

Stephenie Katchabaw

Prof. Barbara Bruce

SASAH 4490X

06 October 2025

### SASAH Experiential Learning Final Reflection



Camp Kee-Mo-Kee has been my home away from home since the very first time I attended in 2011. Last summer, I had the privilege of returning to KMK in the familiar position of Leadership Coordinator, but this time, through the lens of a SASAH experiential learning internship. Though it was my 3<sup>rd</sup> season in the Leadership Coordinator position and my 5<sup>th</sup> season working at KMK in general, I continued to learn, grow, and find innovative ways to expand my skillset. I believe

that the reflective mindset prompted by my internship requirements was quite helpful in this process, as it allowed me to continually explore my responsibilities, thoughts, and feelings in a meaningful way.

My time at KMK was split into two distinct sections: spring season and summer season. During the spring, my responsibilities were to plan and facilitate curriculum-informed outdoor education field trips, clean and inventory main camp areas, help interviewing summer season staff, and chart the course for KMK's leadership program for the summer season. Since Trista, my internship supervisor, specialized in the outdoor education side of camp, one of my big goals for the spring season was to expand my knowledge of local environments and wildlife, as well as



my strategies for the dissemination of this information to students. Trista is an incredibly passionate and insightful outdoor educator, and I am pleased to report that I can now easily identify and share information on much of the camp's natural surroundings, including may apples, skunk cabbage, tent caterpillar nests, poison ivy, stinging nettle, trilliums, garlic mustard, woodpecker holes, io moths (see pictured!), snake grass, inky cap mushrooms, cancer root, tree burls, chicken of the woods, and more. Being able to hold this knowledge and share it with the students that visited our camp was really special, as it felt like a meaningful way to connect with my surroundings and also foster an interest in the environment for the youth who will one day be the new stewards of the planet. For my use, this information is also transferrable to my writing, art, leadership style, and the way I move through the natural world.

Another big part of the spring season at KMK is finding ways to build meaningful connections with the students that visit the camp, as we only get to see them for the day. As ironic as it sounds, my favourite part of the day in the spring is always waving the kids goodbye

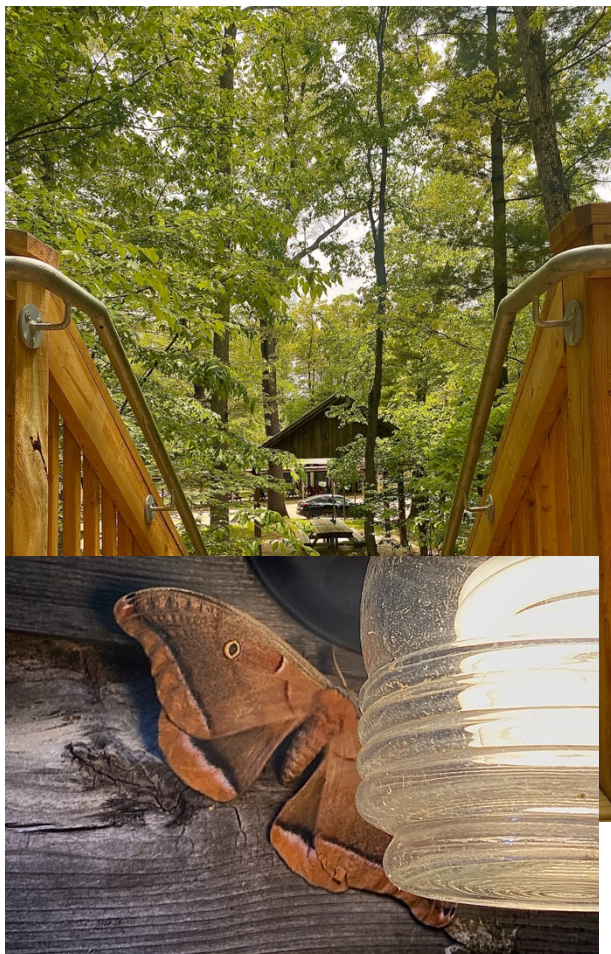


as their busses pull away. This is the moment you get to see how much the day really meant to them, which is a huge part of what makes any of the work we do at camp meaningful. Those students leave covered in dirt, bug bites, and sweat, and yet they still have the energy to give an enthusiastic and energetic farewell. Those high-fives through closed bus windows meant that a kid

left with new knowledge, inspiration, and happiness. I

don't know what career I want to pursue in the future, but I do know that these experiences working with children and seeing the impact we can have even in the span of a day-long field trip will be a huge factor in charting my way there.

The summer season is when my responsibilities became more role specific. As



Leadership Coordinator, I oversaw all aspects of KMK's leadership program that focuses on building foundational leadership, collaboration, communication, personal growth, and interpersonal skills within youth aged 12-16.

The program has three streams: JLIT (Junior Leaders in Training), LIT (Leaders in Training), and CIT (Counsellors in Training), which each have their own unique set of learning outcomes, interactive workshops, and formats. I handled

the planning, scheduling, supervision, and delivery of each of these streams. Other responsibilities I balanced during the summer season included training, supervising, and providing routine evaluations of counselling staff, covering breaks, cleaning, helping with drop-off and pick-up times, behaviour management, and ensuring smooth transitions between camp activities. With all of the above responsibilities, as well as the general expectation that anyone in a coordinator position be available to assist with any other aspect of camp when needed, it was crucial that I be organized, proactive, and take initiative. This has been something that I have struggled with in the past, but I can say with confidence that working at KMK has significantly improved my skills in these areas. I was also able to really hone my teaching skills through the conceptualization and facilitation of workshops for leadership campers. It is one thing to be able to effectively present information, and it is another to make it fun for the participants – I believe that I was able to synthesize both of these aspects, as I saw significant growth and improvement in all of the leadership campers that were under my care this summer. I have always loved working with teenagers, and my most recent summer season at KMK only made me surer of this. While they certainly come with their own challenges, I have found that the key to working with this age group is a foundation of connection and mutual respect. I embrace the fact that I will learn just as much from the leadership campers as they will from me, and I take great care to reflect this in the way that I run workshops, which I believe has positively impacted my ability to deliver on the learning outcomes of KMK's leadership program.

Much like with the spring season, much of the value of the summer season at camp is the way it is a vessel for building connections. When I was growing up, KMK was always a place where I was safe and encouraged to be unapologetically myself, as well as explore what that





truly meant to me. As I've grown up and moved into working at KMK, I have

realized that not only have I been able to replicate this space for campers, but also that I have become the representation that I wish I had when I was that age. It is deeply rewarding and fulfilling to be able to be a positive adult figure and role model in these children's lives while also serving as positive mixed/Indian, queer, and non-binary representation. I have been able



to give campers a glimpse of my corner of the world through simple self-expression, cultural sharing, and answering questions, and similarly, I have been able to share in that of other people – it is this level of interpersonal learning, sharing, and connection that has made my time at KMK truly as valuable as it has been. One of my proudest accomplishments is knowing that I have truly been able to make an impact on people's lives, and that I have personally been a small part of opening children's worlds through teaching, laughter, and mutual support.

As far as tangible impacts of the leadership program, I have revolutionized the way that the leadership program is delivered at KMK through my development of the program. One key workshop that I introduced to the leadership program was inspired by a connection I had formed

with a camper surrounding cultural identity. I wore a pair of beaded earrings one day, which sparked a conversation with an Indigenous camper who said they wanted to bead me a pair of earrings to thank me for being their mentor. I thought that it would be an apt ‘thank you’ to share my appreciation with them by giving them mehndi in return. This heartwarming interaction sparked the idea for a cultural competency



workshop. Armed with the knowledge I had gained as a SASAH student, I was able to deliver this workshop in a way that taught respect, dignity, ethics, and compassion to the leadership campers, and this has become a valuable part of the teachings of the leadership program at KMK.

The time that I spent at KMK this past summer was fun, educational, and expansive. It set the stage for personal and professional growth, as well as furthered my skill development as



an educator, public speaker, supervisor, and part of a working team. I will carry forward the

importance of connection, initiative, staying true to oneself, and mutual learning into wherever my career path may take me next. Safe to say, Camp Kee-Mo-Kee is going to remain my home away from home for quite some time.