



**University
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

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BA (University of King's College, 2007)

**“Learning from Learn to Camp: Investigating Immigrant Integration in
Canadian Parks”**

School of Environmental Studies

Friday, April 17, 2015

2:00PM

David Turpin Building

Room A357

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. James Rowe, School of Environmental Sciences, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Kara Shaw, School of Environmental Sciences, UVic (Member)

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Dr. Jillian Roberts, Department of Educational Psychology & Leadership Studies, UVic

Abstract

While Canada has, in recent years, experienced a significant increase in global immigration in tandem with rising migration to urban centers, visitorship to Canadian parks has been declining. It is thought that this is, in part, due to shifting cultural demographics. In 2011, as part of a larger measured response to these changes, Parks Canada in partnership with the Mountain Equipment Co-op, launched 'Learn to Camp'. The Learn to Camp program provides participants the opportunity to learn how to plan and enjoy safe and successful camping trips. The program is facilitated through one to two day events, and includes a repository of information online and a mobile app. Participants, primarily new and urban Canadians, are groomed to become independent campers: learning where to camp, what to bring, what to cook, and how to stay safe. This thesis seeks to understand the Learn to Camp program – how it is performed, how it is received, and what, if any, are its impacts on participants, parks and other stakeholders? In this project, I draw on primary research and literatures from cultural studies of nature to examine Learn to Camp under two frames, highlighting both immediate and long-term program implications. The literatures provided by critical studies of nature demonstrate how Canadian parks carry a limiting nationalist identity embedded within a history of colonial erasures. In my analysis, Learn to Camp appears to reinforce this historical narrative as it prescribes specific ways of 'knowing' and 'being' in park spaces. Concurrently, interview and questionnaire data indicate that new Canadians have an overwhelmingly positive experience with Learn to Camp. Participants are provided the skills, knowledge, and confidence necessary to become independent campers. Furthermore, participants leave Learn to Camp with a renewed sense of belonging to the Canadian landscape and to Canadian culture. In this project, I am interested in accounting for both the problematic underpinnings *and* the enjoyment that can be found in acculturating practices, such as Learn to Camp.