



# REPORT

*From the office of the...*

## CLAY Coordinator

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TO: Members of the Executive Board  
FROM: Ryan MacDonald  
SUBJECT: Final Executive Board Report  
DATE: Wednesday June 24th, 2015

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### UPDATE

On May 29th-31st 145 high school student delegates and 58 McMaster University student leaders enjoyed a remarkable weekend of learning, leading and discovery at Camp Muskoka Outdoor Education Leadership Centre. Having many members of this board attending CLAY this year as staff including Spencer, Lindsay and Raymond as well as the wonderful Ms. Sarah Jama who co-led an INCREDIBLE anti-oppression training for our staff team, I want to thank the members of the Executive Board for contributing all that they did in a variety of different capacities to make CLAY the incredible success that it was this year.

### SERVICE USAGE

#### **Recruitment**

- Highest number of delegate registrations in the history of the conference (as far as I can tell) with 152
- Strategy focused on visiting schools and talking to someone - worked very effectively with final month push
- Had to turn away 24 delegates past deadline
- Matching opportunities worked very well
  - Highlights include 10 for 10 students matching at Sir John A McDonald and 4 for 4 students at St. Mary's
- Final demographics will be included in transition report and provided to services committee, but approximately 60% Hamilton area students, highest number ever!
- 74 of 152 students registered paid their own way to attend CLAY 2015 (or was not officially sponsored through a school or through our funds)
- Only 6 returning delegates compared to 14 in 2014 and 35 in 2013

#### **Events**

- New theme night activity was a hit with delegates and staff!
- Moving CLAY Coffeehouse to second night was positively impactful on delegate experience
- Brandon Fly, first speaker was well received
- Andy Thibodeau, second speaker was well received by delegates but concerns were made that he spoke very heteronormatively as well as addressed standards of being a 'good student' that might not have been appropriate with respect to academics.

- Staff suggested that although CLAY Connector (similar to MAC Connector) might be a great tradition to have while the conference is at McMaster, it didn't seem valuable when you could be doing so many other cool things while up at a camp.

### **Sessions**

- New mental health session was well received, potentially too early on in the conference to be very impactful, considering changing to later on will be a recommendation made in the transition report.
- Staff felt that sessions were well adapted to the Muskoka setting considering this is the first year, utilizing resources there (or an alternative site) could be valuable.

### **Sponsorship & Fundraising**

- Total ended up being right around \$7,500
- Future opportunities - Todd White, school board, Optimist Club, Rotary Club.
- Huge thanks to 1280 for the hot dogs - raised nearly \$1000 from that alone!

### **Logistics**

- We ran approximately 20 minutes late arriving to Muskoka because of issues with traffic and waiting for delegates to arrive.
- Recommendation for next year would be to investigate how we can more effectively do delegate arrival with limited staff - too few this year.
- After the first day with our delay, things ran like clockwork!
- Would suggest using STOCK Transportation in the future, although their admin staff weren't very fast at replying to emails, they were VERY inexpensive and were fairly accommodating.

### **PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES**

We ran a conference! Yay!

### **UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES**

None! CLAY is officially done for the year :)

I will use this space to include some recommendations that I will be making in my transition report.

#### *1) Removal of the Staff Fee.*

Although being only \$10, it was made on the suggestion of last years VP Finance to include a staff fee to allow students to feel like they are 'contributing or paying for their own development' and to keep them incentivized to not drop out. Students already pay for this service, they should not be charged twice.

#### *2) Move the Date of the Conference back by one week!*

Schools REALLY appreciated it not being on the long weekend as many were hesitant to spend money for an event that students might not even show up to (realistic concern). Further in Muskoka, the end of May is BUG SEASON. This was a major concern for us and ended up forcing us to purchase bug spray while up there.

#### *3) Be ultra-explicit with the delegate packing list!*

Although I did say that towels will not be provided, many people did not realize this meant you had to bring your own if you wanted to shower. This forced us to purchase 10 towels during the weekend, a cost we didn't expect to incur.

#### *4) Further engage the service as a community engagement opportunity*

Because I spent most of my time focusing on the transition of the service to an off site facility, i didn't get to spend as much time as I wanted to working on the PR and community engagement aspect of the service. I think there is a lot of un-tapped potential to engage with community partners about the importance of contributing to this organization.

#### *5) Budget Review*

I think this service is really valuable in it's new format where we offer opportunities to those who otherwise wouldn't get the chance and pay for them. This to me shows that we are saying to the community that McMaster students care! However, with 16 thousand, we were able to pay for nearly 50 delegates or 1/3 of the conference. I think depending upon the priorities of the board, this could be reduced.

#### *6) Location - shop around and bargain!*

This is something I think I did very well. I really can't get over how good of a deal Muskoka gave us for those three days. Moving forward I think it would be valuable to look into Camp Trillium on Rainbow Lake (45 mins from Mac) as a potential option, but its important to reflect on cost - always push for extras.

### **BUDGET**

As I am still waiting on a final budget statement for the conference, all of these totals are projections. I believe our totals will be lower than this with respect to expenses where we didn't pay our total for Sessions, Administration or Special Projects. I expect us to be when all is said and done approximately \$200 under budget. As previously stated if we didn't have some unanticipated expenses during the weekend we would probably be closer to \$300 or \$400 under budget.

In my transition report to next year's coordinator I will include the final budget statement for the year and some important notes. As of now, there are no outstanding invoices to be paid.

CLAY REVENUE			
ITEM	QUANTITY	PRICE	TOTAL
Delegate Fees (Including Tax)	99	\$146.02	\$14455.75
MSU Budget	1	\$16,000.00	\$16000.00
Staff Fees	48	\$10.00	\$480.00
Reduced Delegate Pricing	1	\$500.00	\$500.00
Sponsors	1	\$7,600.00	\$7600.00
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>			<b>\$39,035.75</b>

  

CLAY EXPENSES			
ITEM	QUANTITY	PRICE	TOTAL
Camp Fee	189	\$140.00	\$26,460.00
Bussing	1	\$4,058.90	\$4,058.90
Printing	1	\$1,350.00	\$1,350.00
Lanyards	199	\$3.30	\$656.70
Events	1	\$1,890.00	\$1,890.00
Conference Gift	210	\$1.40	\$294.00
Training	1	\$400.00	\$400.00
Sessions	1	\$400.00	\$400.00
LDL Expenses	1	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Promotions	1	\$400.00	\$400.00
Food	163	\$5.00	\$700.00
Administration	1	\$400.00	\$400.00
Special Projects	1	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>			<b>\$39,009.60</b>

## CURRENT CHALLENGES

The biggest challenge with CLAY is legitimacy. Many people do not understand why the service exists and why we contribute so much to it. I think this year was a step in the right direction and helped to define why this is important. I would love to hear comments from the members of EB who attended this conference to attest to this understanding.

## SUCCESSES

### Delegate Survey (Select Results)

Question	Number of Responses	Response
Please rate your experience at CLAY 2015 (1 being the worst experience, 10 being the best experience of your entire life)	45	Mean Response: 9.5
Based on your experience at CLAY 2015, would you be interested in attending CLAY 2016?	36	Yes
	9	Maybe
	0	No
Do you think having CLAY at Camp Muskoka was beneficial to your overall experience?	39	Yes
	5	Maybe
	1	No

### Positive Comments on Camp Muskoka as a Host

*"I thought that Camp Muskoka was a great way to get people to forget about their city life and really connect with one another, not based on technology or social media. Sharing a cabin with other delegates, as well as sitting together during eating times, created a sense of family among us."*

*"I think Camp Muskoka is an amazing location to host CLAY. It allows us all to be free in the outdoors and leave our worries behind, as well as the city. We are far away and in our own little world and I absolutely love it! We get away from the loud annoyance of the city and go to the peaceful woods where we can all build and grow as leaders and I think it's wonderful!"*

*"I liked that it was somewhere different where most people haven't been before. (Food was also great)"*

*"It was a beautiful setting, and the seclusion from urban society really helped loosen people's tensions. I loved how it was only us there, how there was no risk of interruptions. The "sleeping in a cabin" experience really, REALLY helped with bonding with the other delegates, along with eating in the mess hall and just the whole camp-y vibe"*

### General Delegate Comments on CLAY 2015

*"CLAY taught me valuable lessons and built upon my morals and values, and truly led me to believe that there are amazing people out there. In a matter of days I was able to develop a deep connection with my session group and we grew so attached, like a family. CLAY's positivity and no-judgment policies literally make it the best place to be for being who you truly are and expressing your ideas or secrets without worrying about negligence from others. Some activities brought out the inner child in me, and I really appreciate that. The staff and LD's were some of the best people I have ever met in my entire life, and I will*

*always cherish the memories I made here. Thank you so much to everyone who made CLAY possible and gave me one of the best weekends ever!"*

*"My experience at CLAY was life changing. It taught me that it is good to try to get out of your comfort zone. This will open a bunch of new opportunities for me. This experience will stay with me through my whole life time and I hope to return next year! "*

*"The conference helped me talk to people and step out of my comfort zone. I feel it helps people become more confident with their social skills. The experience was also greatly improved by how kind the McMaster students were."*

*"My experience was positive. I was really stressed about school and things coming up so it was a nice break. I also learned valuable lessons. It's a great way to meet new people and bond with them - especially since they aren't judging you based on the established identity you might have at your school. It's important because of those aspects and also because of the many messages and lessons learned. THANKS SO MUCH FOR THE EXPERIENCE!!"*

*"My experience at CLAY was truly unforgettable and I think it's important because CLAY allowed me to become very close and intimate with people I hadn't even known 3 days ago. It provided a safe environment for me to share all my ideas and even some of my secrets, and I'm definitely coming back next year :)"*

### **Staff Survey (Select Results)**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Response</b>
Please rate your experience at CLAY 2015 (1 being the worst experience, 10 being one of the best experience of your entire life)	14	Mean Response: 9.4
Do you think having CLAY at Camp Muskoka was beneficial to your overall experience?	11	Yes
	2	Unsure
	1	No
Do you think CLAY should continue to pursue an off campus location	14	Yes
	0	Unsure
	0	No

### **General Comments on CLAY This Year From Staff**

*"While the last CLAY I participated in was amazing, this conference exceeded my expectations. The support from the planning and staff team was incredible; I felt welcomed and included all weekend. Seeing the passion the staff team had for the delegates was inspiring, and having the conference in Muskoka really added to the weekend!"*

*"I really liked the change of location, and think it should continue for CLAY 2016. I thought last year's sessions were really insightful and fun, but this year had the Mental Health Session (which my group liked!) and also the theme night had more options for delegates to try (and thus will be more inclusive.)"*

*"The theme night was very well organized! Having different activities that weren't just labeled as alternate was great for delegates who weren't into dancing! Seeing delegates paint (who did paint or who rarely did) was one of my favourite moments of the day. I think having the variety activities where delegates could relax, play games, be active, or make something they could be proud of was awesome."*

*"SO FUN DJ Staples is bae! One of the most successful implementations of alternative programming I have seen - students definitely had a lot of fun this night, regardless of whether they were dancing, taking photos, or participating in alternative programming. Definitely helped that you could just walk between the dance and the games outside - students didn't feel like they had to choose just one. Loved that students didn't have to wear semi-formal gear to have fun - wearing the shirts definitely helped to 'level out' students."*

## **Please use the space below to comment why you believe CLAY is important (or not important) as a service**

*I don't believe that the MSU can consciously exist as a stakeholder in this community without providing services which community members can take part in. CLAY provides invaluable development opportunities for community members. The leaders leaving this conference may not end up going to Mac, but they will still impact the greater community that Mac is a part of. I believe that CLAY is one of the most important services that the MSU offers - as an organization with a responsibility not only to McMaster students but to the leaders of tomorrow.*

*CLAY offers a really cool and unique leadership opportunity to high school students. Somehow, university students become extremely invested in trying to share their leadership skills and life experience with young people who are going through a completely different chapter in their lives. It is a beautiful thing to witness, and an inspiring way for McMaster students to take the insane privilege of attending university and give something back to the community.*

*CLAY is incredibly important because it not only allows delegates the opportunity to meet such a diverse group of other students, but it also gives them a supportive and encouraging environment that hopefully they can bring back to their schools and local communities. CLAY also develops the facilitation skills of the LDs, and allows them to personally grow throughout the weekend, where they are able to form strong connections with their delegates.*

*Generally, CLAY has a bigger impact than I originally thought. CLAY goes into the community and takes a hundred or so youth and inspire them, teach them and empower to be the leaders anyone could be. To me, as a MSU service, it is important for this reason- McMaster, especially the MSU, seems to uphold the idea of community, and how I see it CLAY directly impacts our Hamilton community and surrounding community by Creating Leadership Amongst Youth. Not to mention many of those leaders soon grow to become amazing Marauders that in turn positively impact our immediate community.*

*It is such an amazing personal developmental experience for everyone involved. There is an immeasurable amount of growth and learning to be had from this service. Amazingly proud for McMaster to hold this unique service that contributes so much to the lives of students and youth. This experience, CLAY, has made me fall in love with my school - McMaster.*

*Clay is a positive space not only for delegates but also LD's. It provides a great opportunity for delegates to feel like they belong and are accepted. It gives them an opportunity to expand their comfort zone and meet a diverse group of people. CLAY also does this for LD's while it also doubles as a great opportunity for McMaster students to develop their own leadership skills. It also allows them to see how they empower and make a beneficial impact on others which they had possibly never realized. I know for myself going into the conference I never really felt that I could make a difference to someone. It's pretty empowering knowing that you have made a positive impact on someone's life. Noticing that I can make a difference on someone's life to the extent that I was told I did during CLAY has caused me to reflect on the importance of relationship and support systems as a whole.*

*CLAY directly offers a large amount of university students the opportunity to develop their own leadership skills. More importantly though, CLAY is a symbol of what McMaster students represent. CLAY is about using the tools that students at McMaster have to give back to the community in a very powerful way. It*

*offers the opportunity for youth, especially those who may doubt themselves and their abilities and those in disadvantaged environments to become empowered and learn that they matter.*

### **Conclusion**

I just want to thank members of both this years and last years Executive Board, Dan and Ehima sitting on both at the time of this decision for allowing me the opportunity to pursue this change and turn a dream I had to reimagine what this service can do into reality. This has been one of the most rewarding experiences I've ever had and I cannot thank you enough.

Signing out,

Ryan MacDonald  
CLAY 2015 Conference Coordinator