



CAMPER HANDBOOK 2026

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We respectfully acknowledge that our camp site is located on the traditional territory of the Michi Saagiig, the Mississauga, and the Anishinaabeg (Curve Lake First Nations).

Summer camps in Ontario have long based much of their program on Indigenous practices and traditions. Often this was done without the recognition or appreciation of Indigenous communities and further perpetuated harmful stereotypes. It is important that we acknowledge and appreciate that currently we have many programming pieces at Onondaga Camp that are based on Indigenous practices, traditions, and technologies.

“Onondaga,” comes from one of the original nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Onondaga Camp got its name because it was originally located on Lake Erie, near Port Credit, which is a traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee. The camp moved to its current location on Middle Bob Lake in 1930 and kept the name Onondaga Camp.

As an organization, Onondaga Camp is committed to deepening our understanding and acknowledge our responsibility to reconciliation.

CAMPER HANDBOOK

We are so excited for you to be joining us at Onondaga Camp this summer! Whether you are a new or a returning camper, this handbook will help answer questions you have about camp. Please take some time to read this booklet to help you prepare for an amazing summer!

WHY GO TO CAMP?

Onondaga Camp's mission is to provide an inclusive environment where young people can play, explore, achieve and grow. Camp is a place where everyone should feel welcomed and celebrated for who they are.

Camp was built for you. For over 100 years, Onondaga Camp has given campers like you the opportunity to get away from your everyday life and to try new and exciting activities, all while learning new skills and making friends. Onondaga Camp is a safe environment for you to challenge yourself, to meet new people, and to try everything there is to offer. This is your chance to 'unplug' from city life and immerse yourself into camp life. Our staff are what makes Onondaga Camp so special. They are going to ensure you have an experience that will last a lifetime!

WHAT SECTION WILL I BE IN AND WHO WILL BE MY COUNSELLOR?

You will be placed into a section during your stay at camp. Sections are based on your year of birth and gender identity. Each section has between 30 to 50 campers in it.

JINCIS Ages 6 to 10 (if you were born between 2016 to 2020)

BANTAMS Ages 11 & 12 (if you were born in 2014 or 2015)

INTERS Age 13 (if you were born in 2013)

SENIORS Age 14 (if you were born in 2012)

SUPER SENIORS Age 15 (if you were born in 2011)

There are generally two counsellors for campers living in cabins and one for campers living in tents. Your counsellors are there to help you with anything you need. They will wake you up in the morning, eat meals with you, hang out with you during free time and be there at night when you are going to bed. They are ALWAYS there for you, whenever you need to talk, play or just want to hang out. You can go to your counsellor for whatever you need.

Most of our counsellors have grown up at Onondaga Camp and have been through our Leader-in-Training (LIT) program. We also have several staff from other countries around the world. No matter whether our staff are

new or returning, they are all caring individuals who are there to make sure you have a fun-filled time at camp.

Each section will have a Section Head who will be responsible for all of the campers and staff in the section.



WHERE WILL I LIVE?

THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS LIVE IN CABINS

Jincis, Bantams, and SOME Inters

Cabins are large and spacious and have shelving for every camper. Most cabins have 4 bunk beds in them (8 campers) and some have 5 bunk beds (10 campers). Cabins have storage shelves for each camper and drawers under each bunk. All cabins have electricity, a washroom and sink. Your two counsellors will sleep in the cabin with you. They will have a room right next door to yours, so they are close by if you need them!

THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS LIVE IN TENTS

SOME Inters, Seniors, and Super Seniors

Tents have 6 campers in them and include built-in bunks and storage. Your counsellor does not sleep in your tent with you but they live in a staff tent or cabin nearby. Your Section Head also lives very close by. There are many benefits to living in a tent. Not only are you right on the waterfront, you are also right in the heart of camp and close to all of the activities.

CABIN



TENT



WHO WILL BE IN MY TENT/CABIN?

Onondaga Camp welcomes campers and staff of all gender identities and expressions. We offer two options for accommodations, boys' cabins and girls' cabins. Your cabin or tent will be made up of campers close to your own age. You might have a camper from another country in your tent or cabin. It is always a ton of fun to get to know someone from a different country and background! You may request a cabin mate for your time at camp. Although we are not able to guarantee requests, we will do our absolute best to put you with who you would like to be with. Cabin mate requests must be given to the camp office by June 1, 2026. When we are making the cabin groups we look at campers' requests, the length of their stay, age, who is a first time camper and who is returning. We work very hard to make sure that your cabin group will have a fun and diverse group of campers where everyone will feel included.

Onondaga Camp uses a Bunk Lottery system to assign campers to the beds in each cabin/tent. We use the Bunk Lottery in order to make choosing a bed fair for all campers since not everyone arrives at camp at the same time (some campers fly long distances and arrive late in the evening). When you arrive at camp, no matter the time, you will pick a number from a "hat" which will determine which bed will be yours during your stay.

DO I NEED TO COME TO CAMP WITH A FRIEND?

Definitely not! While at camp you will have the opportunity to meet new people from your cabin, your section and the rest of camp. Your counsellors and Section Head will be there to support you and to make sure that you are making connections with as many new people as possible. All we ask is that you come to camp with a positive attitude and are open to meeting new people.

Onondaga Camp is a very inclusive place. We want everyone to feel like they belong and have a place in the Onondaga Camp family.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I MISS HOME?

Do not worry - this is a totally normal feeling! You are brave to be leaving home and going on an adventure like this. Typically, the times that you will miss home the most are times when you are not active, such as rest hour and bed time. Generally it will only last a day or so, and your counsellor is always there to support you.

If you are worried about missing home, make sure you bring lots of books and games to keep yourself busy during those down times. Your counsellors are going to work hard to introduce you to friends and to make sure you're always doing something, so that your chances of missing home are minimized. Remember, missing home happens to lots of campers when they go to camp. The key is staying busy!

LAUNDRY

If you are at camp for two weeks you will have laundry done once in the middle of the session. If you are at camp for four weeks, you will have your laundry done three times during your stay. Your tent/cabin will have laundry bags to share and you will take your laundry to Brockwell Lodge (one of our big buildings). Your laundry will be washed and folded overnight and will be back for you to pick up the next afternoon!

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CAMPER

YOUR DAILY SCHEDULE

- 7:45 The morning bell will ring for wake up. You will then walk with your tent/cabin and counsellor over to the Dining Hall for breakfast.
- 8:00 Breakfast. There will be morning announcements at the end of the meal. If you have signed up for activities (Bantams, Inters, Seniors and Super Seniors), you will be able to check what activities you have that morning on the kiosk just outside of the Dining Hall.
- 8:45 Clean-up! Time to go back to your tent/cabin and clean. This is also the time for you to get ready for your morning. Make sure you put on your sunscreen and hat!
- 9:15 First bell rings~time to start walking to your first activity.
- 9:25 Second bell rings~start of your first activity.
- 10:30 Second activity.
- 11:35 Third activity.
- 12:30 Third activity ends~Free time and time to change for lunch.
- 12:45 Lunch time.
- 1:30 Rest hour begins~Go back to your tent/cabin to rest up for the afternoon! You can write a letter home, read, or play cards with your friends in the cabin.
- 2:30 First bell rings~Time to head to your first activity of the afternoon, fourth period.
- 2:40 Second bell rings~Start of fourth activity.
- 3:45 Fifth activity.
- 4:40 Free time~Head back to your cabin/tent to meet your counsellor. During this time, you will hang out with your cabin/tent group and decide what you want to do for free time. You could go to main swim, participate in a tournament, an activity, or take some time to have a shower. It's up to you!
- 6:00 Dinner time.
- 7:00 Sectional meeting and evening program! Evening programs are mainly games played with your section. However, sometimes we have campfires, talent shows, or camp-wide games that we do all together as a camp.
- 9:00 Jinci bedtime.
- 9:15 Bantam bedtime.
- 9:30 Inter bedtime.
- 10:00 Senior and Super Senior bedtime.

WHAT ARE THE WASHROOM FACILITIES LIKE?

Every camper cabin has a bathroom and a sink. For campers living in tents, there are shower houses located just behind the tent line. The shower houses have been updated to include modern amenities, including individual shower stalls and toilets. There are also washrooms at the dining hall and beside the Arts and Crafts building. All-gender washrooms can be found on both sides of camp as well as at the Dining Hall.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT ON MY FIRST DAY AT CAMP?

You will be arriving at camp between 1pm and 4pm on your first day. About half of campers will drive to camp with their family or friends and the other half will come up on the bus.

IF YOU ARE DRIVING

When you first get to camp you will be greeted at the gate by the Directors and the Leadership Team. You will then be told what cabin or tent you will be living in and you will be able to drive right there. At the cabin/tent, you will meet your Section Head, counsellor and other campers that have already arrived. You will then have a chance to unpack and settle into your bunk, and your counsellor will start an activity so you can start getting to know the campers in your cabin.

IF YOU ARE ON THE BUS

You will arrive around 4:30pm at the Middle Ball Park (a field in the middle of camp). You will come off the bus and meet your Section Head and they will take you to your counsellor. Your cabin/tent mates will help you bring your luggage to your tent/cabin. After everyone is settled in, your tent/cabin group will head to the Dining Hall for your first meal together (we always have spaghetti on the first night of camp!).

There are several things that we have to get done on the first night. As a section you will do four things:

1. Have a lice check.
2. Complete a swim test.
3. Play games with your section to help you meet the other campers and the counsellors who you will be spending the session with.
4. Review camper expectations with Duncan, our Camp Director.
5. Tour the camp.

After all of this is done, it is time to head to your cabin/tent where you will chat with your cabin/tent mates and counsellor to get to know them better. You will also have a snack before bed. The first day goes by really quickly because we have so much to do!

IS EVERY DAY THE SAME?

The daily schedule on page 6 is an outline for most days at Onondaga Camp. However, there are always different things happening at camp! During the evening we do all types of activities, variety nights, talent shows, and all-camp themed programs. Every Sunday is different too – not only do we get to have chocolate croissants in the morning, we meet at West Point for Summit (a morning of skits & songs) and have a fun afternoon of activities!

Each session we also have the Onondaga Camp Games where our four camp teams compete. You will participate in Olympic-style events for the day with extra points for cheering and team spirit. You will be on the same team each year and will find out your team at camp.

DO WE HAVE CAMPFIRES AT CAMP?

The entire camp meets together for a campfire at the end of each session. This is a great chance for you to get up and lead the camp in a song, skit or cheer, or to just sit back and listen. Campfires are a great chance for everyone at Onondaga Camp to come together. You will also have a campfire with your section during your stay at camp. This is an opportunity to hang out with your new friends and enjoy some s'mores!

HOW DO I KNOW WHAT ACTIVITIES I WILL BE GOING TO?

If you are in the Jinci section, you will visit activities on a rotation schedule. You will go to three activities in the morning and two in the afternoon, (if you are in a 2- or 4-week session one of your activities will be a swimming lesson each day) accompanied by your cabin group and an LIT or counsellor. This makes sure that you visit every activity at least twice during your two week stay at camp, and at least four times during your month long stay. Your rotation schedule will be pinned up in your cabin so you will always know what activity you will be going to. There are a few activities that you must be age 11 or older to do: Giant Swing, Challenge Course, Crossbow, and Mountain Biking. You will be able to look forward to these activities when you become a Bantam!

If you are a Bantam, Inter, Senior or Super Senior, you will sign up for your activities on a daily basis. Sign-up is done at breakfast and dinner each day for the following day's activities. The sign-up binders are rotated through the sections to allow equal opportunity for activity sign up. You can find the activities you have signed up for posted on the kiosks around camp. You will go to activities with campers from all of these sections. It is a great way for you to meet different campers every day!

TUCK SHOP

The Onondaga Camp Tuck Shop has everything you need! It sells Onondaga Camp clothing, batteries, stamps, flashlights, candy and more. During free time you can go to the Tuck Shop if you need a necessity like soap, shampoo, a toothbrush etc. You will have the chance to go to the Tuck Shop a couple times a week to get candy or pop. At this time, you will be able to get two items (such as a Ring Pop, chips, Kit Kat, Aero, Sour Cherry Blasters, Skittles, Ginger Ale or iced tea).

HOW DOES THE DINING HALL WORK?

Everyone eats together in the Dining Hall. You will have a designated table where you and your cabin/tent mates will sit with your counsellor. This table will be yours for the entire time you are at camp. This way you will

always know where to sit and who to sit with. Meals are served family style, so each meal one person will go up to the counter and pick up your table's meal. There is always plenty to eat and we never run out of food!

MEALS

We offer lots of variety with each meal. We always have delicious, kid-friendly meals. In addition to the main dish at each meal, there are also four big “food bars” in the middle of the Dining Hall. At breakfast, you can find hard boiled eggs, bread, jam, soy butter, oatmeal, yogurt, granola and lots of fresh fruit at the breakfast bar. During lunch and dinner, you will be able to find all kinds of different salad options and fresh bread. At lunch there is also a delicious homemade soup. Some typical meals:

BREAKFAST

French toast and sausage, danishes, pancakes and bacon, freshly baked chocolate croissants (on Sundays), eggs and bacon, etc. There is also always cereal available on your table, as well as, fresh fruit, oatmeal, yogurt and homemade granola at the food bar.

LUNCH

Chicken burgers, make-your-own-subs, macaroni and cheese, bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwiches, pizza bagels, grilled cheese and fries, tacos, etc.

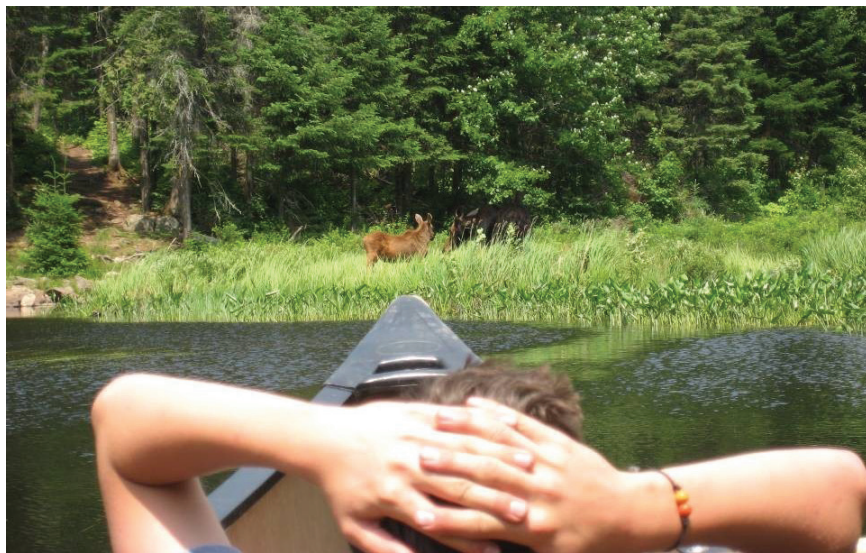
DINNER

Spaghetti, chicken pot pie, chicken wings and salad, shepherd's pie, lasagna, burritos, roast beef and potatoes, hamburgers and hotdogs (every sunday night), pasta, etc.

CAMP IS SCREEN-FREE

Camp is one of the last places in the world where we can experience life ‘unplugged’. At Onondaga Camp, we want you to be able to enjoy all that camp has to offer without the distraction of screens.

With this in mind, it is important to know that campers are not permitted to bring cell phones, tablets, or any personal electronics requiring power. Should these items be brought to camp, they will be confiscated and shipped home at the expense of your family. A \$100 administrative and shipping fee will apply.



CANOE TRIPS

If you are 11 or older, you have the opportunity to sign up for a canoe trip before you arrive at camp. We recommend that you try it at least once, as it is an amazing opportunity for you to get out of camp and experience the great outdoors! You will have a chance to challenge yourself in different ways by helping to build campfires, cook dinner, portage a canoe and set up camp. This will be a great chance for you to bond with the six or seven other campers on your trip, a counsellor and tripper.

JINCIS

(Ages 9 & under) No Canoe Trip

JINCIS

(Age 10) 1 night canoe trip on surrounding lakes with their cabin group

BANTAMS

(Ages 11 & 12) 3 day canoe trip in Leslie Frost Conservation Area

INTERS

(Age 13) 4 day canoe trip in Algonquin Park

SENIORS & SUPER SENIORS

Two Week Campers: 4 day canoe trip in Algonquin Park

Four Week Campers: 4 or 7 day canoe trip in Algonquin Park

CAMP SONG

On the shores of Onondaga stands a great oak tree,
And from this we take our motto when at camp are we.

Strength, uprightness and protection,
These our aims shall be.
May the friends of Onondaga pledge their loyalty.

As the sun is slowly sinking to the campfire's blaze,
White canoes come gently drifting and our voices raise...

Strength, uprightness and protection,
These our aims shall be.
May the friends of Onondaga pledge their loyalty.

CAMP CHEER

O-N-O-N-D-A-G-A
We're better than all the camps they say.
We'll show you how we got that way.
O-N-O-N-D-A-G-A

TAPS

Day is done, gone the sun.
From the lakes, from the hills
From the sky
All is well, safely rest,
Friends are nigh.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WILL I BE ABLE TO TALK TO MY PARENTS?

It is not possible to call your parents while at camp. Don't worry, we will let them know how you are doing after the first few days of camp. If you need to get an important message to your parents, you can send them a letter or speak with your counsellor or Section Head and they can pass along a message for you.

WHEN/HOW DO I GET MAIL FROM MY PARENTS?

Mail will be handed out by your Section Head each day (usually at dinner). Your parents can send you letters by mail or email. Emails are printed out and delivered the next day with the regular mail.

HOW DO CARE PACKAGES WORK?

If a care package is mailed to you it will be kept in the office. You will receive a notice from the office if you have a package waiting for you (the notice will be handed out by your Section Head when mail is given out). Packages can be picked up from the office after dinner. Please note that all packages have to be opened in the office. Due to allergies and animals, no outside food is allowed in camp. Unfortunately, all food items sent in packages will be thrown out. **Families are asked to send only one package per camper.**

HOW OFTEN DO WE GO SWIMMING?

If you are attending a two or a four-week session you will have swimming lessons each day with the other campers in your section. You will be able to work on a Life Saving award right up to National Lifeguard certification. If you are coming for 'C' session, there are no formal swimming lessons. There is an opportunity to go swimming each day, during free time, before dinner. This is the time when you can go to 'main swim' and try out the dive tower or just take a quick dip.

**We hope this handbook
gives you a better idea
about camp and the great
experience that lies ahead.**

**If you have more questions,
please get in touch.**

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