

CASE 8

Camp fYrefly

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BACKGROUND

As Dr. Spencer J. Harrison sat in his office, he became increasingly excited about the upcoming summer. After donating his time as the artist in residence to Camp fYrefly in Saskatchewan, he was chosen to act as the director for the camp in Ontario. Camp fYrefly is a leadership retreat for sexual and gender minority (SGM) youths and their allies. Allies of SGM youth include individuals who support gender equality, equal civil rights, the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning) social movement, and challenge homo-, bi-, and trans-phobias. Since its founding in 2004, Camp fYrefly has expanded to serve three cities, with 2017 planned as the first year the camp would be hosted in Ontario. Planning for Camp fYrefly's inaugural summer in Ontario and future expansion was proving to be a big task, and Dr. Harrison wanted to ensure the success and positive impact of Camp fYrefly for years to come.

An artist and activist, Dr. Harrison was extremely passionate about Camp fYrefly's programming. Although it is a leadership retreat, Camp fYrefly uses arts-based delivery in workshops throughout the camp experience. As a visual artist, Dr. Harrison enjoyed using his arts background in creating workshops for the youth of Camp fYrefly. Familiar with the social exclusion faced by many SGM youth, Dr. Harrison was enthusiastic about the camp's ability to build resilience and leadership capabilities in these groups. Following camp, youth could move forward to create positive social changes and advocate for the rights of LGBTQ individuals within their own communities.

Looking to expand Camp fYrefly's positive impact, Dr. Harrison hoped to incorporate programs to address some of the health disparities faced by SGM youth within pre-existing camp programming. He envisioned a holistic approach to health that would address the syndemic nature of negative health conditions more prevalent in SGM youth than in their heterosexual peers. To assist in the development of a holistic health plan, Dr. Harrison recruited a health promotion specialist.

THE HEALTH OF SEXUAL MINORITY AND GENDER VARIANT YOUTH

Sexual minorities and gender-variant individuals face a number of health disparities, many of which are linked to conditions experienced during early development. Some of the prominent disparities are linked to unsafe sexual behaviours, such as an increased prevalence of sexually transmitted infections as a result of unprotected sex. However, many health disparities are not related exclusively to sexual behaviour – they are a response to the stigma and discrimination experienced as youth (Mayer, Garofalo, & Makadon, 2014). Many of the causes of psychological distress and later-risk-taking behaviours stem from childhood and youth experiences, including abuse by family or peers, societal stigma, and discrimination.

Due to a changing social context, many youth are recognizing their sexual identities earlier in their life than previous generations (Drasin et al., 2008). Greater visibility, increased

acceptance, and increased accessibility to LGBTQ subculture makes it possible for SGM youth to self-identify at younger ages, meaning that they may confront bias, stigma, and other social challenges when they are less mature and thus ill-equipped to do so. In addition, youth may have fewer social supports than older adolescents and young adults. Internalization of social challenges appears to play a role in creating many of the health disparities faced by sexual and gender minority youth when compared to their heterosexual counterparts. Some of these health disparities include increased rates of sexually transmitted infections, substance abuse, abnormal weight, cancer-related-risk behaviours (such as smoking), and other risk-taking behaviours (such as reduced seatbelt use) (Mayer et al., 2014). Many of the root causes of these disparities relate to familial and societal rejection, which create a cycle of alienation, depression, reduced self-efficacy, and an impaired ability to adjust in the process of maturation.

In addition to familial and societal factors, many health care professionals are ill-equipped to treat SGM youth, making it more difficult for them to access competent care despite their desire to do so.

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Organizational History

Camp fYrefly is a national leadership retreat for SGM youth and their allies. It began in 2004 at the University of Alberta, where Dr. Andre Grace and Dr. Kristopher Wells designed a university-community educational outreach project targeting the needs of SGM youth. Since 2004, Camp fYrefly has evolved into a four-day summer leadership retreat for these youth and their allies. The main focus of Camp fYrefly is building leadership potential and personal resiliency in participants so they can act as agents for social change in their families, schools, and communities (Camp fYrefly, n.d.). There are currently camps held in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Camp fYrefly is expanding to include an Ontario location in 2017.

Program Delivery Model

Camp fYrefly programming consists of two major components. The camp itself (as previously described) is the primary Camp fYrefly program geared towards building resiliency and leadership capacity in SGM youth. The second component of Camp fYrefly is the *fYrefly in Schools* program. The *fYrefly in Schools* program was developed to help reduce discrimination against SGM youth within schools (Camp fYrefly, n.d.). The initiative is meant to increase awareness of the impacts of homophobia and transphobia and teach students how to be effective allies for diversity, equity, and human rights. Previous Camp fYrefly attendees compose a student panel, which travels between schools to discuss these issues. The *fYrefly in Schools* program is currently only offered in Edmonton and Calgary.

Applying to Attend Camp

Future campers complete a short application package. The application package includes a variety of questions to gauge each applicant's interest in and need for attending the camp. Application packages are reviewed by a committee, and up to sixty successful applicants are selected from the application pool to attend each camp location.

Camp fYrefly covers all camper expenses, including travel, food, and accommodations. The only cost to campers is a \$25.00 enrollment fee to ensure attendance during the camp. Underage campers must also submit a permission form signed by their parents or legal guardians. Permission forms present Camp fYrefly as a leadership retreat to maintain privacy for youth who have not come out or for youth with unsupportive parents.

A Day at Camp fYrefly

A typical day at Camp fYrefly begins at 7:00 am (Exhibit 1). Campers have the option of waking up to participate in a morning activity or to sleep in and attend breakfast at 8:00 am. Throughout the day, campers participate in a variety of workshops and activities, many that are designed to foster the formation of relationships between campers, build resiliency, and address issues relevant to SGM youth. Camp programming includes opportunities for campers to reflect on their experiences individually and for larger group discussions that may range in size from eight campers to the entire camp population (approximately 60 people). Formal workshops typically revolve around topics pertinent to SGM youth, such as safe sex, and occur in smaller groups. Past workshops include *Non-Binary Gender and You*, and *Celebrating Our Gay Identities* as described in Exhibit 2 (Camp fYrefly, 2015).

Camp fYrefly relies heavily on volunteers for day-to-day programming. Each camp location is planned and run by a camp coordinator. When funding permits, a camp assistant is appointed to support the coordinator through many aspects of camp planning (iSMSS, 2015). Youth leaders are often former campers who have returned to Camp fYrefly in a leadership capacity. Youth leaders are responsible for guiding their assigned groups of campers through the fYrefly experience. Adult volunteers support youth leaders in mentoring campers. In addition to youth and adult volunteers, there are both medical and counselling teams on staff. Members of these teams include nurses, doctors, and social workers. Each Camp fYrefly location also has both an artist and Indigenous elder in residence. The artist in residence is responsible for leading arts-based programming. The elder in residence is responsible for mentoring indigenous SGM youth and building camper knowledge of sexual and gender diversity in indigenous communities.

Partner Organizations

University of Alberta

Camp fYrefly was founded by Dr. Andre P. Grace and Dr. Kristopher Wells – researchers and educators within the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. Camp fYrefly is the only national gender and sexual minority youth leadership camp affiliated with a major research university – the University of Alberta. Affiliation with the university ensures that the camp uses programming informed by evidence-based youth health and safety trends (Camp fYrefly, n.d.).

Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services

Within the University of Alberta, Camp fYrefly is also affiliated with the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (iSMSS). Dr. Grace is also the director of research at the iSMSS. His colleague and former student, Dr. Wells, also works with the iSMSS as the Faculty Director. The iSMSS leads research that affects policy development, intervention, education, and community outreach for sexual and gender minorities. Research at the iSMSS is not only targeted towards youth; it also guides professional development for a variety of disciplines, including teachers, social workers, physicians, and psychologists, enabling them to provide better support, resources, and advocacy for social justice. In addition to working on campus and within the surrounding communities, the iSMSS impacts national policies and services through its work with various agencies and organizations, including the Office of Canada's Chief Public Health Officer, the Canadian Teachers' Federation, and the Public Health Agency of Canada (iSMSS, n.d.).

Geographic Area

Camp fYrefly was founded in Edmonton, and the camp continues to run there every summer. Since the first fYrefly program, an annual camp was opened in Saskatchewan (rotating between Regina and Saskatoon), and shortly after, a third annual camp was opened in Calgary. Plans are currently underway to open a fourth camp at the Trent University campus in Peterborough, Ontario.

Although only four camp locations exist, youth apply from all over the country to attend. Space at camps is limited. Despite national applications, the majority of youth that attend come from surrounding communities.

EXPANDING CAMP FYREFLY

The task of expanding Camp fYrefly to include a fourth location in Ontario was a challenge. Although all resources from previous camps could be used as a guide in creating a program for Ontario, each camp differed based on its geographic location and available resources. Camp locations are also heavily influenced by their surrounding communities. Dr. Harrison had the tasks of selecting a location, raising funds, planning workshops and programming, and selecting volunteers to ensure that Camp fYrefly would be a success in Ontario.

Continued Advocacy

In addition to his work for Camp fYrefly, Dr. Harrison continues to be an activist for LGBTQ rights. Outside of Camp fYrefly, Dr. Harrison is the artist in residence at a middle school in Toronto, an educator at OCAD University, and equity advisor to the chief of *Toronto Fire Services*. In all roles, he is an expert in creating safe and inclusive environments for SGM individuals and their allies. Part of his role as an activist is to raise awareness of LGBTQ issues within a more public context. He regularly speaks at events such as Chamber of Commerce meetings in small towns, where he shares his own story and demonstrates the need for creating inclusive cultures within smaller communities. Since being appointed as the Ontario camp fYrefly director, Dr. Harrison also uses these advocacy events and speaking engagements as an opportunity to network and create relationships with possible future donors to Camp fYrefly. He hopes that raising awareness and suggesting avenues for change will help to create supportive environments for SGM individuals in the future.

Holistic Health at Camp

Planning to continue the leadership legacy of previous camps, Dr. Harrison hopes to integrate health promotion initiatives within Camp fYrefly's programming. Although camp manuals provide each location with the basic information necessary to open a new Camp fYrefly location, each camp is customized based on the director, surrounding communities, artist in residence, available resources, and geographic location. Although he had little formal experience in health care, Dr. Harrison felt that existing camp programs emphasized the importance of holistic health and wellness. To expand on this and address some of the health disparities faced by SGM individuals in a more formal manner, Dr. Harrison decided to create health promotion programs for the camp. He hoped that the Ontario camp would set an example of effective health promotion for other Camp fYrefly locations.

Finding a Specialist in Health Promotion

Dr. Harrison decided to consult with Dr. Grace before planning his health promotion activities. Dr. Grace recommended that he contact a recent graduate from the School of Public Health at the University of Alberta named Dr. Warren Jared. Dr. Grace supervised Dr. Jared's PhD research. Although Dr. Jared had never worked with Camp fYrefly, he did have experience working with SGM youth. Dr. Jared had worked closely with Dr. Grace to develop health promotion programs for youth living on the streets of Edmonton in hopes of promoting safe sexual practices and reducing the incidence of HIV. Well aware of the many challenges faced by SGM youth, Dr. Jared was excited to work with Dr. Harrison and continue to make a difference in this community.

Creating Health Promotion Programs

Although Dr. Harrison was excited at the prospect of promoting health within the camp environment, he knew it may prove to be a difficult task to do so in a meaningful way. There are

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many health disparities faced by SGM youth and a historically difficult relationship between SGM individuals and medical professionals. After meeting with Dr. Jared, Dr. Harrison identified three main challenges existing within the Camp fYrefly environment. The first challenge was the short duration of camp (four days in total). According to Dr. Jared's consult, it may be difficult to make an impact in such a limited amount of time. The second major challenge was the pre-existing leadership and resiliency building mission. Camp days were already full of leadership and resiliency building workshops, making it difficult to integrate new health-related programming. Finally, Camp fYrefly relied on the generosity of donors to open each summer. To ensure sustainability, camp workshops and activities had to adhere to strict budgets. Dr. Harrison wasn't sure what may be possible within the Camp fYrefly context; however, he and Dr. Jared agreed that even small strides towards improving the health of SGM youth would be valuable. With consideration for the camp's leadership capacity and resiliency building, he decided to work with Dr. Jared to plan health promotion initiatives that could be integrated into existing camp programming for Camp fYrefly's inaugural summer in Ontario.

Camp fYrefly

EXHIBIT 1



Time	Thursday – July 23 rd , 2015	Friday – July 24 th , 2015	Saturday – July 25 th , 2015	Sunday – July 26 th , 2015	
7:00am		Optional morning activity	Optional morning activity	Optional morning activity	
7:30am					
8:00am	Staff arrive	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	
8:30am		Stage team initial meeting	Staff meeting	Staff meeting	
9:00am	Campers arrive and check in			Pack and clean room	
9:30am			Identity Workshops		
10:00am	Introductions and guidelines	Healthy Bodies/Healthy Relationships	Pod time	Choice Workshop Block 4	
10:30am					
11:00am	Artist in Residence	Pod time – question box	Human library	Pod time – letters to self and pod photos, then finish packing	
11:30am					
12:00pm	Lunch	Lunch – Rainbow pods	Lunch	Lunch	
12:30pm				YL meeting	
1:00pm	Choice Workshop Block 1	Question box	Old Stories project	Pod time – surveys, closing with pod	
1:30pm		Pod time		AV meeting	Camp photos
2:00pm				Self-care time	
2:30pm	Pod time	Journey & Dog Therapy		Choice Workshop Block 3	
3:00pm				Closing Resources map	
3:30pm			Pod time	Supporters Workshop	
4:00pm	Graffiti wall	Sweat Lodge building	Self-care time		Goodbyes
4:30pm		Nap	Showcase prep	Pick-up	
5:00pm	Old Stories meeting	Self-care time	Showcase prep		
5:30pm			Stage Team meets		
6:00pm	AV Meeting	Supper	Old Stories project	Supper	
6:30pm			AV Meeting		
7:00pm	Choice Workshop Block 2 (Old Stories project meets)	Supper	Showcase prep	Showcase	
7:30pm		Self-care and get ready for swim			
8:00pm		Drive to swim			
8:30pm	Pod time	Swim	Showcase intermission and snack		
9:00pm	Chill Night – spa, movie, fire, games, sweat	Change from swim	Showcase including Stories finale		
9:30pm		Drive to camp			
10:00pm		Snack			
10:30pm	YL meeting	YL meeting	Dance or Fire		
11:00pm		Get ready for bed			
			YL Meeting		

Source: iSMSS, 2015.

EXHIBIT 2

Identity Workshops
Saturday, July 25th 9:00 am – 10:30 am

Non-Binary Gender and You with James Harley

This workshop will explore what it means to identify as non-binary, as well as exploring the intersections between (a)gender, (a)sexuality, and expression. All this will be done to the backdrop of building safe and inclusive communities, in particular for non-binary folks. Games and art will be included. Come and explore non-binary gender identity, and learn how to build safer communities!

Actually It's Sir – Navigating Trans Masculine Experiences and Identities with Daniel Tallack

This workshop will empower youth on the trans* masculine spectrum to be advocates for themselves and their medical care. It will show them how to deal with roadblocks along their path to success, and lead them to realize that they are capable of living healthy and productive lives. It will also cover more specific information pertinent to trans masculine identities, such as medical transition (options etc.) as well as document and gender marker changes. As this is a workshop aimed specifically at persons with trans masculine identities, it can be viewed as a safe space for youth to ask questions or discuss what they may not feel comfortable talking about in a mixed group setting.

Ace-ing It: A Primer into Asexuality with Lihn L., Alia S., Richard R.
Asexual, Aromantic, Demisexual, Grey – A.

These are a few of the labels and ways folks can identify within the Asexual spectrum. For those who already identify, are questioning, or curious, this session is for you! Presenters with Alia Schamehorn & Richard Roach, creators/founders of ACE Edmonton.

Celebrating our Gay Identities by Philip Hau

This workshop focuses on the complex identities of gay males. Everyone is a multicultural being. However, media has sensationalized, and potentially stereotyped, what a gay person looks like/behaves. This workshop highlights and breaks down this stereotypical portrayal of gay men. We are a composite of our sexual identity, gender identity, religion, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, ability, etc. This workshop highlights that yes, we are gay, and at the same time we are more than that. Being gay is just one part of our identities.

Source: iSMSS, 2015.

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INSTRUCTOR GUIDANCE

Camp fYrefly

Nina Malek, BSc, MPH (MPH Class of 2016)
Spencer J. Harrison, PhD (Director, Camp fYrefly)
Ava John-Baptiste, PhD (Assistant Professor, Western University)

BACKGROUND

Since its founding in 2004, Camp fYrefly has become Canada's only national leadership retreat for sexual and gender minority (SGM) youth. The camp has expanded to include two successful locations in Alberta (Edmonton and Calgary), and one in Saskatchewan (either Regina or Saskatoon, alternating annually). The main focus of Camp fYrefly is building leadership capacity and personal resiliency in campers. 2017 is the planned inaugural summer for Camp fYrefly to expand to Peterborough in Ontario. In addition to maintaining Camp fYrefly's original mission of building resilience and leadership capacity, the Ontario camp director hopes to integrate a holistic approach to health within camp programming.

OBJECTIVES

1. Define the challenges faced in implementing a health promotion plan.
2. Apply theories associated with health promotion to create plans for Camp fYrefly.
3. Create SMART goals.
4. Critically appraise health-promotion plans.
5. Apply the PRECEDE-PROCEED model.
6. Understand factors to consider when working with minority/vulnerable populations.
7. Understand factors to consider when working with youth.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Should "holistic health" be a priority within Camp fYrefly programming, and why?
2. Is it possible to create effective health promotion programs when direct contact with the target audience is limited to four days?
3. Can plans for health promotion be extended to create healthier environments within the community? If so, how might that occur? What are possible outcomes?
4. How might resources be prioritized in creating health promotion plans?
5. How can the success of health promotion plans be evaluated within the context of Camp fYrefly? What are some of the challenges associated with doing so?
6. How are health promotion plans shaped by their target audience (in this case, SGM youth)?
7. List challenges associated with creating health promotion plans for use in the Camp fYrefly environment.

KEYWORDS

Health promotion; youth; holistic health; holism; sexual minority; gender variant; LGBTQ; SGM.