

Learning from Learn to Camp: Investigating immigrant integration in Canadian parks

by

Megan Sullivan
BA, University of King's College, 2007

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of the Requirements for the Degree of

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in the School of Environmental Studies

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Abstract

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While Canada has, in recent years, experienced a significant increase in global immigration in tandem with rising migration to urban centers, visitorship to Canadian parks has been declining. It is thought that this is, in part, due to shifting cultural demographics. In 2011, as part of a larger measured response to these changes, Parks Canada in partnership with the Mountain Equipment Co-op, launched ‘Learn to Camp’. The Learn to Camp program provides participants the opportunity to learn how to plan and enjoy safe and successful camping trips. The program is facilitated through one to two day events, and includes a repository of information online and a mobile app. Participants, primarily new and urban Canadians, are groomed to become independent campers: learning where to camp, what to bring, what to cook, and how to stay safe. This thesis seeks to understand the Learn to Camp program – how it is performed, how it is received, and what, if any, are its impacts on participants, parks, and other stakeholders? In this project, I draw on primary research and literatures from cultural studies of nature to examine Learn to Camp under two frames, highlighting both immediate and long-term program implications. The literatures provided by critical studies of nature demonstrate how Canadian parks carry a limiting nationalist identity embedded within a history of colonial erasures. In my analysis, Learn to Camp appears to reinforce this historical narrative as it prescribes specific ways of ‘knowing’ and ‘being’ in park spaces. Concurrently, interview and questionnaire data indicate that new Canadians have an overwhelmingly positive experience with Learn to Camp. Participants are provided the skills, knowledge, and confidence necessary to become independent campers. Furthermore, participants leave Learn to Camp with a renewed sense of belonging to the Canadian landscape and to Canadian culture. In this project, I am interested in accounting for both the problematic underpinnings *and* the enjoyment that can be found in acculturating practices, such as Learn to Camp.

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List of Acronyms

AP – Alberta Parks

BC – British Columbia

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

LTC – Learn to Camp

NDD – Nature Deficit Disorder

MEC – Mountain Equipment Co-op

NHS – National Historic Site

NP – National Parks

ON - Ontario

OP – Ontario Parks

PC – Parks Canada

RV – Recreational vehicle

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Chapter 1

Introduction:

1. Setting camp

“The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function.”

F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Crack Up

In late May of 2011 I found myself tucked in the back corner of Toronto’s Royal theatre watching a live theatrical screening of the National Parks Project.¹ I was the fortunate recipient of a last minute ticket, and arrived late to the scene. Having no prior knowledge of what the night would entail, I quietly snuck in and took a seat. Artful imagery of the national parks floated across a projector screen and different ensembles of Canadian musicians shuffled in and off of the stage, performing songs written collaboratively for the very parks the images were broadcasting. I was mesmerized.

The National Parks Project, now featured as an online medium, introduces itself as such:

In the tradition of the Group of Seven, Margaret Atwood’s *Survival* and other cultural touchstones, the National Parks Project aims to explore the ways in which the wilderness shapes our cultural imagination. The core of this project is the parks themselves – places that most Canadians never visit, but are nonetheless amazing and inspirational parts of the country we call home (Davis et al., 2013).

When I left the theatre that night my boots felt lighter. The city looked fresh and I imagined Toronto just as it is, a small piece of urban existence in the midst of a massively diverse and expansive, wild and beautiful piece of land that we know as Canada. Oh, Canada.

¹ The National Parks Project was created as part of the 2011 Parks Canada centennial celebrations. The film project took different arrangements of Canadian musicians and filmmakers and placed them in 13

Wait, what happened?

The National Parks Project stuck with me. I loved it in a way that left me baffled. I knew that Canadian parks were spaces with complex and problematic histories and realities. And sure, I enjoy camping and being outside. I think that Canada is a great place to live but I certainly don't identify as someone with an outstanding sense of national pride. What did the performance stir up inside of me? Where did these feelings - the surging pride, deep wonderment and unabashed adoration for Canada and parks - come from? This experience motivated questions that I have asked in this thesis: How is wilderness tied to Canadian identity? My own identity? Did new Canadians feel this way when they saw the National Parks Project? What about when they were in park spaces themselves?

The Learn to Camp program provides a rich site to explore these questions, and to consider the experiences of new Canadians in park spaces. Created in 2011 by Parks Canada (Parks) and the Mountain Equipment Co-op (MEC), the Learn to Camp program aims to teach new and urban Canadians how to be safe and independent campers.² Identifying a need to reduce barriers for engaging new audience members into park operations, the program was created in response to decreased visitation in conjunction with rising immigration and urban migration rates (J. Bartram, personal communication,

² Statistics Canada define immigrants as "...those born outside of Canada and are, or have been, landed immigrants. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Some immigrants have lived in Canada for many years while others are recent arrivals" (Statistics Canada, 2009). Their definition is broken down into four categories: well established, established, recent and new, a new immigrant being an individual who has landed in Canada between 2001 and 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2009). Parks Canada uses the term 'new Canadian' in Learn to Camp materials but leaves the term undefined. For the purpose of this research project, the term 'new Canadian' does not discriminate on the basis of immigration status or citizenship but refers to all newcomers to Canada as relevant participants. The definition was expanded to include all classifications and statuses of foreign-born newcomers to Canada to match the research objectives, which are to gain insights from individuals new to Canada experiencing Learn to Camp, regardless of official status.

Learn to Camp documents refer to key target audience members as "Canadians living close to urban centres" (Parks Canada and Mountain Equipment Co-op, 2013). Statistics Canada refers to an urban area as "...a population of at least 1,000 and a density of 400 or more people per square kilometer" (Statistics Canada, 2011), however also note that the term 'urban' is used variably depending on points of view, interest and application. For the purpose of this research, the term 'urban Canadian' refers to any Canadian living in a concentrated population with high density. The majority of new Canadians reside in urban centers, however, not all new Canadians are urban Canadians, and vice versa (Statistics Canada, 2009).

July 19, 2013). Beyond teaching tangible camping skills, Learn to Camp serves as an invitation and welcome for first time visitors into the Canadian park system. The program is structured through one to two day events and is supported by a repository of online information and a mobile app. Although peripherally the program has appeared successful - events are in high demand and capacity has been doubled in most urban areas across the country - no qualitative data assessing program objectives had yet been completed as of 2013 when this research project began.³

This thesis seeks to understand the Learn to Camp program – how it is performed, how it is received, and what, if any, are its impacts on participants, parks and other stakeholders? Drawing on the literatures provided by critical studies of nature, Canadian parks are read as spaces that carry a limiting nationalist identity embedded within a history of colonial erasures. Indeed, parks are a product of an extractivist/capitalist economic agenda (Sandilands, 2000b; Searle, 2000; Cronon, 1996). From this standpoint, Learn to Camp appears to be not only problematic, but a site where conflict and exclusions may inhibit new Canadians from enjoying park spaces. Read through this theoretical framing, Learn to Camp – a program working to invite diversity into park spaces – becomes a compelling site to investigate. This thesis works systematically through short and long term analyses to see if Learn to Camp does in fact reproduce this history, furthering exclusions and inhibiting new Canadians from enjoying park spaces.

Learn to Camp as a program implicitly and explicitly portrays nationalism and a particular Canadian identity in Canadian parks. Qualitative research results indicate that participants experience sentiments of inclusion and belonging, even as the program normalizes and shapes them as particular kinds of Canadians, and excludes other

³ Parks Canada operates Learn to Camp in national park spaces across the country. As well, Alberta Parks and Ontario Parks run provincial versions of the program. While there are variations among the programs, the major themes and objectives of Learn to Camp remain the same across the board: to better integrate new and urban Canadians into the park system through camping. For this reason, this thesis speaks to Learn to Camp as a general program and reflects research conducted on the national Parks Canada (PC) and provincial Alberta (AP) and Ontario Parks (OP) programs (collectively referred to as Parks). Where necessary to adequately reflect and discuss the merits of different program approaches, the differences in the program structures are noted. The recommended adjustments and structural changes discussed in this thesis address the broader national context of the program and also apply provincially.

possibilities for ‘being Canadian,’ or simply being. While I argue that the cultural tensions and the limited national narrative promoted through Learn to Camp is problematic, these themes did not register as immediate impacts or issues for participants or Parks. Moreover, opportunities for progressive movements to garner momentum and support to address these problematic underpinnings could be found by further exploration into enjoyment as a subject of political power. Learn to Camp provides one site to consider what can be learned from such moments of contradiction.

2. Critical Contexts for the Research

Three key literatures were selected to inform this thesis: literatures on Canadian parks, connecting to nature, and cultural studies of nature. These literatures help untangle how park organizations operate and exist today in Canada, and the complexities of experiencing nature⁴. They also provide critical analyses of the historical underpinnings of park organizations, showcasing broader socio-political implications of nationalistic programming. These literatures are critical to understanding the landscape from which Learn to Camp emerges.⁵

Developing the literature review for this thesis was an ongoing project that shifted as research was conducted and analyses formed. The interdisciplinary nature of this project and the cross-cutting context from which this research emerges posed a challenge in determining the literatures to inform this analysis. Consulting with advisors, seeking outside department guidance, and following up on the work of relevant scholars enabled me to critically engage and situate the Learn to Camp program.

2.1 Canadian park context

⁴ ‘Nature; is used here in its dominant sense to refer to the nonhuman world. This word is problematic, laden with multiple connotations and meanings in particular social and political contexts and can be used in relation to the non human world, natural events and processes. For a more in depth discussion of why this is problematic see Kosek (2006) or Val Plumwood (2001).

⁵ Although not the focus of this thesis, it should be noted extensive literature exists examining the experiences of new immigrants in Canada (Banting & Soroka 2012; Lange, Vogels, & Jamal 2011, among others).

The combination of increased immigration, increased migration to Canadian urban centres, and decreasing visitor numbers to Canadian Parks (CP) and National Historic Sites (NHS) led Parks Canada to reprioritize operations in 2006 (Campbell, 2011; Jager & Haplenny, 2012).⁶ In an attempt to better address changing demographics, emphasis has been placed on Visitor Experience and Marketing (Jager & Haplenny, 2012). Citizenship and Immigration Canada report that in 2012 alone approximately 250,000 immigrants entered Canada, significantly contributing to the overall population of 35 million (Government of Canada, 2013). Research indicates that Canada's labour force and economic growth will only be sustained through increased immigration due to declining birth rates (Friesen, 2012). The Canadian population, which was largely comprised of European settlers and indigenous peoples when Parks Canada was formed in 1911, is now described as a multicultural mosaic – comprised of people from a myriad of ethnic and cultural origins.

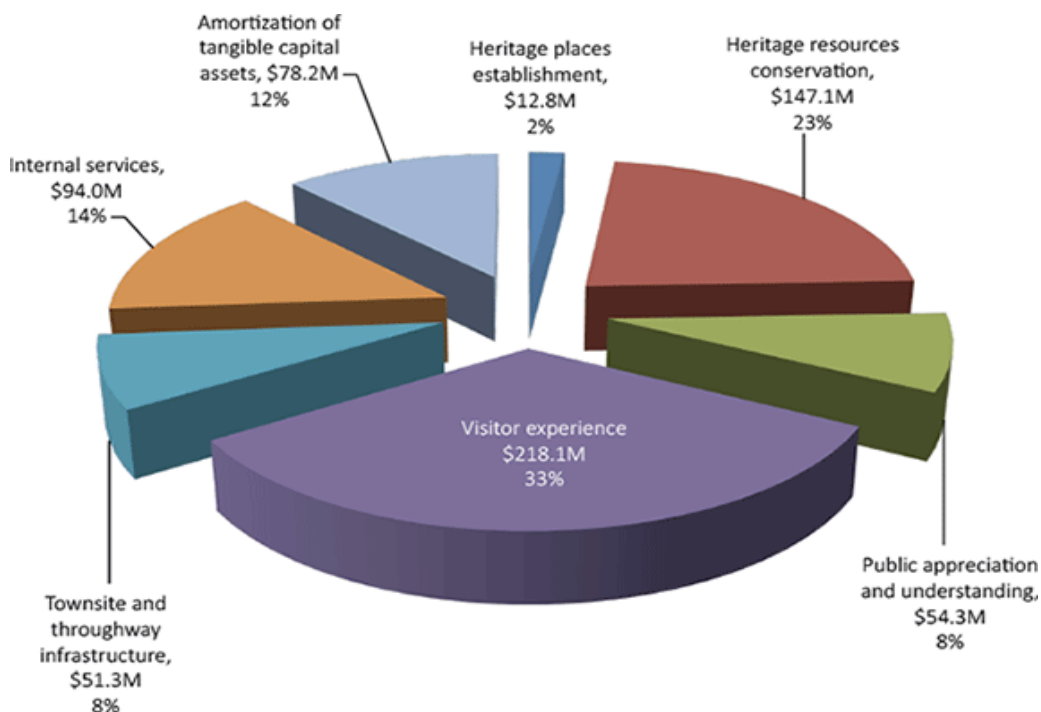


Figure 1: Parks Canada Expenses by Program Activity for the fiscal year 2012-13

⁶ From 2001 to 2009 visitation to NPs dropped by 5.3 per cent while visitation to NHSs decreased by 13.6 per cent (Jager & Haplenny, 2012, p. 4).

Retrieved from: <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/docs/pc/rpts/rmr-dpr/03312013/index.aspx>

Planning for diversity is increasingly important as Canada continues to welcome immigrants from all around the globe. With the second largest immigration population in the world, approximately one in five Canadians are foreign born (Chui, Tran, & Marheux, 2007; Parks Canada Agency on behalf of Canadian Parks Council, 2014). This is especially relevant for park planning as literature indicates that ethnic minority groups participate less in nature recreation than other North American groups (Bain, 2007; Parks Canada Agency on behalf of Canadian Parks Council, 2014; Wolch, Byrne, & Newell, 2014; Floyd, 1999). Indeed, new Canadians are significantly under-represented in visits to NPs and NHSs, representing 12 per cent of visitors (Jager & Haplenny, 2012). For many Canadians, experiences in park spaces are simultaneously declining and shifting. The amount of young families spending time in parks is decreasing. Today, the average park visitor is between 50 and 75 years of age (J. Bartram, personal communication, July 19, 2013). Alongside increased immigration rates in Canada, migration to urban centres is rising. Fewer Canadians are choosing to live in rural areas close to natural spaces, where most National Parks and National Marine Conservation Areas exist, instead rooting themselves in urban areas (Parks Canada and Mountain Equipment Co-op, 2013).⁷ For many urban Canadians, nature experiences occur through playing organized sports on a city pitch, having a picnic in a local park or by passing trees on a street boulevard. Back country camping, alpine skiing, and multi day wilderness treks once reigned as highly sought activities in park spaces. Today, demands are different. Alongside a shifting demographic, traditional park use is also changing. Park visitors come to experience specific view points for photo opportunities, desire electrical hook ups, and stick to well curated trails and organized activities. The most popular park for overnight visitation, Jasper National Park in Alberta, reports that most visitors arrive in RVs for accommodation in lieu of a tent (J. Bartram, personal

⁷ Ninety-seven per cent of new immigrants choose to settle in urban areas, the majority settling in Toronto, Vancouver or Montreal (Statistics Canada, 2011; Jager & Haplenny, 2012). Citizenship and Immigration Canada report that 80 per cent of new immigrants relocate to one of the top thirteen urban centres in Canada upon arrival, 60 per cent of these to Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal (Government of Canada, 2013). This thesis does not assume that all new Canadian are urban, nor does it assume that all urban Canadians are immigrants.

communication, July 19, 2013).

In low numbers, new immigrants are travelling to national and provincial parks but are often ill-prepared and unaware of what to do upon arrival. Although unfamiliar with camping practices, many new visitors understand parks as a popular destination for family activity. Park officials occasionally recommend these visitors leave due to lack of proper equipment for participation in activities (foot and swimwear), accommodation (tent), and nourishment (food). Numerous park staff, both nationally and provincially, have noted that new immigrants are often using park spaces for practices that they have not seen before such as hosting big, intergenerational family gatherings. “New Canadians are accessing our parks and historic sites currently but not in significant numbers and especially not for multi-day uses,” explains Alan Latourelle, CEO, Parks Canada. “Our challenge is to work with these communities...[and learn] how to get them out to our national parks and national historic sites” (Yanchyk, 2012).

Indeed, for most participants, the Learn to Camp event is their first camping experience in Canada. Many new Canadians commented in interviews and surveys that while they may have spent time in Canadian parks prior to the event (generally sites close to cities), that it was most frequently for day activities such as hiking, walking, or hosting large family gatherings. Banff National Park was highlighted by a few participants as a site previously visited, usually by RV. Popular activities conducted in Banff included day hiking and sightseeing. In general, when asked which type of park Learn to Camp participants had frequented, participants were not able to clearly differentiate between municipal, provincial and national parks.

This cultural shift is impacting park operations, programming, and ideology. The Learn to Camp program aims to preserve, promote, and celebrate Canada’s natural and cultural heritage and ultimately, to ensure that visitation to parks continues (Parks Canada Agency, 2013). The program serves as an opportunity for Parks to interact and get to know a new audience of Canadians by *physically* welcoming participants into a park space. The first-hand experience is important: Parks views Learn to Camp as an

opportunity to facilitate a traditional ‘Canadian experience’, from setting up a tent, to roasting marshmallows, and singing over a campfire. It is believed that creating connections - functional, emotional, and identity-based bonds - can inspire individuals to engage in “place protective behaviours such as park volunteerism, voting for pro-conservation politicians and support of park fund raising programs” (Jager & Haplenny, 2012, p. 81). For Parks, increasing visitorship is an investment in their future: park visitors are their future funders and supporters. Canadian parks have been surprised by, and, for the most part unprepared for, these cultural and societal changes: new visitor demographics, the proliferation of non-traditional park activities, and decreased visitation rates. In tandem with a desire from Parks to maintain a particular parks’ culture, the Learn to Camp program emerges in a time where the meanings, goals, and purposes of Canadian national and provincial parks are shifting and being redefined.⁸

2.2 Connecting with nature

Richard Louv, journalist and environmental advocate, was mentioned by many Parks staff as a key influence for Learn to Camp and broader Parks philosophy. Most known for his works, *Last Child in the Woods* (2008), and *The Nature Principle* (2011), Louv can be attributed with starting a new nature movement in the United States of America that strives to bridge the gap between urban Western culture and nature. Coining the term ‘nature deficit disorder’ (NDD), Louv argues that nature has become an abstraction in Western culture. Louv defines NDD:

Nature deficit disorder describes the human costs of alienation from nature, among them; diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses...Nature deficit disorder can

⁸ Despite Learn to Camp being relatively new in Canada, wilderness and experiential education programs are certainly not. Organizations such as Scouts Canada, Canadian Wildlife Federation and Outward Bound have been facilitating similar education camping programs for youth for many years. Ontario Parks looked beyond what was happening in Canada to the *I Can Camp!* program, run by Minnesota State, to help structure their program operations. I Can Camp! is centered on engaging families in making State park camping a regular activity. Looking nationally within Canada, resettlement and other immigrant support organizations also utilize nature experiences to help immigrants transition into their new lives. Urban gardening programs and urban river rafting trips are popular in various Canadian cities, especially among older generation immigrants dealing with culture shock and seeking connections with community (Yanchyk, 2012; Lange, Vogels, & Jamal, 2011).

even change human behaviour in cities, which could ultimately affect their design, since long standing studies show a relationship between the absence, or inaccessibility of parks and open space with a high crime rates, depression and other urban maladies (Louv, 2008, p. 36).

Western culture, according to Louv, teaches people to avoid direct experiences with nature, and paints nature encounters as activities that are unsafe and risky (Louv, 2008). Indeed, the physical and psychological health benefits of spending time in nature have been researched and argued by many (Maller et al., 2006; Ulrich, 1984). Advocates of environmental education and psychology argue that spending time outdoors helps people to focus, lowers stress levels and can have profound grounding capabilities (Gladwell et al., 2013; Li et al., 2011; Tsunetsugu, Park, & Miyazaki, 2010; Pretty et al., 2005).

Biophilia theory echoes similar sentiments, and indeed, is used as evidence for NDD. Theorist and biologist Edward O. Wilson introduced biophilia in 1984, showcasing research that reveals positive associations between the human response to open landscapes and spending time in nature (Wilson, 1984).⁹ In definition, biophilia refers to “the urge to associate with other forms of life” (Kellert & Wilson, 1995, p. 416). Although this concept is not universally embraced by biologists (Louv, 2008), biophilia has received recognition by many scholars arguing that there is an innate attraction to all things that are alive; to all living systems.

More recently, ‘nature therapy’ has emerged in alternative health and psychology fields. Nature therapy is built upon Theodore Roszak’s study of ecopsychology, which looks at human relations to the natural world through ecological and psychological principles (Louv, 2008, Roszak, 1992). Ecopsychology argues that modern society has divided inner and outer life, resulting in a repressed and innate ‘ecological unconscious’, in other words, a repressed connection to evolution on earth (Louv, 2008). This repression results in negative experiences for human kind, in Roszak’s words, “the deepest root of collusive madness in industrial society” (Roszak, 1992). As this argumentation goes, regaining and

⁹ Here nature is used in broad terms, and could mean natural wildness, park spaces, forests, but also weather and animals.

maintaining access to the ecological unconscious leads to renewed health and sanity.

NDD, biophilia theory, and ecopsychology have helped fuel a new push for research into the physical and emotional impacts of spending time in nature. Recent health studies highlighting the negative effects of work driven, sedentary based lifestyles within Canada have further motivated the push for these theories to be taken seriously.¹⁰ Nature therapy has emerged as one attempt to address such impacts. Nature therapy exists formally and informally in practices and programs, striving to cultivate stronger relations to the natural world, and in turn healthier people, both physically and mentally. Of particular relevance to Learn to Camp programming, it has been argued that nature experiences can aid newcomers dealing with culture shock and loneliness in addition to cultivating a sense of peace and belonging (Yanchyk, 2012).

2.3 Cultural Studies of Nature

The Wilderness Myth

Divergent understandings of wilderness, and humans' place within 'natural spaces', serve to emphasize seemingly contradictory features of the Canadian nation-building project, from which Learn to Camp emerges. Scholars have argued that Canadian parks are embedded in an understanding of 'nature' as 'wilderness'. This particular understanding of wilderness emerges from a colonial history which erases indigenous peoples and others in problematic ways. It also arises from extractivist ideologies.

William Cronon's work, *The Trouble with Wilderness* serves as a foundational platform for critical wilderness discourse. Through an outline of American history, Cronon accounts for how the idea of 'wilderness' as ecological conditions preceding human development; spaces that are wild, unruly, and uncontrolled/untouched by man, is a fabricated concept (Searle, 2000; Cronon, 1996; Erickson, 2013). Indeed, the *myth of*

¹⁰ For example, Vitamin D deficiencies are posing serious long-term health problems for millions (1.1 million) of Canadians, while chronic stress and anxiety has been reported to be costing Canada millions in lost workplace productivity (Parks Canada Agency on behalf of Canadian Parks Council, 2014).

wilderness - the idea that parks and conservation rests upon - as a pristine and untouched landscape, free from, or emptied of, humans - is a colonial concept in and of itself (Sturgeon, 2009; Loo, 2006; Searle, 2000; Cuomo, 1998; Cronon, 1996; Sandilands, 2000b). Moreover, the wilderness myth bolsters resource development and extraction by promoting an idea of nature as eternal and unending. It historically legitimizes occupation of the land - and the displacement of others, namely indigenous peoples, minority groups, and non-humans - by erasing over ecological and colonial histories. The wilderness myth reinforces the idea that nature is 'other' to humans, and only valuable once deemed a resource through development or conservation. Within the context of Canada, this manoeuvre ties the extractivist nation of Canada, historically and presently, to conservation. Indeed, without resource development there would be no need for conservation; in other words, no need for parks. While we can see that the rapid extraction of natural resources powers the Canadian economy, it has also prompted, and continues to prompt, the very desire for conservation that animates national park policy. As such, contemporary forms of both resource extraction and conservation are tied to the myth of wildness: they both benefit from - and rely upon - an idea of nature that is fixed, washing over historical and ecological realities (Smith, 2010). The wilderness myth sets nature apart from humans, particularly indigenous humans, creating a division in humans' understanding of their impacts, historically and presently, on non human and ecological actors. The binary vision between what is perceived as 'authentic nature' and 'corrupt urban culture' that the wilderness myth promotes allows responsibility to be evaded, and furthers us from discovering what an authentic ethical, sustainable, and honourable relationship between humans and nature may resemble (Cronon, 1996).

Nature and Nation in Canadian Parks:

Canadian parks, and Learn to Camp events more specifically, are subjects which have a variety of social, political, cultural, and economic meanings (Sandilands, 2000b). Viewed individually, each park - and each Learn to Camp event - has specific, unique, local characteristics, actors (human and non-human) and histories. At the same time, each program and each park are connected through nationalistic manoeuvres (the National

Parks, the gathering of new Canadian citizens). Acknowledging the specificity of each national park, Sandilands refers to a “rather unidimensional public discourse [that is] currently circulating about the parks” in which “the nature of the park was, and is, overdetermined by its location in a narrative of nationhood” (Sandilands, 2000b, pp. 1-3). Ethnographer Anna Tsing argues that it is with friction that we can come to study the ethnographic account of global interconnections and challenge universal truths that have strong holds over popular beliefs (Tsing, 2005). Tsing asks us to look at “...universals not as truths or lies but as sticky engagements” (Tsing, 2005, p. 6). In this light, we can look at Learn to Camp events as sticky engagements where global, national, and local meanings may arise, collide, compound, and conflict. This approach engages underpinnings common to park narratives across Canada, while also considering the ways in which these meanings play out on the ground in divergent park spaces.

The connection between Canadian parks and nationalism can be understood through the concept of imagined identities. The notion of wilderness identity as inherently Canadian is an imagined concept in and of itself. Benedict Anderson argues that communities and nations are always imagined, that “...nationalism has to be understood by aligning it not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being” (Anderson, 2006, p. 12). The notion that Canadian parks unite the country’s diverse areas and populations is certainly an imagined concept. Most would agree that the rocky mountains, rugged coastlines, northern tundra and prairie grasslands are vastly different from one another, and that there is great diversity between the people living in (and within) those areas (Mortimer-Sandilands, 2009). Nonetheless, for many people it feels true that these areas unite and define Canada and Canadians (Campbell, 2011; Searle, 2000; Erickson, 2013). Park organizations continue to promote and reinforce this rhetoric. The *Connecting Canadians with Nature Report* states:

Canada’s natural environment has been a unifying feature of the country’s cultural identity for centuries. It has shaped perceptions of our nation, at home and abroad. National parks are one of the top four symbols of Canadian identity (along with health care, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the Canadian flag), outranking

hockey (Parks Canada Agency on behalf of Canadian Parks Council, 2014, p. 15).

The term ‘imaginary’ does not dismiss the felt connection reflected by many Canadians between their identity and the wilderness of parks. Surveys, various works of art, and statistics have long indicated that this is a popularly held belief. In his work, *Symptoms of Canada: an essay*, sociologist Kieran Keohane notes how, “...the problem of Canadian national unity is one of identification: ie, of leading a diverse collectivity to a mutual recognition of a shared relationship to something called “the Nation” (Keohane, 1997, p. 20). Canadians who believe they have a shared connection to other citizens simply because they value Canadian parks understand that they will never know most other members in this group. Yet the feeling remains: they are related to others through shared culture and history, believing that community is created through a unifying practice of shared values, inclusive of the collective valorization of Canadian parks.

3. Thesis Structure

3.1 Methods

This research employs a multi-method qualitative approach that includes semi-structured interviews, participant observation, questionnaires, document review, and textual analysis. The following research methods were utilized as part of this research project:

- 25 interviews conducted with LTC participants, PC, AP, and OP staff, Mountain Equipment Co-op (MEC) and Coleman staff. Interview questions are located in Appendix A.
- Participation observation at two two-day LTC events: LTC at Fort Langley National Historic Site, BC with PC and MEC, June 2013; and LTC at Darlington Provincial Park, ON, with OP and Coleman, August 2013.
- 37 questionnaires completed by LTC participants at events in Fort Rodd Hill, BC and Fort Langley, BC in 2013 based on participant satisfaction. The questionnaire was crafted by the Vancouver PC office, and included five specific questions

selected by the researcher that were included in participant interviews.¹¹ Questionnaire can be located in Appendix B.

- Review and analysis of LTC program documents and literature.
- Analysis of LTC data (provided and reported by PC, AP, and OP).

As of June 2013 no aggregate data or reporting on the national Parks Canada Learn to Camp program had been conducted.¹² Based on the interest and general positive feedback received by park organizations, the program appeared to be wildly successful. However, no research had been conducted to analyze why participants were interested in the program, and what they took away from the overall experience.

In analyzing qualitative data, I understand research participants as the primary *and* expert sources of knowledge. Following the framework laid out by Owens (2011), I have looked to Rancière's (2003) assertion that politics is "always a matter about knowing who is qualified to say what a particular place is and what is done to it," alongside Blok's (2010) concern with "who gets to speak for the environment and with what degree of public-political credibility" (Owens, 2011, p. 5). This qualitative research approach was chosen for this project as it "...emphasizes the understanding of participants' experiences, interests, attitudes, perspectives, and assumptions...in their own words and actions" (Bain, 2007, p. 27). Morse & Richards (2002) stress that if the research objective "is to learn from the participants in a setting or process the way they experience it, the meanings they put on it, and how they interpret what they experience, you need [qualitative] methods that will allow you to discover and do justice to their perceptions and the complexity of their interpretations" (Morse & Richards, 2002, pp. 27–28). This project strives to develop an analysis that is attuned to the needs and interests of two different audiences: practitioners and academics. I seek to challenge each audience by presenting theoretically nuanced, empirically-informed research.

¹¹ Questions that were in both interviews and questionnaires results in a larger sample size for some questions, although answers were collected using two different methodologies.

¹² Data collection took place between June - September 2013. At present, no comprehensive national reporting has been conducted on the program.

I participated in two Learn to Camp events in summer 2013. Field work occurred at Learn to Camp events with Parks Canada at Fort Langley National Historic Site in Langley, British Columbia (BC), and with Ontario Parks at Darlington Provincial Park in Oshawa, Ontario. The Fort Langley event provided insight into participant interest and engagement with the national Parks Canada program, drawing participants from the greater Vancouver area. Darlington Provincial Park served as an accessible site for the large immigrant population found in Southwestern Ontario. Run by Ontario Parks, the Darlington Provincial Park site provided program comparison with the national Parks Canada Learn to Camp program. Participation observation techniques were administered during each event. Field notes were taken, transcribed, and analyzed alongside other relevant data.

Two target audiences were interviewed at each Learn to Camp event: Learn to Camp participants and Learn to Camp staff. In addition, semi-structured informal interviews were conducted with past Parks Canada and Alberta Parks Learn to Camp participants who were featured in the 2011 documentary *Nature's Invitation* from Edmonton and Calgary, Alberta. In addition, semi-structured elite interviews were conducted with Parks Canada, Alberta Parks, Ontario Parks, MEC and Coleman staff. In total 25 interviews were conducted; 17 interviewees were with Learn to Camp participants, and eight interviewees were with Parks Canada, Alberta Parks, Ontario Parks, Mountain Equipment Co-op and Coleman staff. Interviews were transcribed and data thematically analyzed using QSR NVIVO 8.0, a qualitative data program. Field notes, pertinent documents, and correspondence with Park staff were also analyzed as part of this qualitative data set.

Thirty-seven Learn to Camp participants completed participant satisfaction questionnaires filled out at Parks Canada Learn to Camp events at Fort Rodd Hill, BC and Fort Langley, BC in 2013. The questionnaire was crafted by the Vancouver Parks Canada office, and included five specifically selected questions for this research project that were included in LTC participant interviews. All participants at these two events had

the opportunity to fill out the questionnaire on a voluntary and anonymous basis. Due to the anonymous structure for completing the questionnaire, it is possible that participants interviewed at the Learn to Camp Fort Langley event also participated in an interview, resulting in repeat data. Due to the nature of Parks Canada's operations it was not possible for the researcher to distinguish if this had occurred. As such, all questionnaires completed were used for this research. The data from these questionnaires were compiled in an Excel spreadsheet and analyzed. Specific questions asking participants to rank experiences out of 5 were reviewed and averages calculated. Questions that had a written response were reviewed and analyzed alongside of themes that emerged from participant interviews. While the questionnaires did not specify if all participants were newcomers to Canada, nor their country of origin, the majority of participants were identified as such by Parks Canada staff working the events.¹³

Document reviews and textual analyses of Parks Canada and popular media publications were conducted to explore how Learn to Camp has been articulated and marketed to the broader public. I reviewed reports and feedback collected by Parks Canada's national office, Parks Canada's Vancouver office, Alberta Parks, and Ontario Parks on the Learn to Camp program. These same techniques were used to review the 2011 documentary *Nature's Invitation*. *Nature's Invitation* explores Canada's quest to get new immigrants in touch with natural areas, such as parks, through the Learn to Camp program and looks at potential consequences of a life devoid of nature. This documentary features interviews with Learn to Camp participants, Parks Canada staff, and representatives from local community organizations in Edmonton and Calgary, Alberta working on immigrant integration. Analyzing this documentary allowed for comparisons of the program in 2011 against field experiences in 2013. In addition, participants that were featured in the documentary were interviewed as part of this research project, highlighting program reflections two years after program completion.

3.2 Thesis overview

¹³ Questionnaires did not specify these factors due to the public privacy laws government agencies must follow.

This thesis examines both the immediate experiences of Learn to Camp participants, and explores the potential broader implications for how these participants understand themselves as Canadians. A dual framing was chosen for this research project with respective focuses on immediate and long term impacts, illustrated through chapters two and three. This framing aids us in escaping a position where ideas and theories are critiqued, analyzed, and future possibilities discussed, but in practice, remain difficult to realize in the here and now. In the framing that I offer, practitioners are provided recommendations that can immediately improve Learn to Camp program offerings, and in addition, academic audiences (and the Canadian public more broadly) are offered insights into new immigrant experiences in the context of the national project of Canadian parks.

Chapter two of this thesis is structured as a Learn to Camp evaluation report, positioned for practitioners.¹⁴ In this chapter I seek to answer: **is Learn to Camp meeting their stated program objectives? If so, what adjustments would allow the program to better meet stated objectives? And if not, what is it doing?** Informed by participant observation, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, document and textual analysis, this chapter considers Learn to Camp on its own terms and provides a Learn to Camp program evaluation. This chapter seeks to help fill the gap in current Learn to Camp reporting, aiding park organizations to better understand what the program is accomplishing, and how it is received by participants and staff compared against their own (Parks') set of objectives. Conducting the evaluation report benefitted myself as the researcher, allowing me to grasp what the program offers participants and staff, and providing a strong foundational understanding of the program as it is experienced on the ground. I develop five key recommendations for Parks to help better achieve program outcomes in future Learn to Camp programming. Overall, the research indicates that Learn to Camp is meeting the program objectives as set by the park organizations. Participants leave the program feeling empowered, understanding the practice of

¹⁴ According to the Treasury Board of Canada's Centre of Excellence for Evaluation, "evaluation is the systematic collection and analysis of evidence on the outcomes of programs to make judgments about their relevance and performance, and to examine alternative ways to deliver them or to achieve the same results" (Government of Canada, 2014).

camping, and how to operate within the park system. In addition to these skills, participants value, and culturally and emotionally connect with Canadian parks through the experience of Learn to Camp. Research illustrates that participants enjoy Learn to Camp and, after program completion, desire to return to Canadian parks. Many expressed joy garnered from the program, most notably from social bonding, spending time in nature, and from gaining a sense of belonging.

Armed with a robust understanding of the program, its accomplishments and challenges, chapter three furthers the Learn to Camp discussion by engaging in a theoretical analysis. This chapter investigates notions of nature and nation as they present themselves in the Learn to Camp program. This chapter is positioned towards academic audiences (and the Canadian public more broadly). Its framing is informed by literatures in critical studies of nature alongside primary research. This chapter investigates **how Learn to Camp implicitly and explicitly portrays Canadian identity in relation to Canadian parks and wilderness, and what the broader implications of this portrayal might be.**

My analysis of the Learn to Camp program offers a case study from which to consider how nationalizing wilderness myths are experienced on the ground by new Canadians. I argue that Learn to Camp imbues more than just camping skills to participants - that in fact it reinforces a national narrative of wilderness identity as “Canadian”. As a result new Canadians are encouraged to adopt a specific way of understanding and participating in Canadian parks. The dominant conception of Canadian parks fails to attend to Canadian colonial histories and diverse cultural realities. However, despite the program’s problematic underpinnings of nationalism, the program remains beneficial in that it cultivates new environmental stewards and fosters sentiments of belonging and comfort. Fieldwork demonstrated that participants outwardly enjoyed Learn to Camp. The analytic tools provided by cultural studies of nature helps illuminate problematic underpinnings at work in Learn to Camp. Such tools are less helpful, however, in helping us understand the enjoyment Learn to Camp produced for participants. Critical engagement with Learn to Camp reveals that enjoyment can be part of the acculturation process - acculturation into limiting and problematic norms. This tension gives pause for reflection. While a critique of the limiting and dominative nature of Canadian nationalism as it is performed

and transmitted in parks is vital, I argue that these critiques are analytically and politically limited when they do not account for popular desire. This chapter contributes to existing literature on wilderness discourse and national park politics in Canada (Erickson, 2013; Loo, 2006; Mortimer-Sandilands, 2009; Searle, 2000; Sandilands, 2000b).

Chapter four, the conclusion of this thesis, presents and reflects upon the key contributions of the thesis, and explores their wider implications for potential future research projects.

By employing a dual framing to an assessment of Learn to Camp, the wider significance of how the program *is experienced on the ground* is illuminated, giving insight into the lived realities of those participating in the program and acknowledging their agency within the research. Beyond a theoretical critique of the problematic narratives of Canadian identity at play in Learn to Camp programming and events, this research revealed that the participants enjoyed and indeed benefitted from particular acculturating practices, posing a key challenge to some theorists' arguments. This approach showcases the ways in which a traditional framing from either a practitioner point of view, or academic analysis may fall short. Yes, there is danger in this approach: either piece read separately does not fully account for what I argue are important perspectives key to understanding more fully the impacts and outcomes of the Learn to Camp program. My intent, and hope, is for the two pieces to be read together, offering an expanded illustration of Learn to Camp and its effects, immediate and otherwise. By looking at the two pieces together we are provided more opportunity to see different impacts, challenges, and to consider different futures for Learn to Camp.

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Chapter 2

Learn to Camp Program Evaluation: What have we learned?

Executive Summary

This report presents the results of a program evaluation undertaken of the Learn to Camp (LTC) program. The evaluation responds to two main research questions: **Is Learn to Camp achieving it's stated objectives?** And if so, **what adjustments would allow the program to better meet these stated objectives?** This program report speaks to Learn to Camp as a general program and reflects research conducted on the national Parks Canada (PC), provincial Alberta Parks (AP) and Ontario Parks (OP) programs (collectively referred to as Parks).¹⁵ The recommended adjustments and structural changes discussed in this report address the broader national context of the program and also apply provincially. Where necessary, the differences in the program structures are noted to adequately reflect and discuss the merits of divergent program approaches. Data collection was undertaken by the researcher between September 2012 and September 2013. The report was undertaken to examine program relevance and performance, and to inform future management decisions related to the program.¹⁶

Overall, this evaluation concludes that Learn to Camp participants leave the program with a marked sense of empowerment, improved understanding of camping practices, and knowledge of provincial and national park systems. However, research indicates that LTC programming could be adjusted to increase program relevancy and effectiveness. This report makes **five key recommendations** to observed program shortcomings:

¹⁵ While there are variations between these programs, the major themes and objectives of Learn to Camp remain the same across the board: to better integrate new and urban Canadians into the park system through camping.

¹⁶ This program evaluation follows processes and formatting recommended by the Centre of Excellence for Evaluation, Treasury Board of Canada's Secretariat (Government of Canada, 2014).

The project was partially funded by the School of Environmental Studies and the Centre for Co-operative and Community Based Economy at the University of Victoria, and the Canadian Co-operative Association.

- Increase capacity for building program partnerships. Connect and collaborate with local resettlement and immigrant support organizations.
- Expand LTC program to include opportunities for future contact and further engagement.
- Reduce barriers for participation: cost, transportation and access to camping gear.
- Train park interpreters to work with cross cultural and English as an Additional Language (EAL) audiences.
- Increase staff hiring from diverse backgrounds.

The LTC program represents one initiative geared towards increasing the accessibility of park spaces to a growing Canadian demographic—new and urban Canadians. In order to achieve such objectives, initiatives such as the LTC program must continue to ensure their relevancy and effectiveness in delivering park experiences.

Introduction and purpose of program evaluation

This report presents the results of a program evaluation of the Learn to Camp (LTC) program.¹⁷ The evaluation was undertaken by the researcher to examine program relevance and performance for the period 2011 to 2013 and to inform future management decisions related to the program.

This program report seeks to respond to the research questions: **Is Learn to Camp meeting it's stated objectives?**¹⁸ And if so, **what adjustments would allow the program to better meet stated objectives?**

The report is organized into four main sections.

- Section 1 presents a profile of LTC;
- Section 2 presents the methodology for the program evaluation and discusses limitations;
- Section 3 presents the research findings; and
- Section 4 presents the recommendations and overall conclusions.

1. Historical Context

Learn to Camp, a joint program launched in 2011 between Parks Canada and the Mountain Equipment Co-op (MEC), provides participants the opportunity to learn how to plan and enjoy safe and successful camping trips. Through one to two day events, a repository of information online and a mobile app, this program teaches participants, primarily new and urban Canadians, everything they need to know to start camping:

¹⁷ This research was conducted as part of a larger research based thesis project for the School of Environmental Studies at the University of Victoria. This program report followed a research plan developed prior to the commencement of field research. The research planning phase was undertaken between September 2012 and May 2013 and was completed in consultation and approval from the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board, Parks Canada, and Ontario Parks.

¹⁸ LTC program objectives are listed in Section 1.2.

where to camp, what to bring, what to cook, and how to stay safe.¹⁹ “The Learn to Camp program will provide Canadians, especially those living in urban centres away from Canada’s national treasures, [with] the necessary skills and knowledge to have an amazing experience while connecting with our country’s nature and culture,” stated Peter Kent, Canada’s Environment Minister responsible for Parks Canada, in a recent news release. “This memorable journey of hands-on experiences will inspire Canadians to get engaged in the protection of these places for the benefit of future generations” (Parks Canada, 2013). Since its launch in 2011 the program has grown considerably.

Learn to Camp events are in high demand; program capacity has doubled in urban and immigrant dense locations such as Toronto, Vancouver, and Calgary, and most events sell out. While Learn to Camp has proven popular with its target audience, little research has been conducted on program impacts and effects. This evaluation report addresses that gap.

Similar Learn to Camp programs have been implemented by Alberta and Ontario Provincial Parks and replicated in specific BC schools. While there are variations between these programs, the major themes and objectives of Learn to Camp remain the

¹⁹ Statistics Canada define immigrants as “...those born outside of Canada and are, or have been, landed immigrants. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Some immigrants have lived in Canada for many years while others are recent arrivals” (Statistics Canada, 2009). Their definition is broken down into four categories: well established, established, recent and new, a new immigrant being an individual who has landed in Canada between 2001 and 2006 (Statistics, Canada 2009). Parks Canada uses the term ‘new Canadian’ in Learn to Camp materials but leaves the term undefined. For the purpose of this research project, the term ‘new Canadian’ does not discriminate on the basis of immigration status or citizenship but refers to all newcomers to Canada as relevant participants. The definition was expanded to include all classifications and statuses of foreign-born newcomers to Canada to match the research objectives, which are to gain insights from individuals new to Canada experiencing Learn to Camp, regardless of official status.

Learn to Camp documents refer to key target audience members as “Canadians living close to urban centres” (Parks Canada and Mountain Equipment Co-op, 2013). Statistics Canada refers to an urban area as “...a population of at least 1,000 and a density of 400 or more people per square kilometer” (Statistics Canada, 2011), however also note that the term ‘urban’ is used variably depending on points of view, interest and application. For the purpose of this research, the term ‘urban Canadian’ refers to any Canadian living in a concentrated population with high density. While the majority of new Canadians reside in urban centers, however, not all new Canadians are urban Canadians, and vice versa (Statistics Canada, 2009).

same across the board: to better integrate new and urban Canadians into the park system through camping. For this reason, this report speaks to Learn to Camp as a general program and reflects research conducted on the national Parks Canada (PC) and provincial Alberta (AP) and Ontario Parks (OP) programs (collectively referred to as Parks). Where necessary, the differences in the program structures are noted to adequately reflect and discuss the merits of different program approaches. The recommended adjustments and structural changes discussed in this evaluation address the broader national context of the program and also apply provincially.

1.1 Program Objectives

Parks Canada's Learn to Camp Handbook describes the specific program objectives:

1. **To provide opportunities** for Canadians uninitiated to camping who live in urban centres **to learn** new skills that will allow them to create memorable experiences in Canada's great outdoors.
2. **Promote** camping experiences and related activities available at Parks Canada locations.
3. **Foster a sense of connection** to Canada's authentic and heritage places through memorable experiences and increased knowledge.
4. **Increase visitation** to national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas, especially by those arriving from urban locations (Parks Canada and Mountain Equipment Co-op, 2013, p. 4).

Similarly, Ontario Parks describes their Learn to Camp program objectives:

1. Introduce new visitors to Ontario's provincial parks.
2. Reduce barriers to camping with a focus on knowledge, skills and confidence.
3. Inspire new visitors to become life-long campers (Ontario Parks, 2013, p. 2).

Lastly, Alberta Parks outlines their program objectives as "a nature based program for new Canadians to explore their new "home" environments and in the process develop an environmental awareness and associated literacy skills" (K. Cantelon, personal communication, September 4, 2013).²⁰

²⁰ Alberta Parks' Learn to Camp program is part of a larger project called *Nature as a Second Language*. The goals of this program are to introduce new Canadians to parks while engaging new comers in environmental literacy. For more see Cantelon (2013), Lange, Vogels, & Jamal (2011), and Sillito (2010).

Parks, MEC, and Coleman staff stressed a variety of broad goals and aspirations when asked about Learn to Camp objectives. While all three entities are involved in Learn to Camp and share program objectives, Coleman remains a company, MEC a cooperative, and Parks a public agency. All three have market incentives, and all three operate as enterprises.

1.2 Program Profile

The LTC event program is delivered in a variety of formats between each park organization (PC, AP, and OP) *and* between each organization's respective parks. While there is great variation in certain aspects of the program such as location, natural environment, provided provisions, demonstrations, and local partners, all LTC events have the same core objectives at heart. All programs aim to empower participants to return to parks by teaching tangible camping skills. Program consistency is achieved through mandatory workshops that cover the basics of camping: tent set up, cooking and safety. Park organizations strive to provide their respective parks with a guiding framework for the LTC program while maintaining flexibility for the diverse needs of each location, LTC partners, and surrounding community of participants.

Although informal collaboration and conversation did take place between Parks Canada, Alberta Parks, and Ontario Parks when developing the Learn to Camp program through the Canadian Parks Council, and the programs share some of the same partners nationally and provincially, Park staff remarked that each program primarily developed independently from one another.

Events ideally occur in a national park, provincial park, or a national historic site, close to an urban center. Occasionally the location may be switched to a municipal or private camp ground, or to a community center, depending on event location and the surrounding community (Parks Canada and Mountain Equipment Co-op, 2013).

Food and transportation may be provided depending on location-specific and arrangements. Parks Canada's Learn to Camp events are structured to host up to 100 participants at a time, creating a shared educational experience. Participants are provided with tents, and most commonly, are guided to set up camp in one large site; side by side.²¹ In the case of Ontario Parks' LTC programming, participants are provided with a complete camping kit fit with a Coleman stove, cleaning and other additional "luxury" items such as Coleman lanterns, whisk brooms, and bbq utensils.²² In all LTC programming participants receive a site orientation from park staff upon arrival. This orientation includes an explanation of the roles of park staff.

Various demonstrations and workshops are available for participants throughout the event. The core programming focus is on how to select campsites, pitch and tear down tents, cook food over a campfire and/or camp stove, fire and wildlife safety, and general 'how to' within the park system - from booking a campsite, to interacting with park staff, to waste management. In some locations heritage and wildlife presentations, nature walks, learn to fish/paddle board workshops - among others workshops - may be offered, but are not a part of the mandatory program roster. LTC's end goal is to leave participants confident and empowered to take the next step in becoming responsible, independent campers and park users.

Learn to Camp programming is demonstration based. This style of teaching is helpful when working with English as an Additional Language (EAL) audiences, providing visuals for those dealing with language barriers. Staff demonstrate how to assemble a tent, how to source a safe campsite, and how to cook a few popular meals over a camp stove or fire. Small efforts are made to consider different food preferences, a difficult task

²¹ Ontario Parks' Learn to Camp event places each family group in individual campsites, but next to one another. This is easily facilitated due to smaller group sizes. Alberta Parks' events range in numbers.

²² Ontario Parks rely heavily on corporate partners for their Learn to Camp program. Coleman has served as their key program partner since 2011, with the more recent additions of Canadian Tire, Off! and Swish Quality Cleaning Products. Corporate partners support the program primarily through gear donation (Ontario Parks, 2013).

based on the variety of cultures and ethnic backgrounds present.²³ Due to large group sizes and participant-to-staff ratios at Parks Canada events, meals are catered and generally do not replicate what was demonstrated during cooking workshops.²⁴

In addition to the LTC events, the webpage and mobile application provide users information on what to expect when camping in a national park, what to bring, what to wear, what to know, what to cook, where to camp, camping checklists and recipes, as well as links to their registration services. Web material is available in English, French, traditional Chinese, simplified Chinese, Punjabi, and Spanish, and the mobile application is available in English and French (Parks Canada Agency, 2013).

1.3 Additional program considerations

Select parks work with local partner organizations to promote and recruit LTC participants. Partner organizations are able to offer support in a variety of means, which may include promoting the program, coordinating registration, and providing financial support through registration subsidies for participants, translation of documents, or transportation.

Alberta Parks has structured Learn to Camp to operate as part of a larger English as an Additional Language program, partnering with local re-settlement groups and providing a more educational approach through literacy offerings. The Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers has been collaborating with Alberta Parks on the Learn to Camp program since inception. Judy Sillito, past Director of Language Services, comments on their motivations for partnering with Learn to Camp: “There’s research and inquiry going on about what it means to connect to a new country. And we thought that connecting to the land would be one avenue into feeling at home in your new place” (Yanchyk, 2012).

²³ The Parks Canada Learn to Camp website and app includes a recipe for ‘Open fire Tandoori chicken’ (Parks Canada Agency, 2012a) and Ontario Parks’ website features tips on cooking rice “for those who can’t part with their rice cooker” (Ontario Parks, 2014a).

²⁴ For example, the Fort Langley event attended for this research project served chicken or veggie burgers with salad and home fries.

Another example of partner collaboration is the RV Coalition of BC. The RV Coalition participates in BC based Learn to Camp events throughout the province. They support the program by funding the translation of Learn to Camp documents into three languages, and in turn showcase an RV and provide information about their association at events. Through this partnership, participants are provided with an example of another way to access and enjoy parks, Parks receive additional monetary support, and the Coalition gains exposure to a target audience they are looking to engage.

2. Methodology

2.1 Overview

Learn to Camp has been operating in Canadian provincial and national parks since 2011. Up to this point, no research has been undertaken to assess whether or not national LTC programming is ensuring LTC is meeting its stated objectives.

This research employs a multi-method qualitative approach that includes semi-structured interviews, participant observation, questionnaires, document review, textual and visual analysis. The following research methods were utilized as part of this analysis.

- 25 interviews conducted with LTC participants, PC, AP, and OP staff, Mountain Equipment Co-op (MEC) and Coleman staff. Interview questions are located in Appendix A.
- Participation observation at two two-day LTC events: LTC at Fort Langley National Historic Site, BC with PC and MEC, June 2013; and LTC at Darlington Provincial Park, ON, with OP and Coleman, August 2013.
- 37 questionnaires completed by LTC participants at events in Fort Rodd Hill, BC and Fort Langley, BC in 2013 based on participant satisfaction. The questionnaire was crafted by the Vancouver PC office, and included five specific questions selected by the researcher that were included in participant interviews.²⁵ Questionnaire can be located in Appendix B.
- Review and analysis of LTC program documents and literature.
- Analysis of LTC program data (provided and reported by PC, AP, and OP).

The methodology was designed to help determine what Learn to Camp is achieving when matched up against its stated objectives as listed in Section 2.2, and what would allow the program to better meet stated objectives. Interviews and questionnaires focused on four

²⁵ Questions that were in both interviews and questionnaires results in a larger sample size for some questions, although answers were collected using two different methodologies.

core themes to decipher the program relationship to each set objective. These themes include:

- Motivations for participation in LTC.
- Program expectations and overall satisfaction.
- Barriers for program participation and for independent return.
- Reflections on identity and Canadian parks.

The following section outlines the data collection methods, and research limitations for the program report.

Overall, results from this research project indicate that Learn to Camp is meeting stated program objectives. Participants leave the program feeling **empowered**, understand the practice of camping, and how to operate within the park system. In addition to these skills, participants **value**, and **culturally and emotionally connect** with Canadian parks through the experience of Learn to Camp.²⁶

2.2 Data collection methods

The researcher participated in two Learn to Camp events in summer 2013. Field work occurred at Learn to Camp events with Parks Canada at Fort Langley National Historic Site in Langley, BC and with Ontario Parks at Darlington Provincial Park in Oshawa, Ontario. Fort Langley provided insight into participant interest and engagement with the national Parks Canada program, drawing participants from the greater Vancouver area. Darlington Provincial Park served as an accessible site for the large immigrant population found in Southwestern Ontario. Run by Ontario Parks, the Darlington Provincial Park site provided program comparison with the national Parks Canada Learn to Camp program. Participation observation techniques were administered during each event. Field notes were taken, transcribed, and analyzed alongside other relevant data.

²⁶ Similar research findings are reported by Bain (2007) on new Canadian experiences with National Parks.

2.2.1 Key informant interviews

Two target audiences were interviewed at each Learn to Camp event: Learn to Camp participants and Learn to Camp staff. In addition, semi-structured informal interviews were conducted with past Parks Canada and Alberta Parks Learn to Camp participants who were featured in the 2011 documentary *Nature's Invitation* from Edmonton and Calgary, Alberta. In addition, semi-structured elite interviews were conducted with Parks Canada, Alberta Parks, Ontario Parks, MEC and Coleman staff. In total 25 interviews were conducted; 17 interviewees were with Learn to Camp participants, and eight interviewees were with Parks Canada, Alberta Parks, Ontario Parks, Mountain Equipment Co-op and Coleman staff. Interviews were transcribed and data thematically analyzed using QSR NVIVO 8.0, a qualitative data program. Field notes, pertinent documents, and correspondence with Park staff were also analyzed as part of this qualitative data set. The interpretation of data is the researcher's own and may not reflect the views of individual interviewees, Park organizations, MEC or Coleman.

Table 1. Number of interviews conducted by interview group

Interview group	Number of interviews conducted
LTC participants, Fort Langley, BC (PC and MEC program)	9
LTC participants, Darlington, ON (OP and Coleman program)	5
Past LTC participants (PC, AP and MEC program)	3
PC staff (<i>One senior staff member and two LTC on the ground staff members</i>)	3
AP staff	2
OP staff	1
MEC staff	1
Coleman staff	1

Simple random sampling was used to select LTC participants from Fort Langley and Darlington events for interview purposes. Past LTC participants were selected for interview on the basis of contact information availability. Past LTC participant interviews

were conducted via phone. Interviews with MEC, Parks Canada and Ontario Parks staff at Fort Langley and Darlington events took place in person. Interviews with Coleman, Alberta Parks, and additional Parks Canada staff were conducted via telephone.

LTC participant interviewees represent a variety of geographies, and gender identities. Out of the 17 interviewees, 14 attended the event with family members and the remaining two attended with friends. 15 interviewees were immigrants to Canada.²⁷ Eight interviewees were male, and nine female.

Table 2. Number of Learn to Camp participant interviews conducted by country of origin

Country of origin	Number of interviews conducted
Bangladesh	2
Brazil	1
Canada	1
China	7
England	3
Iran	1
Pakistan	1
Taiwan	1

2.2.2 LTC Questionnaires

Thirty-seven Learn to Camp participants completed participant satisfaction questionnaires filled out at Parks Canada Learn to Camp events at Fort Rodd Hill, BC and Fort Langley, BC in 2013. The questionnaire was crafted by the Vancouver Parks Canada office, and included five specifically selected questions for this research project that were also included in LTC participant interviews. All participants at these two events had the opportunity to fill out the questionnaire on a voluntary and anonymous basis. Due to the anonymous structure for completing the questionnaire, it is possible that participants interviewed at the Learn to Camp Fort Langley event also participated in an

²⁷ An additional participant was included in the interview sample as their parents had immigrated to Canada one year before their birth, adding a valuable perspective to the study.

interview, resulting in repeat data. The nature of Parks Canada's operations did not allow for the researcher to distinguish if this had occurred, and as such, all questionnaires completed were used for this research. The data from these questionnaires were compiled in an excel spreadsheet and analyzed. Specific questions asking to rank experiences out of 5 were reviewed and averages calculated. Questions that had a written response were reviewed and analyzed alongside of themes that emerged from participant interviews. While the questionnaires did not specify if all participants were newcomers to Canada, nor their country of origin, the majority of participants were identified as such by Parks Canada staff working the events.²⁸

2.2.3 Document and textual analysis

Document reviews and textual analyses of Parks Canada and popular media publications were conducted to explore how Learn to Camp has been articulated and marketed to the broader public. I reviewed reports and feedback collected by Parks Canada's national office, Parks Canada's Vancouver office, Alberta Parks, and Ontario Parks on the Learn to Camp program. These same techniques were used to review the 2011 documentary *Nature's Invitation*. *Nature's Invitation* explores Canada's quest to get new immigrants in touch with natural areas, such as parks, through the Learn to Camp program and looks at potential consequences of a life devoid of nature. This documentary features interviews with Learn to Camp participants, Parks Canada staff, and representatives from local community organizations in Edmonton and Calgary, Alberta working on immigrant integration. Analyzing this documentary allowed for comparisons of the program in 2011 against field experiences in 2013. In addition, participants that were featured in the documentary were interviewed as part of this research project, highlighting program reflections two years after program completion.

2.3 Limitations

²⁸ Questionnaires did not specify these factors due to the public privacy laws government agencies must follow.

The research methodology was designed to provide multiple kinds of data for analysis. As in all program reports, there are limitations and considerations that should be noted.

2.3.1 Representativeness of interview data

The scope and timeframe for completing the research project limited the number of field visits and interviews possible to attend. PC LTC events most commonly occur during the same weekend across the country, thus making it difficult to attend more than one event. An additional site visit to an OP LTC event was chosen to help provide additional geographical data. A site visit to an AP event was not possible due to funding and time constraints.

Due to confidentiality and privacy protection laws, PC could not provide contact information for past LTC participants. As such, the number of past participants the researcher was able to locate was limited.

Experiences of LTC participants certainly vary between and within geographies, ethnicities and cultures. It is not the intent of this research to present the data of LTC participants as a collective experience of newcomers, but rather, to look at trends and themes in responses to help better understand what LTC is achieving on the ground.

2.3.2 Limited program data provided for national assessment

No aggregate data or reporting on the national PC LTC program was conducted during the data collection phase of this research project. Specific data, research and reporting on LTC programming that was available from PC Vancouver office, OP, and AP were considered and are included as part of this research. As such, the geographical representativeness of this research is limited and focused on specific regions, and within those regions, specific parks. Interviews with staff from PC, AP, OP, MEC, and Coleman discussed national and provincial LTC coverage to help mitigate this limitation.

The researcher was only able to obtain questionnaires on program satisfaction from the PC LTC events held in 2013 in Fort Rodd Hill, BC and Fort Langley, BC. A connection with the local office permitted the addition of five of the researcher's questions that were included in LTC participant interviews. These questionnaires were crafted by the PC Vancouver office and were not, to the researcher's knowledge, used nationally.

3. Findings

The following section examines:

1. Is Learn to Camp achieving its stated objectives, listed in Section 2.2?
2. What adjustments would allow the program to better meet stated objectives?

These findings are sorted by theme, as stated in Section 3.1:

- Motivations for participation in LTC.
- Program expectations and overall satisfaction.
- Barriers for program participation and for independent return.
- Reflections on national identity and Canadian parks.

3.1 Motivations for participation

LTC participants

Finding: Participants are drawn to LTC as a family friendly activity. LTC participants wish to feel confident, safe, and secure in park spaces. Research indicates that the majority of LTC participants are unfamiliar with Canadian camping practices, although they may have visited parks for day trips or had previous camping experience in their home countries. Participants desire to be taught camping practices directly from “experts”.

A desire to have a **family experience** and to learn, as a unit, how to camp was strongly emphasized by nearly all participants as the most important part of the LTC experience. Twenty-five out of 37 participants noted this as their top motivation for participation on the questionnaire. Participants noted that it was important that all family members properly learn tent building, cooking, and safety skills as a unit so the responsibilities did not fall onto one individual alone. In two cases, families attended the program where one spouse was a seasoned Canadian camper, and the other a new immigrant to the country with little to no outdoor experience. The partners that were familiar with camping

expressed that it was important to have an outside expert teach their partner the skills necessary for a successful camping experience. The stress of being solely responsible for a family camping trip was too great. In both cases, the Canadian born spouse felt that without a third party delivering and affirming the necessary information, their children could potentially be put at risk. Having the LTC event be a shared family experience was very important.

Twenty-nine out of 37 participants who completed the questionnaire responded that they arrived with family members: either a partner or extended family. The remaining eight participated with friends. The potential for social bonding, specifically for partaking in a family activity, is a clear incentive for garnering program participation. Park staff reiterated this in their observations of the program.

It is telling that the favourite activities noted by participants were the building of the tent and the campfire/s' more activity. When questioned why these activities were favoured, most participants responded that it was because they got to participate either as a family and/or as part of a large group.

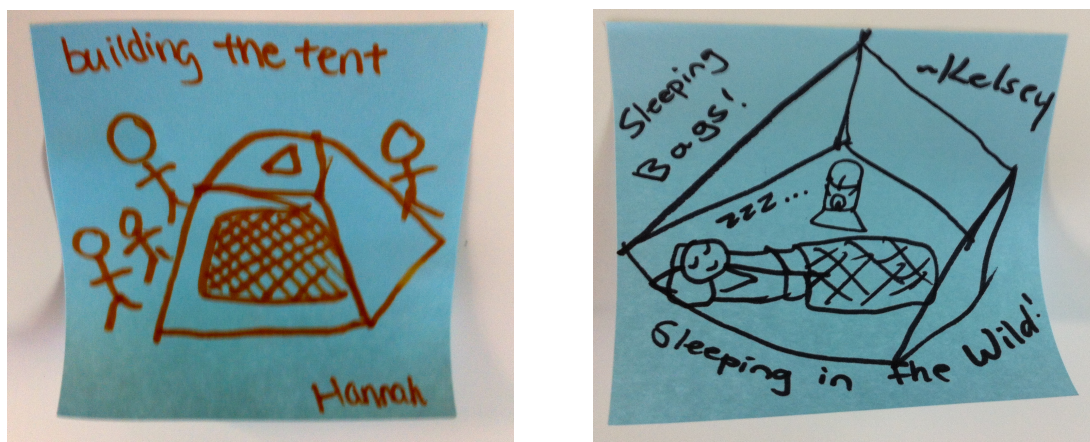


Figure 2. Images from reflection tree activity at Fort Langley event, June 2013.
Source: M. Sullivan

Most commonly, participants expected to learn how to set up a tent, how to stay safe, and how to prepare food over a fire: the basic objectives laid out by the park organizations for the program. Concerns of safety and “learning from the experts” were reiterated

throughout the program experience. The idea of “surviving in the wilderness” via camping was intimidating for many participants who had never spent a night in the outdoors, let alone the outdoors in a new country. Many participants felt strongly that they needed to be shown how to properly set up their tent, how to prepare for adverse weather conditions, and how to protect themselves against wild animals and any other threats that the wilderness may offer.

Many parks work with local resettlement and immigrant support organizations to promote and recruit participants; 90 per cent of participants surveyed found out about Learn to Camp from a friend or past participant via a new settlement organization serving as a local Learn to Camp partner.²⁹ Other Learn to Camp participants found out about the program from Parks’ websites and through local newspaper ads. In particular, ads in local Chinese newspapers appear to have been highly effective according to interview and questionnaire data. Only two participants noted finding out about Learn to Camp from MEC emails.

LTC staff

Finding: LTC staff view Learn to Camp as a gateway for introducing new citizens to Canadian parks and to a Canadian tradition. They are excited and feel passionate about sharing park spaces with new comers.³⁰

LTC staff expressed motivations for the program that went beyond teaching technical and practical camping skills. They most closely correspond with the first objective laid out by Parks Canada, “**To provide opportunities** for Canadians uninitiated to camping who live in urban centres **to learn** new skills that will allow them to create memorable experiences in Canada’s great outdoors” (Parks Canada and Mountain Equipment Co-op, 2013).

Connecting new audiences to nature, introducing new immigrants to a Canadian tradition,

²⁹ Questionnaires and interviews indicate that word of mouth is the strongest mechanism for engaging new and urban Canadians with the Learn to Camp program.

³⁰ LTC staff includes staff from PC, AP, OP, MEC, and Coleman.

making memories and encouraging reflection were all mentioned as important pieces - if not *the* point - of the program. These motivations were not outwardly expressed to participants during the Learn to Camp programs attended, however, sentiments of each were subtly and repeatedly imbued through anecdotes and personal story telling.

Motivations for **sharing Canadian parks** with other new Canadians emerged as a theme among staff and partners. Many expressed a hope to foster a sense of value for - and belonging to - the land among first time park users. Not surprisingly, staff are passionate about the subject matter of camping and spending time outdoors in nature. Staff often referred to childhood memories of being in outdoor spaces and expressed sentiments of the renewed sense of peace and calm they experience from spending time in nature. Many expressed a wish to share this with new Canadians who may not have had similar experiences. They felt that by exposing participants to parks, nature spaces that have been “set aside” for Canadians, that these sentiments would inherently be felt. “It is a challenging endeavor to go to a new country and to begin a new life,” explained James Bartram, Education Director of the Palisades Stewardship Education Centre in Jasper National Park. “So I think the mental and physical health benefits of taking some time to get out of the cities and come and visit some of these spectacular wilderness areas. It’s a real opportunity for new Canadians to rejuvenate themselves and be sustained and feel a sense of pride and ownership” (Yanchyk, 2012).

Park staff expressed that **combatting nature deficit disorder (NDD)** is one of the biggest benefits coming out of Learn to Camp.³¹ In particular, staff commented that new Canadians in urban cities might be more inclined to experience NDD due to feelings of isolation. Interview responses suggest that helping new Canadians integrate through exposure to parks and nature was important to Parks staff.

Although program motivations were not explicitly discussed during program workshops or presentations, they are an important part of the overall experience and impression left

³¹ Richard Louv, journalist and environmental advocate coined the term ‘nature deficit disorder’ (NDD). Nature deficit disorder describes the human costs of alienation from nature, including; diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses. For more see Louv (2008).

upon participants after program completion.

3.2 Program expectations and satisfaction

LTC participants

Finding: Overall, LTC participants' expectations were met and they felt satisfied with program delivery. In general, participants felt prepared and informed about the program before arrival. Although participants expressed that gaining technical camping skills was their primary motivation to participate, participants reported social bonding activities as their favourite part of the experience. Exceptions to these findings are noted below.

Interview and questionnaire data reveal that overall Learn to Camp exceeded expectations of participants. Thirty-seven Learn to Camp participants who completed questionnaires were asked to rank the program on a scale from 1-5, 5 being the highest rating and 1 being the lowest. The average rating of the experience was 4.5. When asked if the program gave participants the confidence they needed to camp on their own, participants on average ranked the probability at 4.4.

Learn to Camp participants in general reported feeling adequately prepared for the event. All participants received a detailed packing list and itinerary prior to arrival. Most participants familiarized themselves with the webpage and mobile app prior to the event.

A few participants noted that although they felt prepared for the Learn to Camp event, thanks to the information sent out via email and located on the web, that their ideas of Canadian parks and camping had been largely based on illustrations and Hollywood movies. They commented that what they experienced on the ground was in fact quite different. Some of these participants thought that Canadian parks would be more hostile and that the wilderness, or nature itself, would be “scarier to navigate”. They reported that their experience showed them that park spaces were safe and nurturing.

During the PC Fort Langley event many participants did not expect to be in such tight corridors and had expected to be in individual campsites, despite being informed of this prior to the event. A few participants complained of noise throughout the night, neighbours snoring or children waking up early, and being surprised at how much noise carried between tents.



Figure 3. Tents set up at Fort Langley Learn to Camp event, June 2013.
Source: M. Sullivan

While most participants did not mind these noises per se, they did comment on it when asked what surprised them most about sleeping in a tent. Similarly, many participants anticipated having the opportunity to cook meals themselves and were surprised that meals were provided.³² A Learn to Camp participant reflected:

³² Ontario Parks' Learn to Camp program has participants' cook their own meals. Each family is provided with a camp stove and kitchen tent and is asked to bring their own food to prepare. It was well received by participants, and easily facilitated due to the smaller group size. Logistically having each family cook and be supervised would be a challenge for PC to facilitate given the number of participants attending their events, however, national parks conducting Learn to Camp are provided the option to do so. Incorporating more

For us if we do it by ourselves, we are usually not going to do that because we will make mistakes. It looks difficult but actually it is not. This is our first time. Yesterday was actually my first time setting up the tent. It looked difficult but actually when you really worked on it and then had some assistance from Parks Canada it was quite easy to set it up. So through this experience, next time I will consider what I can actually do by myself and bring my family out.

Mosquitos caused mild anxiety and anguish among some participants. Many children in the Fort Langley campsite received bites, on average between five to ten per child. This was a new experience for many of the participants and parents were concerned. On the feedback forms one participant commented that it would be nice to have better first aid available to deal with issues such as the mosquito bites. At the end of the weekend, participants were asked to share a reflection via a drawing or word depiction on a sticky note that made up a collective reflection tree. Five participants drew images depicting receiving mosquito bites, or wrote out 'bugs' and the word 'ow' as their most memorable activity. Parents appeared stressed about the mosquitos during daily activities and used large amounts of insect repellent on children when realizing that they would be remaining outside for the day.

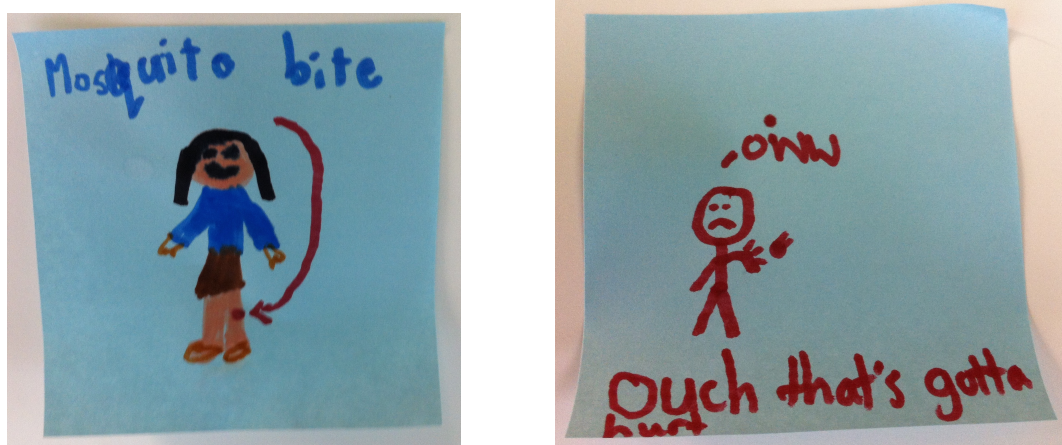


Figure 4: Images from reflection tree activity at Fort Langley Learn to Camp event, June 2013.

Source: M. Sullivan

hands on opportunities for participants could increase confidence and ability to perform the tasks independently in the future.

Many participants remarked that they were surprised and pleased to be surrounded by so many (other) new comers in the program. It was generally felt that the **multi-cultural dimension of the group was a strong asset** to the overall experience. A significant number of recent immigrants commented that they wished more Canadian born participants had been a part of the program. Only a select few participants in these programs were Canadian born participants and/or seasoned campers. Conversely, two separate Canadian born and seasoned campers suggested that Parks tailor programming for those very new to the country and further separate the groups, expressing frustration of being in a group setting with a various levels of English speaking capabilities.

When surveyed on what was most enjoyable about LTC, participants primarily mentioned socially based activities. Spending time with kids at campfires, making s'mores, building the tent and sleeping overnight with family, and learning safety together were most commonly noted.

LTC staff

Finding: LTC staff value and believe that LTC fills a demand for educating a new demographic about the Canadian park system and Canadian camping practices. LTC also serves as an opportunity for Park staff to learn about different cultural practices and preferences, and allows them to better tailor park offerings in the future. However, they are concerned with the amount of resources required to carry out the program.

All park staff strongly affirmed the need and demand for the LTC program in an effort to help educate and engage a new demographic of Canadians into the park system.

Park staff remarked on their own surprises with LTC, recalling lessons learned from their first years working on the program. Almost all stories pertained to **unanticipated cultural differences**. The importance of food was emphasized. Park staff commented on

hosting bonfires with marshmallows and subsequently learning that gelatin is not appropriate for certain religious and cultural diets. Learn to Camp events now carry halal or vegan marshmallows to provide alternatives for those wishing to participate in the campfire and s'more making session, while respecting religious and cultural practices. Likewise, another staff member recounted planning meals for a BC Learn to Camp program. They had decided on a classic West Coast Pacific salmon dinner with rice, choosing a local food that holds cultural significance to many indigenous groups in the province. However, for their audience, which was primarily of Asian descent, rice was much more culturally significant. The staff member recalled running out of rice in the first 20 minutes of serving dinner, and having leftover fish to deal with at the end of the night. Another staff member mentioned needing to explain how electricity worked in the park, after seeing a large number of participants arriving with electric kettles. For many families having tea or noodles at the end of the day is an important and routine activity. Many LTC events now better anticipate the cultural needs of their audiences, prepare a variety of food options based on the preferences of their surrounding demographics, and pre-emptively discuss concerns such as electricity and food preferences in the camp ground upon arrival.

For a two day event, LTC is extremely time consuming to coordinate and organize. Staff commented that one-on-one communication is very important for engaging new campers into the park system. Consistent communication through face-to-face interactions, emails, and phone calls alone take up numerous amounts of hours in addition to the number of staff needed on the ground for each event. Even with the support of partner organizations the stress of staff capacity and resources is high. While the website and mobile app were used by participants and positively reviewed, the struggle with learning a new language often results in confusion and - from the park staff perspective - is best sorted out with direct communication.

3.3 Barriers for program participation and for independent return

LTC participants

Finding: LTC participants indicate that they have a strong desire to return to camp in Canadian parks, and feel confident after having partaken in the program. However, barriers such as cost, transportation, and access to gear stand in the way of others participating in the program, and for participants themselves to be able to return as independent campers.

Most participants expressed enthusiasm for camping and returning to Canadian parks upon program completion. Past participants that were interviewed two years after participating in a Learn to Camp event confirmed that they had returned to Canadian parks, as was their intention immediately following the program, and had slowly been working up to more challenging camping experiences (such as multi night stays and trying out new locations).³³ Data collected from Ontario Parks on their LTC program revealed that 74 per cent of participants returned to camp within one year of attending the program (Ontario Parks, 2013).

Interview and questionnaire data confirms that participants do desire to return to a Canadian park to camp after completing the LTC program. Thirty-seven participants who completed questionnaires were asked to rank their desire to return to camp on a scale from 1-5 (5 being the highest rating and 1 being the lowest). The average rating for **probability of return was 4.6**. Thirty-two participants responded that they would return to a Canadian park or National Historic Site (not necessarily to camp) after having participated in LTC, and an additional three participants noted that they would like to return once their children were older, or once they had gained more supported experience. When asked if the program gave participants the **confidence** they needed to camp on their own, participants on average ranked the **probability at 4.4**.

All interview participants noted that they wanted to continue camping after LTC, although some had reservations. Participants were concerned that they may not be able to

³³ Due to privacy protection laws, tracking down past Learn to Camp participants was challenging. The past participants interviewed in this project report were able to be located through contacts because of their continued engagement. Therefore, it was probable that these interviewees would be repeat park visitors.

remember all that they had learned, whether they would be able to accumulate the proper gear, manage transportation, and if they would be able to get the time off of work. Costs associated with obtaining gear, transportation, and park fees were also mentioned as a major concern for many families.

LTC staff

Finding: LTC staff understand the barriers facing many new immigrants, and feel conflicted when constructing operational plans focused on marketing opportunities.

When looking at the target audiences for the program - new and urban Canadians - many park staff expressed **feelings of confusion and contradiction**. From a marketing standpoint, many expressed the need and desire to reach out to wealthier new immigrants who will have the means, time and money to be able to become a regular park visitor. In contrast, working with new immigrant settlement organizations that provide subsidies or funding for the program allows many new immigrants living in difficult socio-economic realities to attend the event. The probability of returning to parks for this demographic is much lower. Getting time off work, and being able to secure transportation and gear are much greater obstacles for new comers struggling to find work in a new country, especially if raising a family (Lange, Vogels, & Jamal, 2011; Bain, 2007; Yanchyk, 2012; Louv, 2008). It is important to note that these obstacles aren't unique to new Canadians. They exist as barriers preventing all Canadians of low socio-economic status from regularly accessing park spaces.

Addressing **transportation barriers** has proven challenging in past LTC events. When piloting LTC in 2011, Parks Canada attempted to provide transportation for all participants. Despite the demand for this service, facilitating and coordinating transportation did not prove worthwhile. LTC participants arrive from various locations. Selecting a central meeting place for group transport was tricky, especially in areas where people were coming from more rural locales. In addition, coordinating overnight parking for those meeting group transport proved more of a hassle than a benefit.

On the other side of the spectrum, providing transportation allows Alberta Parks to reach many participants who would otherwise be unable to attend Learn to Camp. Alberta Parks works closely with a community of Burmese refugees. Without transportation service many of their participants would not have the means to visit a park, let alone attend the event.

3.4 Reflections on national identity and Canadian parks

LTC participants

Finding: Participants leave Learn to Camp with a renewed sense of belonging to the Canadian landscape and to Canadian culture.

Participants reflected through interviews and questionnaires that they left LTC feeling more **knowledgeable about camping in Canadian parks**. These sentiments were expressed fervently during interviews. The cultural and emotional connections that participants felt to the land and to practicing camping with their family were noted as the favourite part of the overall experience. Participants expressed that these sentiments made them want to return to a Canadian park to camp. Twelve participants noted in questionnaires that one of their motivations for partaking in the program was that camping was a Canadian tradition. Thirty-seven participants who completed questionnaires were asked to rank if the program increased their interest in learning more about national parks on a scale from 1-5 (5 being the highest rating and 1 being the lowest). The average rating reported was 4.4. When asked if LTC changed the way participants felt about Canadian culture or heritage, 22 participants responded positively and 5 expressed that it didn't really change how they felt, but reinforced positive associations they previously held.

Many participants reflected that the experience made them **feel 'Canadian'**. One participant reflected:

Having people from all walks of life coming together to learn about something that is so quintessentially Canadian. Going camping can be a very daunting thought. This program really provided the confidence to do more in Ontario's parks. I have and will continue to talk about this program to anyone who will listen.

Many participants commented that the idea of camping itself seemed very foreign, it was difficult to understand the value of the camping before physically participating:

Before I come here I think camping is nothing. See, this is just like my backyard! Why do I do it and BBQ in the backyard! I can make a tent in my backyard and do it the same way, why do I have to travel so far away. But when I came here something different because I know the other members of the course and we know each other and we are helping each other.

Canadian born participants also mentioned this theme during interviews:

I thought it would be a basic introduction to camping, lots of young families here and tomorrow. I was surprised that there are a lot of immigrant families. Some of them are here too to experience Canadian culture. That means camping I think to them.

Participants reflected on their idea of camping as a “leisurely Canadian activity”. Many stated that it contrasted with their motivations for arriving in Canada: to work hard and to set up a new life. However, participants also expressed feeling joy from being outside in nature and value for taking a break from their day-to-day lives. In many cases they reflected humorously on their previously held attitude towards camping. Many of them commented that they now understood what it meant to “feel Canadian” outside, likening it to relaxing and a peaceful state of mind.

LTC staff

*Finding: LTC staff reported that sharing Canadian park spaces and traditions with new Canadians were key program drivers. They spoke excitedly about **sharing** parks with new Canadians.*

This finding echoes the sentiments listed above in *Section 3.1, Motivations for participation*. Interestingly, when asked directly if Learn to Camp educated participants on Canada, Canadian history, and/or Canadian culture, most staff paused before responding and began their answers with “I guess...” and “Hm, well, I suppose..”, indicating that it was not something that had been previously considered, nor intentionally made, as part of the program. However, when asked about program objectives, benefits, and impacts, nationally driven sentiments of sharing Canadian traditions, park spaces, and culture were mentioned numerous times in responses:

You want them to take by, infer by experience. You know, they are seeing Canadians teaching other new Canadians how to light a fire and they are looking around them and they are seeing people sitting around their fires and, “Gee, it looks like they are talking and laughing and enjoying each other’s company and looking at stars and watching the moon,” You know, it is like do you teach that? You don’t. You have to show it. Let them experience it. And so, Canadian culture, do you teach people that? Well, teach about Canada? Yes, we teach about Canada because we are teaching them about the natural history in the area, we are teaching them about some of the culture people do when they go camping, they enjoy the outdoors, they appreciate the outdoors, you know. This the cottonwood tree, it’s the cottonwood fluff, the environment we are in, and they’ll go to a Historic Site and they’ll learn about the history of the place, this is where BC was announced and the relationships early people had with First Nations. So, they are getting that through programming but...I don’t know. I think that is the intent; you want them to pick up this stuff because that’s what is important to Parks Canada.

And when these families come here they are looking for a way to attach and wanting to find it and then, and we kind of slipped in with this camping trip and they saw it as a way to attach to the land and to the country. And, you know, and again, they searched in numbers more so with their kids, because they want them to have those opportunities so.... That they did see it as a way to become Canadian and that it was a way to, you know, I just myself got the sense that these families are going to go back to their jobs and they are going to have something in common to talk to the regular Canadian people who they are working with, something in common finally. You know, “What did you do on the weekend?”, “I went camping”. And they’ve got this common thing that wasn’t there before. Up until now it is a very, it’s not an easy conversation that happens because we take it for granted those of us who grew up here.

I think what is so good about it is that it is one of the programs where we have the longest amount of time with them, so that we can really create a sense of trust and familiarity and sort of, that they know that they are taken care of and that we are there for them, and building that trust I think is really important. And getting new audience members or new park assistance in our programs in the future. So it is a big investment but hopefully it will pay off. And even if they don't go to our places they still have a sense of connection to our parks and sites and Canada.

Staff spoke with pride about sharing the Learn to Camp program, and Canadian culture and traditions, with new Canadians. Interviews and participant observation indicate that Park staff have a genuine desire to welcome new Canadians into park spaces and to facilitate an enjoyable and comfortable experience for them.

4. Recommendations

This section presents recommendations and overall conclusions based on the research findings. The recommendations are presented in accordance to the stated PC LTC objectives.³⁴

Overall, results from this research project indicate that Learn to Camp is meeting stated program objectives. The program has been successful in **providing opportunities** for Canadians uninitiated to camping who live in urban centres **to learn** new skills that will allow them to create memorable experiences in Canada's great outdoors. During LTC events camping experiences and related activities available at Parks Canada locations have been **promoted**. The program has, generally, **fostered a sense of connection** to Canada's authentic and heritage places through memorable experiences and increased knowledge. Research indicates that **visitation** to National Parks, National Historic Sites and National Marine Conservation Areas is likely to increase due to participation in this program.

Participants leave the program feeling **empowered**, understand the practice of camping, and how to operate within the park system. In addition to these skills, participants express sentiments **of value and emotional connection** in relation to Canadian parks through the experience of Learn to Camp.

There are, however, a number of adjustments that can improve the program offerings. These recommendations are included below in accordance with the relevant PC LTC objectives:

Recommendation #1: *Increase capacity for building partnerships. Connect and collaborate with local immigrant integration organizations.*

³⁴ Program objectives are stated in Section 1.1.

Aligned program objectives:

- To provide opportunities for Canadians uninitiated to camping who live in urban centres to learn new skills that will allow them to create memorable experiences in Canada's great outdoors.
- Promote camping experiences and related activities available at Parks Canada locations.
- Increase visitation to National Parks, National Historic Sites, and National Marine Conservation Areas, especially by those arriving from urban locations.

The biggest issue facing Learn to Camp is simply capacity. Capacity to deal with increased demand for participation, staff capacity to carry out more high touch programming, and financial capacity to make it all possible.

While the program has been notably successful from a Parks view point, the question remains: is it possible to achieve the same results with less resourcing? Park organizations operate on strict government allocated budgets and could be facing more cuts in the near future. Program cost and financial efficiency is a primary concern across park organizations in all domains of operation. If fewer resources are allocated to each Learn to Camp event in the future, it is unknown whether similarly successful results can be achieved. Currently Parks Canada partners with MEC. In addition, national parks wishing to participate in Learn to Camp are welcomed to foster partnerships with community organizations at the local level.³⁵ Local partnerships are encouraged, but voluntary. Stress on staff resourcing makes developing meaningful community partners challenging for both park offices and the community partners. Having partnerships remain an unofficial role in the workplace, combined with rotating staff year over year, results in shaky community relations and stressful coordination. Defining local partnerships as an integral component of Learn to Camp could, in the long run, ease workloads, amplify programming, and facilitate strong community relations.

³⁵ Similarly Ontario Parks partners with Coleman and Off!, and Alberta Parks with MEC and, in the past, with a variety of community organizations.

Relationships between LTC programs and community organizations, specifically new settlement and immigrant support organizations, facilitate mutual benefits. These relationships allow for the sharing of organizational logistics and the facilitation of strong and holistic programming for new comers. They also provide a platform for sharing best practices between organizations. This is specifically beneficial for park staff (interpreters) who are officially trained to work solely with native English speakers.³⁶ The Learn to Camp program is often staff's first experience formally working with English as an Additional Language audiences in an interpretation capacity. Community organizations who work regularly with these demographics are better able to translate needs and desires to park organizations, resulting in better and more tailored programming. Ideally partnering organizations would work in tandem with Parks, however, depending on local demographics and resourcing at local offices, many different formations are possible.

An investment into designated staff to carry out programming in tandem with strong community partners could in later years ease the burden of constrained resources. Both national and provincial park organizations rely heavily on students and local community organizations to carry out the Learn to Camp program, but administrative efforts are still carried out by the Park staff themselves.³⁷ The student population base serves as an ideal source to continue with - and to increase utilization of - in order for programming to remain cost efficient and effective.

It is evident from this research that participants require and want more one-on-one communication, whether it be through Parks themselves or through partner organizations. While the website and mobile app were used by participants and positively reviewed, the struggle with learning a new language often results in confusion. From the participant perspective, mis-understandings are best mitigated with direct communication.

³⁶ Learning in a parks context is commonly known as “parks interpretation”, meaning that it is specifically carried out in a nature park. “[According to Beck & Cable (2002)] Interpretation has been defined as communication that is both an informational and inspirational process to create intellectual and emotional connections between the natural audience and the landscape” (Lange, Vogels, & Jamal, 2011, p. 25).

³⁷ For example, the BC Parks Canada office works in partnership with UBC to host education students as part of a practicum requirement. Ontario Parks utilize summer students to administer the majority of their LTC events.

Recommendation #2: *Expand LTC program to include opportunities for future contact and further engagement.*

Aligned program objectives:

- Foster a sense of connection to Canada's authentic and heritage places through memorable experiences and increased knowledge.
- Increase visitation to national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas, especially by those arriving from urban locations.

Between participants and program partners there is a strong desire to continue and further expand Learn to Camp. Parks struggle with continuing engagement with Learn to Camp participants post program. Nationally, public privacy laws bind Parks Canada and MEC, making the collection of contact information from participants restricted unless voluntarily given. Often contacts are made through third party community organizations that coordinate participants. These organizations are in turn used as the mouth-piece for passing along communications between Parks and participants. Between staff turnover, loss of interest by participants, and communication breakdowns between entities, follow up often gets lost.

Ontario Parks has had more success collecting data and following up with participants. Unbound by the same contact information collection restrictions, they have engaged past Learn to Campers through a follow up survey one year post program. With this information they have managed to better tailor their program each year based on feedback received. Finding a way to increase communication post program would greatly help Parks Canada better connect and tailor future programs for Learn to Camp alumni. Expanding LTC to include future contact and engagement would require upfront resourcing. However, with strategic and thorough outreach, Parks may be able to shift resourcing to work in their favour. Engaged alumni are potential outreach speakers, facilitators, and ambassadors. Crafting a well-designed program to further engage and educate LTC participants could also help reduce base level Park outreach.

The majority of participants expressed that if the option were there, they would feel more

comfortable with additional support for their next camping venture. Many asked if more group camping events, perhaps with more sophisticated workshops, were available. A handful of participants identified themselves as repeat visitors to Learn to Camp, trying out a new location or returning with extended family and/or friends. Park organizations are exploring opportunities to create a graduate program for participants. Possibilities discussed include having graduates visually identify themselves in the campground. This could encourage new campers to seek out an identified support when faced with questions or problems in the campsite. Other ideas include offering a discounted rate and allowing graduates to assist in leading LTC sessions during summer programming.

Another viable option, but one that would include heavy financial and organizational resources, is streamlining events so that select parks have unique program offerings. Creating a streamlined program that has a consistent base offering of camping 101 skills across parks (either nationally and/or provincially), while maintaining unique offerings per park (such as Learn to Paddle Board or having a wildlife specialist teach on a specific local species) would create a circuit for participants. This would enable continued enjoyment and building of campground confidence while diversifying activities and experiences. Again, financial and organizational resourcing would need to be available for these ideas to flourish.

A significant number of recent immigrants commented that they wished more Canadian born participants had been a part of the program. This could be a future consideration; including more seasoned campers to mix with new participants wanting to observe and learn. Seeking out community volunteers to aid with the graduate program could also help to satisfy the desire from new Canadians to increase integration with Canadian born citizens.

Recommendation #3: *Reduce barriers for participation: cost, transportation and access to camping gear.*

Aligned program objectives:

- To provide opportunities for Canadians uninitiated to camping who live in urban centres to learn new skills that will allow them to create memorable experiences in Canada's great outdoors.
- Promote camping experiences and related activities available at Parks Canada locations.
- Increase visitation to National Parks, National Historic Sites and National Marine Conservation Areas, especially by those arriving from urban locations.

Learn to Camp serves as a bridge for many new Canadians facing one or all of these barriers. There is movement within Learn to Camp to help mitigate these obstacles. In response to transportation barriers, Parks Canada and Ontario Parks teamed up with Park Bus, a not for profit initiative that provides bus service to key outdoor destinations in Ontario in summer 2013. Departing from Toronto and Ottawa, this service helps urban dwellers access the National and Provincial parks of Ontario (Transportation Options Association of Ontario, 2010). This bus services select Learn to Camp events in addition to providing service during Park season. All programs provide gear for participants for program participation, but not beyond the event dates themselves.

More broadly, Parks have partnered with the Institute for Canadian Citizenship, which provides new Canadians with a Cultural Access Pass. This pass grants holders free access to all National Parks, National Historic Sites, National Marine Conservation Areas, Alberta Provincial Parks, and Ontario Provincial Parks, among other attractions, for a full year (Institute for Canadian Citizenship, 2014).

In an effort to reach audiences without gear, Parks Canada has launched oTENTiks, permanent tent structures, and this year both Parks Canada and Ontario Parks have come out with 'equipped campsites' available for rental at select parks (Parks Canada Agency, 2014a; Ontario Parks, 2014b). The hope is to attract participants who wish to camp, but aren't quite ready to invest in equipment.

Other recent manoeuvres Parks has taken in an effort to reach new audiences include the Google Street View mapping of the national parks as well as considering providing Wi-Fi access in national parks. Both efforts have caused minor controversy with the public,

stirring some citizens to speak out in protest. In an update on the Parks Canada website regarding wireless internet access, Parks makes their case for the consideration: there is a demand coming from visitors for more imagery of, and access within, the places they will be visiting (Parks Canada Agency, 2014b). This falls in line with feedback from Learn to Camp participants. In response to those against having traditional “off the grid” wilderness serviced, Parks have committed to keeping backcountry areas Wi-Fi free. They state their case, which echoes the same driving motivation behind Learn to Camp, as such: “In closing, tourism trends evolve quickly and Parks Canada must adapt in order to attract new visitors who will come discover our nation’s natural and historical treasures that we have been protecting for over 100 years” (Parks Canada Agency, 2014b).

Acknowledging the realities that many new Canadians face, reducing programming costs, and providing better access to transportation and gear will increase participation from both urban and new Canadians in Learn to Camp. It will also help to truly diversify visitorship to parks. Moving towards long term actions, such as the Otentiks and Parkbus programs, will reduce these barriers for regular park visitation from new and urban Canadian target groups.

Considering barriers for participants should give interpreters pause for consideration on program delivery and encouraging repeat visitation. Delivery of information on what gear to purchase, and which parks to visit in the future may create, or add to, feelings of isolation among financially restricted participants. An Alberta Parks staff member commented that although they partner with MEC for their Learn to Camp events, they often recommend participants buy gear at Canadian Tire or other stores due to affordability.

Recommendation #4: *Train park interpreters to work with English as an Additional Language (EAL) and cross-cultural audiences.*

Aligned program objectives:

- Promote camping experiences and related activities available at Parks Canada locations.
- Foster a sense of connection to Canada's authentic and heritage places through memorable experiences and increased knowledge.
- Increase visitation to National Parks, National Historic Sites and National Marine Conservation Areas, especially by those arriving from urban locations.

Modifications continue to happen at Learn to Camp events as park staff become more culturally aware of needs and practices of the different audiences visiting the parks. Learn to Camp programs are better equipped to attend to cross-cultural desires and staff are better prepared to ask questions prior to the event in order to prepare as much as possible. These small details make huge differences in overall program satisfaction, and can be the difference between a participant feeling at ease or feeling anxiety and discomfort. Providing and anticipating cultural needs may increase the likelihood of having participants transform into independent campers as they experience increased comfort in park spaces.

Many new Canadians at Learn to Camp had camped previously in their home countries. This opened up insightful conversations about Canadian camping culture, safety and park spaces. Many Chinese participants commented on camping in designated areas in their home country, but always in permanent structures. The tent, for them, was a new structure with which to become accustomed. Participants from Bangladesh noted their wariness of park spaces before partaking in Learn to Camp. For these participants parks were associated with unsafe areas to be avoided at night. The theme of safety was prevalent in these discussions. Ontario Parks in particular puts specific emphasis on safety. Their program has a Park Warden arrive on site and introduce themselves to participants as part of the general Learn to Camp welcome.³⁸ This welcome introduces park personnel, explains who they are, how to find them in the park, and emphasizes that their primary role is to protect park visitors. The figure of the warden was new and surprised a few participants. Participants from a variety of backgrounds commented that without the explanation they would have been wary of park personnel in uniform based

³⁸ Parks Canada has numerous staff personnel dropping in during their Learn to Camp events. It varies by park location and staff availability. Alberta Parks follows a similar structure.

on previous negative experiences and associations with authority. Park interpretation training has traditionally been based on the assumption that park visitors are accustomed to the role of enforcement in public spaces, and that park visitors have a basic understanding of park safety protocol. This example serves as an important indicator that Parks have much to gain from broadening their educational and interpretation skills. This adjustment would help to appropriately welcome more Canadians into park spaces.

Park organizations are working towards remedying the cultural disconnect between LTC staff and participants despite the internal barriers they face for increasing their reach of engagement. Learn to Camp has been ultimately beneficial for both participants and park organizations in terms of gaining exposure and education to one another through a firsthand experience. Ontario Parks has made reaching out to urban audiences a priority for their programming. Representatives for booths and presentations are sent whenever possible at public events held throughout the year at libraries, immigration settlement agencies, community health centers, and English as a Second Language classrooms. They believe this has helped them to promote Learn to Camp and to learn more about the audiences they are trying to reach. Alberta Parks has been approaching the disconnect similarly, but with limited staff resourcing. Parks Canada, in addition to Learn to Camp, has a full time staff member dedicated to New Canadian engagement and outreach. At this point the coordinator position is in its early days and is heavily research based. The New Canadian Engagement Coordinator has been consulted to help out with Learn to Camp development but is still working on responses to key questions facing the program and organization at large, such as: When is the best time in the immigration cycle to introduce Parks Canada? What messages about Parks will resonate with this new audience?

Recommendation #5: *Increase staff hiring from diverse backgrounds.*

Aligned program objectives:

- Promote camping experiences and related activities available at Parks Canada locations.
- Foster a sense of connection to Canada's authentic and heritage places through

memorable experiences and increased knowledge.

Structurally, Canadian park organizations lack diversity within their workforce (J. Bartram, personal communication, July 19, 2013). Hiring staff from diverse backgrounds in addition to increasing outreach to and knowledge of diverse Canadian audiences will better help Canadian park organizations increase cultural awareness and understanding of Canada's diverse populations. This will ultimately allow for more Canadians to see themselves reflected in the park system.

Connecting with a new audience of diverse Canadians is one of the primary challenges facing park organizations today (Bain, 2007). This challenge exists on virtually every level of Parks' operations - from those working on the ground to those making strategic decisions in head offices. Not only are new Canadians largely unfamiliar with the practice of camping and parks, but the park organizations themselves are often unfamiliar with the realities newcomers face. Park organizations have had little to no experience working with a demographic where different perceptions of nature, parks and camping are prevalent (Bain, 2007; Lange, Vogels, & Jamal 2011; Finney, 2013). One staff member described Parks Canada as "an old school traditional organization [with] not a lot of diversity, mainly older white men". They commented on how the homogenous make-up of the organization itself creates barriers for reaching new audiences, specifically urban and new Canadians. Attempts to diversify are difficult. As a federal agency, Parks Canada is mandated to primarily hire from within a pool of existing parks and/or government employees. Similarly, provincial park organizations have strict rules for internal hiring before employment opportunities can be posted and sought externally. This has positive impacts such as high retention rates and opportunities for staff growth and development. It also presents serious challenges for reaching all, or more of, the multicultural Canadian populace. Program and project leaders are generally restricted from hiring outside professionals when looking to hire for positions dedicated to working on education and/or new Canadian and urban outreach. As a result, traditional views of what Canadian parks are and represent remain largely unchanged within the organizational culture. Ultimately, increasing diversity within the Parks organizations

themselves will help increase understanding of, and outreach to, the target audiences of new and urban Canadians.

4.1 Further considerations

Conducting a program evaluation allows a researcher to step back and view a project with a heightened critical lens. The purpose of this evaluation was to report on Learn to Camp in relation to the program's own set objectives. However, beyond the scope of this evaluation, additional outcomes were observed.

Interview and data results presented in this evaluation report indicate that new Canadians have an overwhelmingly positive experience with Learn to Camp. Participants culturally and emotionally identify with and value nature in Canadian parks in a diversity of ways. Furthermore, participants leave Learn to Camp with a renewed sense of belonging to both the Canadian landscape and to Canadian culture. This is experienced through direct interactions with nature and with other Learn to Camp participants (predominately other new Canadians) and park staff.

At the same time, Learn to Camp implicitly and explicitly reproduces nationalism and a particular Canadian identity in relation to Canadian Parks and wilderness through programming. Parks Canada conjures up a particular conception of Canada that principally reflects the histories and desires of settler Canadians, while largely excluding and/or erasing indigenous peoples, and others, from the narrative. The Learn to Camp program, while welcoming diversity in park spaces, teaches a specific and limiting way to 'be' and 'know' park spaces. The narrative presented in Learn to Camp lacks attentiveness to Canadian colonial histories and diverse cultural realities, and has the potential to further exclude their target audience, new immigrants, rather than justly welcome them.³⁹

Encouraging staff to further their education of colonial history and new immigrant

³⁹ For more see Sullivan (2015).

realities, and providing participatory structures to further develop Learn to Camp among diverse audiences, can help acknowledge and address this embedded challenge.

5. Conclusions

The research findings show that Learn to Camp is making positive strides toward educating new Canadians on camping practices and towards cultivating new stewards for the Canadian parks. New Canadians participating in Learn to Camp are feeling empowered, returning to Canadian parks, and have expressed feeling culturally and emotionally connected to Canadian parks through camping. They leave the program with strong sentiments of value for time spent outdoors and the Canadian park system itself. While the LTC program is meeting their set objectives, there is room for improvement both in quality and scope of program implementation.

This research indicates that the key recommendations to strengthen the LTC program include: 1) Increasing the capacity for partnerships in program management, 2) Expanding the LTC program to include opportunities for future contact and further engagement, 3) Reducing barriers for participation: cost, transportation and access to camping gear, 4) Training park interpreters to work with English as an Additional Language (EAL) and cross cultural audiences, and 5) Increasing staff hiring from diverse backgrounds.

Parks needs to continue to work at reaching out to this demographic of new and urban Canadians. Programs like Learn to Camp, along with the creation of new permanent tent structures and equipped campsites, are steps in the right direction. As these demographics make up a significant portion of the current Canadian population, Parks need to ensure they remain relevant as Canadian society inevitably grows and changes.

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Chapter 3

Learn to Camp, Learn to be Canadian

“Call it a lie, if you like, but a lie is a sort of myth and a myth is a sort of truth”

- *Cyrano de Bergerac, in Edmond Rostand: Cyrano de Bergerac (Act 2)*

1. Introduction

Learn to Camp, a joint program launched in 2011 between Parks Canada and the Mountain Equipment Co-op, offers new and urban Canadians the opportunity to learn how to plan and enjoy safe and successful camping trips in national parks.⁴⁰

In 2006, Parks Canada focused their efforts on marketing and visitor experience in response to three emerging factors: 1) increased immigration from a multitude of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, 2) increased migration to Canadian urban centers, and 3)

⁴⁰ Statistics Canada define immigrants as “...those born outside of Canada and are, or have been, landed immigrants. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Some immigrants have lived in Canada for many years while others are recent arrivals” (Statistics Canada, 2009). Their definition is broken down into four categories: well established, established, recent and new, a new immigrant being an individual who has landed in Canada between 2001 and 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2009). Parks Canada uses the term ‘new Canadian’ in Learn to Camp materials but leaves the term undefined. For the purpose of this research project, the term ‘new Canadian’ does not discriminate on the basis of immigration status or citizenship but refers to all newcomers to Canada as relevant participants. The definition was expanded to include all classifications and statuses of foreign-born newcomers to Canada to match the research objectives, which are to gain insights from individuals new to Canada experiencing Learn to Camp, regardless of official status.

Learn to Camp documents refer to key target audience members as “Canadians living close to urban centres” (Parks Canada and Mountain Equipment Co-op, 2013). Statistics Canada refers to an urban area as “...a population of at least 1,000 and a density of 400 or more people per square kilometer” (Statistics Canada, 2011), however also note that the term ‘urban’ is used variably depending on points of view, interest and application. For the purpose of this research, the term ‘urban Canadian’ refers to any Canadian living in a concentrated population with high density. While the majority of new Canadians reside in urban centers, however, not all new Canadians are urban Canadians, and vice versa (Statistics Canada, 2009).

³⁹ I use the term “indigenous” to describe “...groups with ancestral ties/claims to particular lands prior to colonization by outside powers and ‘whose nations remain submerged within the states created by those powers’” (Shaw, Herman, & Dobbs, 2006 as cited by Sundberg, 2014, p. 34). In places when citing scholarship, interviews and government publications the terms “Aboriginal” and Metis” are used. For the purpose of this research, the indigenous communities referenced are submerged within the state now known as Canada.

significantly decreased visitor numbers to Canadian National Parks and National Historic Sites (Campbell, 2011). Accumulating evidence indicates that Canada's labour force and economic growth will only be sustained through increased immigration due to declining birth rates within Canada (Friesen, 2012). The Canadian population, which was largely comprised of European settlers and indigenous peoples when Parks Canada was formed in 1911, is now described by the dominant Canadian identity as a multicultural mosaic – a new generation of Canadians from a myriad of ethnic and cultural origins.

Learn to Camp forms the primary site of analysis for this paper. Based on semi structured interviews, participant observation at two Learn to Camp events, and questionnaires, my field research shows that new Canadians have an overwhelmingly positive experience with Learn to Camp.⁴¹ Participants culturally and emotionally identify with, and value, nature in Canadian parks in a diversity of ways. Furthermore, participants leave Learn to Camp with a renewed sense of attachment to both the Canadian landscape and to Canadian culture. This is cultivated through direct interactions with nature, with other Learn to Camp participants (predominately other new Canadians) and park staff.

In this paper, I seek to put this research into dialogue with another thread of scholarship on Canadian parks: the literature on the cultural studies of nature. Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands argues that Parks Canada – and the Canadian imaginary more broadly - employs both wilderness *and* multiculturalism as two of the central narratives for understanding 'Canadian identity' (Kalman-Lamb, 2012; Sandilands, 2000a).⁴² In Sandilands' words, "In both narratives, the conflictual diversity of the present is acknowledged, but in both also, this present is held in a sort of suspended animation between past origins and future, universal fullness" (Sandilands, 2000a, p. 171). This balancing act - acknowledging multiculturalism and wilderness in the present, while also perpetuating the contradictory historical and nationalizing myths - is richly illustrated in

⁴¹ See Sullivan (2015) for Learn to Camp program evaluation report.

⁴² Both multiculturalism and wilderness have become popularized tropes within the Canadian imaginary since Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's governance in the 1970's and 80's (Kalman-Lamb, 2012; Newbery, 2013; Campbell, 2011).

Learn to Camp. The program at once embraces diversity by welcoming new Canadians into park spaces, while at the same time carefully instructs participants on ways to ‘know’ and ‘be’ in park spaces. In what follows, I demonstrate how Learn to Camp presents itself as a program acknowledging and welcoming diversity, all the while working to order and contain it in very particular, and problematic ways. Furthermore, I examine how seemingly broad multicultural openings, such as Learn to Camp, become curated sites for identity performance.

Indeed, there is a growing body of literature documenting the links between nationalism, wilderness, and historical colonial erasures (See: Cronon, 1996; Kosek, 2004; Sandilands, 2000a; Loo, 2006; Erickson, 2013; Campbell, 2011; Newbery, 2013). Rather than retrace the ground work of political ecologists, cultural theorists, geographers, and others who have examined the colonial histories of nationalism and “wilderness”, this analysis demonstrates how national myths of wilderness, multiculturalism and, significantly, what it means to ‘be Canadian’, are rehearsed, reproduced, and renegotiated within Learn to Camp. While this critical literature has significantly informed my analytical framework, I also consider the merits of Learn to Camp, as observed during fieldwork. Participants outwardly enjoyed participating in Learn to Camp. The enjoyment gleaned from program participation, I argue, deserves as much attention and consideration within our critical analysis. In part, this paper is my attempt to make sense of the critical analysis provided by the literature when read alongside the experiences and reflections shared with me by Learn to Camp participants and staff during fieldwork. Concurrently, the analytic tools provided by cultural studies of nature help illuminate the problematic underpinnings of nationalism at work in Learn to Camp. They are less helpful, however, in helping to understand the enjoyment Learn to Camp produces for participants, and its effects.

There is, of course, the question of whether the enjoyment experienced through the program is *because of*, or *in spite of*, these problematic elements. Experience is multifaceted. Just because Learn to Camp advances what I deem to be problematic nationalist identities, doesn’t necessarily mean that they determine the outcome of enjoyment, either in terms of narrative or experience. Indeed, there is a growing body of

literature documenting how spending time in nature does, or can, result in positive physical and mental states (Louv, 2008).⁴³ Yet, primary research does indicate that at least part of this enjoyment spawned from feeling connected to broader nationalistic tropes: performing Canadian practices, connecting to Canadian land and history; being ‘Canadian’. How are we to make sense of the enjoyment popular publics seemingly experience while participating in colonial, imperialist, and generally exclusionary practices?⁴⁴ Specifically, what are we to make of the enjoyment experienced in Learn to Camp given the problematic foundation of the program? Based on my research, I argue that the current scholarship, as introduced above, does not go far enough in recognizing within their critiques the power and charisma of ‘enjoyment in acculturating practices’. Within the case of Learn to Camp, participating in Canadian wilderness and camping culture re-enacts and stabilizes particular nationalist identities through performance. Solely focusing on the problematic aspects of Learn to Camp is likely to alienate participants and, in effect, inaccurately recount the program experience. While a critique of the limiting and homogenous nature of Canadian nationalism as it is performed and transmitted in parks is vital, these critiques are analytically and politically limited when they do not account for popular desire.

This paper is anchored by two vignettes that reflect how Learn to Camp is embedded in, and reproduces performances of an exclusionary ‘Canadianness’. They illustrate how participants, primarily new Canadians, reacted to these practices; positively. Alongside theoretical analysis, these vignettes help to illustrate the complexity that is Learn to Camp. These findings open interesting potential research questions such as, how can we explain, and what are the wider implications of this apparent paradox of enjoyment of practices that are limited and problematic? What would it look like to perform ‘Canadianness’ differently: could this be done in a way that realizes Parks’ goals for the

⁴³ Nature; is used here in its dominant sense to refer to the nonhuman world, natural events, and processes. This word is problematic, laden with multiple connotations and meanings in particular social and political contexts. For a more in depth discussion of why this is problematic see Kosek (2006) or Val Plumwood (2001).

⁴⁴ On occasion, I use the first person plural to include myself in the group to whom this essay is primarily addressed: mainly Canadian citizens of any descent, or other producers/consumers/supporters/allies of park culture. In doing so, my intention is not to generalize these sentiments to all Canadians.

program, but also opens up a different, perhaps more inclusive and engaging, Canada? And thirdly, what wider implications might this pose to progressive movements who seek to point out these exclusions, yet also seek to engage and attract people? This paper begins by describing the critical contexts undertaken for this paper and the research site itself: Learn to Camp events in Fort Langley National Historic Site, BC and Darlington Provincial Park, ON. I then bring critical scholarship from cultural studies of nature to bear on an examination of Parks Canada, specifically within the site of Learn to Camp. This discussion better places us to understand federal nationalism as it exists and continues to be inserted into Canadian parks, and subsequently, into Learn to Camp. Investigating how particular performances of being ‘Canadian’ are conducted and received is vital to both academic and professional park communities as we attempt to better understand, integrate, and justly welcome new Canadians.⁴⁵

2. Critical Contexts

2.1 Park space as a site of identity formation

The natural history and the cultural history are really inseparable. Without the natural world there wouldn't have been trade and if you think about the geography and how that played into the settlements and how it affected the whole coming of the railway and the decision of BC to join Canada and on and on and on. It is all related to the natural world (Learn to Camp Staff, personal communication, June, 2013).

Very prideful, when I learn the history [of the park space]. For me, I feel like I am part of Canada (Learn to Camp participant, personal communication, June 2013).

Symbols and themes of wilderness have historically been used to represent an integral part of Canadian identity through art, literature, and film (Atwood, 1991; Loo, 2006;

⁴⁵ Learn to Camp programs are run in Canada nationally by Parks Canada, and provincially by Alberta Parks and Ontario Parks. While there are variations between these programs, the major themes and objectives of Learn to Camp remain the same across the board: to better integrate new and urban Canadians into the park system through camping. For this reason, this paper speaks to Learn to Camp as a general program and reflects research conducted on the national Parks Canada (PC) and provincial Alberta (AP) and Ontario Parks (OP) programs (collectively referred to as Parks). The analysis in this paper is focused on national parks, but is also applicable within provincial and local Canadian park contexts.

Searle, 2000; Erickson, 2013; Newbery, 2013; Kalman-Lamb, 2012). One need only think of the Canadian flag (maple leaf), currency (beaver, moose), the closing ceremonies of the 2010 Vancouver Olympics (canoes and beavers) and the 'I am Canadian' Molson beer ads to see wilderness markers promoted as 'Canadian' across the cultural landscape (Kalman-Lamb, 2012). Canadian parks are consistently showcased as Canada's national treasures, representing the diversity of the nation in ecological form (Campbell, 2011; Mortimer-Sandilands, 2009; Millard, Riegel, & Wright, 2002). A recent Focus Canada survey of Canadian citizens ranked the national parks fourth among Canadians' most-valued symbols of identity (Environics Institute, 2010).⁴⁶ Nonetheless, with over three-quarters of citizens now living in urban areas, today's majority of Canadian citizens have never physically visited a national park (Campbell, 2011; Millard, Riegel, & Wright, 2002). It is apparent that Canadian parks, along with a specific idea of wilderness, are alive and thriving in the dominant Canadian psyche and imagination. Certainly park organizations aren't original in their self-promotion as being inherently 'Canadian', or as fundamental to national identity. They do, however, continue to promote and benefit from this trope.

While Learn to Camp is a relatively new program, Canadian parks themselves have a long history and legacy of representing Canadian identity. The role of Canadian park organizations has become much more than the Canadian Park Agency's initial mandate to protect landscapes in an effort to respect forest reserves and parks (Campbell, 2011, p. 2).⁴⁷ Today Canadian park organizations take pride in promoting themselves as governing bodies with the mandate to ensure the conservation and restoration of ecosystems, while providing visitor access to many iconic landscapes and attractions. There has been significant debate and discussion on the contradictory nature of these two objectives, and historically the weight has shifted from one side of the table to the other (Campbell, 2011; Searle, 2000; Mortimer-Sandilands, 2009). Nonetheless, Parks Canada's mission, as of 2000, is to maintain ecological and commemorative integrity, serving as both the

⁴⁶ Thirteen symbols were provided and 72 per cent of survey responders cited national parks as important symbolic markers (Environics Institute, 2010).

⁴⁷ Made in 1911, originally under the title the Dominion Parks Branch (Campbell, 2011).

protector and eager host of park spaces. (Campbell, 2011; Mortimer-Sandilands, 2009; Searle, 2000; Sandilands, 2000b).

In recent years, and aligned with the push for marketing and visitor experience, there has been an extensive outward effort by Parks to further herald the Canadian wilderness brand. In February 2014, the Canadian Parks Council in collaboration with the federal, provincial and territorial park systems issued the report, *Connecting Canadians with Nature: An Investment in the Well-being of our Citizens*.⁴⁸ The report compiles research creating the "...first-ever comprehensive evidence-based report in Canada that chronicles the many proven benefits of spending time in nature" and prompted Park Ministers to commit to "...work together to creatively and collaboratively inspire Canadians to experience nature through parks in ways that support their health and well-being" (Canadian Newswire, 2014). While no concrete actions have yet to be (publicly) laid out by Park ministers on how they will proceed in relation to this goal, the Learn to Camp program steps in this direction. David Oraziotti, Ontario's Minister of Natural Resources, commented after the conference: "Ontario continues to connect Canadians with nature through programs such as Learn to Camp... We look forward to working with our partners to enhance opportunities for the public to enjoy Ontario's provincial parks" (Canadian Newswire, 2014). The report stresses the importance and benefits of spending time in parks – from economic drivers, such as nature-based tourism, to more ideological efforts such as inspiring national pride. It is clear from the language used throughout the document that nature is viewed as not only essential to the health and well-being of Canadians, but also as a critical component of Canadian identity: "Canada's natural environment has been a unifying feature of the country's cultural identity for centuries. It has shaped perceptions of our nation, at home and abroad" (Parks Canada Agency on behalf of Canadian Parks Council, 2014). More recently, Parks Canada has launched a clothing line, PC Original, that dons the slogan, "This Land is Your Brand" (CBC News, 2014). They explain their backstory as follows: "For the first time, we Canadians have a

⁴⁸ While the objectives of the provincial and territorial parks systems, with the exception of Quebec (Canadian Newswire, 2014), vary slightly from one to another, in general terms, these organizations follow a similar mandate of Parks Canada. Together the park organizations collaborate through the Canadian Parks Council.

brand of casual apparel that truly allows us to express the unquestionable pride, passion and love we have for our country's incredible natural spaces and the inherent connection they make with our national identity" (Parks Canada, 2014). Historically and today, Canadian park organizations take pride in promoting themselves as ambassadors and curators of national identity.

Parks Canada's Learn to Camp programming further fortifies the connection between parks and national identity for new Canadians through collaboration with Citizenship and Immigration Canada. All new Canadian citizens receive a 'Cultural Access Pass,' valid for their first year of citizenship. This pass provides free and unlimited access to over 1000 of "Canada's cultural treasures from coast-to-coast-to-coast" inclusive of National Parks and Historic Sites and specific provincial parks systems (Institute for Canadian Citizenship, 2014).⁴⁹ In addition to this promotion, select Learn to Camp events, in both national and provincial parks, host outdoor citizenship ceremonies bolstering the notion to new Canadians that parks are an integral part of Canadian identity (Yanchyk, 2012). Indeed, in both subtle (staff motivations and casual conversations) and outward ways (such as heritage presentations and citizenship ceremonies), Canadian parks and Canadian identity are continuously being connected, performed, and reinforced in the Learn to Camp experience.

2.2. Wilderness and nationalism

While Parks Canada has unabashedly made their nationalistic ties explicit, when we turn to critical theory we see yet another ideological agenda at play in Learn to Camp. Examining the definition of nature that Canadian park organizations utilize within their practices of conservation, interpretation, and education illuminates problematic underpinnings associated with the wilderness trope. In these terms, nature/wilderness refers to ecological conditions that precede human development; spaces that are wild, unruly and uncontrolled/untouched by man (Cuomo, 1998; Cronon, 1996; Erickson, 2013; Higgs, 2003; Porter-Bopp, 2006; Rutherford, 2011; Scott, 2010; Searle, 2000;

⁴⁹ At present only Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan Parks participate in the program.

Sturgeon, 2009). The wilderness myth- the idea that parks are stable, unchanging spaces that exist outside of human activity - lends itself to a promise of a fixed Canadian identity outside of cultural and ecological reality. In other words, the perception of nature remains static despite changing ecological and social realities. In embracing wilderness as 'other', the Canadian public are located outside of the natural.

While there are numerous contestations against this idea of nature/wilderness in eco-feminism, deep ecology, ecological restoration, and other discourses, Canadian parks today uphold the tradition of keeping nature/wilderness spaces zoned, controlled and curated as they see fit (Cuomo, 1998; Cronon, 1996; Erickson, 2013; Higgs, 2003; Porter-Bopp, 2006; Rutherford, 2011; Scott, 2010; Searle, 2000; Sturgeon, 2009). This definition of nature/wilderness as a timeless and pristine landscape reinforces the state and its capitalist pursuits. Applied to both resource extraction and conservation, it pushes past acknowledging historical and present day actualities and into a mythological place of fixed permanence. Ecological and social realities are swept under the rug while colonial extractivism uninhibitedly continues to flourish. With this myth, Canadian parks - perceptions of what park spaces are for, who frequents them, and what activities are performed there - run the risk being held in the same timeless trap.

It is precisely because time does *not* stand still that Learn to Camp becomes a site rich with myths conflicting, clashing, and rubbing up against present day realities. In Learn to Camp, Canadian parks become welcoming sites for diversity, yet they themselves have a history of regional and colonial exclusion (Mortimer-Sandilands, 2009). The story of indigenous peoples has long been hidden from popular narratives of Canadian history, especially in regard to the violent removal of many indigenous and other ethnic communities from what are now Canadian National Parks (Campbell, 2011). The myth of wilderness has been useful for purposes of development because it bespeaks unending wealth, but also because it has historically legitimated occupation of these spaces (no humans were here before, this landscape is empty and ripe for the taking). More just relationships between settler Canadians, indigenous peoples, and the more-than-human world, are marginalized by the myth of wilderness. When we look at Learn to Camp in

this context, with participants coming from a multitude of cultural and ethnic backgrounds with their own histories and experiences related to land, nations, and race, it gives us pause. Blanketing over diverse present and historical realities has the potential to lead to violent introductions into a new nation and colonial identity.

2.3 Case Study: Learn to Camp

With these frameworks in mind, I sought to explore the Learn to Camp program. I participated in two Learn to Camp events in summer 2013. Field work occurred at Learn to Camp events with Parks Canada at Fort Langley National Historic Site in Langley, British Columbia (BC), and with Ontario Parks at Darlington Provincial Park in Oshawa, Ontario.

I employed a multi-method qualitative approach that included participant observation, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, document review and textual analysis.⁵⁰ Interviews and questionnaires allowed for individuals to articulate their experiences and perceptions of the Learn to Camp experience, Canadian park organizations, and Canadian culture and heritage. Participant observation, document review, and textual analysis allowed for a deeper understanding of the impacts of these experiences on the Learn to Camp program and Canadian society more broadly. Participation observation techniques were administered during each event. Interviews and field notes were taken, transcribed, and analyzed alongside other relevant data. From this data, I produced a program evaluation report that included five key recommendations for the Learn to Camp program to better meet their stated objectives:

- Increase capacity for building program partnerships. Connect and collaborate with local resettlement and immigrant support organizations.
- Expand LTC program to include opportunities for future contact and further engagement.
- Reduce barriers for participation: cost, transportation and access to camping gear.

⁵⁰A copy of interview questions can be found in Appendix A. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

- Train park interpreters to work with English as an Additional Language (EAL) and cross cultural audiences.
- Increase staff hiring from diverse backgrounds.⁵¹

In this paper I delve further into the juxtaposition between this critical context and the program itself, focusing another lens onto the program and the tensions that comprise it. Here, I build on the evaluation by exploring my own perceptions of the program within the wider critical context set out by the literatures previously discussed. This paper draws heavily upon participation observation that was administered during Learn to Camp events, putting on the ground experiences into conversation with theory.

Participant observation is a largely unstructured ethnographic research method used for conducting research on a people or population (Dewalt, 2002; Newing, 2011; Reeves, 2010; Spradely, 1980). The aim of this observation is to be able to describe with authenticity how and why people do what they do, relevant to the research question being investigated. The researcher ideally spends an extended amount of time living with the participants or host community and exercises judgment as to what extent they, them self, participate in activities, the types of questions they ask of community members, and when and how they interact with participants (Newing, 2011). It is important to note that for the context of this research, participants, namely new Canadians – were not within their normal environment or daily routine. I, myself, was participating in the program as a new participant, and some of the activities (for example, Learn to Fish) were first time experiences for myself as well. Due to the length of events, developing long term relationships with participants was not possible. Despite this limitation, participant observation techniques provided meaningful data key to informing this analysis

3. Performing ‘Canadianness’

3.1 Vignette: Voyageur Presentation: Fort Langley Parks Canada Learn to Camp event

⁵¹ For full evaluation report, see Sullivan (2015).

During a Learn to Camp event at Fort Langley National Historic Site in British Columbia, Park staff put together a theatrical historical presentation. Participants were invited to take part in the re-enactment of the history of the Fort.

The Learn to Camp group gathers near an outdoor theatre around dusk. Parents and children wander through the campsite to find the theatre, past other families camping independently from the program. They stop and observe how others have set up their tents, what and how they are cooking, and watch young children play on a nearby jungle gym. A hum of mutterings, a mix of many languages, buzzes through the air. Parks Canada staff call for everyone to quiet down and seat the group on hay bales, arranged in rows, for viewing the stage. Families generally sit together. Many can be seen spraying children with bug spray; many spray over and over again. The group looks tired and full from dinner although many children run around in excitement for the marshmallows and mysterious s'mores that have been promised for later on.

A heritage presentation has been organized for the group. Showcasing Fort Langley National Historic Site is an objective for this particular Learn to Camp program, purely based on the cross-promotional opportunity that the location provides. Parks Canada staff and volunteers (a group of young students from various disciplines on co-op terms and three UBC teachers -in-training doing community practicums) introduce the session: a presentation on Les Voyageurs, (The Voyageurs) and the fur trading that took place at Fort Langley beginning in the 1800's.

It is a standard scripted presentation, performed for various groups who visit Fort Langley National Historic Site throughout the year. However, staff are welcome to use their discretion and adapt as they see fit. A young black woman, a park interpreter, appears in front of the crowd dressed as a French Canadian Voyageur. She is in a billowy white dress with a wrap around apron. She introduces herself and explains that she will be acting out a story depicting the fur trading that occurred at Fort Langley years ago, and that she will be looking to the audience for a few volunteers later on to help her out.

She begins the presentation by laying out beaver pelts on a makeshift table. She teaches the group to sing the song 'Alouette', a French folk song.⁵² Most participants mumble the words. Many appear not to understand what they mean, nonetheless; people are keen to join in and children are happily engaged. The presenter does not explain the meaning of the words. She tells the group that the song was sung by the Voyageurs as they travelled in birch bark canoes through Canadian waterways in order to trade furs. The singing helped the paddlers' keep a steady pace, she says.

Alouette:

Alouette, gentille alouette,

Alouette, je te plumerai.

Je te plumerai la tête. x2

Et la tête! Et la tête!

Alouette! Alouette!

A-a-a-ah

Translation:

Lark, nice lark,

Lark, I will pluck you.

I will pluck your head. x2

And your head! And your head!

Lark! Lark!

O-o-o-oh

The history of Fort Langley is presented to the group. After the abandonment of the Columbia River in 1848 as a trade route, the Hudson Bay Company forwarded goods to Langley for transshipment to their forts in British Columbia. The audience is told about the Voyageurs, and that they, French Canadians along with Aboriginal peoples, were involved in the fur trade throughout North America, specifically with the Hudson Bay Company.⁵³ Trade happened through waterways and Fort Langley served as a post

⁵² Originating from France, "Alouette" is a popular children's song about plucking feathers from a lark in punishment for being woken up by its song. The song was first published in *A Pocket Song Book* for the use of students and graduates of McGill College (Montreal, 1879). However, Canadian folklorist Marius Barbeau argued that the song's true origin was France (Plouffe, 2014). It is believed that starting in the 1500's the French Fur trade was active for over 300 years in North America and that the songs of the French fur trade were adapted to accompany the motion of paddles dipped in unison. They believed that singing helped the voyageurs to paddle faster and longer (Mills, 2014).

⁵³ The terms Aboriginal and First Nation were used interchangeably during the presentation.

because of its position on the Fraser River.

Many audience members watch the woman intently as she displays the furs while delivering the presentation. A few kids run around, some audience members look off in the distance. It is not clear if everyone can properly hear or understand the presenter. At times it is hard to hear. It is possible that some of the word choices are more advanced than the English speaking capabilities of some audience members. The presenter explains that the furs were traded for markets mainly found in Europe. Canada played an important role in the fur trade because of its cold climate and large habitat for animals such as the beaver. These conditions, she explains:

...Created luxurious furs to make clothing for rich Europeans. For 250 years the main European economic activity in what is now most of Canada was the fur trade. It was also important to the Aboriginal trappers who traded furs at the fur trading posts in return for trade goods from Europe. The vast river and lake system made transportation possible by birch bark canoe, an Aboriginal invention.

The presenter explains how the furs were packed and transported, carried in bales on the backs of men in canoes. Together the group sings 'Alouette' again. She explains that most Voyageurs were young French Canadian and Métis men. She does not offer a definition of Métis to the audience. She speaks of the immense strength it took to paddle up the rivers with the pelts, carrying canoes. To close, she invites audience members to come participate. A young Canadian Mexican boy and a young girl from an Iranian family are selected. They are laced up with Hudson Bay blankets on their backs. In a circle they pretend to paddle through water. The audience, made up of a large variety of ethnicities softly sings 'Alouette' in the background.

Conversations, interviews, and questionnaire comments from participants following the Fort Langley performance reflected a deep sense of appreciation and value for the history of the land.⁵⁴ Political philosopher and sociologist Richard J.F. Day writes, “The reality

⁵⁴ Thirty-seven Learn to Camp participants completed questionnaires filled out at Parks Canada Learn to Camp events at Fort Rodd Hill, BC and Fort Langley, BC in 2013 based on participant satisfaction. The questionnaire was crafted by the British Columbia Parks Canada office, and included five specifically

of Canadian diversity is symbiotically dependent upon this fantasy of unity – without it a diversity simply could not exist, and certainly could not be a problem” (Day, 2000, p. 9). In part, the fantasy of shared experience – shared landscape and shared history – unifies the diverse array of (new) Canadians in Learn to Camp.

The recreational practice of camping is central to Learn to Camp – and to Canadian parks for that matter. Much of what Learn to Camp orchestrates is spatial choreography of park etiquette. As compelled by Learn to Camp programming, participants actively inscribe park spaces with particular meanings. In turn, such activities cultivate participants’ identities in relation to parks, and wilderness, more broadly. First participants learn through demonstration how to be in park spaces – how to set up their tents, how to cook over a campfire, how to reflect and look at the stars – and then as a group, they collectively perform these actions. As geographer Tim Cresswell states, “. . . places are practiced. People do things in place. What they do, in part, is responsible for the meanings that a place might have” (Cresswell, 2009, p. 2). Personal and spatial identities are not pre-given, rather; they are continually re-made and reiterated. This occurs through cultural processes, power relations, and acts within the representations, spaces, and relations of everyday life (Fullagar, 2009). The feelings participants identified as ‘being Canadian’, are produced through ‘performing Canadian’ activities in Canadian park spaces. Just as in the Fort Langley presentation, performing practices becomes a means of creating a bodily inscription. “They lodge in bodies; bodies in fact carry discourses as part of their own lifeblood” (Butler, 1998, p. 282). Wearing pelts and singing as the Voyageurs, just as setting up tents and reliving European conquests, reinforces the nation’s colonial past, tying parks (an idea of wilderness) to Canadian identity.

selected questions for this research project that were also included in LTC participant interviews. All participants at these two events had the opportunity to fill out the questionnaire on a voluntary and anonymous basis. The data from these questionnaires were compiled in an excel spreadsheet and analyzed. Twelve participants noted in questionnaires that one of their motivations for partaking in the program was that camping was a Canadian tradition. Thirty-seven participants who completed questionnaires were asked to rank if the program increased their interest in learning more about national parks a scale from 1-5, 5 being the highest rating and 1 being the lowest. The average rating reported was 4.4. When asked if LTC changed the way participants felt about Canadian culture or heritage, 22 participants responded positively and 5 expressed that it didn’t really change how they felt, but reinforced positive associations they previously held.

Learn to Camp participants commented:

I have rarely felt more Canadian than when I am out camping and seeing how beautiful this country is and I think this is the best way to do it.

Oh yea, the marshmallows and the graham crackers. (Laughter). To be a real Canadian you've got to do that! It is very Canadian really. And one more thing – hot chocolate!

Participants expressed interest in learning the history of the land in order to be able to pass this on to their children, reflecting that they desired that their children grow up with the “Canadian experience”.⁵⁵ One participant noted on their questionnaire that, for them, the most impactful part of Learn to Camp was that... “my children had a great experience and fantastic memories in Cdn [Canadian] nature.” When asked if the program changed how they felt about Canadian culture or heritage, 22 participants responded positively and five expressed that it didn’t really change how they felt, but reinforced positive associations they previously held. Comments included, “Yes, made me proud of being a true Canadian,” “Yes, have better experience of camping shared by so many Canadians,” and “Yes, we saw the outside and original culture,” among others.

A particular branding of nationalism is at play in Learn to Camp. The program perpetuates the notion that Canadians are - and always have been - environmental stewards. In publications Parks Canada continually boast how they were the first national park system to be established, and how Canada, as a nation, takes pride in its connection to nature (Parks Canada Agency on behalf of the Canadian Parks Council, 2014; Parks Canada, 2011). This particular brand of ‘Canadianness’ was present in subtle ways throughout the Learn to Camp event. Informal chats about how campers care for park spaces (environmentally safe and responsible ways to deal with waste, gather firewood, and interact with the flora and fauna), and demonstrations on what to do in park spaces (go on nature walks, observe biodiversity, build a campfire, sing songs, and share

⁵⁵ Most participants referenced this as learning the “history of the land” and of “place” rather than stating learning ‘Canadian history’. It was my impression that they were interested in the history as related to the shared landscape.

stories), together build an image of a particular ‘Canadianness’. The story presented in the Fort Langley presentation worked to naturalize this image of ‘Canadianness’. The Voyageurs were positioned as central figures, catalysts even, in the historical narrative of the land. Furthermore, the image of Voyageurs traversing the Fraser River in birch bark canoes connotes a naturalized colonial history of European settlers and their capitalist pursuits of fur trading.

Despite the fact that I personally admire and believe in environmental stewardship, and share a keen interest in history, I found the immediate reflections shared by Learn to Camp participants of ‘Canadianness’ as a shared national identity to be startling:

It, enforces it, you know that this is what we’re about. Protecting our national assets. You go to a lot of other countries. We really care. Over here in Canada we care, like it is in our culture. Like you recycle things, you make sure you don’t cut down a gigantic tree because of the environment. That is who we are. And Parks Canada, that is a good idea, they enforce that, they remind people that you are just like a little speck in the environment and we better think about protecting because if we don’t, it won’t be there for the future generations.

I would like to say that if new comers of immigrants, whatever you want to say, including me, they are a part of Canadian people, right? And so to make Canada more beautiful we need everybody’s contributions in the sense of everything else. So if we want to make everybody on the same page, we have to bring these immigrant people up to that level in the sense of this park and... [that they] understand that nature is our forest and parks, they contribute to our mental health also physical health in the sense that you can walk and run and have fun, enjoy that park as well. So, we need to train, let them be in this culture more to make them more away about the nature and about the forest and parks of course, and how to make their lives more enjoyable with it. We need to bring them in a same, we need to train them, make them in the same group, same kind of people who think similarly in the forest and animals in the same sense. So we need to get more learning in the new immigrant people.

A staff member commented:

[Our aim is], engaging Canadians and connecting hearts and minds. And the urban audience in particular here in Fort Langley that, is the key audience. The audience who is, you know, [we want our program to be] something to appeal to new

Canadians, something to appeal to the urbanites who don't have means really to connect with our Historic Sites and our Parks and the new Canadians who are learning the cultural identity of the new country and things that Canadians do and hold dear which is one big thing is appreciating your Parks through camping.

It appeared as though participants had quickly associated “Canadianness” with a particular history and identity. Sandilands’ tracing of the term ‘ecological integrity’ is helpful here for better understanding the naturalized, national narrative at work in the Fort Langley presentation. According to Sandilands, ideas of “nature” and “nation” are articulated in the mandate of Parks Canada as part of a historical national objective: ecological integrity (Mortimer-Sandilands, 2009, p. 163).⁵⁶ The term is used to convey the notion that preservation of the biotic community is tied with historical and national integrity. This alludes to the notion that any deviation away from this priority throughout park history has been a mis-step or deviation in park management (Mortimer-Sandilands, 2009).⁵⁷ The danger in this articulation, argues Sandilands, is that it places science as the primary knowledge system for parks management, parks staff (the state) as the owners of this science and at the same time causes an erasure of the parks’ rich and complex history (Mortimer-Sandilands, 2009). “The effect of this erasure of the parks history is the naturalization of integrity as the destiny of Canadian national parks” (Mortimer-Sandilands, 2009, p. 182). A review of Parks Canada’s history illustrates that this articulation of ecological integrity is in fact a new utterance of ecological science and national heritage – a reinsertion of nationalism - into Canada’s parks. In turn, a false representation of the Canadian identity is produced as ‘timeless stewards of preservation’; furthering the work of the wilderness myth and wedding it to national

⁵⁶ Parks Canada states on their website, “According to the *Canada National Parks Act*, the law governing national parks in Canada, “ecological integrity” means, with respect to a park, “...a condition that is determined to be characteristic of its natural region and likely to persist, including abiotic components and the composition and abundance of native species and biological communities, rates of change and supporting processes.” (Parks Canada, 2013). Aldo Leopold is credited with first using the term ecological “integrity” in 1949, and Parks Canada first in 1979 (Mortimer-Sandilands, 2009). While there are many definitions related to the term, following Sandilands I am focusing on the use of the term as of 1988 by Parks Canada where in which “the emergence of ecological integrity as a “first priority” for planning and management was a significant change” (Mortimer-Sandilands, 2009)

⁵⁷ Historians and scholars alike have noted the changing articulations in Parks Canada’s biography; Parks were initially created for tourism and development (Campbell, 2011; Loo, 2006; Mortimer-Sandilands, 2009; Searle, 2000).

identity. In doing so, Parks Canada asserts that (ecological) integrity is an embedded Canadian value. This linguistic manoeuvre is a particular instance of the larger effort to further a singular naturalized narrative of ‘Canadianness’.

Only one participant commented that they felt something was missing from the Fort Langley presentation. This questionnaire reflected, “No [LTC did not change how I felt about Canadian culture or history], just as imp. [important] to remember first nations - they are more interesting than European pillagers”. I contend that despite the highly positive reflections from the majority of participants, the Voyageur presentation illustrates erasures and exclusions at work in the extension of a singular national narrative. The history of white European settlers is privileged over histories of indigenous people in the recounting of the fur trade in Fort Langley. While the histories and lineages of the Learn to Camp staff and participants are not wholly known, historical narratives of race and ethnicity clash in reality as minority groups perform the role of colonizer and other, alternative narratives, are erased or told through a controlled voice. Indeed, other narratives, accounts and ways of being in parks have largely been blanketed over. It is rare to hear the historical accounts of indigenous, Acadian, and other communities that were violently removed from the land for conservation or development, or to hear accounts of how specific livelihood practices that took place on park lands, such as hunting and fishing, have been banned or continue to be contested (Campbell, 2011).

The ways in which multiculturalism rubs against historical park narratives in Learn to Camp uncover state manoeuvres to nationalize the imagination, bypassing ecological and cultural histories and realities. In Canada, conservation and resource development work hand in hand to mythologize an idea of wilderness. Park spaces thrive on the wilderness myth – the idea that wilderness is stable, pristine and untouched, free from human activity. Mythologizing wilderness spaces as historically void of human activity and having unending ecological wealth fuels a largely white nationalist imagination. These two myths support one another, authenticating a specific vision of the nation’s origins and naturalizing colonial and capitalist conquests that removed (and continue removing) humans and non human actors alike in the name of conservation and/or development. As

Searle asserts, this presentation within parks creates a “deadly mismatch between perception and reality” (Searle, 2000). Presenting conservation as key to Canadian identity (Canadian as good steward), misses the dispossessions and extractivism that make this conservation necessary in the first place.⁵⁸

While these myths and prescriptions come alive through Learn to Camp programming, conversations with park staff did not reveal that they were aware of these implications. In fact, their intentions appear genuine in wanting to provide participants with the best welcome into Canadian parks as possible. Staff commented:

Yea. Food. You know, we just kind of walked into it blind. The first trips were owning quite a bit of it. We provided lots of food and we had, we realised that marshmallows were not cool, that they have, oh what is it called? Gelatin. And then we found out that there is a halal marshmallow available that we could buy. Costs a little bit more money, we had no idea it was available, so with the other trips we bought these halal marshmallows and everything, some other things that were probably common sense. Like roasting sticks that had meat on them can't be used for veggie dogs. You know, you have to have completely separate things. So we were late on that. So all this is happening on the fly, you know. It wasn't something anybody knew going into it.

So when I was speaking to the immigrants, I thought that would be really interesting to know what is their, the preconceived notions these immigrants have of natural areas and parks before they even meet a Caucasian uniformed parks staff person, because as soon as they meet me they are going to start to form ideas about where they are going, about what the park is, and you know. If I walk in and start talking about the rules and that it is a protected area and that there is camping only in specific areas they are going to start connecting it with what they came from. And there is just lots of unseen things.

⁵⁸ While there is resistance to this myth that calls for a richer understanding of park spaces as “conflictual localities, with sites of interaction both historically and currently [with] global, local and different national meanings” (Sandilands, 2000b, p. 141), the pervasive force of the nationalized wilderness myth dulls even these sites of resistance. We see examples of resistance in forms such as recent demonstrations against pipeline development through parks in British Columbia, the co-management of Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and the Stein Valley Nlaka'pamux Heritage Park, and recognition of other indigenous peoples and subjugated ethnic groups through the naming and management of park spaces. Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve, National Marine Conservation Area Reserve, and Haida Heritage Site serve as the first national park to officially recognize management by two nations, Canada and the Haida Nation (Porter-Bopp, 2006; Parks Canada Agency, 2014b).

And when these families come here they are looking for a way to attach and wanting to find it and then, and we kind of slipped in with this camping trip and they saw it as a way to attach to the land and to the country. And, you know, and again, they searched in numbers more so with their kids, because they want them to have those opportunities so.... That they did see it as a way to become Canadian and that it was a way to, you know, I just myself got the sense that these families are going to go back to their jobs and they are going to have something in common to talk to the regular Canadian people who they are working with, something in common finally. You know, "What did you do on the weekend?", "I went camping". And they've got this common thing that wasn't there before. Up until now it is a very, it's not an easy conversation that happens because we take it for granted those of us who grew up here.

We just can't go in there with our way with how we like to eat, or how we like to schedule our day. We have to learn and watch, so they realized that water was really important so that they could make tea and noodles at the end of the day. And, you know, yes they may want to plug in their phones but that might not be possible so we have to address that need, like, "You're going to have to switch off because this is why". And just basic things like, this year I realized they hadn't been told not to put food in their tents. So, I'm like, I've got to change that. That is obvious to me but it is not, you think like a beginner camper as well.

Curious tensions are illuminated within the site of Learn to Camp. The program pushes participants to adopt a particular and limited understanding of 'Canadianess', a brand of identity built from an exclusionary base. Problematically, the performance of 'Canadianness' in turn sustains and perpetuates power structures (capitalist and colonialist, among others) that may cause violence upon the very audience the program is targeting: new Canadians. Yet, field research indicates that Learn to Camp staff and participants have an overwhelmingly positive experience with Learn to Camp, even as cultural tensions surface within the programming.

3.2 Vignette: Campfire activity: Fort Langley Parks Canada Learn to Camp event

Each Learn to Camp event hosts an evening activity that brings the group together around a campfire. At the Parks Canada Learn to Camp Fort Langley event one big fire

is arranged for the group of 100 campers. Following a demonstration on fire building and safety, a fire pit is lit in the middle of an area of packed dirt, contained by an iron cylinder with partial grill top. Most adult and children participants remark that they had been anticipating this activity all day. Park staff reflected in interviews conducted prior to the event that the campfire is what makes camping special; that it is a time for people to share conversation and reflection, unwind, and disconnect from technology and the busy world that surrounds them.

Kids buzz around the pit asking for marshmallows. Park leaders work hard to maintain attention and control over the situation, but struggle to compete with the loud voices and hyper activity of the crowd. Park leaders calm the audience, explaining that it is tradition to sing around the campfire. The group is given copies of a songbook and together they sing a few selections, led by co-op students doing work terms with Parks Canada. Most families cuddle up and gladly take part. Some participants stand up and clap, participating with hand gestures for songs. A few audience members, specifically the elderly, appear confused. It is not apparent whether they understand the activity, if the language in the songbook is at an appropriate level, or if they are interested. Most songs that are chosen are generic; "On top of Spaghetti" rouses the crowd. One song sits strangely with a few leaders. One co-op student staff member leads a German-themed folk song, taught with actions that include a straight-arm salute. Many staff appear uncomfortable with the actions and lyrics, some sitting down and avoiding participation, while participants merrily try their best to sing along, many trying to follow and catch up. The historical reference to a German one-armed salute appears to go by unnoticed as a multicultural sea of participants salute in unison.

Following the singing, chaos ensues. It is time for s'mores. Metal pokers are handed out to any and all children. Kids rush to grab the pokers before park staff announce instructions for marshmallow-roasting. A few staff members struggle to rise above the noise and explain that pokers are to be pointed DOWN unless donned with a marshmallow and then are to be held ABOVE the fire. Many a marshmallow fall to their death in the fire. A few tears start to roll but are quickly saved by the generosity of other

Learn to Campers, passing on golden mallows to replace the fallen soldiers. A few adults try smores for the first time and are revolted: “What is this...”?? “So sweet” and “icky” are commonly heard, while others hungrily lick the sugar off their fingers and go in for a fourth s’more.

Cultural tensions inevitably arise during Learn to Camp events. The performance element of the program pushes participants towards a certain collective national identity: the camper, the environmental steward, the Canadian. The leisuressque-quality of the recreational activities that take place within the parks frames the experience as both timeless and light hearted. In another context, the chorus of campers singing the German folk song may have been questioned or deemed inappropriate. In this instance, participants unquestionably followed suit, raising their hands, and then quickly moving onto the next activity.

Yet, while Learn to Camp steers participants towards a specific ‘Canadian’ trajectory, Learn to Camp acknowledges diversity and pushes for a multicultural experience. *Both* narratives of wilderness and multiculturalism are ever present and at work in the Learn to Camp.

...it seems that multiculturalism and wilderness acknowledge diversity in their moves toward representation and inclusion of difference, but also order and contain this diversity in very particular ways, thereby rushing us past the disruptions of cultural conflict and multiple natures in the present by domesticating these unruly presences as mere particularities (Sandilands, 2000a, p. 4).

Anthropologist Anna Tsing notes how “Cultures are continually co-produced in the interactions I call ‘friction’: the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference” (Tsing, 2005, p. 4). Learn to Camp is laden with instances of friction: the program teaches a specific way to be in Canadian parks, presenting both a narrative and a script for performance that positions park spaces as static and timeless. At the same time the program welcomes participants from different backgrounds, and in this way, encourages park organizations to adapt. Learn to Camp is

an example of this adaption: a program working towards furthering the inclusion of diversity within parks, but in an ordered and particular way that rushes past parks' own exclusionary history(ies) and reality(ies).

4. Enjoying 'Canadianness'

I think from this camping I will know more about the Canadian living style. Relaxing you know. It is not as, maybe our style is something that you go to here and stay in the one place and then go to job and be relaxing and enjoying, no hurry up so much (Learn to Camp participant, personal communication, August 2013).

I think this is a very good opportunity for us to meet with other new immigrants and also try to integrate it in Canadian society because this is sort of run by Canada, right? So Parks Canada you call it. So this is kind of good opportunity here for the new comer, they come together and try to experience something they not usually do back in their home country. Because where we are from they don't really do camping back in the home country, but living in here we feel that it is more leisure and that it is good for our kids to running around in the campsite and just the experiences (Learn to Camp participant, personal communication, August 2013).

The evaluation report conducted on Learn to Camp showcased that participants overwhelmingly *enjoy* the program. Learn to Camp participants culturally and emotionally identify with, and value, nature in Canadian parks in a diversity of ways. Furthermore, participants leave Learn to Camp with a renewed sense of belonging to both the Canadian landscape and to Canadian culture. This is experienced through direct interactions with nature and with other Learn to Camp participants (predominately other new Canadians) and park staff (Sullivan, 2015).⁵⁹

Critical engagement with Learn to Camp reveals that enjoyment can be part of the acculturation process - acculturation into limiting and problematic norms. This tension gives pause for reflection. While a critique of the limiting and dominative nature of Canadian nationalism as it is performed and transmitted in parks is vital, these critiques

⁵⁹ For more see Sullivan (2015).

are analytically and politically limited when they do not account for popular desire. I argue that this tension invites attention within academic discourse.

This analysis provides opportunities for further investigation: how can we explain, and what are the wider implications of this apparent paradox of practices that are exclusionary, yet enjoyable? Indeed, the primary research conducted for this project does not pinpoint or untangle the exact triggers for the enjoyment participants reflected, and certainly enjoyment itself has a slippery and subjective nature. Recognizing enjoyment in the process of critique can help to produce new - and perhaps more desirable - alternatives.

What would it look like to perform ‘Canadianness’ differently: could this be done in a way that realizes Parks’ goals for the program, but also opens up a different, perhaps more inclusive and engaging, Canada? What would a Learn to Camp program that paid heed to colonial histories and diverse cultural and ecological realities look like? Programs such as Brown Canada, a community led project that works to promote diverse South Asian histories in Canada through documentation, creation, and sharing points to future possibilities (Council for Agencies Serving South Asians, 2014). This project works as a site of agency *collecting* and sharing stories of South Asians in Canada in response to exclusions experienced in curriculum, collective memory, and media. Their mission is stated:

Publicly sharing stories, told in our own words, addresses this exclusion and creates more truthful narratives of history that reflect diverse experiences. Archiving stories is powerful in bridging gaps between different communities and ages and in promoting understanding between multiple individuals and groups. It is important to tell our stories of exclusion, activism, community-building, resisting, surviving and growing because these individual stories make up our collective histories (Council for Agencies Serving South Asians, 2014).

Brown Canada’s structure holds powerful potential for a more inclusive Learn to Camp. By reminding ourselves that multiple perspectives make up our realities, could we work

to create more space for other voices, historical and present day accounts of park experiences, within popular programs like Learn to Camp? Space to maintain the joyful aspects that make the programs desirable, and space for more liberatory and inclusive ways for welcoming new Canadians?

Lastly I ask, what wider implications might this pose to progressive movements who seek to point out these exclusions, yet also seek to engage and attract people? Solely focusing on the problematic aspects of Learn to Camp is likely to alienate participants and, in effect, inaccurately recount the program experience. Dismissing the enjoyment often integral to problematic practices can limit reach and influence. Noting participant enjoyment can help curtail strident dogmatism and make not only Learn to Camp - but also progressive social movements - more attractive and desirable sites for diverse participation.

Learn to Camp is a problematic program; it reinforces a national narrative of wilderness identity as 'Canadian', consequently encouraging new Canadians to adopt a limited way of understanding and participating in Canadian parks. This narrative lacks attentiveness to Canadian colonial histories and diverse cultural realities. Yet, the program is also beneficial for participants, and perhaps nature, cultivating new environmental stewards and fostering sentiments of belonging and comfort. Fieldwork demonstrated that participants in the program, primarily new Canadians, appeared to enjoy the type of acculturation that Learn to Camp provides. Cultural studies of nature scholarship offers Learn to Camp a powerful and important critique, but does not account for the difficulties of actualizing those critiques in the present. Of particular relevance to broader audiences, the overwhelmingly positive feedback from Learn to Camp participants points towards a lack of inclusive, accessible integration services and programs in Canada. Further research into enjoyment in acculturating practices, such as in Learn to Camp, can help shape future possibilities that adhere to this desire while remaining inclusive and engaging for all audiences.

Before I come here I think camping is nothing. See, this is just like my backyard! Why do I do it and BBQ in the backyard! I can make a tent in my backyard and do it the same way, why do I have to travel so far away? But when I came here something different because I know the other members of the course and we know each other and we are helping each other and talk with them (Learn to Camp participant, personal communication, August 2013).

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Chapter 4

Conclusions

The questions that inspired this research have continued to circle around my head during the process of conducting fieldwork, developing this analysis, and completing the writing of this dissertation. *How is wilderness tied to Canadian identity? My own identity? How do new Canadians feel about National Parks? What about when they are in park spaces themselves?* And after all this has been ‘said and done’ or, more accurately - researched and analyzed – they are questions I am still figuring out. Since I began describing this research to my advisor, colleagues, interview participants, and family and friends more broadly, their reactions have echoed similar sentiments. “Camping? That sounds fun!” Perhaps it is unsurprising for others to hear that Learn to Camp is met with such a high degree of enjoyment from participants, but it did surprise me. Spending the first year of my degree entrenched in critical academic literatures, I expected to find more moments of tension, anxiety, and frustration as diverse cultures and histories came together at Learn to Camp events. And while I did see the theories I studied at play during the events, my experience participating in Learn to Camp alongside others *was* very enjoyable. I was the only participant at both Learn to Camp events who attended the program solo. And although I was introduced as having a specific role as a researcher from the University of Victoria, it did seem odd to be on my own when all others were clustered together with family and friends. I did not anticipate, or expect, the warmth with which I was welcomed to join and be a part of families and friends during the events. I was invited to share morning tea and breakfast with a family from Iran at Fort Langley. A young girl adopted me as her marshmallow roasting guardian by the campfire and we became best friends for the next 12 hours. In Darlington, two kind Chinese women helped me to set up my tent, tucked me in at night, and sent me home with a week’s supply of green tea and cakes. I caught my first sunfish with the help of an eight year old Brazilian boy who was the champion fisher in the bunch. These moments stuck with me as I transcribed interviews, reviewed questionnaires and field notes, and re-visited the texts that informed this work. While I cannot claim to know beyond what was reflected to me during

fieldwork *how* Learn to Camp feels for new Canadians, I can say that *being a part of the experience*, even with a critical lens, did feel good.

Through the Learn to Camp program, I sought to explore these perspectives, and to consider the experiences of new Canadian in park spaces. To find out how new Canadians experienced the Learn to Camp program, and Canadian parks more broadly, I drew on primary research and theoretical scholarship from cultural studies of nature. Firstly, I evaluated the Learn to Camp program against their own set objectives. Doing so provided a grounded understanding of the program from both the perspective of Parks and from participants themselves. Secondly, I drew upon critical literatures to investigate if ‘Canadianness’ was being reproduced /performed in the program, and to consider the wider implications of this. My thesis uncovered an apparent paradox: within the exclusionary history of ‘wilderness’ landscapes, problematic acculturation occurs in Learn to Camp. Yet, at the same time, the research demonstrates that Learn to Camp remains enjoyable, and helpful, for participants as it cultivates an appreciation for park spaces and creates sentiments of comfort and belonging. My thesis works systematically through immediate and short term program outcomes in order to tease out this paradox. It examines opportunities to welcome diverse populations into park spaces and better Learn to Camp offerings, while taking seriously the problematic underpinnings of the Learn to Camp project. The first part of this final chapter reviews the main conclusions of this project by chapter. The latter section reflects upon future directions for this research and possibilities for alternative approaches to wilderness- based integration programming.

Chapter two of this thesis is structured as a Learn to Camp evaluation report, positioned for practitioners. This chapter provides a detailed description of Learn to Camp and the primary research conducted for this project. My primary research findings indicate that the program is making positive strides toward educating new Canadians on camping practices and towards cultivating new stewards for the Canadian parks. Learn to Camp participants reported feeling empowered, desired to return to Canadian parks, and expressed feeling culturally and emotionally connected to Canadian parks through camping. They expressed value for spending time outdoors, for conservation, and the

Canadian park system itself. I discussed the ways in which Learn to Camp is currently meeting their set objectives.

In addition, I provided five key recommendations to further strengthen the LTC program that emerged from the research. They include: 1) Increasing the capacity for partnerships in program management, 2) Expanding the LTC program to include opportunities for future contact and further engagement, 3) Reducing barriers for participation: cost, transportation, and access to camping gear, 4) Training park interpreters to work with English as an Additional Language (EAL) and cross cultural audiences, and 5) Increase staff hiring from diverse backgrounds. Based on this analysis, I conclude that Learn to Camp is meeting both organizational and participant expectations in terms of providing participants with the skills and knowledge necessary to feel prepared and confident in park spaces. Beyond meeting program objectives, this analysis demonstrates that social bonding and attachment to landscape are central to participants' enjoyment of the Learn to Camp experience, and that these sentiments motivate their desire to return to Canadian parks.

Chapter three analyzes key primary research findings under the framing of critical studies of nature literature. Participants described their Learn to Camp experiences - learning to set up tents, cooking over a camp stove, sitting around campfires while learning about 'Canadian' history - as enjoyable, providing them a sense of belonging and feeling 'Canadian'. Indeed, it became clear that Learn to Camp addresses an oft overlooked and underemphasized aspect of immigrant integration: a desire to access and feel competent in non-urban environments. Examining Learn to Camp through this critical framework, however, reveals that Learn to Camp promotes a very particular kind of 'Canadian' identity. This particular nationalist identity, I argue, is embedded within a history of colonial erasures, and an extractivist/capitalist economic agenda. By invoking a performative analysis, I demonstrate how Learn to Camp programming rehearses and perpetuates this problematic identity by presenting limited ways of being in and knowing park spaces. However, dismissing the Learn to Camp program based on this critique does not fully reflect the experiences of the participants for whom the critique is directed. I

argue that attention needs to be paid to the enjoyment expressed by Learn to Camp participants, and beyond that, the enjoyment of particular acculturating practices.

The analytical puzzle presented in Learn to Camp – enjoyment of particular acculturating practices – presents exciting opportunities for further research. I ask, how can we explain, and what are the wider implications of this apparent paradox of enjoyment of practices that are exclusionary? What would it look like to perform "Canadianness" differently: could this be done in a way that realizes Parks' goals for the program, but also opens up a different, perhaps more inclusive and engaging, Canada? And thirdly, what wider implications might this pose to progressive movements who seek to point out these exclusions, yet also seek to engage and attract people? Enjoyment attracts participation, as is demonstrated by demand for the Learn to Camp program. Thus, untangling the enjoyment reflected by Learn to Camp participants can help shape future possibilities that adhere to this desire while accounting for problematic foundations found in/concealed by acculturating practices.

Ultimately, this thesis sought to unpack the wider implications embedded in Learn to Camp. The dual framing I have crafted is not common for a Master's thesis; providing both an evaluation report aimed at practitioners, and offering a theoretical analysis positioned for academics. My hope is that that this thesis will address the challenge of operating between critical theory and program delivery, allowing critical conversation to produce beneficial results on the ground without overlooking the effects of an unquestioned and unexamined association of, in this case, a particular Canadian identity. There are limitations to this framing: either piece read alone presents a very different, and somewhat conflictual, perspective on Learn to Camp. However, read together, the work positions the reader to place themselves in the shoes of both practitioner and theorist: challenging practitioners to both *account for* and *look beyond* set program objectives, engaging in critical conversations that account for historical and contemporary relations of power and domination, and pushing academics to question how theories can be actualized on the ground.

Appendix

Appendix A

Interview Questions

Learn to Camp Participant Questions


1. Can you please tell me your name, a bit of your background, who are you here with/who you participated in Learn To Camp with?
2. What brought you to the Learn to Camp event? How did you find out about Learn to Camp?
 - a. Why did you sign up for this program? What did you hope to get out of it/take away from it?
3. Can you please describe your experience with the Learn to Camp program to date? Is it what you had expected? If not, what has differed?
4. Have you had any previous experiences in Canadian Parks? Parks Canada/Ontario Parks the organization?
 - a. What is your experience with MEC? What about other cooperatives in Canada?
 - b. What other activities do you do, or have you participated in, that involves getting out in nature prior to this event? In your day to day life? Special activities? Have you spent much time in Canada's natural landscapes?
5. Do you think you will return to a National or Provincial Park, or National Historic Site? Why/why not?
 - a. Past participants: Have you returned to a National or Provincial Park, or National Historic Site? If so, please describe.
 - b. Past participants: Has your feelings about the program changed since immediately participated, now that two years has passed?
6. What has been the most impactful or important thing that has happened to you during this event? What will you take away/what has been the biggest take away for you?
7. What recommendations do you have for the program?
12. Does this program change how you feel about Canadian culture or history?

Park, MEC & Coleman Staff Questions

1. Can you please tell me your name, your title and role, a bit of your background, and how you became involved with Learn to Camp?
2. Please describe how Learn to Camp came into being.
 - a. Are you aware of any literature, theory or other program models that motivated or influenced the creation of this program?
 - b. What were the initial objectives for the program? Have they changed? If so, how?
 - c. What outcomes have you observed from Learn to Camp to date?
 - d. Where do you see the future of Learn to Camp heading?
3. MEC is a co-operative. Is this important for the Learn to Camp program? Why/why not?
4. What observations have you had of new immigrants in Parks outside of the Learn to Camp program?
5. Is the program impacting/not impacting Parks' operations? If so, how?
 - a. What do you see as the biggest opportunity or benefit coming out of this program?
 - b. What do you see as the biggest challenge coming out of this program?
6. Does Learn to Camp educate participants about Canada? Canadian culture? If so, please describe how.

Appendix B

Questionnaire


 parkscanada.gc.ca
 parcscanada.gc.ca

Learn-to Camp Program

Thank you for participating. Please complete this feedback card, as it provides us valuable information on the program and what we can do to improve it for the future.

Participation is voluntary.

Which age group best describes you?

17 to 24 35 to 44 55 to 64
 25 to 34 45 to 54 65 or older

How many people (including yourself) are with you at Learn-to Camp?


1 2 3 4 5 6 7 or more

Which of the following best describes with whom you are camping? Shade all that apply.

By myself With my immediate family
 With friends With my spouse/partner
 With extended family Other

Why did you want to learn how to camp?

Curious – wanted to see what it is all about
 I heard it is a fun way to spend time with friends/family
 It is a Canadian tradition
 Other: _____

 53216

Thank-you. Please return this card to any one of our friendly staff members.

Staff use only

How would you rate your overall camping experience this weekend?


Very enjoyable Not at all enjoyable

How much do you agree or disagree with the following:

	Totally agree			Totally disagree	
	5	4	3	2	1
This program gave me the confidence to camp on my own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Thanks to this experience, I am going to try camping again	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The program increased my interest in learning more about Canada's national parks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What did you enjoy the most this weekend?

Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this program?

 13000

Postal Code:

Staff use only

Additional questions added for this research project:

Participants were given a large text box for the response to each question.

1. How did you find out about Learn to Camp?
2. How would you describe your understanding of the Learn to Camp program before you arrived?
3. Were your expectations met? If not, what was different?
4. Have you had any prior experience with Canadian Parks before this event? If so, please describe.
5. What other activities do you, or have you participated in?

Appendix C

The Co-operative Element

The co-operative dimension of the Parks Canada and Mountain Equipment Co-op Learn to Camp partnership is a sub research topic for this project. Research findings conclude that this is an area that receives little to no limelight within the Learn to Camp program. Neither Parks, MEC, nor participants expressed interest in making this element more visible within programming. In Canada co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity (British Columbia Co-operative Association, 2014).⁶⁰

Canadian co-operatives commit to seven principles to guide their practice, the seventh being concern for community (British Columbia Co-operative Association, 2014). Both the Canadian co-op movement and Canadian Parks face a new demographic of Canadians with which to engage. Both these entities can benefit from better integrating new immigrants into their work force, programming, and objectives. For the majority of Learn to Camp participants, the event served as their first exposure to MEC. When asked during interviews if they were aware that MEC was a co-operative, most responded negatively. Few had visited the store before, and only one participant was aware that they were a co-operative. The majority of participants had little to no knowledge of co-operatives in Canada, and none showed any further interest of learning more about the subject area when it was brought up in conversation. Both Parks and MEC commented that although the co-operative values certainly align with aspects of Learn to Camp's program objectives, that the Parks and MEC's shared mission to engage communities in outdoor activities serves as the primary driver and linkage for the program. Certainly MEC hopes to increase membership and brand visibility through the program (which happens to be done through co-operative membership), but that is no different than Parks' aspirations to increase visitation numbers. A Parks Canada staff member commented:

⁶⁰ In Canada co-operatives follow the International Cooperative Alliance statement of the cooperative identity.

I didn't get that feeling; a lot of them didn't really understand anything about camping let alone that there are an outdoor store that is in fact a cooperative. So in terms of participant knowledge and feelings about whether it is a co-operative or not – I don't think it matters. But in terms of the Mountain Equipment Co-op's philosophy and mandate and respect for the environment and about the wonderful educational programs and things that they do, and safety first, and take only pictures leave only footprints sort of attitude, it certainly fits with it all, Parks Canada's messaging.

Initially, a research question I was interested in was looking at what shared lessons Parks and co-operatives could gain from Learn to Camp. However, interviews revealed that the co-operative dimension of the program was not a priority for MEC nor Parks. It was not stressed to participants and was not a subject that drew any further interest.

References

British Columbia Co-operative Association. (2014). *Co-op Principles. British Columbia Co-operative Association: Building a Co-operative Economy*. Retrieved January 12, 2013, from <http://bcca.coop/content/principles>

Appendix D

Human Research Ethics Board Approval



Human Research Ethics Board
 Office of Research Services
 Administrative Services Building
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 Victoria British Columbia V8W 2Y2 Canada
 Tel 250-472-4545, Fax 250-721-8960
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Certificate of Renewed Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Megan Sullivan	ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER 13-212 <small>Minimal Risk - Delegated</small>
UVic STATUS: Master's Student	ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE: 13-Jun-13
UVic DEPARTMENT: ENVI	RENEWED ON: 13-Jun-14
SUPERVISOR: Dr. James Rowe	APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE: 12-Jun-15
PROJECT TITLE: What we can learn from Learn to Camp? Assessing immigrant integration in Canadian Parks	
RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS: None	
DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING: Centre for Co-operative and Community Based Economy Fellowship (2013); Norm Bromberg Research Bursary (2013); UVic Fellowship (2013)	
CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL	
<p>This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol.</p> <p>Modifications To make any changes to the approved research procedures in your study, please submit a "Request for Modification" form. You must receive ethics approval before proceeding with your modified protocol.</p> <p>Renewals Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed reminder prompting you to renew your protocol about six weeks before your expiry date.</p> <p>Project Closures When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Human Research Ethics Board by submitting a "Notice of Project Completion" form.</p>	
Certification	
<p>This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____ Dr. Rachael Scarth Associate Vice-President Research Operations</p>	

13-212 Sullivan, Megan

Certificate Issued On: 13-Jun-14