

# Community Living Toronto

SHADOW LAKE:

## *Participant, Family & Staff Satisfaction*



**By:** Kristen Lwin  
Alexandra Lubelsky  
Deborah Goodman  
CHILD WELFARE INSTITUTE, CAS TORONTO

**For:** Gary Ouellette  
Sue Lynch  
Bruce Rivers  
Karyn Swaffield  
COMMUNITY LIVING TORONTO

**Date:** March 22, 2011

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>1.0</b>	<b>BACKGROUND: COMMUNITY LIVING TORONTO (CL TORONTO)</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1	CL TORONTO: Shadow Lake Centre	2
1.1.1	<i>Shadow Lake</i>	
1.2	Evaluation of Shadow Lake	3
<b>2.0</b>	<b>EVALUATION METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1	Methodology and Evaluation Tools	4
2.2.1	<i>Guest Self-Report Questionnaire</i>	
2.2.2	<i>Staff Self-Report Questionnaire</i>	
2.2.3	<i>Caregiver Telephone Interview</i>	
2.2	Data Analysis	4
<b>3.0</b>	<b>FINDINGS</b>	<b>5</b>
3.1	Guests' Data	5
3.2	Staff Data	7
3.2.1	<i>Quantitative Data-Staff</i>	
3.2.2	<i>Qualitative Data- Staff</i>	
3.3	Family Data	15
3.3.1	<i>Quantitative Data- Family</i>	
3.3.2	<i>Qualitative Data- Family</i>	
<b>4.0</b>	<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>21</b>
	<b>APPENDIX 1 – Shadow Lake Guest Survey</b>	<b>22</b>
	<b>APPENDIX 1 – Shadow Lake Staff Survey</b>	<b>23</b>
	<b>APPENDIX 1 – Shadow Lake Family Survey</b>	<b>24</b>

## 1.0 BACKGROUND: COMMUNITY LIVING TORONTO (CL TORONTO)

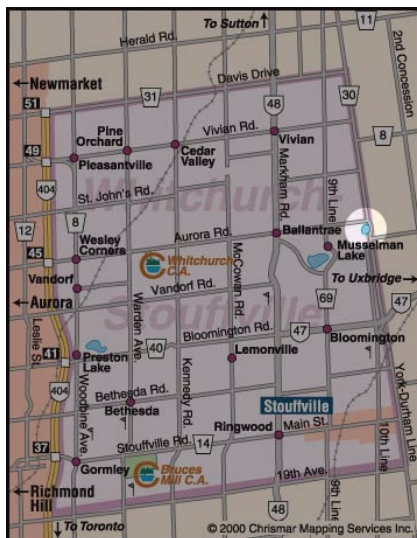
Community Living Toronto (CL Toronto) is a not-for-profit agency created in 1948 to assist people with an intellectual disability. Since its genesis, CL Toronto has been a source of support to thousands and thousands of Toronto families and their family member with an intellectual disability. CL Toronto supports these individuals through participating in community activities, helping them realize their full potential, and assisting them in their search for accessible and meaningful ways to live in the community. CL Toronto's mission statement underpins their values and goals:

***Community Living Toronto changes the lives of people with an intellectual disability by giving them a voice and supporting their choices where they live, learn, work and play.***

CL Toronto offers a range of programs throughout the city that support its work in realizing its mission. The summer residential program at Shadow Lake is one program that has been offered for many, many years through CL Toronto.

### 1.1 CL Toronto: Shadow Lake Centre

Shadow Lake Centre is located on over 300 acres of rolling terrain on the Oak Ridges Moraine in Stouffville, Ontario, just 45 minutes north of Toronto.



Shadow Lake Centre (Shadow Lake) is open all year long. During the summer it is a co-educational, residential camping program for people of all ages with an intellectual disability. For the rest of the year, its facilities and property is rented out to community groups. Examples of such groups include: schools, churches, youth and yoga groups, scouts, guides, air cadets and movie shoots.

The focus of this report is the experiences and satisfaction of the individuals with an intellectual disability who attend Shadow Lake's residential summer program, their families, and the CL Toronto staff who provide Shadow Lake's services and supports.

### 1.1.1 Shadow Lake

CL Toronto provides individuals (guests) with an intellectual disability with the opportunity to participate in a residential camp each summer. Guests at the Shadow Lake residential camp program can be as young as seven years and there is no upper age limit. There are nine sessions during the summer, each is one week in length, and guests can attend for more than a week at a time. While the average staff-to-guest ratio is 3-to-1 there are a limited number of beds available for guests who require 1-to-1 staffing.

During the day, programs such as swimming, boating, fishing, crafts, music, hiking, sports and indoor games are made available in small groups. After dinner, the entire camp comes together for campfires, dances, movie nights and drama events.



Shadow Lake staff group include a full time director and property manager, a part-time recreation supervisor and approximately 70 university and college students hired to deliver the CL Toronto programs and services.

## 1.2 Evaluation of Shadow Lake

In July 2010, CL Toronto management contracted with CAS-Toronto, Child Welfare Institute (CWI) to provide evaluation on selected programs. Shadow Lake was identified as a priority program for the evaluation services. CWI staff and the Director of Shadow Lake determined the focus would be an evaluation on the experiences and satisfaction of the guests, their families, and the staff who provide the services.

CWI staff and the Director of Shadow Lake developed and piloted the staff and guest survey evaluation tools during July 2010. Follow up with the families/caregivers' of the guests was done via a telephone survey in Fall/Winter 2010.



## 2.0 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

---

### 2.1 Methodology and Evaluation Tools

A mixed methodology was used for evaluating the Shadow Lake respondents. There were three key informant groups:

- Shadow Lake Guests (G) (n = 15) *Self Report Questionnaire* see Appendix 1
- Shadow Lake Staff (S) (n = 37) *Self Report Questionnaire* see Appendix 2
- Shadow Lake Families (F) (n =20) *Phone Questionnaire* see Appendix 3

The evaluation involved a total of 72 respondents. All tools were developed in partnership between the director of Shadow Lake and CWI research staff.

#### 2.1.1 Guest Self-Report Questionnaire

There were 66 guests registered in Week 9. Twenty-six guests were identified as able to understand the evaluation request; of those 26, a total of 15 (57.7%) or over half provided their review and comments. Guests were provided a standardized feedback form and asked to complete it at the conclusion of the 2010 camp session. They had the option of filling out the survey form on their own, if able, or with the assistance of a staff person. The questions were posed with illustrations such that the guest would be able to comprehend the emotions attached with the question. See Appendix 1.

#### 2.1.2 Staff Self-Report Questionnaire

In 2010, Shadow Lake had a total of 77 staff; fifteen were not assigned to work the day of the Week 9 evaluation leaving 62 able to participate. Staff was asked to fill out a standardized survey form, enquiring about their experience, training and improvements they would like to see at Shadow Lake. The questionnaire had 15 questions that included quantitative (Likert-based questions) and qualitative (narrative based questions). A total of 37 staff (59.7%) completed the staff survey. A range of staffing positions provided data (e.g. program staff, counselling staff, 1:1 staff, service staff, supervisory and maintenance. See Appendix 2.

#### 2.1.3 Caregiver Telephone Interview

Experience with Shadow Lake from the perspective of the guests' caregivers/ families' views was also collected. A total of 20 caregivers were randomly sampled from a list of all guests who attended Week 9 however group homes were excluded. Caregivers/families provided Shadow Lake with prior consent to the interview with CWI staff. Twenty caregivers completed the phone interview. They were asked 18 questions about their son/daughter's experience with camp and their thoughts and suggestions for needed improvements. See Appendix 3.

### 2.2 Data Analysis

All participants were assigned a non-identifying code and identifying information was excluded. Quantitative data were entered into SPSS 15.0 and univariate and bivariate analysis was conducted; qualitative data were recorded verbatim into a 'word' table format and analyzed for thematic content.



## 3.0 FINDINGS

---

### 3.1 Guests' Data

Guests' feedback was primarily narrative based as they were asked three questions:

*What was the best thing at Shadow Lake?*

*What did you dislike the most?*

*What would make your stay more enjoyable?*

#### **Best Thing at Shadow Lake?**

Their comments provided a great deal of information about the various aspects of Shadow Lake they most enjoy. Two themes emerged: the counsellors and the activities.

#### **THEME 1: Counsellors**

For the guests the counsellors at Shadow Lake are its best attraction. While no one specific feature or characteristic emerged in the analysis, the general support and enthusiasm of the counsellors seems to be what the guests like best. One guest did note counsellors' specific knowledge of their syndrome was very appreciated.

*G7 "Wonderful counsellors"*

*G13 "Nice and friendly counsellors"*

*G8 "All of the great counsellors and activities"*

#### **THEME 2: Activities**

Many guests listed the activities at Shadow Lake as the "best thing". A wide range of activities was noted and all included some type of physical movement. Specific ones highlighted were: water events, dancing, exercising and tennis.

*G4 "Dancing"*

*G6 "Programs - rec. hall, walks, water toys"*

*G3 "Loves tuck, dances, tennis, games, lake swim & splash pad"*

#### **Sub Theme: Water Activities**

The pleasure guests experience with water events is elevated to a sub-theme due the frequency in which it was noted. Popular activities include: swimming, boating/canoeing and fishing.

*G13 "You can get big fish out of the lake"*

*G3 "...swim & splash pad"*

*G15 "... canoe, big boat"*



## **Dislike the Most at Shadow Lake?**

A few areas emerged regarding what guests perceive is “fair” or “poor” about Shadow Lake. Most often listed as “fair” were arts and crafts activities, seemingly an activity not overly enjoyed by these 15 guests who completed the survey. Two themes arose when guests were queried about what is “poor” about Shadow Lake: 1) frustration with other guests’ behaviours and 2) when it rains at camp.

### **THEME 1: Other Guests**

The guests indicated that while at camp they are sometimes frustrated with other guests’ behaviours. Sometimes other campers are too loud or in the sharing of cabins, personal space/ is not respected or time on their own is limited.

*G3 “Some campers are too loud”*

*G1 “Other guest behaviours”*

### **THEME 2: Rain**

Guests were clear they do NOT like it when it rains at Shadow Lake. While this is clearly out of the control of the camp it may reflect that the activities that they guests see as the “best” (e.g. water sports) are not possible and those perceived as “fair” (e.g. arts/craft) are the fall back options with inclement weather.

*G2 “When it rains”*

*G4 “When it’s raining”*

## **Improvements to Shadow Lake**

Respondents did provide suggestions regarding improvements to Shadow Lake. One was in the area of activities and the other was specific to structural improvements.

### **THEME 1: Add Activities**

Guests’ suggestions for improvements focused on adding a variety of physical activities to the summer program. Illustrations of recommendations included: an exercise gym, a baseball diamond, horseback riding and biking. In short, guests want to add to the number and type of activities already available at the camp.

*G12 “Horses, bike riding”*

*G15 “Not too much walking”*

### **THEME 2: Structural Improvements**

Suggestions about structural improvements to make the guests experience more enjoyable at camp include grass grown in the field so more activities can take place in this area and greater accessibility for wheelchairs so all guests can participate in the activities and programming.

*G10 “Plant grass in the playing field-make it green”*

*G5 “More wheel chair accessibility”*

## **Guests’ Recommendations**

Guests’ recommendations fall into two categories: structural and activities.

<b>Structural Improvements</b>	<b>Activity Enhancements</b>
√ Add grass to playing field - allows more physical activities and programming	√ Add greater mix/different types of physical activities e.g. biking, horseback-riding
√ More wheelchair access - more guests can participate	√ Changes to arts/crafts approach
√ More personal/individual time for guests – all their time in programming is at times demanding/frustrating	√ Greater variety/mix of programming when weather doesn’t allow outdoor activities

## 3.2 Staff Data

### 3.2.1 Quantitative Data - Staff

Shadow Lake staff was provided with a one-page questionnaire, comprised of 15 quantitative and qualitative questions about their work experience, satisfaction with the camp milieu, and suggestions for improvement.

A total of 37 staff members from various positions completed the feedback questionnaire. See Table 1.

#### **Staff Demographics N=37**

*Gender:* Majority of staff were female (78%, n=28) vs. male (22%, n=9)

*Age Groups:* 20-22 years (58% n =21) vs. 23-25 years (6%, n=2) vs. 26+ years (3%, n=1)  
Nine-out-of-ten (92%, n=33) were less than 23 years of age,

*Positions:* Program Staff (32%, n=12)  
Counselling Staff (41%, n=15)  
Other (e.g. maintenance, service, supervisory) (27%, n=10)

*Pre-Training:* Not applicable n=7 (20%)  
Applicable n =30 (80%)  
❖ Attended Pre-training 24 of 30 (80%)  
❖ Did Not Attend Pre-training 6 of 30 (20%)

*Experience with CL Toronto Population:* Yes: n=29 (78%) No: n= 8 (22%)

*Worked Before At Shadow Lake:* Yes: n=20 (54%) No: n= 17 (46%)

#### **Pre-Training N =37 (Q1-3)**

Regarding who attended pre-training and who did not the quantitative analysis found it did vary somewhat according to age, with those staff in the youngest age group (17-19) having a lower attendance rate (42% attended vs. 58% not attended) compared to an older age group (20-22), where the attendance ratio was much higher (85% attended vs. 15% not attended). Qualitative data provided some insight as to the reason, where the younger staff group suggested a later date in the year for pre-training as many are still in high school when the training was offered.

*Q1-Pre-Training ~ Guests Have a Great Vacation:* Thirty staff responded. Overall, eight-out-of-ten (80%) indicated the training did prepare them for achieving that goal; one-in-five (20%) were neutral on the question.

*Q2-Pre-Training ~ Prepared for the Physical Work:* Thirty staff responded. A little less than two-thirds (63%) indicated the training did prepare them for the physical nature of the job and one-third (33% or n=8) indicated a 'neutral' response.

*Q3- Pre-Training ~ Prepared for Guests' Health Care Needs:* Thirty staff responded. Two-thirds (66%) agreed and less than one-third (30%) was 'neutral'.



*Neutral Responses:* Additional analysis found: 1) the attribute of whether or not staff had worked with the population in the past did not impact on whether or not they felt the training had prepared them for work, and 2) the 'neutral' responses were equally distributed across all three groups: counselling, program and service staff.

*Additional Training:* Staff from all levels (program, counselling and service) indicated a need for additional training. Analysis of their comments indicates they would find an increase in training helpful for their work with guests.



### **Professional Milieu N =37 (Q4-6)**

*Q4 -Staff Support:* Almost all the staff indicated they receive feelings of support from one another at Shadow Lake. Nearly all staff respondents (95%) indicated they either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that staff were supportive of one another.

*Q5 -Staff Adequately Supervised:* Over eight-in-ten staff surveyed (86%) either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' they were adequately supervised.

*Q6 -Reasonable Work Schedule:* While nearly seven-in-ten (68%) indicated they thought their work schedule was reasonable staff comments suggest this is an area where improvements can be made. Satisfaction with the work schedule was related to position and prior experience at Shadow Lake.

- ❖ People who had worked at Shadow Lake in the past felt more positive about the work schedule, where 80% (n=16) either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' their work schedule was reasonable vs. staff that had not previously worked at the camp, where about half or 53% (n=9) indicated the same.
- ❖ Position influenced staff response to the question. Only *counselling* or *program* staff indicated they 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' when asked if their work schedule was reasonable vs. *other* positions all agreed the work schedule was reasonable.

**Overall Experience N=37 (Q7-8):**

The overall experience of staff indicates very positive responses.

Q7 – *Overall Satisfaction:* All participants (100%, n=37) indicated they either ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ they are satisfied with their work experience at Shadow Lake.

Q8- *Recommend To Others:* Again, almost all (97%) staff surveyed said they would ‘recommend Shadow Lake as work experience to others’.

See Table 1 for a summary of Staff Survey results.

Table 1: Staff Survey Questionnaire

Staff Survey Questions		N=37	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree/ Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	TOTAL
Q1	Pre-training prepared me to help the guests have a great vacation	30 7=NA	17%	63%	80%	20%	~	100%
Q2	Pre-training prepared me for the physical work with the guests	30 7=NA	10%	53%	63%	33%	4%	100%
Q3	Pre-training prepared me for the guests’ health care needs	30 7=NA	13%	53%	66%	30%	4%	100%
Q4	Staff were supportive of each other	37	38%	57%	95%	5%	~	100%
Q5	I was adequately supervised	37	32%	54%	86%	8%	6%	100%
Q6	My work schedule was reasonable	37	22%	46%	68%	22%	10%	100%
Q7	Overall, I am satisfied with this work experience	37	49%	51%	100%	~	~	100%
Q8	I would recommend this summer job to others like me	37	54%	43%	97%	3%	~	100%

Note:

Minimum  
80-100%  
agree

Minimum  
60-79%  
agree

Minimum  
20% – 33%  
neutral

At least  
10 %  
disagree

### 3.2.2 Qualitative Data - Staff

The written comments of staff provided a great deal of rich information regarding Shadow Lake's assets and strengths. They also provided perceptive suggestions for improvements. It was clear from their responses that staff learned a great deal from their experience at the camp and benefitted in their interactions with the guests.

#### **Strengths of Shadow Lake - Staff**

Three themes arose during the process of analyzing the staff feedback on the strong points of Shadow Lake: *the people*, *the learning*, and *the atmosphere*.

#### **THEME 1: The People**

The most positive aspect of Shadow Lake from the staff's view: the guests and the staff. The connections between people presented as being the most important part of staff's experience during camp, along with the ability to work and learn together, which fostered bonds between guests and staff. This joint, interactive experience allowed the "we", the "us", the "team", the "unit" feelings to form and strengthen.

S14 *"... the guests were great and the staff became a small family"*

S16 *"We all worked as a team"*

S26 *"The people were great to work with and the guests were fantastic"*

S36 *"It creates a shared community of a unified experience "*

#### **THEME 2: The Learning Experience**

Another prominent theme was the importance to the staff of their learning experience in working with those who live with disabilities. Their comments aptly illustrate why staff feel it is important to their growth as people, as professionals, to learn about various disabilities. Additionally, staff flagged the benefit of gaining practical experience in working with different populations.

S19 *"It was a good experience. You learn a lot from the guests. It changes the way you see things"*

S34 *"It is a great work experience, and it opens one's awareness to people with disabilities"*

S33 *"I gained a rewarding experience whereby I got to interact with groups of different ages and challenges were met as different situations were present."*

S9 *"It allowed me to not only have a summer job that I enjoyed but it taught me new things about interacting with others and about myself"*

#### **THEME 3: The Atmosphere**

The final theme identified the atmosphere of Shadow Lake as one of its key attractive qualities. Staff underscored the physical beauty of the camp and the positive, supportive ambience that characterizes Shadow Lake.

S17 *"It is a healthy, safe and recreational environment for ALL individuals to learn and grow"*

S7 *"It is a beautiful facility, and a great atmosphere for employees and guests"*

S13 *"It provides a safe, fun atmosphere for guests and counsellors alike"*



## **Improvements to Shadow Lake - Staff**

Two key areas staff noted that they feel require improvement: *modifications to staff working environment* and *improvements to guest programming*.

### **THEME 1: Staff Working Environment**

A number of staff indicated some improvements in the work conditions at Shadow Lake would be beneficial to the work experience. Examples given referenced situations were:

- ❖ Long hours of work with few breaks were difficult
- ❖ Greater span in scheduling return to work after a day with long hours
- ❖ Added staff or replacement staff as staff leave during the summer
- ❖ More training prior to beginning their work at Shadow Lake.

S12 *"The long hours, lack of rest periods (both staff and guests) made it difficult to work to my fullest..."*

S17 *"From a staff position, we were lacking staff, and this put more stress on everyone"*

S26 *"I didn't know what to expect with this population. [I] hoped that we would get some education on the guests' disabilities and how to deal with certain needs"*

### **THEME 2: Programming**

Suggestions to improving programming appear to stem from staff's desire for guests to have a great experience at camp. Themes emanating from this area were:

- 1) Lack of variety in programming,
    - ❖ Need different activities; including more physical games that can include a broader range of participants
  - 2) Limited guest accessibility to some programs
    - ❖ Need activities that can include those with limited mobility
  - 3) New/refreshed equipment needed
    - ❖ Need new and refurbished games, puzzles as well as different arts and crafts.
- S13 *"The craft supplies and toys/games are in short supply/need to be updated"*
- S19 *"We lack some activity supplies such as board games, puzzles, arts and crafts supplies"*
- S22 *"Lack of variety of organized activities for guests"*

### **THEME 1: Staff Working Environment**

Suggestions provided by staff to help improve their experience at Shadow Lake fell into two separate themes, both with sub themes. The first theme -working conditions - comprised of hours & breaks, and additional staff; the second theme - logistics – consisted of suggestions around training and communication.

#### **Theme 1A: Working Conditions**

A major theme - *working conditions* – emerged out of staff's suggestions for improvements. Comments fell into two areas: a) hours and breaks and b) additional staff.

##### *Theme 1A1: Hours and Breaks*

A key suggestion from staff on improvement was related to changing the working hours and break schedule. Staff felt the length of their shifts was too long and needed to be reduced; breaks be combined to allow one lengthy break, rather than two short ones; and a later curfew would be helpful to allow them to decompress at the end of the work day.

S10 *"To improve the staff's experience I would consider allowing staff to rather than take 3 fifteen minute breaks/day, combine the allotted breaks as each staff chooses"*

S12 *"Have more organized evenings (10pm-12am) that are free!"*

S25 *"More breaks throughout the day or shorter days"*

### *Theme 1A2: Additional Staff*

Staff members felt the addition of a staff 'floater' would be beneficial for the guests' well-being and experience at camp. A floater would be able to assist where needed within the various programming or activities taking place. Other suggestions included hiring in the middle of the summer if staff give notice. In addition to making a difference for guests, staff indicated a reduction in stress for remaining staff if supplementary workers are hired.

- S33 *"Very understaffed! More counsellors hired so it's less hectic - sometimes the guest to counsellor ratio is too high"*
- S17 *"Keep hiring new staff as we lose them"*
- S1 *"Hire a "floater" who's job is to help staff throughout the day"*

### Theme 1B: Logistics

#### *Theme 1B1: Training*

Staff want additional training. Additional information and education about disabilities and the guests attending Shadow Lake would be helpful in improving experience and interactions. A link to a previous suggestion is providing training for those unable to attend the pre-training spring dates (e.g. those in high school or staff hired later in the summer).

- S5 *"Make a later training date for staff still attending high school"*
- S14 *"Education of various needs and specifics..."*
- S26 *"Education on various disabilities. We could extend our programs if we understood what people's needs are."*

#### *Theme 1B2: Communication*

Much of staff's comments under this theme centered on their desire to have information disseminated more frequently and foster better communication between staff and supervisors. One suggestion to make guest profiles available to staff, so staff are better able to understand each guest's needs and how to assist in making the experience more enjoyable. Staff also indicated a desire to have more group functions amongst themselves in order to promote teamwork and connections.

- S20 *"Activity news should be communicated in advance to program staff"*
- S23 *"Be able to read profiles Saturday night during movie, have program staff read them too"*
- S28 *"Provide more details during training week. Encourage more communication between returners and new ones."*
- S20 *"Activity news should be communicated in advance to program staff"*





## **THEME 2: Guest Programming**

Staff provided varied examples on their ideas on how to improve the guests' experiences. Two themes arose from content analysis: equipment and activities. Regarding advances in the families' experience, staff recommended improved communication.

### **Theme 2A: Equipment Improvements**

In addition to suggestions around updated equipment at Shadow Lake, comments also included suggestions for a greater variety of equipment related to the physical activities component of the camp to allow greater inclusion, accessibility and participation. With in-door activities, staff desires included a larger assortment of arts and crafts.

- S7 *"Purchase more toys and entertaining things e.g. new board games"*
- S11 *"Provide more resources or adequate equipment for adapting activities"*
- S15 *"Newer equipment so more variety for activities"*
- S25 *"More supplies so that we can run more and better activities"*

### **Theme 2B: Increase in Activities**

A theme from staff that mirrored the guests' theme is the suggestion to increase the variety of activities offered. Staff felt the increase in physical and non-physical activities would enhance the guests' camp experience. Other suggestions included the option of individual planning, especially for those guests who regularly do not participate in group activities.

- S33 *"More group activities and mass programs are needed (different activities)"*
- S29 *"I would have more personal programs...I would also like to see more variety in activities, since several of our guests stay for many weeks..."*
- S9 *"I would prepare more activities that ALL of the guests can be included in/are interested in"*

### **Theme 2C: Improved Family-Camp and Family-Guest Communications**

Staff recommendations on how to make families' experiences with Shadow Lake better were divided into two themes on improved communication: 1) communication between camp and family, and 2) communication between guest and family.

#### ***Theme 2C1: Family-Camp Communication***

Improved communication approaches in this area centered on early communication that better relays to families what experiences at camp their guest will have and to instill confidence in the staff's ability to meet their guest's needs. Staff felt a tour of Shadow Lake would be beneficial, where seeing the camp and meeting the different counsellors could help alleviate family members' worries about guest care. They also recommended the need for continuous communication with family members, advising them about specific activities their guest is participating in and how they are adjusting to the camp.

- S10 *"To improve the family's experience I would reassure caregivers that their loved ones will be in great hands, and when the end of the week comes tell caregivers exactly what happened all week"*
- S15 *"Give an open house/tour so they can see Shadow Lake and have a day they can experience it for themselves"*
- S17 *"The family should get to know and meet more counsellors rather than just one counsellor"*
- S24 *"Better communication, more realistic clothing suggestion list"*



*Theme 2C2: Family-Guest Communication*

Staff thought improvement in families' experience could be achieved through better communications between guest and family members. Suggestions included guests communicating with family members while at camp (e.g. letter or post card home), a check-out program and sending photos via email or guests leaving camp with photos, souvenirs or crafts they have made.

- S1 *"Collect email addresses so that staff can send pictures of the guest"*
- S25 *"Send guests home with photos so parents can see how much they loved camp"*
- S26 *"Have a book of souvenirs/crafts"*
- S16 *"Offer a "write a letter home" option"*

**Staff Recommendations**

The suggestions for improvements to the Shadow Lake experience for staff fall into two categories: improvements to staff working environment and guest programming.

Staff Working Environment	Guest Programming
√ Add more hours & breaks and additional staff as needed (e.g. floaters, extra hires as staff leave)	√ Equipment improvements
√ More pre-training times and more advanced training	√ Activity improvements
√ Foster communication between staff and supervisors in better meeting guest needs	√ Improve family-camp and family-guest communications



### 3.3 Family Data

#### 3.3.1 Quantitative Data – Family

Twenty-five caregivers and families of Shadow Lake guests' were sampled randomly from the Week 7 guest list. The families consented for CWI to contact them and they participated in a 10-20 minute phone interview. The standardized phone interview consisted of 18 questions about their and their son or daughter's experience at the camp. A total of 20 families participated in the phone interview.

#### **Camper Demographics N=20**

The 20 caregivers were asked a few demographic questions about their son/daughter and their attendance at Shadow Lake.

Camper Age:           Ages 13-19 (25%, n=5)  
                          Ages 20-29 (15% n= 3)  
                          Ages 30 + (60% n= 12)

# Yrs At                1 to 4 summers (40%, n=8)  
Shadow Lake:        5 to 29 summers (40%, n=8)  
                          30 summers+ (20%, n=4)

#### **Important Aspects of Shadow Lake (N=20) Q 1-6**

Q1 – *Guest is Safe*: All the families/caregivers (n=20) of caregivers either '*strongly agreed*' (95%) or '*agreed*' (5%) that the most important thing about Shadow Lake is that their son/daughter is safe.

Q2-*Guest has Fun*: Similar finding but not quite at the same agreement strength where all 20 either '*strongly agreed*' (75%) or '*agreed*' (25%) that the most important thing about Shadow Lake is that their son/daughter has a fun and enjoyable time.

Q3-*Guest Learns New Skills*: Most families agreed but not all noted this was an important component where only '*strongly agreed*' (35%) or '*agreed*' (35%) and a quarter (25%) were '*neutral*'.

Q4-*Guest Meet New Friends*: The preponderance of families viewed this as an important element where eight-in-ten '*strongly agreed*' (50%) or '*agreed*' (30%); but for one-in-five (20%) –they were '*neutral*' whether it was an important aspect of their camper's experience.

Q5 – *Guest has a Camp Experience*: Almost all families/caregivers (n=19) felt this was a key aspect of Shadow Lake where '*strongly agreed*' (75%) or '*agreed*' (20%) that the most important thing about Shadow Lake is that their son/daughter get to have a camp experience.

Q6– *Guest is With Peer Group*: Again, almost all families/caregivers (n=19) felt this was an important offering of Shadow Lake where '*strongly agreed*' (55%) or '*agreed*' (35%) that being with their peer group was an important aspect.

The top three aspects, as noted by highest '*strongly agree*' percent, were in rank order: *guest is safe* (95%); *guest has fun* (75%); and *guest has a camp experience* (75%).

**Overall Satisfaction N=20 (Q7-9)**

Q7– *Reasonable Price*: Nearly all (95%) either ‘strongly agreed’ (50%) or ‘agreed’ (45%) that the cost of Shadow Lake was reasonable.

Q8– *Overall Satisfaction*: All (100%) either ‘strongly agreed’ (85%) or ‘agreed’ (15%) that they were satisfied with the Shadow Lake program for their son/daughter.

Q9– *Recommend It To Others*: All (100%) would recommend Shadow Lake to others ‘strongly agreed’ (90%) or ‘agreed’ (10%).

See Table 2 for a summary of Family Survey results.

**Table 2: Family Survey Questionnaire**

Family Survey Questions		N=20	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree/	Neutral	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	TOTAL
Q1	My son/daughter is safe (has right amount of staffing care)	N=20	95%	5%	100%		0	100%
Q2	My son/daughter has fun	N=20	75%	25%	100%		0	100%
Q3	My son/daughter learns new skills (e.g. paddling, crafts)	N=20	35%	35%	70%	25%	0	100%
Q4	My son/daughter meets new friends	N=20	50%	30%	80%	20%	0	100%
Q5	My son/daughter has a camp experience	N=20	75%	20%	95%	5%	0	100%
Q6	My son/daughter is with their peer group	N=20	55%	35%	90%	10%	0	100%
Q7	The price is reasonable	N=20	50%	45%	95%	5%	0	100%
Q8	Overall, I am satisfied with the Shadow Lake program	N=20	85%	15%	100%		0	100%
Q9	I would recommend Shadow Lake to others	N=20	90%	10%	100%		0	100%

Minimum  
80-100%  
agree

Minimum  
60-79%  
agree

Minimum  
20% – 33%  
neutral

### 3.3.2 Qualitative Data- Family

The feedback from the twenty families provided a great deal of in-depth information regarding the positive aspects of Shadow Lake. They also had suggested areas for improvement. While there was an overwhelming amount of positive commentary from the guests' caregivers on their satisfaction with the program, some caregivers found it difficult to answer a number of questions as they did not experience the camp first-hand and/or their son/daughter is non-verbal.

#### **Strengths of Shadow Lake – Family**

Four main themes emerged from the analysis of family/caregiver response to this question. They are presented in rank order from the most prominent to less prominent.

- Overall experience
- The Atmosphere
- The People
- Camp Setting and Organization

#### **THEME 1: Overall Experience**

The most prominent positive aspect of Shadow Lake was the experience for their son/daughter. Fifteen of 20 of the caregivers greatly appreciated that their son/daughter was able to retreat to Shadow Lake, knowing their son/daughter absolutely loved the camp. Families indicated they were satisfied with the activities, facilities and food, and were grateful that their guest had the opportunity to have an overnight experience.

- F2 *"My daughter enjoys it, looking forward to it, and can't wait for next year. She has tried other camps and it is the only one she wants to go back to."*
- F3 *"I see how my daughter reacts...when we drop her off for her time there she is extremely happy. When I call and speak with her I can tell she having a wonderful time which very important."*
- F7 *"Everything is good about it—every activity they have, every program."*
- F10 *"My son is very anxious to go and packs bags weeks before. He thinks about it constantly, wakes up ready to go."*
- F13 *"Made a lot of wonderful friends there...has the best time summer after summer."*
- F15 *"My son learns to be away from mom & dad—he realizes he doesn't have to be with mom/dad."*

#### **THEME 2: The People**

For the families a prominent positive aspect of Shadow Lake is the people: the staff and the administration. Responses from half the families underscored their belief that the counselors fit in well with the guests, they are well trained, personable, enthusiastic, and work hard to make it the best experience for the guest. Additionally, there was an overwhelming amount of praise for the Shadow Lake Director. These families strongly support the Director of Shadow Lake and the vision and inclusive approach taken. As one family member noted, *"The Director is the glue that holds the camp together."*

- F4 *"The Director seems to be an involved leader and director of the camp. He is available and knows many of the campers. "*
- F10 *"Staff are very well trained, personable, well-experienced, and try to make sure the experience for the camper and family is excellent."*
- F11 *"The Director is wonderful with everyone. He treats everyone like his own family, is there for us and can go talk to him."*
- F16 *"The Director has a vision that people follow through on."*
- F19 *"On the whole, the staff is helpful and fun to be with; they seem to want to learn about the different children's problems. My son fits in very well with the staff."*
- F19 *"The Director is the best part about it – he is just a gem..."*

### **THEME 3: The Atmosphere**

The last prominent theme was the overall positive, accepting atmosphere felt by families at Shadow Lake. Families generally found the camp accommodating, inclusive and supportive; they felt comfortable letting their son or daughter go to overnight camp; they trusted the staff members' abilities and appreciated that their son/daughter felt at ease while attending Shadow Lake.

*F6 "Don't have to worry at all – trust them 100% percent."*

*F7 "Really a unique place."*

*F13 "They are wonderful where [my son] is concerned because he [is] physically challenged and he is just so loved there."*

*F13 "Comfort in knowing that it is a place that he can go year in and year out - no matter how old he is."*

### **THEME 4: Camp Setting and Organization**

The final theme that emerged for the families as a key strength of Shadow Lake was the camp setting and administration. One-third of the families articulated their satisfaction with the location of the camp and its rustic, beautiful setting; they also expressed their satisfaction with the admissions process, the organization of the camp and how effectively it is run.

*F4 "I like their reporting habits—write proper reports to the parents per week with checklists and comments...they return some forgotten belongings and the site is well maintained."*

*F16 "Shadow Lake is good because the consistency of the kind of care, expectations, how the schedule works and the size."*

*F18 "It is a beautiful location, very scenic."*

### **Improvements to Shadow Lake - Family**

Only one-quarter of caregivers voiced any issues when asked about suggested improvements, and of those comments, only two themes emerged.

- Supervision of Guest Self Care
- Communication

### **THEME 1: Supervision of Guest Self Care**

A few comments identified a worry with not enough supervision and instruction being provided from the counsellors on self-care skills of the guests, such as use of sunscreen and bug spray and regularly changing clothing.

*F2 "The sunscreen and bug spray were not touched; she was badly burned on her neck and bitten when she came home...if they were putting sunscreen and bug spray on this shouldn't have happened."*

*F11 "Sometimes [my child] will come home and hasn't been changing clothes everyday...some times putting dirty clothes on. She is handicapped and needs someone to tell her she is doing the right thing...I think sometimes they [guest] get lazy because they know counselor won't say anything."*

*F12 "More mosquito repellent on the kids – came home bitten to pieces."*

### **THEME 2: Communication**

Issues with communication were noted on a very few occasions – flagged were miscommunication of schedule issues or an absence of expected communication.

*F12 "I was a little disappointed that no one called me to tell me how he was doing. - don't tell me you will call and not do it."*

## Suggestions for Improvement - Family

Families were asked about one thing that would improve the guest's experience, the families experience and one thing overall to improve at Shadow Lake.

### ❖ **Improve CAMPERS' Experience**

Most families were unable to respond to this question for a number of very good reasons. One - they did not feel that they had the expertise to comment; two - because they were not campers at the camp they didn't feel they could respond; and three – as their son/daughter was non-verbal they not communicate this information. While 40% did provide a response to this question the primary theme was: *improved staff supervision and safety*.

F2 *"A bit more training of the staff in dealing with her anxieties."*

### ❖ **Improve FAMILIES' Experience**

Only twenty percent of caregivers provided a suggestion on improving the family's experience with no theme being dominant. General suggestions included: *safety around the pick up and drop of area, better communication, and more updates about their son/daughter*.

### ❖ **Improve Shadow Lake Experience**

Over one-third gave suggestions in this area. The dominant theme that emerged: *improvement of facilities*. Suggested areas were the nursing station and washrooms.

F16 *"Where they usually have the nursing station, that could be brighter, it is kind of a dark, dingy facility and could more attractive."*

F19 *"I think the washrooms in the main building could stand a little bit of updating, one thing I get to use."*

## Implications for Son/Daughter if Shadow Lake Did Not Exist

This question gave the caregivers pause. They provided thoughtful, insightful feedback regarding the implications for their son/daughter if Shadow Lake did not exist. The two themes were:

Sadness  
*Missing a camp experience*

Seek alternative option

### **THEME 1: Sadness**

The dominant theme by far – the guests would be extremely sad if Shadow Lake did not exist. Nearly two-thirds of families expressed the sentiment that Shadow Lake is extremely special and would be greatly missed by everyone.

F11 *"She would be broken hearted and so would a lot of other people."*

F13 *"Oh my gosh, that would be awful because if there is anything else that is comparable I don't know about it. I would heartbroken"*



### THEME 1A: Missing A Camp Experience

An element of the “sadness” theme was families’ belief their son/daughter would be missing out on an important experience, a normal experience for most children – summer camp. Half the families spoke about the importance of Shadow Lake in allowing their son/daughter to have a camp experience that they would not be able to have elsewhere; an experience that allows the guests to be in a different environment, a place where they feel safe and comfortable and accepted.

- F6 *“Camp is very different experience- change in environment, see different people, jump into lake. No other place in town that would give him this.”*
- F8 *“He wouldn’t be amongst his peers. It might be difficult to find another place where he may be accepted.”*
- F14 *“He is not such an outgoing person...looks forward to the independence, it is his vacation, meets new people, overall experience is so positive. It is all he needs, he reaches expectations and goals.”*
- F17 *“If this was the last program we spend our last penny on we would make sure we continue it as long as we can.”*

### THEME 2: Seek Alternative Options

This theme underscored the importance of Shadow Lake where families would look for another camp. Nearly one-third said they would look for an alternative camp for their son/daughter. Unfortunately for many of these families, other alternatives either do not exist or they are unaware of them. For the families knowledgeable of other alternatives, they preferred Shadow Lake to other camps but would only use an alternative if they had no other option.

- F4 *“Have some alternatives we discovered this year when we needed extra cover. We like Shadow Lake better though.”*
- F9 *“There are other camps but not as convenient. We don’t like them as much but would send him to them.”*
- F15 *“We would have to find another camp, which is comparable, which doesn’t exist.”*

### Family Recommendations

The suggestions for improvements to the Shadow Lake experience for staff fall into two categories: improvements to staff working environment and guest programming.

Guest Care	Communication
√ Increase attention to ensuring self-care needs are met	√ Improve family-camp and family-guest communications
√ Improve facilities	

## 4.0 SUMMARY

---

### **Satisfaction:**

All three stakeholder groups – guests, their families/caregivers, and the staff providing the services indicate very high levels of satisfaction with their Shadow Lake experience. While the guests didn't provide a number rating, they did indicate it IS the staff and activities that they are most satisfied with; the other two groups – staff and families, both gave satisfaction ratings of 100%.

Over three-quarters of staff have had prior experience with people who have an intellectual disability, an important factor in understanding the needs of the guest population. Loyalty appears to be a strong element in the Shadow Lake workforce with more than half of the staff in 2010 indicating they have had prior work experience at Shadow Lake. Loyalty is also found in the families who refer their son/daughter to the camp. For some, Shadow Lake has been an essential part of their summer plan for years, if not decades. The families also spoke about how difficult it would be for their child and themselves if Shadow Lake did not exist.

There are many elements about Shadow Lake where the three stakeholder groups surveyed flag it as an exceptional program of excellence. As with all programs there are areas of improvement that can be found and made. Analysis of the recommendations across the guest, family and staff groups identifies the following as suggested areas for improvement:

### **Suggested Areas for Future Improvement:**

#### **Guest Care**

- √ Increase attention to ensuring guest's self-care needs are met.

#### **Activity Enhancements**

- √ Add greater mix/different types of physical activities e.g. biking, horseback-riding.
- √ Greater variety/mix of programming when weather doesn't allow out-door activities e.g. arts/crafts approach.

#### **Communication**

- √ Foster communication between staff and supervisors in better meeting guest needs.
- √ Improve family-camp and family-guest communications.

#### **Structural Improvements**

- √ Add grass to playing field to allow more physical activities and programming.
- √ Equipment and facility improvements e.g. nursing station, washrooms, wheel-chair access.

#### **Staff Working Environment**

- √ Add more hours & breaks and additional staff as needed (e.g. floaters, extra hires as staff leave).
- √ More pre-training times and more advanced training.

## 5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

---

### **Guest Care**

- Provide a dedicated staff that will be responsible for overseeing areas of personal hygiene and care for guests including clothing, oral and personal hygiene and skin care (e.g., sunscreen, bug spray etc.)

### **Communication**

- Review communication methods including content of guest report and customer satisfaction cards that will enhance the exchange of information with guests and families.

### **Staff Working Environment**

- Refine the training strategy to focus on pre-training solutions, specifically addressing high school students, and the identification and implementation of ongoing training and a plan to train staff who are in supervisory positions.
- Enhance the recruitment strategy in order to promote staff retention by targeting students in related areas of study.
- Explore strategies to maintain staff commitment during the last few sessions of camp.



SHADOW LAKE GUEST SURVEY

**Guest name:** \_\_\_\_\_ [first name]  
[last name]


**Gender:**     Male         Female        **Date of Birth:**        [dd]        [mm]  
[yr] \_\_\_\_\_

**Been to Shadow Lake Before:**    No    Yes   **If “yes”, since when or # times:**

HOW DID WE DO THIS SUMMER...

	What is the <b>BEST</b> thing about Shadow Lake?
	What is the thing you <b>DISLIKE</b> the most about Shadow Lake?

**What would you improve?**

	What could we do to make your visit at Shadow Lake more <b>ENJOYABLE?</b>
---	---

**SHADOW LAKE STAFF SURVEY**

Please take a few minutes to complete this feedback form. Your evaluation of our **Shadow Lake Centre Summer Program** is very important as your feedback allows us to continue to evaluate the camp's effectiveness and improve its quality. All your responses are non-identifying, are kept confidential, and results are only used for evaluation purposes. **Thank you!**

<b><u>A little about you...</u></b>						
<b>Gender:</b> <input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female		<b>Age Group:</b> <input type="radio"/> Age 17-19		<input type="radio"/> 20-22	<input type="radio"/> 23-25	
<input type="radio"/> Over 26						
<b>Staff Position:</b> <input type="radio"/> Counselling Staff <input type="radio"/> Program Staff <input type="radio"/> Service Staff <input type="radio"/> Medical /Health Care Staff <input type="radio"/> Supervisory Staff						
<b>Attended May Pre-Training:</b> <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes						
<b>Worked with this population before:</b> <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes <b>Worked at Shadow Lake before:</b> <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes						

**Please circle only one response for each question**

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
1	Pre-training prepared me to help the guests have a great vacation	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA
2	Pre-training prepared me for the physical work with the guests	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA
3	Pre-training prepared me for the guests' health care needs	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA
4	Staff were supportive of each other	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA
5	I was adequately supervised	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA
6	My work schedule was reasonable	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA
7	Overall, I am satisfied with this work experience	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA
8	I would recommend this summer job to others like me	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA

**We are interested in your experience at Shadow Lake. Please share your experiences.**

9	Shadow Lake was <b>good</b> because...
10	Shadow Lake was <b>fair</b> because...
11	Shadow Lake was <b>poor</b> because...

**What would you improve?** [use back of page if needed]

12	What is one thing you would do to improve the <b>staff's</b> experience at Shadow Lake?
13	What is one thing you would do to improve the <b>guest's</b> experience at Shadow Lake?
14	What is one thing you would do to improve the <b>family's</b> experience at Shadow Lake?
15	What is one thing you would do to <b>improve</b> Shadow Lake?

### **SHADOW LAKE FAMILY SURVEY**

Please take a few minutes to complete this feedback form. Your evaluation of **Shadow Lake Centre** is very important as your feedback allows us to continue to evaluate the camp's effectiveness and improve its quality. All your responses are non-identifying, are kept confidential, and results are only used for evaluation purposes. Thank you!

**The most important thing about Shadow Lake is:**

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
1	My son/daughter is safe (has the right amount of staffing care)	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA
2	My son/daughter has fun	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA
3	My son/daughter learns new skills (e.g. paddling, crafts)	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA
4	My son/daughter meets new friends	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA
5	My son/daughter has a camp experience	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA
6	My son/daughter is with their peer group	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA
7	The price is reasonable	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA
8	Overall, I am satisfied with the Shadow Lake program	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA
9	I would recommend Shadow Lake to others	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA

**We are interested in your experience at Shadow Lake. Please share your experiences.**

10	Shadow Lake was <b>good</b> because...
11	Shadow Lake was <b>fair</b> because...
12	Shadow Lake was <b>poor</b> because...

**What would you improve?**

13	What is one thing you would do to improve the <b>camper's</b> experience at Shadow Lake?
14	What is one thing you would do to improve the <b>family's</b> experience at Shadow Lake?
15	What is one thing you would do to <b>improve</b> Shadow Lake?

**If Shadow Lake didn't exist, what would that mean for your son/daughter?**

16	
----	--

17	How old is your son/daughter?
18	How many years have your daughter/son attended shadow Lake centre?