

# Campfires, Canoes and Colour: Racial Narratives and Representations at Overnight Summer Camps

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2024

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Overnight summer camps are a vital part of Ontario's historical and contemporary outdoor recreational landscape. While summer camps offer fun recreational programming for youth to experience the outdoors, private overnight summer camps remain predominantly white, upper-class environments with a deep history of racial discrimination, cultural appropriation, and perpetuation of gender stereotypes. Existing literature has addressed barriers to outdoor access and cultural appropriation in outdoor recreation, yet there remains an unexplored gap in understanding the lived experiences of navigating racialized dynamics within summer camp settings. As such, this research aims to investigate how overnight summer camps in rural Ontario are racially constructed. By conducting a thematic analysis of overnight summer camp pictorial content and employing autoethnographic research to examine my experiences as a camper and staff at an overnight summer camp, this thesis reveals the complexities of representation, othering, and belonging within the context of overnight summer camps in rural Ontario.

**Key Words:** summer camp, race, outdoor recreation, representation, community



*Photo: Dining Hall at overnight summer camp in rural Ontario*