

# Coming Into Our Own



ten  
oaks  
PROJECT

STRATEGIC PLAN  
2011-2014

# Contents

Introduction	3
Mission, Vision & Values	5
Our History & Milestones	6
Strategic Priorities	7
Strategic Priorities (Detail)	9

# Introduction



In 2007, the Ten Oaks Project launched an ambitious plan to guide its efforts, setting goals to grow its capacity to break down barriers, enhance self-esteem, and build leadership and self-confidence for the children and youth of LGBTQ communities. That exercise drew on the important views of the broader Ten Oaks Project family to set strategic priorities, as well as clarify and communicate the mission, vision, and values of the organization. Since that time, the Board of Directors, along with the staff, volunteers, donors, families, and program participants, have acted as stewards to that vision, with careful recalibrations, course corrections, and expansions to keep current with the capacity of the organization and the needs of the community.

The vision set out in 2008 was to guide the organization into 2011. As we complete 2010, it is time for the Board of Directors to again turn its attention to another chapter of the strategic plan, imagining our organization's possibilities for the three years ahead. This strategic plan, however, is not just about these specific three years, but laying a course that allows the Ten Oaks Project to successfully evolve well beyond – charting a future that may not even seem imaginable now.

Thinking about where we have come since the last full strategic planning process, it is clear how much has happened: we have found a permanent home for the organization, we have invested in our future by hiring an Executive Director, we have substantially grown our program offering with the development of Project Acorn, we have delivered on our mandate to empower youth by having Project Acorn be significantly steered by a Youth Advisory Committee, we have further rooted ourselves in Toronto (including through a new significant fundraising event), and we have grown our donor base and operating funding by over four times since 2007. We have evolved into an organization that delivers important programming across our diverse communities throughout the calendar year, and we do this through unique new tools and enhanced resources.

To chart the course we lay out here, we have listened closely to the community. We began with intense reflection as a Board of Directors and complemented this with meaningful input from community leaders, from our program users, families, donors, and friends. The priorities identified here reflect their wisdom and advice.

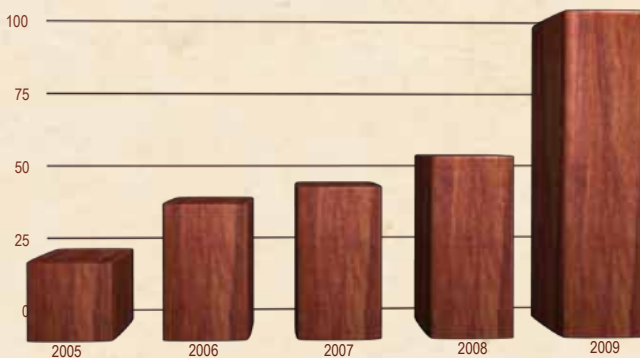
Consultation gave us much to consider as we refine the course for the years ahead. Consultations helped us to recognize that 2011-2014 will bring new challenges and opportunities to the organization. Challenges will come in the form of an

increasing need to grow a reliable and ongoing funding base for programs, as well as challenges in maintaining program and organizational excellence in the face of significant turnover. We'll also face challenges as we try and grapple with program expansion that is sustainable, efficient, and meets community needs. We also came to recognize the significant opportunities we have, including new ideas for program expansion, continued ways to use our existing resources, and the exciting prospects of integrating an increasing number of alumni into our operations.

The Board of Directors worked hard to integrate these challenges and opportunities into our thinking about the years ahead. The consultations also related three key findings to us:

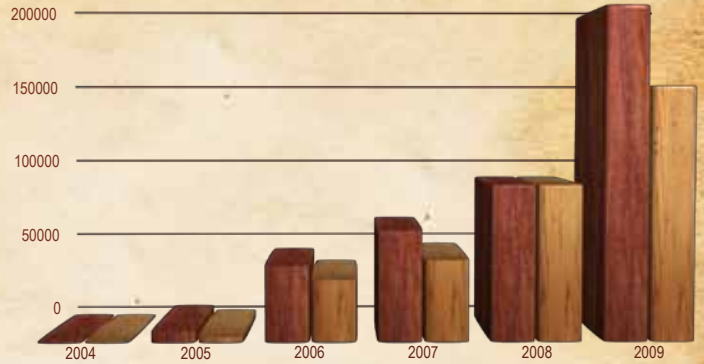
- 1) That there is wide consensus on maintaining our existing programs and their proven excellence, but no clear consensus on next steps (including whether or how to expand these programs)
- 2) That we connect with our communities in a multitude of ways, and that we need to better recognize the diversity and consistency of our program offerings
- 3) That we have had exceptional growth in the last number of years that we are still becoming acclimatized to

### Program Participants 2004 - 2009



All of these became themes for the strategic plan in the pages that follow. We have laid out a plan that seeks to allow the organization to catch up with its own rapid growth. This means we are not proposing any significant new programs or expansions, but instead concentrating on solidifying doing what we already do

### Revenue & Expenses 2004 - 2009



and continuing to do it well. The one exception to this is a willingness to explore continued low-resource ways to connect with our communities, mainly by sharing our story and resources with others. We have also laid out a plan that builds on this effort to 'come into our own', by placing a greater effort on financial planning – looking to ensure we can be sustainable in the long term as a larger organization. The plan also attempts to reconcile this rapid growth by placing a greater emphasis on our use of resources, namely trying to do things more efficiently and sustainably, and recognizing the huge assets represented by our people and our funds. Finally, the plan seeks to ensure we maintain the spirit of the organization at its founding, notably by recommitting to our programs to ensure that they continue to be life-changing and empowering experiences for the children and youth of LGBTQ communities.

This vision recognizes that we have experienced rapid and important growth that we wish to sustain long into the future. This will necessitate careful planning, strategic thinking, and the continued support of all our friends and families across our communities. We look forward to continuing our partnership with you as we live out this plan.

### Ten Oaks Project Board of Directors

Kate Burke  
 Chris Cowperthwaite  
 Noreen Fagan  
 Jackie Kennelly  
 Dawn Moore  
 Kate Moore  
 Pamela Murphy

Beth O'Connor  
 Chris Persaud  
 Marnie Potter  
 Mark Schaan  
 Lee Rose  
 Stephen Woods

# Mission, Vision & Values

While we have not altered our mission, vision or values, the Board of Directors recommits to living them out in all we do and using them as a strategic guide in the years to come.

## Our Mission

The Ten Oaks Project engages and connects children and youth from LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, two-spirit, queer) communities through programs and activities rooted in play.

## Our Vision

The Ten Oaks Project is a leader in meeting the needs of children and youth in LGBTQ families and LGBTQ youth. Our work is inspired by camp and grounded in social justice as we strive to create safer spaces and grow positive peer networks for all children and youth.

## Our Values

### Empowerment Through Play

What we do is fun – and, lots of it! Our work is grounded in asset-based philosophies that use play to effect personal change, enhance self-esteem, develop leadership and foster independence. We believe that by bringing children and youth together to play and engage in recreation, we can build their confidence, forge bonds and facilitate understanding.

### Learning by Doing

We believe that the best way to understand how the world works, and how to change it, is to engage in it. To facilitate this we ensure our programs are rooted in experiential education, or hands-on learning, that inspires active engagement, piques curiosity, and creates spaces where questions can be asked, investigations conducted, successes celebrated and mistakes learned from.

### Social Justice

We strive to make the world more fair, push to see society value all people more, and try to better understand and respect our environment. By critically reflecting upon the way in which human rights are manifested in the everyday lives of people, we are challenged to provide equitable opportunities and representation in a real and substantive way. Our commitment to economic accessibility and respect for the diverse voices in our communities flows from this goal.

### Collaboration and Innovation

We do things a bit differently. Forging relationships that are strong and collaborative is at the heart of what we do. The communities we serve are engaged in every aspect of what we do. We strive to evolve by adapting and adding our flavour to existing best practices. What we do, we want to do well, and we recognize that the way to do that is to build on the strengths of our community.

### People

Fundamentally, we are an organization that is built around people – their hopes, their abilities, and their uniqueness. We understand children and youth as persons in their own right and aim to provide experiences that develop, support and empower them. The organization, as its core, is motivated by the needs of children and youth with LGBTQ parent(s) and LGBTQ youth. Moreover, we are an organization built on the strength of our community and we would not exist without the valuable contributions of our volunteers, staff, directorate, sponsors, donors and community partners.

# Our History & Milestones

In April 2004, Holly Wagg and Julia Alarie co-founded the Ten Oaks Project in response to the lack of services for the children and youth of the LGBTQ community in Ottawa. The distribution of a needs assessment survey between April and August 2004 to assess the feasibility of a summer camp program showed that an overwhelming 81.6% of survey respondents supported the concept of this initiative. Eleven months of fundraising, planning and development resulted in a one-week summer camp, the first of its kind in Canada, in August 2005.

Since then, Camp Ten Oaks has had six successful years of camp where we have provided fun, engaging and well-rounded camp-flavoured programming for the children and youth of the LGBTQ community. We have built on our successes by developing new programs, notably Project Acorn, an impressive and important contribution to youth leadership. We have also shared our learning at conferences and community events. We have engaged with our community in many different ways and look forward to doing so in the future.

**April 2004** » Julia Alarie and Holly Wagg co-found the Ten Oaks Project.

**September 2004** » Inaugural Board of Directors is put in place, which includes Sonja Prakash, Jen Keystone, Elpis Law, Julia Alarie and Holly Wagg, and begin to establish a strategic direction for the organization. Ten Oaks Project partners with Mountain Meadow, a Philadelphia-based organization that has offered a summer camp program to children and youth of LGBTQ families since 1991. **October 2004** » Ten Oaks Project partners with Family Services Ottawa and Centretown Community Centre to deliver Rainbow Families, a group for children of GLBTTQ families and their parents. **January 2005** » Ten Oaks Project makes a presentation to Ottawa City Council on the needs of children of LGBTQ families.

**February 2005** » Announcement that Camp Ten Oaks will take place August 21-27, 2005 near Wakefield, Quebec. **March 2005** » The Ten Oaks Project is granted charitable status and raises over \$4,500 at its first annual camp Bowl-A-Thon. **August 2005** » Camp Ten Oaks takes place and is attended by 22 campers. **September 2005** » Rainbow Families takes off for 2005-2006 with an emphasis on the children's program and two new facilitators. **February 2006** » A new leadership program for campers ages 16-17,

the Leadership Acorns, is announced as part of the Camp Ten Oaks program.

**March 2006** » Over \$14,400 is raised at the second annual camp Bowl-A-Thon by more than 20 teams. **April 2007** » Delivered a plenary session entitled "That's so Gay!" - Speaking Out About Homophobic Bullying and Harassment" at I Am Safe, the third international CAYFO conference on bullying and victimization. **January 2008** » The Ten Oaks Project moves into its first rented office space, making the move from kitchen table to proper boardroom. The Ten Oaks Project hires its first ever paid staff person. Katie Collins acts as Office Coordinator until October, 2008, helping the organization set up its filing system and manage its information. **August 2008** » Camp Ten Oaks Camp Director Julia Alarie retires with a bang, as the camp program provides an inspirational week for 58 campers.

**October 2008** » The Ten Oaks Project begins preparations for a new program with the creation of a Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) to advise the Board on a new leadership camp. **February 2009** » The Ten Oaks Project organizes a workshop for school administrators on LGBTQ children and youth, including those in LGBTQ families, which is well-received and raises the important issues of making schools safer. **March 2009** » The 5th Annual Bowl-a-thon

exceeds all previous revenue targets raising \$40,000 with 30 teams and exciting host Kelly Dear. **April 2009** » The Ten Oaks Project hires its first ever Executive Director, Kate Moore, to provide programmatic and strategic vision for the organization. **July 2009** » The first-ever Project Acorn is held with 32 youth participants, 8 youth leaders, and 9 adult leaders. **October 2009** » The Ten Oaks Project inducts its first ever Honourary Lifetime Members: founders Julia Alarie and Holly Wagg, founding Board Directors Sonja Prakash and Jen Keystone, and longtime friend, volunteer and Board Director Chris Cowperthwaite. **November 2009** » The first ever CampCurl fundraiser is held in Toronto, raising over \$25,000. **January 2010** » The Ten Oaks Project begins takes its message of creating safer spaces for LGBTQ communities to other camps, training over 150 camp directors and camp staff on how to make their programs more inclusive. **February 2010** » A team of staff and Ten Oaks Project volunteers present at the first ever Rainbow Health Conference. **July and August 2010** » The Ten Oaks Project runs its largest ever program season with 63 campers and 27 staff at Camp Ten Oaks and 34 participants, 10 youth leaders and 16 adult leaders at Project Acorn.

# Strategic Priorities

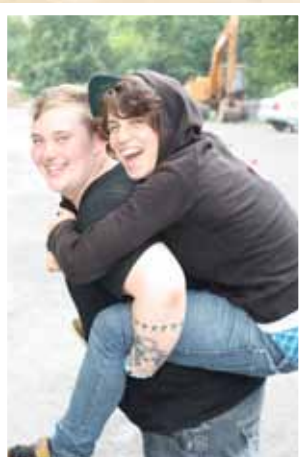
**#1 Recognize and position the Ten Oaks Project as a year-round child and youth serving organization, exploring possible low-resource innovations that conform to our mission, vision and values.**

The Ten Oaks Project runs two flagship summer programs for the children and youth of LGBTQ communities but also connects and engages with the community throughout the year. Over the next three years, the organization will place a greater emphasis on both its summer programs and community engagement activities (Bowl-A-Thon, CampCurl, Founders' picnic, etc.). This will also necessitate examining how best to be a youth-serving organization, recognizing the agency and empowerment so important in our models. This will include stronger integration across our organization, and expanded efforts to recognize, promote and enrich our community engagement activities. While the organization has seen incredible growth in recent years, it is still critical to continue to innovate and grow. Using the mission, vision, and values of the organization as a base, the Board of Directors will explore low-resource additions and innovations that increase links to our communities of interest.

**#2 Build sustainability through the development of a multi-year financial plan.**

Over the last number of years, the Ten Oaks Project has rapidly grown its operating budget. While revenue has continued to grow to meet these new demands, it will be crucial for the organization to ensure this size and scope is sustainable in the longer term. By laying out a multi-year business plan, the organization can begin plans for diversification of revenue sources and more concrete annual financial goals. Core elements of this will include a greater focus on donor stewardship, longer-term revenue sources, and a more strategic approach to revenue from grants.

The Ten Oaks Project was originally created to develop and deliver a summer camp for the children and youth of LGBTQ communities. In the next three years, we will harness the momentum of Camp Ten Oaks by developing and implementing a succession strategy to ensure sustainability of operations into the future. We will ensure that the unique and magical features of this program are preserved in the documentation of a program framework, and that we explore ways to better integrate Camp Ten Oaks staff and campers into the year-round activities of the project.



# Strategic Priorities

**#3 Maximize the organization's available resources (monetary, physical and human) to increase efficiency and sustainability.**

Throughout its history, the Ten Oaks Project has relied on the extreme dedication of its volunteers and community donors. With the significant increase in the scope of operations, the organization must now focus on ensuring that it maximizes and does not overburden these critical inputs. This must include growth of the volunteer base (including strategic targeting of needed skills), improvements in project planning and timing, and detailed budgeting and fiscal allocation.

**#4 Maintain Camp Ten Oaks as a principal program of continued excellence and an integral part of the Ten Oaks Project.**

The Ten Oaks Project was originally created to develop and deliver a summer camp for the children and youth of LGBTQ communities. In the next three years, we will harness the momentum of Camp Ten Oaks by developing and implementing a succession strategy to ensure sustainability of operations into the future. We will ensure that the unique and magical features of this program are preserved in the documentation of a program framework, and that we explore ways to better integrate Camp Ten Oaks staff and campers into the year-round activities of the project.

**#5 Solidify Project Acorn as another flagship program of the Ten Oaks Project, plotting a course for sustainability and further strengthening of its model.**

In the summer of 2009, the Ten Oaks Project was able to realize an important goal (and a long-time dream) by launching Project Acorn, a leadership retreat for the youth of LGBTQ communities. With two successful seasons now complete, the organization must continue to document and strengthen the models (both programmatic and financial) of this important new venture. This will include identification of new financial resources, clarification of leadership and roles, and further documentation and development of processes and frameworks. It will be also critical to further articulate and live out the youth-to-youth with adult support and understand its implications for the organization as a whole.



# Priority #1

Recognize and position the Ten Oaks Project as a year-round child and youth serving organization, exploring possible low-resource innovations that conform to our mission, vision and values.

## Community Engagement Activities »

- Reposition community engagement activities as core to the organization's operations and as an additional connection to our mission, vision and values
- Recognize non-program events as part of the overall operational plan

## Financial Planning »

- Ensure sufficient budget and resources to successfully deliver community engagement activities

## Resource Diversification »

- Explore new funding sources to offset the costs of community engagement activities, including grants and community partnerships

## Child and Youth Focus »

- Align organizational efforts and structures with focus on youth agency and empowerment

## Volunteer Development »

- Retain and recruit additional volunteers to assist the organization in these important activities and recognize this work appropriately

## Program Development and Innovation »

- Continue to explore expansion of training for the broader camp community
- Identify low-resource ways to maintain connections with program participants throughout the year
- Identify program innovations that better align delivery with the mission, vision and values of the organization and increase community connectedness (e.g. francophone offerings)
- Develop partnerships and collaborative relationships as required to deliver new programs and services
- Offer to share the skills and expertise we have developed to date with community partners who are looking to expand or offer new services to our community

# Priority #2

Build sustainability through the development of a multi-year financial plan.

## Planning »

- Develop a multi-year business plan through community and board consultation that outlines revenue targets and potential sources, growth in expenses by function and category, and overall objectives for revenue mix and cost controls
- Identify potential new sources of revenue, including corporate sponsorship and core-funding grants

## Donor Stewardship »

- Create a strategy for donor development and stewardship to retain donors and grow existing giving levels, ensuring sustainability for existing program operations and organizational plans.

# Priority #3

Maximize the organization's available resources (monetary, physical and human) to increase efficiency and sustainability.

## Work planning »

- Stronger use of work-planning tools that focus on key milestones, needed resources and critical timelines
- Concentration on critical tasks and increased emphasis on de-scoping or delegation as appropriate
- Clearer accountabilities for all key staff and volunteers in the core aspects of the organization's work
- Development of templates and manuals to ease succession
- Identify ways to simplify processes and avoid duplication of effort, without impacting the quality of our programs and activities

## Volunteer Recruitment »

- Continued development of a volunteer recruitment and retention strategy, including identification of high-resource individuals to ease burdens on staff and volunteers
- Growth of committee structures with clear accountabilities to reduce individual work burden while ensuring completion of critical functions

## Financial management »

- Increase use of planning tools to identify resources required and allow for reductions in costs when possible

# Priority #4

Maintain Camp Ten Oaks as a principal program of continued excellence and an integral part of the Ten Oaks Project.

## Camp Ten Oaks »

- Continue implementation of a succession strategy for camp to ensure continuity and sustainability of operations
- Through community consultation, develop an overarching program framework to guide operations and decision-making
- Strengthen our capacity to recruit, retain and engage a diverse group of skilled volunteers to work at camp each summer
- Further develop manuals and documentation of best practices to ensure continuity, innovation and preservation and articulation of the project framework

# Priority #5

Solidify Project Acorn as another flagship program of the Ten Oaks Project, plotting a course for sustainability and further solidification of its model

## Project Acorn »

- Further refine program operation model, notably structure of leadership and roles
- Further develop the Youth Advisory Committee model with a framework including objectives, timelines, and key activities
- Clarify community partnerships and expected results for each
- Develop financial plan that outlines sustainability of project going forward, notably new revenue sources and lowered cost burden
- Annually identify operational priorities to ensure program and program delivery remains aligned with industry best-practices and positions our program model as a recognized leader
- Review annual evaluation plan
- Begin development of a succession strategy to ensure continuity and sustainability of operations
- Further document and articulate youth-to-youth with adult support model, including exploring implications for the organization as a whole



Ten Oaks Project  
255 Montreal Road, Suite 205  
Ottawa, Ontario K1L 6C4  
613.321.2825  
[www.tenoaksproject.org](http://www.tenoaksproject.org)

Charitable No. 85521 5471 RR0001