Partners in Inclusion at a Residential Summer Camp: A Case Study

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Abstract

This study examines the success of a partnership-driven inclusive camping program. Following a social justice philosophy, Camp Crystal Sands developed their inclusive camp program with assistance from Project Rainbow. Project Rainbow specializes in assisting camps with the inclusion process, and is a subsidiary of Reach for the Rainbow. This camp arrangement was selected for study as a potential reflection of best practices in inclusive camping. Participant observation, document analysis, and interviews gathered during a week-long summer camping session and examined to determine the effectiveness of the partnership and the achievement of inclusion goals. Results and recommendations are presented, including discussion of the importance of utilizing a camp-wide approach that trains all staff to work directly with campers with disabilities.

KEYWORDS: Residential camp, inclusion, children, partnerships

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Introduction

Summer camp opportunities for children have been available for many years (American Camping Association, 2008; Canadian Camping Association, 2008). Positive social relationships, skill development, identity, and values are among the wide-ranging benefits for campers (American Camping Association, 2005; Biadescchi, Henderson, & James, 2007; Fine, 2005; IPSOS Reid, 2001; Powell, 2003). There is also a growing body of literature on the contribution of camp experiences to positive youth development in areas such as adventure/exploration, independence, and friendship (Henderson et al., 2007; Thurber, Scanlin, Scheuler, & Henderson, 2007). Benefits to staff have also been far-reaching from positive impacts on life skills, attitudes, self-awareness, confidence, career goals, to relationships with peers (Bolden, 2005; DeGraaf & Glover, 2003).

Given these widespread benefits of camping, it should come as no surprise that families of children with disabilities have long sought out summer camp opportunities for their children (Blas, 1997; Brookman et al., 2003). While children with disabilities have been able to access camping opportunities since the 1930s, historically these camps have been in segregated settings where there were no campers without disabilities (Blake, 1996). Segregated camps have included camps that were designed for persons with a specific disability such as persons with physical disabilities (Thurber & Malinowski, 1999) as well as camps for persons with an illness such as cancer (Meltzer & Johnson, 2004). Although both types of segregated camps offered one way for children with disabilities to experience summer camp (Goodwin & Staples, 2005), there was a growing recognition of the need for more integrated options to also be available (i.e., where campers with disabilities attended a regular camp alongside campers without disabilities (Dibner & Dibner, 1971; Sable, 1992).

One reason for expanding integrated options was social justice, a philosophy that is based on the premise that all persons should have the same rights and conditions (Donnelly & Coakley, 2002; Lord & Hutchison, 2007). This means camps would be viewed as having a social obligation to foster the physical and social integration of children with disabilities into the camp environment. A social justice lens also means that camps would need to provide the necessary supports to ensure the participation of campers with disabilities with other members of the camp community (Blake, 1996; Hutchison & McGill, 1998). Ideally, camps would foster inclusion, which Hutchison (2006) defined as the process of involving people with disabilities in communities where citizenship, empowerment, full participation, individual and community capacity-building, and relationships are present. In the early 1990s, the inclusive community movement began to lay down its roots (McKnight, 1995). This movement witnessed a scrutiny of the continuum and the disappointments of both physical and social integration (Wieck & Strully, 1991). As a result, the concept of inclusion emerged as an alternative to social integration and the continuum. This definition represents a paradigm shift or a "new story" (Lord & Hutchison, 2006). The concept of disability and integration were re-constructed through a process of critical analysis not previously witnessed (Devine & Lashua, 2002; McGill, 2000).

A second reason for expanding inclusive camping relates to the benefits accrued through inclusion. Indeed, an integrated option for camping is rooted in the broader benefits of integration in recreation witnessed throughout Canada and the United States (Hutchison & Lord, 1979; Schleien, Ray, & Green, 1988). Soon these benefits were reflected in research on integrated camping. Campers with disabilities improve in diverse areas such as communication skills, play behavior, making choices, cooperation, taking responsibility, independence, self-esteem, and friendships (Arnold, Bourdeau, & Nagele, 2005; Brannan, Arick, Fullerton, & Harris, 2000; Bullock, Mahon, & Welch, 1992; Schleien, Hornfield, & McaVoy, 1994; Sugarman, 1996). Further, campers without disabilities, by getting to know children with disabilities, learn to focus on capacities rather than limitations, realize their commonalities, and diminish their fears (Blake & Waters, 1995; Hornibrook, 1997; Lau, Keung, & DeGraaf, 1999; Sable, 1992). Camp staff also benefit, as working in an integrated camp increases their awareness and skills for fostering campers' gifts and interests, accommodations, and relationships with peers (Blake & Waters; Brannan, Fullerton, Arick, Robb, & Bender, 2003; Hornibrook). Finally, families of campers with disabilities benefit from hav-
ing more time to rejuvenate and increase family cohesion (Anderson, Schleien, McAvoy, Lais, & Seligmann, 1997; Scholl, McAvoy, Rynders, & Smith, 2003).

**Challenges in the Canadian Context**

Although integrated camping had been available for some time and hundreds of campers have been accepted into regular camp programs (Blake, 1996), there is some evidence that camps in Canada have been struggling in their efforts to include children with disabilities. For example, in the mid-1990s, the umbrella organization for camping in Canada, the Canadian Camping Association (CCA) was called upon to develop resources and training manuals, and offer organizational support for integration based on a growing demand from campers, parents, and camp staff (Blake). At this time the CCA conducted a survey that revealed that only 190 out of 334 camps were working towards integration or were completely integrated (CCA, 1992). In reviewing these findings, Blake noted that these survey numbers might actually overestimate the extent to which integration was taking place, as the camps that were just beginning integration were included in this count. Most disconcerting, however, was the point made by Blake that many camps felt that their camp environment was not suitable for children with disabilities and would not pursue integration.

In 2001, IPSOS Reid, on behalf of CCA and Provincial Camping Association completed three projects with the intent of helping with decision-making regarding marketing, lobbying, and meeting members’ needs: a secondary analysis of Statistics Canada census data (e.g., population by age, gender, families); a national general consumer/parent survey (e.g., attitudes towards camp, reasons for going to camp); and a survey of national and provincial members (e.g., issues facing camps, performance of provincial associations, camp background). The latter member survey was sent to CCA members with 225 out of 751 camps responding. The camps were asked “Does your camp have a program offering for campers with special needs?” Results for campers with disabilities were: physical (54%), A.D.D./learning (37%), developmental (26%), and mental/behavior (14%). A second question that asked “Please indicate the percentage of your total summer camp population that is identified as special needs” showed that 56% of camps that offer special programs had 5% or fewer campers with special needs. On another question, 15% indicated they were totally dedicated to special needs campers (IPSOs Reid, 2001). This lack of clarity around the term special, and the absence of the term ‘integrated’ made it hard to determine how much integration was happening. One must also wonder why integration was not on the telescope of the survey developers.

To further complicate this situation, historically the literature on integrated camping has been sparse and mostly anecdotal, written on the experiences of the authors, rather than grounded in empirical research (Blake, 1996; Blake & Waters, 1995; Hutchison, 1989; Orchard, 1996; Pontone, 1996). One notable study was done around this time on attitudes of camp counselors toward integration (Bogle, 1996). This study was done by a Project Rainbow staff person on five of their own camps for a class project. The study was limited in nature and had methodological weaknesses that pointed to the need for further research. However, a few interesting recommendations were that directors needed to have an open door policy when counselors have problems, examine staff development practices (e.g., including more simulations), give more information about integration to the counselors, and provide support as needed to counselors.

**Rationale for the Study**

Canadian research on camp inclusion is needed (Bogle, 1996). As inclusion emerges as a societal philosophy, the theoretical and conceptual framework of such research must be consistent this perspective. There a need to examine camps from this more critical lens.

Several pressing questions can be posed through this research to shed light on the inclusion and its relevance to camp. How should inclusion be structured, what are the goals of inclusion in the camp context, what programming or staffing variables might facilitate inclusion, and what challenges or barriers exist? It appears that while interest in inclusive camping is growing, achieving inclusion, not just integration, is a much more challenging task.

A landmark American study by Brannan and colleagues (2003) has done much to fill in the research gap on camp inclusion. This
study, a national multi-site case study on inclusive camping, examined inclusion efforts at 12 camps and two resident and outdoor schools identified from 24 camps across the U.S. that operated inclusive programs. The study reviewed the specific approaches to developing and implementing inclusive outdoor programs, focusing on the "best practices" identified at the participating camps. However, it is important to say that having this extensive American study does not mean that Canadian research is no longer needed. Research that examines a camp's attempt to foster inclusion is needed as it could reveal the successes and challenges of implementation and allow for further refinement of inclusive strategies, guidelines, and policies that will assist camps in more fully realizing their goal of inclusion.

The purpose of this study was to examine a camp's attempt to foster inclusion. Using a qualitative case study approach, this paper investigates the inclusive practices of Camp Crystal Sands (a pseudonym), a residential summer camp that began including campers with disabilities in 1999. In terms of format, inclusion at Camp Crystal Sands was fostered in partnership with Project Rainbow, an outside organization with an expertise in inclusive camp practices. According to Project Rainbow, the camp has achieved substantial success with inclusion. As such, this study may be considered an investigation into a 'best practice' of inclusion implementation. Specifically, this study asked the following questions:

a. How was the inclusion process structured, including the partnering relationship with Project Rainbow?

b. What were the inclusion goals in the camp context and how well were they achieved?

c. What were the factors that facilitated inclusion at the camp, and further, how could inclusion be improved?

Case Study Methodology

Case studies differ from other research methods in that they investigate a "bounded system," which Stake (1995) described as "a specific, complex, functioning thing" (p. 2). They are the preferred strategy when the investigator has little control over events and the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, 2003). Because relatively little is known about the inclusion process in a camp environment in Canada, particularly of a partnership nature, this study most closely approximated what Yin described as a revelatory case.

Although case studies can take a qualitative or quantitative approach, this study most closely followed the qualitative methodology as presented by Stake (2000) whereby the case study aims to develop an understanding of the particularity and complexity of the object of study. Similar to ethnographic research, participant-observation, in-depth interviewing, and document analysis played a prominent role in data collection. By offering a detailed account of a specific case, the value of case studies is found in their ability to illustrate issues, generate broad understandings, and encourage insight (Stake).

Site Selection: Camp Crystal Sands

The camp selected for this study was called Camp Crystal Sands, a residential summer camp located in Southern Ontario. As previously mentioned, Camp Crystal Sands implemented inclusion in partnership with Project Rainbow, an outside organization with expertise in inclusive practices. Project Rainbow is the camp inclusion arm of the organization Reach for the Rainbow (RFTR), a non-profit organization that partners with community organizations to develop integrated recreational, respite, and outreach opportunities for children and youth with disabilities across the province of Ontario (www.reachfortherainbow.ca). RFTR began to facilitate integration in community recreation settings in 1983 and in 1987, under the auspices of Project Rainbow, extended its partnerships to summer camps. Currently, Project Rainbow has over 50 partnering day and residential camps, and, as of 2006, had provided services and opportunities to over 900 children, young adults, and their families (Project Rainbow, 2006).

Camp Crystal Sands was selected using a purposeful sampling approach (Creswell, 2003) with the intent of profiling a partnering relationship that might be considered a "best practice" in inclusive camping. The selection criteria included: accreditation with a provincial camping organization; high ratings on previous evaluations by Project Rainbow; at least
4 years experience with inclusion; compliance with Project Rainbow policies; and leadership staff experienced with inclusion. Although a number of the 50 partnering camps met these criteria, Camp Crystal Sands was selected for this study because of its geographical proximity to the research team. Initial contact with Project Rainbow was made through the Head of Evaluation at the Project Rainbow Head Office in Toronto in January 2002, when the study design was being developed. Permission to conduct the study came from two sources: the Project Rainbow Program Manager, as well as the director of Camp Crystal Sands.

At the time of the study, Camp Crystal Sands had been partnering with Project Rainbow for four years, since 1999. A residential United Church of Canada camp that had been in operation since 1951, the directors of Camp Crystal Sands learned about Project Rainbow through its sister camps and decided to pursue a partnership, believing that inclusion and its underlying values of social justice and diversity were closely aligned to the camp's Christian spiritual beliefs. Representatives from Project Rainbow made a presentation to the Board of Directors of the camp and the partnership proposal was supported.

The camp stretched over a 20-acre site that included a river and a forested area. The main office was centrally located and easily recognized and a large dining hall was nearby. Campers slept in cabins that were arranged in a semi-circle behind the office, or in a smaller "tent camp" adjacent to the main site. While at Camp Crystal Sands, campers enjoyed traditional camp activities including canoeing, hiking, archery, campfires, arts and crafts, as well as high ropes, basketball, volleyball, and swimming. The day began with a morning dip in the pool, followed by breakfast, cabin clean-up, an all-camp game, and a spiritual session. Campers then participated in three morning program sessions with their cabin groups. After lunch was a rest period, followed by two 45-minute program sessions and a mandatory all-camp swim. After dinner, an hour of free time and an all-camp game, spiritual session, and camp fire brought the day to a close.

Camp Crystal Sands received approximately 100 campers between the ages of 6 and 15 for each of its eight week-long summer sessions. Thus, based on the criteria set by Project Rainbow, each week, three to five campers with a disability attended Camp Crystal Sands. Each of these campers was placed into a cabin group with approximately 10 other campers, 2 counselors, and 1 inclusion counselor. In the week of this study, three campers placed by Project Rainbow were attending camp. All three campers had a developmental disability. Sheana was a camper aged 10; her inclusion counselor was Natasha. Barry was a camper aged 9; Barry's inclusion counselor was Kala. And Mike, the third camper placed by Project Rainbow, had been paired with inclusion counselor Bill; Mike was 11 years old. All names are pseudonyms.

Data Collection Procedures

Triangulation was used to reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation. Triangulation conveys the idea that multiple sources of data and perceptions clarify meaning, verify the repeatability of an observation or interpretation, and bring credibility to the findings (Bogdan & Biklin, 1998; Patton, 2002; Stake, 2000). Data collection took the form of documents analysis of Project Rainbow and written camp materials, participant observations of selected campers and staff, and interviews of key staff members. Different types of data may yield different results; therefore, the observation results and the interview results were compared to each other to verify the results. Also, inconsistencies between the two different types of data can offer opportunities for deeper insight into the study (Patton, 2002).

The researchers received written consent to collect data from all interview participants. The parents of the campers attending Camp Crystal Sands during the observation week were informed of the study via a letter sent home prior to the camp session. Most campers were aware of the study because the on-site observer had been introduced to the campers as a researcher at the beginning of the camp session.

Participant observation methodology. Observations were collected at the camp for the duration of one 6-day camp session, from August 4–9, 2002. During this week of observations, three campers with disabilities who had been placed by Project Rainbow were in attendance at the camp. Each of the three campers was observed for 2 days. A member of the research team took the role of "observer-participant" (Glesne, 2006), essentially tag-
ging along with the camper's cabin group and at times observing the activities (e.g., swimming, spiritual sessions) and at other times participating (e.g., cabin clean-up, canoeing). Jottings were recorded throughout the day and twice daily, during all-camp swim and before bed; jottings were expanded into detailed field notes, following a protocol designed to foster thick description of the camp experiences that were observed.

**Document analysis methodology.** Training manuals, newsletters, articles, and brochures belonging to both Project Rainbow and the camp were examined. The documents were analyzed along with the interviews and observations to provide a comprehensive understanding of how inclusion was facilitated and impeded at the camp.

**Interview methodology.** Interviews were conducted with staff from both Camp Crystal Sands and Project Rainbow. The interview participants were the inclusion manager from Project Rainbow, the camp director, the camp inclusion coordinator, and seven staff members who were directly involved in inclusion during the week of observations (i.e., cabin counselor or inclusion counselor to one of the campers with a disability). Staff members were interviewed on a one-to-one basis to encourage each participant to share honestly about the inclusion process and to obtain unique voices from the different participants (Patton, 2002). Interview questions focused on the specific role of the interviewee in the inclusion process (Questions for camp staff included, “What do you do to make sure all campers are included in the camp program?” and “What unique challenges have you faced when trying to include all campers into a program?”). Interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and were audio taped with the permission of participants. A transcription of the interview was mailed to the interviewee to verify its accuracy.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

Analysis of the case study data began with a thorough review of all interviews and field note transcripts, as a way to develop a holistic picture of camp inclusion and to begin to get a feeling for the data in terms of indigenous concepts (Patton, 2002). Following this step, the research team began to classify the data using the process of open coding. Codes were developed by grouping together phrases that were similar in terms of ideas, events, or themes. NVivo 3 (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2002) was used to assist with this stage of data management. Additionally, while the researchers were coding the data, they also generated memos which reflected any hunches of particular relationships or theories emerging from the data. To increase credibility of the findings, we returned to the data to search for further examples which might support or refute our preliminary interpretations.

Common patterns were then created from the codes using constant comparisons. A pattern is a descriptive finding that is common across people or sites; Patton (2002) gave an example, “almost all participants reported feeling fear when they went down the mountain” (p. 453). Researchers looked for convergence or recurring regularities (common patterns) in the data; these regularities reveal patterns that can be used later for clarification of broader themes.

**Results**

**Structuring Camp Inclusion: A Partnership Model**

In this study, camp inclusion was the responsibility of two partnering agencies: Project Rainbow and Camp Crystal Sands. Whereas the role of Camp Crystal Sands was to provide the camp experience, the role of Project Rainbow was to support the camp in the successful inclusion of campers with a disability. Project Rainbow supported its partner camps in three main ways. First, it helped camps put in place a set of policies designed to foster inclusion. For example, Project Rainbow mandated that partner camps must agree to reserve a specific number of spaces per session throughout the summer for campers with disabilities, not just at the beginning or the end of the summer when the camp may not be as full. Camps must also agree to do all that is possible to have the campers included at the camp, including hiring additional trained staff to support campers with a disability. Project Rainbow also required that only one camper with a disability can be placed in a cabin group, and this camper must be placed with others of the same age. Further, if a camper with a disability was able to participate with little additional support, he or

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she may attend the following summer without the additional staff support. Camps must also agree to have regular communication and site visits with Project Rainbow. Finally and most importantly, the commitment to inclusion must be camp-wide, rather than just a commitment by a few specially trained staff.

Along with policy establishment, Project Rainbow assisted in the referral and placement of campers with disabilities. Potential campers registered through Project Rainbow, which then matched the camper with a camp based on a variety of factors such as location, facilities, interests, and needs. Project Rainbow then provided the camp with a detailed profile regarding the camper’s particular interests and needs, as well as some strategies for inclusion as suggested by the camper’s family and support workers if any. The profile arrived at the camp approximately 1 week before the camper, allowing staff time to prepare for the camper’s arrival. Finally, a third role of Project Rainbow was to take an active role in on-site support that included leading staff training sessions, supplying camps with adaptive equipment, and consultation throughout the summer.

**Inclusion Goals: Full Participation and Being “Part of the Group”**

At Camp Crystal Sands, the meaning of inclusion resonated as a broad definition; however, it was modified to reflect the context of the camp environment. Staff descriptions of inclusion goals focused on two main aspects: inclusion as full participation in camp activities, and inclusion as full participation in the social experience of membership in a cabin group.

**Inclusion as full participation in camp activities.** At Camp Crystal Sands, a central meaning of inclusion related to the effort to ensure full participation in camp activities for all campers, regardless of their ability. As Mandy, the inclusion counselor described, the notion of fostering full participation has been a part of the mindset of the camp since the partnership began with Project Rainbow:

> I think it’s a general attitude from the start of it. When it was introduced that first summer, it was kind of a ‘we’re going to start this off, we’re going to have children with one-to-one support, they’re going to be involved as much as possible in programming and in different things’. And always someone in each area has been told to and encouraged to find different ways for that kid to stay with that group and every area of camp, trying to include this child.

The camp aspired for inclusion not only in the routine camp activities, such as eating in the dining hall or sleeping in a regular cabin, but also in the more physically challenging activities. Bob, a counselor, commented that the goal of the camp’s inclusion process was to ensure that the campers with a disability had the opportunity to try out all camp activities rather than being “left out” and unable to participate:

> That’s our biggest goal, that they do as much as everything or try everything. We go canoeing, we go on high ropes, we play archery, and stuff like that... I like that no one gets left out. It kind of feels like a big family where you’re going to be able to try something and nobody’s going to put you down for it.

The camp took a number of approaches in its effort to achieve the goal of full participation. One approach was to improve the accessibility of the camp setting. For example, the camp added ramps to buildings and made program areas easier to access. For activities that did not lend themselves to these kinds of structural modifications, the camp looked to equipment adaptations. Some of this adapted equipment was supplied by Project Rainbow. Doug explained: “We supply some equipment that will assist individuals with physical disabilities. All-terrain wheelchairs are an example. We don’t have enough for all 50 participating camps. So we hustle those between camps when required.”

However, not all activities, games, and adventures at Camp Crystal Sands were able to be adapted using equipment. In these times, the camp used the physical labor of the staff to increase the participation opportunities for the campers with disabilities. For example, counselor Bob recounted how participation in a hike to a remote waterfall was made possible by the physical work of camp staff:

> I had a great little camper in our group and we went on a big hike at Smooth Rock Falls [a pseudonym].

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We came to a hill. It was a steep hill, and our biggest challenge was to get her up the hill, a very steep hill. Because everybody else climbed using the rope, but she just didn’t have the motor skills... So we had three staff members working to get her up the hill. She felt great when she got up the hill.

When appropriate, activities and schedules were modified to better accommodate the varying abilities of the campers in the group. Some of the program accommodations noted by staff included shortening hikes, changing the order of activities, making activities less structured, and flexible scheduling. Indeed, the camp director talked about the importance of recognizing the need to individualize the program, as the standard camp routine can be overwhelmingly demanding, both physically and socially, on campers with a disability:

Often you [as a camper] expect O.K., I’m scheduled to get up in the morning and do this, do this, do this. But some people can’t handle that. And I think a big part of integration is understanding what of the schedule they can handle and there are some kids who are overloaded if you give them it all to do. By giving them little by little, and having O.K., if we spend the first 20 minutes with the group then we can go and spend some alone time after giving them 20 minutes, and trying to increase that time every day and not pushing them beyond their limits.

In summary, the camp had a number of strategies it used to foster the full participation of campers with a disability in the various activities offered at camp. Based on the comments of the staff and the on-site observations, the camp was highly successful in achieving this inclusion goal. For example, while one member of the research team was hanging out with Barry and his group for 2 days, it was observed that Barry was given an opportunity to participate in every activity that the rest of his group participated. Although Barry did not always partake in all of the activities, he did participate in many, including some activities that required adaptations such as the high ropes course and canoeing.

Inclusion as being ‘part of the group’.

At Camp Crystal Sands, a second goal was to ensure that campers with a disability were included in the social experience of the cabin group. Many staff described inclusion in terms of ensuring that the camper with a disability was included as “part of the group” and, ideally, developed meaningful relationships with other campers. The comments by camp counselor Pam described this social aspect of inclusion:

And I love seeing, even this week, with Barry in my group. I can see how some of the kids are just taking on to him. They just take him on as a friend or as like a little brother and I love how they watch out for him and they always help include him.

Similarly, counselor Maggie described inclusion in terms of campers with a disability being included in the group: “I just love seeing kids just encourage each other and stuff like that and feel inclusion and stuff like that and just make them totally part of the group. That’s got to be the best part.”

Compared to the inclusion goal of full participation, it was recognized that this socially-oriented inclusion goal was more difficult to achieve, as the director stated: “it is a lot easier to physically integrate a child than to socially integrate a child.” One reason was because social inclusion required that the other campers in the group welcomed and befriended the camper with a disability. Many staff noted that other campers were often hesitant to interact with the camper sent by Project Rainbow, partly because they were unfamiliar with his or her disability. As such, staff noted that their role was to help the other campers understand the camper’s disability and teach them how to interact, as counselor Marissa described:

We introduce the camper to the other campers and if the kids have questions, they normally come up to ask the question. Like for Donna [a camper from a different session], ‘Why can’t she talk?’ And we just try to answer them and not make them seem completely different, just try and help them understand better.

Staff also talked about the importance of modeling appropriate interactions, as campers
will follow their lead. Counselor Pam noted: "if they see us trying to include them, then the kids just completely follow the example and they are so helpful." With modeling and guidance, relationships would begin to emerge.

These comments were confirmed during the on-site observation period. Although there some moments when campers with disabilities were excluded or ignored, it was much more common for them to be welcomed and shown kindness. Interactions were also observed at times when campers were not under the close watch of the counselors. Further, often these interactions were initiated by the other campers, as was observed in the following incident with Sheana, a camper with a disability:

Sheana went to lie down on the tarp to talk with Natasha after eating. One of the boys came over and started play-fighting with Sheana (all of the other kids were doing the same). Sheana laughed and started playing with him. She appeared to be enjoying herself because she kept going back for more.

Although campers with a disability tended to be welcomed by the other campers, not all of these campers desired the group-oriented social experience of summer camp, and instead preferred to be alone or separated from their cabin group. As the camp director noted, "There are some kids that want to be with the other kids. There are other kids who come to camp who never want to be with other kids." Staff noted that it was the campers who preferred to be separated who were the most difficult to support and include, and for some campers, inclusion was a "constant challenge." One such camper was Barry. Barry's inclusion counselor, Sharon, was continually trying to get Barry to stay with his group and achieved only moderate success. At one point, Barry sat down, so Sharon pulled him up and told him how much fun it would be to see Adam, a counselor, in a tree, so Barry went with the group. Another example of counselors trying to keep their campers with their group was when Kala, an inclusion counselor, tried to convince Barry to go to his group. It took about 10 minutes, but he finally went. She used a lot of sayings such as, "Come on Barry, your sword is in the bunk, let's go get it!"

At other times, however, when Barry was told to stay with his group; he still decided to leave. On one occasion, Barry lasted about 20 minutes of group time before he decided to go for a walk. Kala told him to just stay for a few minutes, but he decided to leave. Barry, at times, would make it to where he was supposed to be, but then quickly decided he wanted to go somewhere else. Barry walked in his cabin and checked the place out then left shortly. Barry then decided to go back to Bill's cabin and he played some guitar with Bill.

As it is difficult for relationships to form when campers are physically separated, it was important for staff to try to keep the campers with a disability with their cabin group. To achieve this, staff mainly tried to persuade these campers using positive encouragement. Inclusion counselor Bill described this approach:

I guess we're encouraging campers to stay with the group. We're always pushing him and telling him about the great things that are going to happen and all the friends you're going to meet if you go with the group, keeping it positive and pushing him, not forcing him, but pushing him to the point where he makes the decision.

When this approach failed, staff occasionally tried to be more directive. For example, in one instance when Barry had separated himself from his group, the camp director showed up and using a firm, authoritative voice, told Barry that he had to stay with his group. However, in times when these efforts failed, the camper would be permitted to leave the group, accompanied by his or her inclusion counselor. At these times, the camper would often participate in a different activity in close proximity to the cabin group, such as when Natasha read Sheana a book while the rest of the cabin went swimming. Still, on many instances, a camper with a disability was observed with the inclusion counselor, quite removed from his or her cabin mates. For example, while waiting in line for dinner outside the dining hall, camper Mike and his inclusion counselor Bill hung out with counselors, writing on the erase board, while the rest of the cabin group stood in line.

Staff commented on the practice of "pulling campers from the group." For example, as noted earlier by the camp director, time away
from the group was important for campers who became overwhelmed by the social aspects of camp life. Counselors also talked about the struggle of balancing inclusion goals with the goal of creating a positive camp experience for the camper with a disability. In the case of Barry, camp counselor Pam explained that sometimes Barry just did not want to be with his group and so the staff let him do an activity that would make him happy:

Well, sometimes there's just like, there are certain activities that, for example, Barry just doesn't like to do and it's hard because you really want for him to be in it with the kids because you want him to be happy too.

The inclusion coordinator was one of the few people interviewed who explained that some inclusion counselors were accustomed to taking their campers out of groups. She suggested that the inclusion counselors needed to be made aware that they were inhibiting inclusion:

Some [inclusion] counselors sometimes get in the habit of pulling children out too often and so maybe trying to make people aware to push just that little bit to make it so they're not always giving an out, or pulling them away.

**Factors Facilitating Camp Inclusion: A Structured Team Approach**

Overall, Camp Crystal Sands achieved a great deal of success including campers with disabilities. These campers were able to fully participate in all aspects of camp programming and further, they were welcomed and befriended by the other children at the camp. Based on the observations and interviews of camp staff, three factors emerged as significant for how they contributed to inclusion: a “floating” staff arrangement; structured respite opportunities; and accessible resources for problem solving.

A “floating” staff arrangement. Camps have different models for determining how staff will work with campers and programs. For example, Blake (1996) noted five different staffing approaches: staff are hired specifically to work with the children with disabilities; a team of a specially trained counselors and regular counselors work with a cabin that includes a camper with a disability; all staff are hired with the expectation that they might get involved; parents provide their own worker to accompany their children; and lastly, the camp recruits volunteers to supplement staff. The approach followed at Camp Crystal Sands was one in which every counselor was hired with the expectation that they might get involved and further, counselors were given the choice of working with the campers referred by Project Rainbow. With the exception of one full-time inclusion counselor, Camp Crystal Sands staff floated in the sense of being a counselor one week, maintenance another week, and inclusion counselor the next week.

All staff members interviewed for the study made reference to the fact that they could choose to be an inclusion staff member. Marissa, a camp counselor, stated that she liked the fact that all staff members had the opportunity to be an inclusion counselor, “I like that here we give everyone an opportunity to do it [be an inclusion counselor]. We ask all the counselors to do it, and so everyone has a chance.” According to Bob, a camp counselor, “We’re all regular counselors and will be asked the week before if we would like to do Rainbow the next week.” Kim, the camp director, said floating promoted a team atmosphere and all counselors had the opportunity to work with the campers with disabilities:

Personally, I think staff floating is much more effective. It promotes a team atmosphere. It doesn’t promote ‘these are the inclusion counselors, and all they do is one-to-one, because they don’t get to know the other staff as well.’ Often, the inclusion counselors do have to leave the group for a few minutes if their camper has to go for an extra washroom break or go and get changed or something like that. So they’re the ones that are usually least with the group, if you want to put it that way. So you don’t want them to not be nobody on the staff. Since everybody co-counsels together, everybody knows each other really well and everyone has time to do one-to-one. They remember the support they needed, so they are more willing to give the inclusion counselors support.
Although this study is not able to compare different staffing approaches, it does offer a strong rationale for a floating staff arrangement over other approaches such as hiring specialized staff. Although specialized staff offers benefits in terms of tailoring training and staff development, the observations at Camp Crystal Sands suggest that these benefits are outweighed by the team approach and whole camp commitment fostered by the floating approach.

Accessible resources for problem solving.
A second factor contributing to inclusion was the accessibility of resources to help staff while they were actively working on inclusion. Although the literature regularly mentions the importance of training for inclusion (e.g., McTavish, Chatterton, & Schmidt. 1996; Parker, 2001), the reality at Camp Crystal Sands was that staff were rarely well trained in inclusion techniques prior to when they began working as an inclusion counselor, given the relative inexperience of camp staff, the seasonal nature of camping, and the short duration of camp training periods. At Camp Crystal Sands, most staff were in their first or second year of working at camp; further, they received only a few hours of training on inclusion during pre-camp. Camp Crystal Sands is not alone in their challenge to develop a highly trained staff; as Brannan et al. (2003) noted, “due to economic and value changes regarding voluntarism, outdoor-based programs also have found the recruitment and retention of qualified and appropriately motivated staff to be one of the most significant challenges” (p. 40). Given these constraints, it was extremely important for camp staff to be able to access information and problem solving support while working as an inclusion counselor.

A number of different staff served as resources including the camp director, the inclusion coordinator, as well as Project Rainbow staff. For example, the camp director, who had extensive experience in camp inclusion, regularly checked in with inclusion counselors to offer suggestions and share information. According to the director:

I typically find myself checking in with all the counselors who are doing one-to-one at some point in a day. Definitely, at least a check in, how are you doing, how's your camper doing? And if I notice that somebody is struggling, trying to come up with some suggestions that are practical or something they can try. Also, like I said before, it's often relaying their needs to some of the senior staff, who can help them out... Talking about what we can do in order to make it work, or can we have an extra staff to make it work?

Staff from Project Rainbow also offered support to inclusion counselors during their weekly on-site visits. According to Doug from Project Rainbow, an important aspect of their role is to offer continual support throughout the summer:

On the camp visits, that is a time to do observations and speak with the counselors and give the tips... You know when it comes to integration its not just a wish. You really have to get support, plan support, and we do that piece so we wouldn’t just make the transfer and referral. We were visiting those camps. Our coordinators not only are doing the intake, but they are also the person training the camp; also following through with resource visits and planning, though in a sense it's a small wrap around program in all those facets in the camp communities.

The importance of communication and information sharing was also noted by Brannan and his associates (2003) as an important inclusive practice. These authors recommended that counselors and inclusion counselors meet regularly to discuss strategies, troubleshoot, and solve problems collaboratively.

Planned respite opportunities. A third aspect of the structured team approach was the planned respite opportunities for inclusion counselors. Compared to cabin counselors, inclusion counselors have a more demanding supervisory role, as the camp director explained: “It is harder than counseling a regular group of kids and so they are given 45 minutes of extra time where they just maybe have shower time because they can’t shower when their kid showers and they can’t do those types of things when their child’s doing that.” Within Camp Crystal Sands, the inclusion coordinator had the responsibility for helping the inclu-
sion counselors by providing relief and helping when the inclusion counselor needed it. Mandy, the inclusion coordinator, described her role in offering respite:

I'm kind of the resource person. I do a lot of support for the counselors who have only one camper a week. Every day I do 45 minutes of relief for somebody and I do extra relief if somebody needs it just because it's my job...I try to check in with those counselors every day and see how things are going and see if anything has come up or try and see if they're keeping things going or the child's having difficulty with the group, and I try to see if somebody needs extra relief that day.

Other staff, including program staff and volunteers, also would occasionally replace inclusion counselors. For example, during the observation week, one volunteer worked with Natasha and provided her with opportunities to take breaks when needed.

The importance of respite for inclusion staff was not noted in the study Brannan and his associates. However for Camp Crystal Sands, planned respite not only offered inclusion counselors a moment of relief, but it also helped contribute to the collective orientation toward inclusion.

Areas for Improvement: Planning for Socialization

One area for improvement related to the tendency for staff to remove campers with disabilities from the group context. Staff noted that they struggled to include campers who preferred to remain separated, as they felt pulled between the goal of fostering friendships and the desire to make the camper happy. Although clearly there are times when separation is appropriate, it was also noted and observed that the practice tended to be overused. This is a concern because it limits the potential for friendships to develop. The literature indicates that friendships can be formed between campers with and without disabilities in inclusive settings (Bullock et al., 1992; Hornibrook, 1997; Lord, 1996; Sable, 1995) because of the positive social interaction that occurs while at camp (Brannan et al., 2000; Hornibrook; Sable, 1995). However, if there is not an awareness of the importance of friendships and the important role that the camp environment can play, it is easy for these opportunities to be missed. One way to minimize separation would be to more fully structure socialization opportunities into camp programming, such as through the establishment of a 'socialization plan' for each camper that takes into consideration individual needs but also aims to maximize opportunities for group experiences.

Discussion and Recommendations for Improving Inclusive Camping

Although as a philosophy inclusion has broad support, statistics have shown that in reality, many camps have not successfully included children with disabilities into the camp environment (CCA, 1992; IPSOS Read, 2001). By investigating a best practice in inclusive camping, the aim of this study was to reduce the gap between philosophy and practice by providing information that can improve opportunities for inclusive camping. Based on the study findings, this discussion will focus on how to reduce the gap in two main areas. One area is in improving a camp's 'readiness' for inclusion, which helps to address the findings of the Canadian Camping Association survey in which a low number of camps reported pursuing inclusion. The second area is related to fostering an 'inclusive culture' within the camp itself, and providing camps that have made a commitment to inclusion with some structural and organizational strategies for inclusion.

Camp Readiness

In the literature on community development and social change, an underlying factor contributing to success is readiness, or the commitment of the community to undertaking change (Vail, 2007). In the community of a camp, the notion of readiness similarly applies. Readiness relates to a number of factors, including the recognition of a problem, a philosophical alignment with the goals of the intended change, as well as a belief that the organization or community has the capacity to make the change (Frisby, Crawford, & Dorer, 1997). Capacity relates to not only the human resources to make the change, but also organizational resources such as a planning strategy, economic resources, policies, physical resources, and supportive institutions (Vail).
In the case of Camp Crystal Sands, the religious foundation of the camp and its connection to social justice contributed to a philosophical readiness for inclusion. In terms of structural readiness and organizational capacity, the partnership with Project Rainbow played an essential role. As an organizational partner, Project Rainbow contributed immensely to the inclusive capacity of the camp by providing policy support, managing the administration of camper referrals, leading training sessions, and providing ongoing, on-site support. For a smaller-sized and relatively autonomous camp like Camp Crystal Sands, inclusion would simply not be achievable without the involvement of an outside capacity-building organization.

Many camps also depend on partnerships with local organizations to help prepare for inclusion (Bullock et al., 1992; Orchard, 1996; Sable, 1992). Partnerships that are grounded in the experiences of people with disabilities, sensitive to the needs of families, knowledgeable about inclusion strategies, and connected to the community all contribute to more positive inclusive initiatives (Lord, 1998; Rynders, 1995; Schleien, 1995, 1995; Schleien, Rynders, Heyne, & Tabourne, 1995; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990).

Braman and his associates (2003) described three different types of partnerships. The first type involves asking an agency to help provide staff training about the needs of children with disabilities. The second type involves obtaining help with both training and referrals. Last, the third type of partnership – and the type that best describes the relationship between Camp Crystal Sands and Project Rainbow – is the most intensive and involves co-creating and co-staffing an inclusive program with an agency that serves people with disabilities. This last approach to partnership suggests that partnerships and collaboration can be seen as a model for inclusion.

Partnerships provide a context for locating integrated settings; finding possible participants with disabilities; deciding collaboratively on suitable policies, models, and strategies; learning from the expertise of each other; and ensuring adequate leadership is provided (Brookman et al., 2003; Hutchison, 1998; Orchard, 1996). At Camp Crystal Sands, Project Rainbow offered significant support and guidance toward establishing inclusive opportunities; and continued to support inclusion through camper referral, supplying resources and equipment, and ongoing staff training. While the literature offers examples of camps that do the inclusion themselves (McTavish et al., 1996), we must also realize that many camps may be significantly limited in their ability to do so due to their tendency to have inexperienced staff, limited resources, and limited time for training. Staff must be well trained to provide the best opportunity for every camper who goes to camp (Bogle, 1996; McGill, 1984; McTavish et al., 1996). As part of the partnership between Project Rainbow and camps, Project Rainbow played an important role related to staff training. Pontone (1996) stated that one of Project Rainbow’s policies was to train the entire camp staff regarding the needs of children with disabilities.

Recommendations for improving inclusive camping in terms of fostering camp readiness can take on two approaches. The first is to foster a *philosophical readiness* for inclusion. As noted earlier, many camps are currently not attempting inclusion or do not see inclusion as part of its organizational mandate. Working to foster philosophical readiness would relate to an approach that helps to establish inclusion not as a choice, but as an expectation or a standard within the camp industry. For this, we see a strong championing role being played by such organizational bodies as the Canadian Camping Association, the American Camping Association, and the provincial and state associations. Through their communications, current standards frameworks, and training and network opportunities, much could be done to foster an industry-wide readiness for inclusion.

The second approach would be to foster a greater *structural readiness* for inclusion in the camp industry. To this end, Project Rainbow offers an excellent example of a partnering agency that is able to bring structural support to camps in Ontario that are looking toward inclusion. Establishing similar partnering relationships for other regions would surely expand inclusion. This process could begin with camps or camp associations forging relationships with disability organizations in their region, as these organizations can provide the camp with the know-how related to understanding, accommodating, and strategizing for how to include campers with disabilities. Perhaps there is also...
a lead role to be played by Project Rainbow in developing or serving as a training ground for similar partnering organizations for other regions.

_Fostering an Inclusive Culture_

Overall, this study profiled a camp that had successfully built a "culture of inclusion." The structured team approach that included floating staff arrangements, accessible resources for problem solving, and planned respite all contributed to a team orientation toward inclusion and helped make the camp a welcoming place for campers with disabilities. In general, the findings at Camp Crystal Sands confirm the results of the broader study by Brannan and his associates (2003) in terms of some of the in-camp practices that can foster inclusion.

The camp-wide approach taken at Camp Crystal Sands is different from the approach taken at some camps in which specific staff members are assigned to campers with a disability for the entire summer, as well as the approach of campers with a disability being assigned their own staff member who counsels them in a one-to-one relationship. Although this study did not take a comparative approach in terms of different staffing or structural arrangements, this case study clearly illustrated the benefits of a structured team approach in terms of a camp-wide commitment to inclusion. Related to this, one recommendation would be for camps to consider adopting a framework that fosters this camp-wide commitment, rather than having it set up in a way where it is seen as the responsibility of only some staff but not others. Along with on-site strategies such as floating staff and planned respite, this culture of inclusion can extend to hiring and training, such that all staff are hired and trained with the expectation and the capacities to be able to work with all campers.

Along with building a camp-wide commitment to inclusion, a clarification around the meaning of inclusion and what inclusion looks like in the camp context is also important. At Camp Crystal Sands there was some confusion over what inclusion actually meant—was it forming friendships or was it "staying with the group?" At times staff members were unsure of how to weigh the focus on group interaction with the individual needs and preferences of the campers with a disability. For some of the children, their removal from the group setting related to the needs of their disability and the challenges of the social context. At other times, however, removal seemed to have more to do with the preferences of the camper to do something different from the group. However, the camp environment is not one in which children are given total freedom to do what they want to do. How should this general expectation translate to campers with a disability? As a recommendation, more discussion within the camp industry and the inclusive camp literature more broadly, would add clarity around the meaning of inclusion in camping.

Some questions for future research that might deepen our understanding of camp inclusion also need to be explored. For example, what impact does having 1-week camps only have on the inclusion process compared to some camps with 1-month sessions (Parker, 2001) and might the camp board want to consider longer durations for some campers? In a comparative sense, what are the benefits and limitations of having a one-to-one approach to support often evidenced at this camp in terms of relationship building? Clearly, many children with disabilities and parents choose integrated options because of their potential for friendship development (Bennett, Lee, & Luke, 1998; Guralnick, Connor, & Hammond, 1995; Mulion, Maclavish, & Bockstael, 2000; Sciberras & Hutchison, 2004).

At the micro level, inclusion was defined earlier as the process of involving people with disabilities in communities where citizenship, empowerment, full participation, individual and community capacity-building, and relationships are present (Hutchison, 2006). Many people and organizations are not yet able to get beyond clienthood and services and focus only on gifts and capacities, create accommodations for every person, and expect nothing less than real friendships to emerge. Until then, changes at the micro level like our camp will be limited. Since this has been a study about inclusion and partnerships, what kinds of partnerships are needed to contribute to greater macro level change? Are there any partnerships beyond Project Rainbow (and other similar organizations) and their camps that are needed for inclusive camping to be accelerated? Many national and provincial disability organizations are lobbying for policy changes that promote greater
inclusion (Lord & Hutchison, 2007; Pedlar, Haworth, Hutchison, Dunn, & Taylor, 1999). What would it take to get groups such as the Canadian Camping Association (CCA/OCA) and provincial camping organizations to forge partnerships with disability organizations? If what Lance Secretan (1999) said is true, that a cause “connects us from our present reality to a richly imagined future” (p. 69), it is possible that key organizations become partners and play a much expanded leadership role in the future.

Conclusion

Many segments of society are struggling to build a culture of inclusion, from leisure settings, to places of work, schools, and neighborhoods (Devine & King, 2006; Devine & Lashua, 2002; Pedlar et al., 1999; Zoerink & Rosegard, 1997). This trend toward inclusion is influencing outdoor programs and camping (Fullerton, Brannan, & Arlick, 2000, 2002; Sugarman, 1996). While Camp Crystal Sands is a symbol for many camps that are doing a good job at the micro level in terms of inclusion, at the same time they are limited in their ability to become truly inclusive settings. Without a different vision by camping associations, the non-profit sector, government, and broader civil society, the challenge for camps to fully embrace inclusion will continue. While change at the micro level must continue, it cannot be done in isolation of more relevant macro level change. Partnerships are surely an important vehicle for change in our highly complex society as we strive towards creating a more civil and inclusive society (Lord, 1998; Schleien et al., 1994; Westley, Zimmerman, & Patton, 2006). This forging must be done with full awareness of the limitations of partnerships and strategies for safeguarding the principles of genuine collaboration (Clear, 2001; Helgesen, 1995; Murray, 2000).

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