

Camp Northland

Jewish Camp Council of Toronto

Strategic Plan 2022

Proposal for the Board of Directors

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Strategic Planning Overview

In September 2021, the Board of Camp Northland / Jewish Camp Council of Toronto initiated a Strategic Planning process driven by a Strategy Committee to help guide and unite staff, board members, and other stakeholders on the priorities and direction of the organization.

The Strategy Committee was tasked with several key questions:

1. Establish a clear direction around the 3–5 year objectives of the organization
2. Ensure that the Vision and Mission statements for Camp Northland align with the Strategic Plan
3. Create a concise, compelling, and realistic set of strategies to focus the entire organization
4. Provide high level guidance to professional staff to ensure alignment of operations and strategies
5. Review the challenges and risks that need to be monitored, prioritized, and mitigated
6. Develop clarity around the key metrics (success criteria) that we want to achieve
7. Identify and align investments, capabilities, or resources required

A committee of 6-8 Board members was established and met over the course of ten weekly workshops to develop this Strategic Plan. The committee also coordinated a series of parent focus groups and engaged several key stakeholders for input and perspective.

As part of the strategic planning process the committee spent significant time reviewing our extensive history and how that helps define Camp Northland today, and how it guides our future aspirations and planning. The committee developed a high-level SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis to determine those areas where we need to improve in order to build our Camp capabilities for the future.

Associated with the SWOT analysis was an identification of the potential risks that the Camp faces in meeting its short and long term strategic and operational objectives.

This executive summary describes the **seven core strategies** that the committee recommends for go-forward focus. Behind each strategy is a set of initiatives that define how the strategies will get executed (what priority, timing, resource requirements).

The draft initiatives and other background materials are contained in a separate document that will be the focus of attention in the coming months once the core strategies are approved by the Board.

Camp Northland - Camp Community Definition and Values

Camp Northland seeks to continue to provide the broader Jewish community across the GTA a “best-in-class” summer camping experience by bringing the following values to everyday camp life.

What sets Camp Northland Apart? - A Unique Jewish Community Camp

Camp Northland's history helps to define who we are and why we are different from other Jewish camps and other private camps in Ontario. Camp Northland's raison d'etre was and continues to be **A Jewish Community camp**. It is unique because Camp Northland is the only broad based Jewish Community camp that is both located in Ontario and serving the Jewish Community in Ontario. It is also the largest Jewish camp in the province.

What defines Northland as a Jewish Community camp is that it is non-affiliated with any Jewish religious or secular movement. Similarly, it is not connected with any political ideology or youth movement. There is only one simple overarching goal: It is focused on connecting campers, staff and families from all sectors of our Jewish community with a broad and meaningful Jewish summer camp experience in a tolerant, inclusive, safe, meaningful and joyful environment.

Camp Northland seeks to continue to provide the broad Jewish Community across the GTA a “best-in-class” summer camping experience by bringing the following three sets of values to everyday camp life, and to our interactions with stakeholders throughout the year.

- A “**Community Camp**” **environment** that is continuing to work towards becoming increasingly broadly inclusive and diverse in terms of gender, sexuality, physical abilities, mental health, colour, socio-economic status, perspectives and levels of observance on Judaism, etc. to campers, families and staff.

Our community camp environment is dedicated to providing a safe space that is accepting, open-minded, caring and supportive of everyone in our camp environment.

- An exposure to and appreciation of **broad based Jewish values and identity**:

Jewish Values: Safety, pluralism, valuable life skills, Jewish identity building, family & community (and the subsets of each of these values as outlined in our mission and vision statement including, physical, mental, and emotional well-being, tikkun olam, tzedakah, connectivity to Israel, respect for individuality and choice, gratitude and kindness, shalom bayit, etc.)

- **Excellent programming and facilities** that promote individual self-actualization, team membership, and leadership skills and friendships each summer that ideally last a lifetime.

This includes a strong appreciation for nature, the outdoors, and our broader environment.

Note that these values need to be merged with our current set of values to add further clarity to our identity

The “Givens” that anchor our identity and strategies

The Strategic Plan is anchored by several broad “givens” or commitments that inform the breadth and nature of the strategies proposed:

- Camp Northland is a not-for-profit summer camp serving the broader GTA Jewish community by providing the best possible value, while investing financial surpluses for both short and long term improvements, while maintaining programmatic diversity and effective overall competitiveness within the camping landscape.
- Camp Northland is committed to Jewish identity and values
- Camp Northland is located on Moose Lake, in Haliburton - its home for the past 75+ years - moving is not a realistic option to consider
- The JCC (Jewish Camp Council) aspires to continually grow in terms of values, quality, impact and relevance to our stakeholders.

From the outset it was recognized that the Strategic Plan 2022 is a process. It is meant to be a roadmap that provides the Board and the Professional staff a common understanding and to lay the groundwork for a strong, vibrant, and uniquely relevant Jewish Community camp in 5, 25, and 50 years.

Seven Key Strategies for Camp Northland 2022-2027

After intensive discussion and deliberation, the Strategic Committee identified the following strategies to guide Camp Northland's current and future operations and investment plans.

The strategies were created with active input from the Executive Director and professional staff and it is this professional group under the Executive Director's leadership that would be responsible to drive execution of the strategies, with support from the Board in key areas.

1. **Grow our engagement with our community's Jewish children** to inspire young generations to embrace Jewish life and to ensure a Jewish future. This will include seeking ways to utilize our summer camp capacity effectively without compromising the experience and quality we want to deliver to our campers and staff.
2. **Invest in required infrastructure and operations** at the Moose Lake property to deliver the best possible camping experience for both current and future needs. This includes topics such as camper and staff cabin updates and capacity, food service, health centre, and master planning.
3. **Create and drive a superior staff experience** that makes Camp Northland the best camp for teens and young adults, as well as our year-round professional staff, to work at. This will be accomplished through training, support, investment, and application of learned leadership skills.
4. **Explore and evaluate new Jewish Camp Council opportunities** through renewed relationships with community stakeholders and partners
5. **Develop fundraising capabilities** to raise at least a **\$5 million** capital investment (over a 5-year period) to be able to begin to build our "camp of the future" by year 5 of this plan.
6. **Improve programming capabilities across our staff** and increase programmatic creativity at the cabin level staff. Similarly, specialty staff will be trained and empowered to increase levels of creative and dynamic programming, milestone achievements to be recognized, and key notable progressions in the various specialty areas.
7. **Increase capacity to support camper and staff mental health** by taking proactive steps to nurture mental, emotional, social, & spiritual health at camp and for our camp community throughout the year.

Strategic Risks

As we embrace the upcoming 2022 camping season, Camp Northland has much to celebrate. The 2021 camp season was remarkable in spite of the pandemic. The campers and staff, by all accounts, had a memorable and fulfilling season. Northland is in the enviable position having a very strong reputation across stakeholders. We now have the flexibility and luxury to plan a future that can position Camp for the next 50+ years. However, in spite of our current position the Camp is not without risks.

In this final section we identify eight major risks that we see as critical to the future success of camp.

1. While we have solid professional leadership, the depth and breadth of our full-time staff might not be sufficient to execute the strategies. **More bench strength may be required.**
2. We have a significant amount of responsibility and workload on the roles of our Executive Director and our Camp Director, and while **these are both full time roles** if the strategies are pursued, both positions are currently held by one person.
3. **The financial viability of camp operations must remain a key priority.** The initial financial model created by the finance committee shows high sensitivity to various revenue and efficiency scenarios. Camp has an aged and aging infrastructure that needs to be addressed in order to meet current and future needs and opportunities.
4. **We do not currently have capacity and/or capability to raise additional major donations** to get us close to our \$5 million goal over the next 5 years. Without significantly improving the fundraising capabilities to achieve additional major donations (>\$50,000) the Camp will be hard pressed to meet its fundraising goals in support of the identified capital and programme needs.
5. **The health, safety, and legal environment remain significantly risky**, especially during dynamic times such as the current pandemic. Ensuring we have the right physical and human resources in place is essential to mitigate these and future risks.
6. **Losing the essence of our historical commitment and roots to serving the needs of underprivileged Jewish children provides potential reputational and legal risk.**
7. **The ability to hire and retain quality seasonal staff** (at all levels of camp operations) is a current and long term problem and presents significant risks in the ability of the camp to provide a safe environment, dynamic programming, food services, and medical facilities and supporting services. This is a particular concern across different camp sectors; i.e. mental health of our campers and staff, staff retention due to competing educational and financial drivers, etc.
8. **Catering is becoming an increasingly precarious service to outsource.** There are fewer options available for Northland and other Jewish camps to choose from. This is a potential existential risk.

Readers are encouraged to read the appendix to this document that provides deeper background and context for these recommendations