF) at the University of Athens, in Georgia, USA), the Fellow was able to further promote Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre Inc. and why he was visiting camps in North America. Through this meeting the Fellow was asked to attend the ICF Conference in Antalya, Turkey in October 2014, an invitation the Fellow has accepted.

In August 2013, the Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre Inc. Committee approved the Fellow attending the ICF Conference in Antalya, Turkey in October 2014 with the understanding that while at the Conference the Fellow intends to attend the International Camp Directors Course (ICDC) Trainee Trainers Course. In October 2009 the Fellow was a participant in the first ICDC conducted in Australia with the focus of the course being:

- To present the basics of camp management in the core areas of the organised body of knowledge
- To expand their network of peers and develop a community of professionals in a 'camp like' atmosphere
- To provide an introduction to self-directed learning and the participants' role in their own professional development process.

By becoming an ICDC Trainer and attending the ICF Conference the Fellow will be able to further strengthen connections within the camping industry, promote what the Fellow has witnessed through this Fellowship and beyond while also continuously developing and implementing best practice models at Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre Inc.

In 2014, the Fellow will also become more actively involved the Australian Camps Association (ACA) Conferences and Programs. By supporting and attending the ACA Conferences and Programs the Fellow will be able to continue to promote what he witnessed in North America while also learning from the camp industry both nationally and internationally.

Through this involvement and creating further connections within the camps industry both nationally and internationally, the Fellow will be able to become better connected to further challenge, support and assist the government, industry associations and the camps association to build a more accessible future for all campers and further challenge young people with special needs beyond their comfort zones.

8. Recommendations

Dare to be different!

It's time for everyone to challenge themselves to further challenge young people with special needs and give them the opportunity to fully experience and grow through experiential education. As industries continue to evolve and develop their ways of thinking to include universal design and ensure that accessibility to all is increased, we need to ensure these opportunities are extended beyond buildings, facilities, grounds and infrastructure within the camps industry to ensure that the opportunity to experience adventure and experiential education also evolves.

We need to challenge young people with special needs. These young people need to be given opportunities that they rarely will experience throughout their day-to-day lives. They need to be challenged to participate, grow, experience and learn through experiential education.

We – as government, industry, education, community and professional associations – need to challenge ourselves to challenge them. We need to fully control the real risk of higher adventure activities while increasing the level of perceived risk for the participant offering them the opportunity for peak adventure through unique experiential opportunities. We need to walk, explore, fund, develop and implement beyond our comfort zones to ensure that all young people with special needs are given the opportunity to grow physically, socially and intellectually through the experience of:

- High Ropes
- Alpine towers
- Rock climbing
- Abseiling
- Archery
- Camping.

By challenging ourselves to further develop unique experiential and adventure education programs for young people with special needs to achieve beyond their comfort, we will be able to help all young people achieve to their full potential.

With all industries required to meet strict safety and Australian standards throughout all aspects within each industry, the camps industry has a very unique opportunity to become a global leader in accessible or universal design standards for experiential education. While in North America, the Fellow met with Brian Lisson the President of Adventureworks Associates Inc. in Ontario, Canada. Adventureworks is a leading high ropes course builder in Canada and while the Fellow discovered that the high ropes industry in North America is regulated by the Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) through campsite visits, the Fellow was amazed to discover that there are no specific guidelines, regulations or accreditation requirements specifically focused on the design, development and implementation of accessible high rope elements and alpine towers. As long as materials and methods used by the camps creating accessible high rope courses and alpine towers meet the ACCT standards, the designer has the freedom of imagination.

While the ACCT is currently focused on developing standards, guidelines and requirements for high ropes elements, flexibility and freedom to is given when it comes to accessible high ropes and alpine tower elements. With the growing need for accessible high ropes courses and alpine towers throughout North America, the ACCT will create specific standards, guidelines and requirements relating to accessible high ropes and alpine tower elements, but until then imagination, exploration and creativity are the keys to accessible experiential adventure and education programs.

Dare to be different. Dare to use your imagination. Dare to explore. Dare to be creative. Dare to

8. Recommendations

discover new possibilities and opportunities to allow everyone to discover their full potential and be challenged beyond their comfort zones. Dare to become a global leader in experiential education. Dare to unite the world through the camps industry by creating unique experiential adventure and education programs that can be replicated globally.

By daring to dream, the Fellow will support the achievement of the following recommendations:

Government

- Through education, create opportunities for young people with special needs to fully experience and engage themselves in experiential adventure and education programs.
- Enhance and expand the Residential and Outdoor Schools Associations (ROSA) campsites to include appropriate and challenging experiential adventure and education programs for all Victorian Government School students.
- Provide input and funding into the development of experiential adventure and education programs including but not limited to:
 - Accessible high ropes courses
 - Accessible artificial indoor rock climbing and abseiling walls
 - Accessible alpine towers
 - Accessible tree house accommodation experiences.
- Provide input into the discussion and creation of Australian Standards into relation to all aspects of accessible experiential adventure and education programs.

Industry

Unite the:

- Australian Camps Association (ACA)
- Outdoor Recreation Industry Council (ORIC)
- International Camping Fellowship (ICF)
- The Association of Challenge Course Technology (ACCT)
to create a unique universal set of guidelines, requirements and regulations for accessibility in relation to experiential adventure and education programs.
- Encourage camps throughout Australia to continue to implement new and accessible experiential adventure and education programs using imagination, exploration and creativity.
- Encourage all Australian camps to strengthen their relationships with each other to learn, develop and modify their facilities, grounds, programs and experiences through open communication and unified support.

8. Recommendations

Education and Training

- Modify current Tertiary Education Outdoor Education Courses to ensure that students are given the opportunity to become qualified in a variety of camp specific programs and activities so that when they graduate, their qualifications are accredited through nationally recognised training providers and are current. Qualification may include:
- Bus Licence
- Wilderness 1st Aid
- High & Low Ropes Instructor
- Water Instructor – i.e. canoe, kayak, raft, swim
- Artificial and natural rock climbing and abseiling instructor.
- Increase the volume of exposure to students within Tertiary Education implementing experiential adventure and education programs with special needs clients.

International Specialised Skills Institute

- Skill and knowledge deficiencies remain throughout the Australian Camps Industry regarding the development of innovative experiential adventure and education programs for special needs clients. These skill and knowledge deficiencies should be addressed by ISS Institute through the provision of further Fellowship opportunities in partnership with the Australian Camps Association.

9. References

- » Richard Louv, Last Child in the Woods – Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2008
- » Colin Mortlock, The Adventure Alternative, Cicerone Press, 1987

As highlighted in the International Experience Sector, the fundamental information for this report was gained from open discussion with Camp Managers and Staff throughout all visits, rather than theoretical research or reference material. Bellette is grateful for all the staff at every camp, institution and business that made themselves available for discussion. Through their generous support and willingness to talk with the Fellow has been instrumental in completion of this report.