



# Camp Seneca Lake Alumni Evaluation

**June 2025**

**Prepared by Third Plateau Social Impact Strategies**

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# Introduction

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In 2025, Third Plateau partnered with the **Farash Foundation** and **Camp Seneca Lake** to evaluate the camp's long-term impact, with a focus on understanding the lasting value of Jewish camp experiences from the perspective of camper alumni. This evaluation was conducted in anticipation of **Project Campfire**, a new initiative led by the Farash Foundation that will provide free Jewish camp experiences to Rochester-area youth.

Launched in Summer 2025, Project Campfire is an unprecedented investment in Jewish camping, offering every Jewish-identifying child in grades 3-9 in the region the opportunity to attend Camp Seneca Lake at no cost for up to one session per summer.

As this initiative prepares to roll out, the Farash Foundation and Camp Seneca Lake saw a critical opportunity to evaluate the long-term value of Jewish camp – particularly how it shapes Jewish identity, connections, and engagement – and to build a foundation for a forthcoming longitudinal study that will follow current and future campers.

This cross-sectional alumni evaluation was designed to better understand the long-term impact of Camp Seneca Lake by engaging with former campers, who are now young adults. Through surveys and focus groups, this evaluation explores how camp shaped their Jewish lives, what aspects of the Camp Seneca Lake experience had lasting significance, and what we can learn to inform the implementation and assessment of Project Campfire.

## **Specifically, this cross-sectional study serves four purposes:**

- To validate the hypothesis that Camp Seneca Lake strengthens Jewish identity into adulthood;
- To explore the mechanisms through which camp produces these outcomes;
- To understand the long-term perspective of alumni further removed from the camp experience; and
- To develop a reference point for interpreting the outcomes of future campers.<sup>1</sup>

This executive summary presents key findings from the alumni evaluation and provides early insights that Camp Seneca Lake and the Farash Foundation can use to inform Project Campfire's evaluation while also offering guidance for enhancing the current Camp Seneca Lake experience.

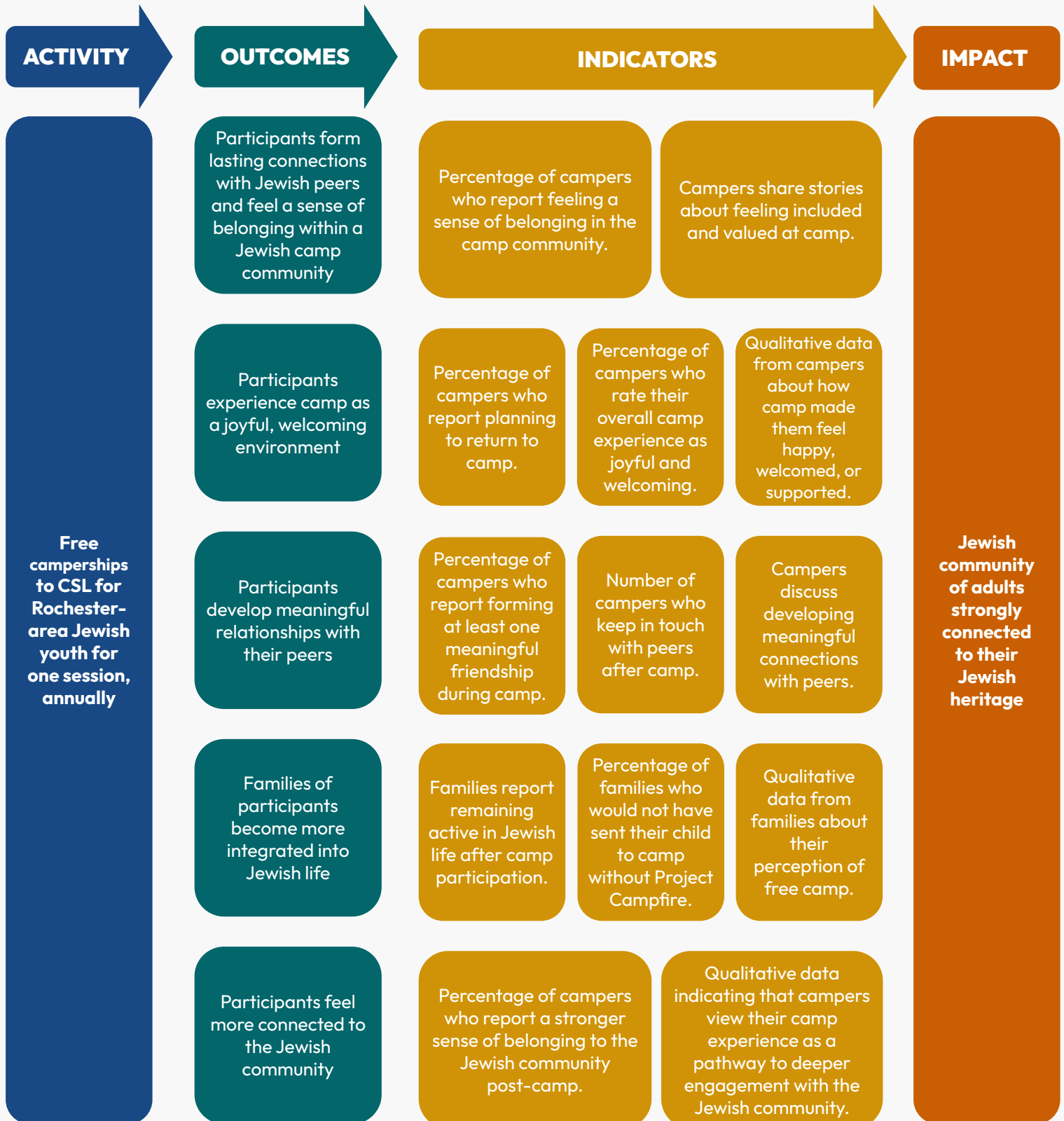
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<sup>1</sup> This initial cross-sectional evaluation with alumni was designed, in part, to inform the development of a longitudinal survey for current campers that is being implemented in Summer 2025. In addition to capturing insights about the lasting effects of Camp Seneca Lake, the findings help to clarify which outcomes and experiences matter most to alumni. These insights will be used to shape survey content and priorities moving forward. By establishing this alumni perspective as a starting benchmark, the study enables future evaluations to explore how current campers' experiences align with, differ from, or evolve beyond past patterns, offering a valuable frame of comparison as the camp continues to grow and adapt.



# Project Campfire Theory of Change

Project Campfire's Theory of Change represents the key outcomes and impact that the Farash Foundation aims to achieve in concert with Camp Seneca Lake through Project Campfire.



# Methodology

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This report is based on data collected through 1) an online survey developed by Third Plateau and administered to Camp Seneca Lake alumni in March and April 2025 and 2) focus group discussions facilitated by Third Plateau with Camp Seneca Lake alumni in April 2025. Please see [Appendix A](#) for a more detailed description of the methodology, [Appendix B](#) for the complete list of survey questions, and [Appendix C](#) for the focus group protocol.

## Research Questions

This evaluation was guided by a set of core research questions designed to illuminate the effectiveness, impact, and areas for improvement within Camp Seneca Lake.<sup>2</sup> These questions were developed by Third Plateau in collaboration with the Farash Foundation and Camp Seneca Lake to ensure that they reflect the priorities, context, and intended outcomes of the work. By grounding our inquiry in the following questions, the evaluation seeks to generate meaningful insights that can inform decision-making, enhance program design, and support continuous learning:

- To what extent, if any, does attending camp increase the likelihood that a Jewish child identifies with and celebrates their Judaism as an adult?
- To what extent, if any, do camp alumni feel positively connected and engaged with the Jewish community?
- What variables, if any, impact long-lasting Jewish connections and engagement for alumni?

## Design and Administration

The survey employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative questions to better understand the relationship between Jewish identity and attendance at Camp Seneca Lake. A total of 112 respondents between the ages of 18 and 35 anonymously completed the survey, which was distributed electronically using Third Plateau's software system, Qualtrics, to maximize accessibility.<sup>3</sup> Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical methods, while qualitative responses were thematically coded and analyzed using an inductive techniques. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of participant experiences, engagement levels, and program impact.

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<sup>2</sup> For a detailed overview of how each research question aligns with the outcomes outlined in Project Campfire Theory of Change, please refer to the Crosswalk Table in [Appendix D](#). This table maps each research question to its corresponding short- or long-term outcome, highlighting the specific data sources (e.g., survey items, focus group themes) used to assess progress toward those outcomes. The crosswalk is intended to provide transparency in the evaluation design and demonstrate how the data collected supports the assessment of key impact areas.

<sup>3</sup> Although 213 individuals began the survey, this analysis only includes data from the 112 fully completed responses. Partial responses have been excluded from this report in order to ensure a consistent dataset for analysis. The survey invitation was estimated to be received by at least 400 individuals through either direct communication with the Camp Seneca Lake newsletter or through social media outreach, resulting in an overall response rate of approximately 28%.

# Methodology

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## Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions were also conducted as part of the evaluation to gather in-depth qualitative insights. At the conclusion of the survey, respondents were directed to a separate, unlinked form—distinct from the survey data collection—where they could voluntarily express interest in participating in a focus group. This approach preserved the anonymity of their survey responses. Third Plateau then followed up directly with those individuals to coordinate participation and further maintain participant confidentiality.

Third Plateau also designed the focus group protocols and facilitated the semi-structured conversations. The data collected from these discussions complemented the survey results and helped to deepen the understanding of key themes within the evaluation. A total of 16 participants engaged in four focus group discussions, which were designed to capture diverse perspectives and experiences.

## Limitations

While this methodology provided robust survey and focus group data, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, survey respondents represent only a sample of Camp Seneca Lake's total alumni population. Second, respondents who completed the survey may be more engaged with the camp or have had particularly positive experiences, potentially overrepresenting favorable views and active alumni participation. Finally, the reliance on self-reported data in both the survey and focus group discussions may introduce social desirability bias, where participants could provide responses they believe are expected rather than fully reflecting their true feelings or behaviors.

# Key Evaluation Findings

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## Highlights

This section provides an overview of the most significant strengths identified through the evaluation, drawing on data from both survey respondents and focus group participants. These highlights reflect the current impact of Camp Seneca Lake on its alumni and illustrate key themes related to Jewish identity, Jewish community connection, and long-term engagement with camp.

- **Camp Seneca Lake helps alumni form lasting connections to Jewish community and identity, with participants reporting stronger engagement in Jewish life into adulthood.** Across both survey and focus group data, participants shared how Camp Seneca Lake deepened their connection to Jewish heritage and community. Nearly all survey respondents (97%) reported feeling a strong connection to their Jewish identity and 96% said that camp strengthened their ties to the Jewish community. These connections often extended into adult life through Jewish organizational involvement, celebration of Jewish holidays, participation in Jewish peer networks, and assumption of Jewish communal leadership roles.
- **Camp experiences foster strong feelings of belonging, with nearly all alumni reporting that they felt valued, included, and supported during their time at camp.** Alumni overwhelmingly described Camp Seneca Lake as a welcoming and affirming environment. Survey data showed that 98% of respondents felt a sense of belonging, while 95% felt both included and valued. Focus group insights also revealed that formal and informal recognition, such as leadership roles and peer acknowledgements at camp, reinforced this sense of inclusion and community.
- **Shabbat and Jewish ritual practices at camp emerged as central drivers of positive Jewish identity formation and connection.** Shabbat services and other Jewish rituals at camp were widely described as joyful, memorable, and spiritually meaningful. Many alumni cited Shabbat by the lake as one of the most powerful Jewish experiences, and several said it was their first introduction to Jewish practice in a way that felt welcoming and natural. These rituals fostered pride in Jewish identity and offered a model for continued engagement in Jewish ritual post-camp.
- **Alumni form strong and enduring friendships at camp, which often remain central to their social networks and sense of Jewish belonging into adulthood.** Many alumni reported forming meaningful friendships at camp and keeping in touch with those friends afterward. These relationships, described as more authentic and accepting than those formed elsewhere, serve as a vital support system and a key pathway for sustaining connection to the Jewish community after their camp experiences conclude.

# Key Evaluation Findings

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## Highlights

- **Leadership opportunities at Camp Seneca Lake positively shaped participants' confidence, sense of agency, and community engagement.** Both survey and focus group participants emphasized that leadership roles at camp – ranging from informal roles as campers, such as being selected as a team captain, to more formal responsibilities as counselors – were pivotal experiences. These opportunities contributed to personal growth, a sense of responsibility, and long-term connection to community values. Alumni described these moments as both empowering and deeply affirming.
- **Alumni maintain long-term, meaningful engagement with Camp Seneca Lake.** Survey respondents attended an average of 10 summers as campers and staff, demonstrating a strong commitment by returning year after year. Several participants also shared that their connection to camp extended into young adulthood, as they returned to serve as counselors or staff members. This continued engagement reflects the powerful role camp played in their lives and the lasting sense of community that it fostered.



# Key Evaluation Findings

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## Opportunities

This section outlines a range of strategic opportunities and areas for continued investment related to the Camp Seneca Lake alumni experience. These opportunities identify ways the camp can deepen its long-term impact by building on existing strengths, addressing persistent challenges, and responding to evolving alumni needs and interests. While the survey and focus groups included questions about past experiences at camp, very few responses addressed how camp itself could be improved. As a result, most of the opportunities outlined here focus on the post-camp alumni experience. While these ideas reflect what was shared directly by alumni, it is important to note that they may not all align with Camp Seneca Lake's current logistics, resources, or operational capacity.

- **Expand year-round alumni engagement to sustain community connections.** Alumni expressed a desire for more opportunities to stay connected outside the summer months. They valued recent efforts to strengthen alumni programming and encouraged continued investment in in-person reunions, regional meetups, and virtual events like Shabbat gatherings. These touchpoints help to preserve the feeling of community, reinforce Jewish identity, and foster long-term relationships among alumni of all ages and backgrounds.
- **Create more opportunities for continued Jewish learning and exploration.** While cultural and ritual engagement among alumni remains strong, participation in formal Jewish learning is relatively low (26%). Camp Seneca Lake could potentially address this gap by offering Jewish learning opportunities tailored for alumni. This could include virtual learning sessions or short videos from counselors and staff exploring Jewish themes in a relatable way.
- **Leverage the power of storytelling to reinforce identity and belonging.** Focus group participants emphasized how meaningful it is to share and hear stories about their Camp Seneca Lake experiences. There is a clear opportunity to amplify alumni voices through storytelling platforms—whether via newsletters, social media spotlights, or recorded reflections. Facilitating these stories not only strengthens personal and community identity, but also helps newer or disconnected alumni re-engage with the Camp Seneca Lake network and values.
- **Replicate core elements of the camp experience during the off-season.** Alumni deeply miss the unique atmosphere of camp and shared a desire for “touchstone” events that recreate its magic. Organizing off-season programs that emulate the feel of Camp Seneca Lake—complete with familiar songs, communal meals, or rituals—can help alumni to reconnect emotionally and spiritually, particularly during transitional life stages (e.g., college, early adulthood).

# Conclusion

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This evaluation highlights the powerful and lasting impact of Camp Seneca Lake on its alumni, particularly in fostering Jewish identity, community connection, and leadership development. The findings demonstrate that alumni view camp as a formative experience that shaped their sense of belonging, strengthened their ties to Jewish life, and provided enduring personal and social benefits. Through both survey and focus group data, it is clear that the camp experience continues to resonate deeply with alumni, influencing their adult lives in meaningful ways.

Looking ahead, insights from the alumni evaluation can inform strategies to enhance the experience of current and future campers. The themes that emerged from this analysis, such as the importance of Shabbat, the value of inclusive leadership opportunities, and the deep bonds formed through camp friendships, point to programmatic elements that have the greatest long-term impact. By intentionally reinforcing these elements, Camp Seneca Lake can continue to nurture Jewish identity, belonging, and personal growth in ways that last well beyond the camp years. These findings also lay the groundwork for a forthcoming evaluation of current campers, offering a valuable reference point for understanding how camp experiences evolve over time.

# Evaluation Findings

The evaluation findings offer a comprehensive analysis of the Camp Seneca Lake alumni experience, examining alumni impact, engagement patterns, and implications for programmatic design and alumni relations.

## Participant Overview

This section provides an overview of key characteristics of survey respondents. Understanding these characteristics helps to contextualize the findings and ensures that the evaluation captures the diverse experiences and perspectives of the respondent base.

**A large portion of respondents are between 18 and 24 years old.** Over half of the survey respondents (52.5%) were born between 2001 and 2006, indicating that the sample primarily reflects the perspectives of individuals currently in their late teens to early twenties. See *Table 1*.

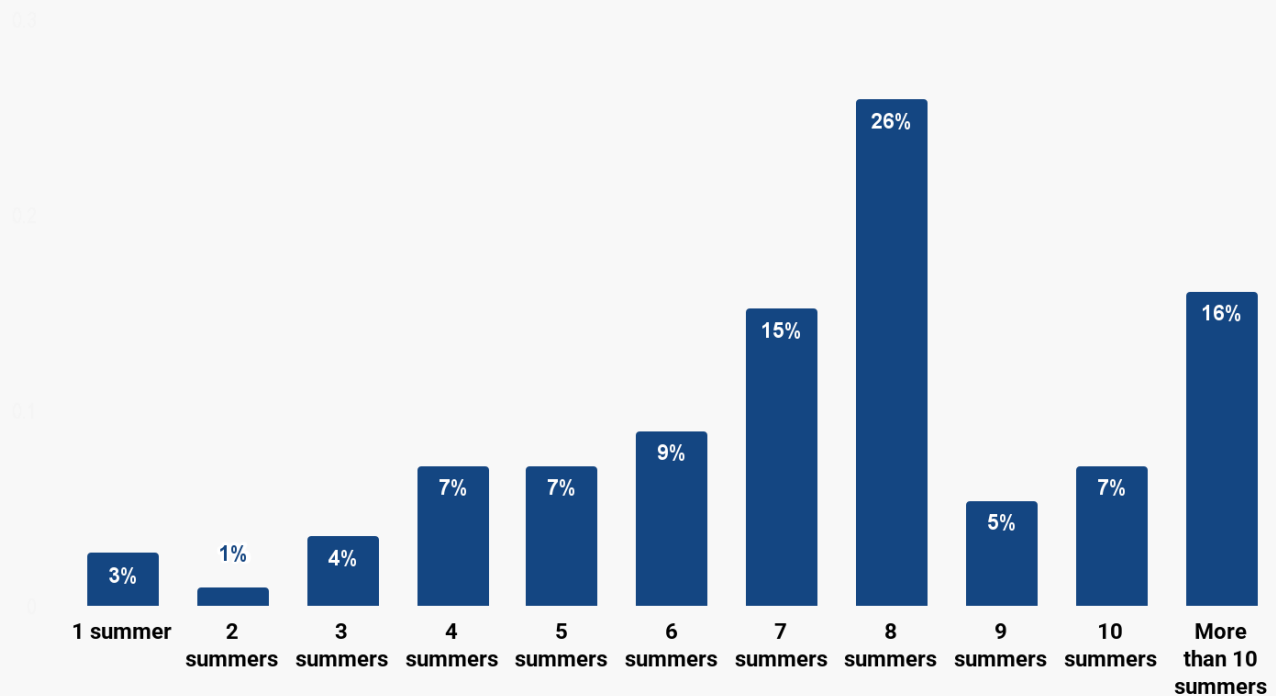
Table 1. Respondent Birth Year

Year	Percent	Total Count
1989	3%	3
1990	2%	2
1991	3%	3
1992	1%	1
1993	1%	1
1994	3%	3
1995	3%	4
1996	5%	6
1997	5%	6
1998	6%	7
1999	4%	5
2000	7%	8
2001	6%	7
2002	8%	10
2003	11%	13
2004	8%	10
2005	7%	8
2006	12%	14
2007	1%	1

Source: 2025 alumni evaluation survey. Note: n=112.

**Many alumni remained engaged with Camp Seneca Lake well beyond their initial summer experience.**<sup>4</sup> Survey respondents reported deep, sustained involvement with Camp Seneca Lake, attending as a camper or staff member<sup>5</sup> for a median of 8 summers and an average of 10 summers.<sup>6</sup> See Figure 1.

*Figure 1. Respondent Attendance at Camp Seneca Lake as Camper or Staff*



*Source: 2025 alumni evaluation survey. Note: n=112.*

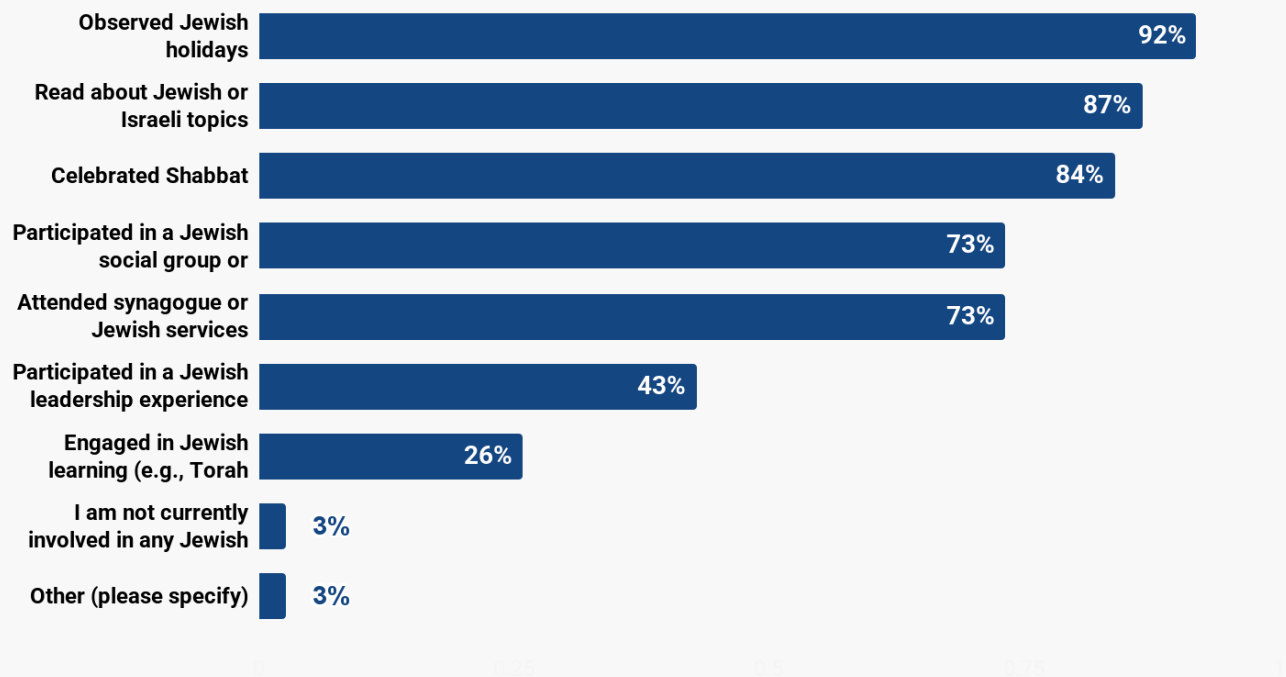
**Alumni continue to seek opportunities to incorporate Jewish activities, practices, and values into their everyday life.** The majority of survey respondents reported participating in at least one Jewish activity over the past year, with the most common being observing Jewish holidays (92%), reading about Jewish or Israeli topics (87%), and celebrating Shabbat (84%). By contrast, only 26% reported engaging in formal Jewish learning (e.g., Torah study or classes), and just 3% indicated no current involvement in Jewish activities. This suggests strong cultural and ritual engagement, but comparatively lower participation in structured educational settings. See Figure 2.

<sup>4</sup> We looked at whether campers who attended for more summers had different experiences or outcomes compared to those who attended for fewer summers. To do this, we ran statistical tests (Kruskal-Wallis) on survey responses related to joy, belonging, identity, and other key outcomes. These tests did not show any clear or consistent differences based on how many summers someone attended. This could mean that the program has a strong and consistent impact regardless of how long campers participate. However, it is also possible that the smaller number of responses in some attendance groups made it harder to detect meaningful differences.

<sup>5</sup> In this study, “camper years” are defined as summers attended from rising 3rd grade through rising 10th grade, which aligns with the traditional Camp Seneca Lake camper experience. While survey respondents were asked to report the number of summers they attended *as a camper*, some respondents included summers served in staff roles—such as rising 11th grade (trip programs) or rising 12th grade (staff-in-training). As a result, responses indicating more than eight summers as a camper may reflect a combination of camper and early staff years.

<sup>6</sup> The median (8 years) represents the midpoint of the data—half of the respondents attended for more than 8 summers and half for less. We reported both the median and the average (mean) to offer a fuller picture: the average highlights the overall level of attendance, while the median helps account for potential outliers and gives a more typical experience among survey respondents.

Figure 2. Respondent Participation in Activities During the Past 12 Months



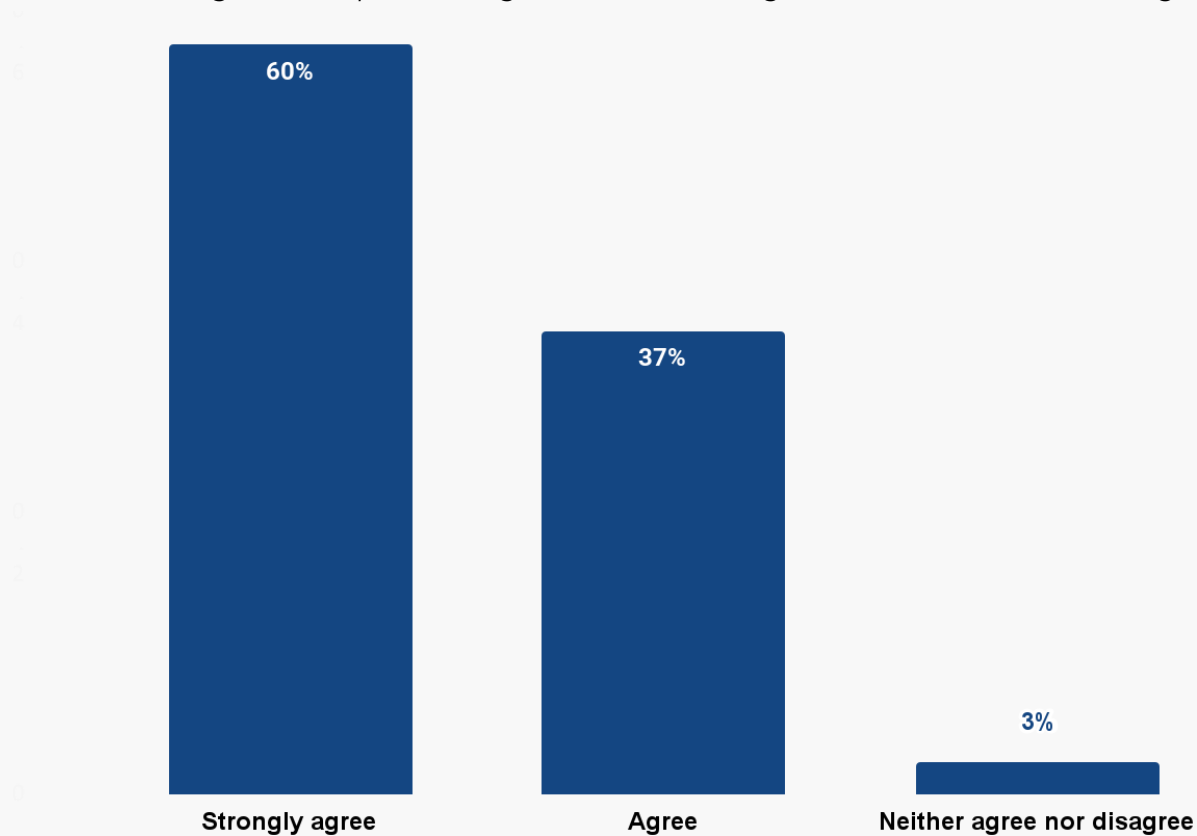
Source: 2025 alumni evaluation survey. Note: n=112.

This finding was also reflected in qualitative data. Survey respondents described how Camp Seneca Lake's programs provided valuable learning experiences related to Jewish tradition. Whether through attending Judaica sessions, learning about Jewish holidays, or participating in events like Tikkun Olam day, alumni were able to gain a deeper understanding of their heritage. Focus group participants similarly described how Camp Seneca Lake introduced them to a range of Jewish rituals, customs, and values in ways that felt "meaningful" and "accessible." This included learning prayers, observing kosher dietary laws, and participating in holiday celebrations. Several participants noted how these experiences helped them to feel more comfortable and knowledgeable when engaging in Jewish practices with their families outside of camp and later in their adult lives.

***"Camp Seneca Lake influenced how I think about being Jewish now where I don't have to agree with this Rabbi or go to that service or practice in any specific way that's going to appease anybody else. I can do it for me and that's, at the end of the day, what's most important."***

**Camp alumni feel connected to their Jewish identity and background.** Most survey respondents (97%) agreed or strongly agreed that they feel a strong connection to their Jewish heritage. In addition, no respondents disagreed with this statement, underscoring a broadly shared sense of cultural identity among Camp Seneca Lake alumni. See Figure 3.

Figure 3. Respondent Agreement on Feeling Connected to Jewish Heritage



Source: 2025 alumni evaluation survey. Note: n=112. Response options for “Disagree” and “Strongly disagree” are not shown, as 0% of respondents selected these options.

**Camp Seneca Lake fosters a joyful, inclusive, and authentic approach to Jewish life, encouraging personal exploration.** Participants described Camp Seneca Lake as a welcoming environment that introduced them to Jewish life through joy and community. For those from areas with few Jewish peers, simply being surrounded by others who shared their heritage was meaningful. Rituals like Shabbat services by the lake, singing after meals, and sharing bagels and lox created a personal, sensory, and communal Jewish experience. In addition, the camp presented Judaism as diverse and open, encouraging campers to explore different practices in ways that felt authentic to them. This approach contrasted with prior experiences in other Jewish settings and made Judaism feel fun, expressive, and alive. The positive associations built at camp left a lasting impression, fostering a greater willingness to explore Jewish life and a continued pursuit of Jewish community.

***“I definitely remain very close with my camp friends. I think a lot of my friends are Jewish, just from different activities I’ve been involved in at camp and in college.”***

# Participant Outcomes

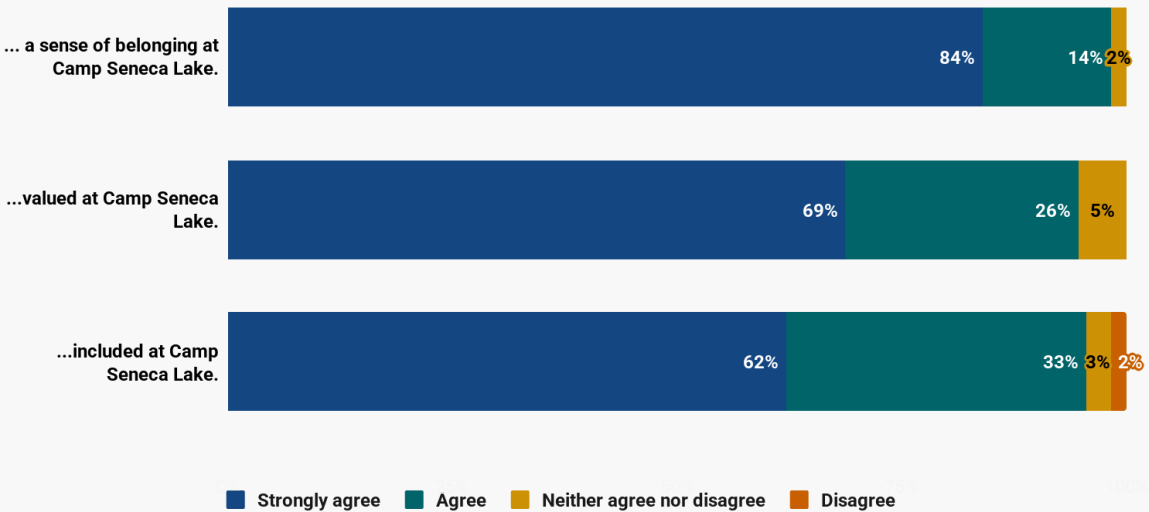
This section of the evaluation report presents findings in response to key research questions, offering a comprehensive analysis of Camp Seneca Lake’s strategic and programmatic effectiveness. These impacts reflect the outcomes and benefits experienced by alumni as a result of their time at camp, including effects on Jewish identity, belonging, and ongoing engagement. Organized by outcome area, each section begins with an overview of key findings across the alumni community, highlighting broad trends and then exploring specific aspects of alumni impact and engagement in greater detail. These analyses provide insight into how different dimensions of the camp experience have shaped outcomes for former campers.

## Outcome 1: Participants form lasting connections with Jewish peers and feel a sense of belonging within a Jewish camp community

**Overall Trend:** Across surveys and focus groups, participants described a range of experiences that made them feel seen, appreciated, and connected at Camp Seneca Lake. These moments—whether through formal leadership roles, expressions of appreciation, or small acts of trust and inclusion—collectively shaped participant sense of belonging within the Camp Seneca Lake community as well as the broader Jewish community.

**Camp Seneca Lake fosters a deeply welcoming environment where campers feel connected and respected.** A majority of survey respondents reported positive experiences related to belonging, value, and inclusion at Camp Seneca Lake. Specifically, 98% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt a sense of belonging, 95% felt valued, and 95% felt included. These findings suggest that the camp is highly successful in creating a community where campers feel seen, supported, and part of something meaningful. See Figure 4.

Figure 4. Respondent agreement on feeling...



Source: 2025 alumni evaluation survey. Note: n=112. Response option for “Strongly disagree” is not shown, as 0% of respondents selected this option.

**Leadership opportunities provide a sense of belonging, growth, and communal responsibility.**

Many alumni felt “very honored” at camp when they were entrusted with leadership responsibilities. These roles often involved guiding peers, supporting younger campers, or representing their cabin, and were remembered as moments when participants felt they were contributing to something bigger than themselves. Alumni who also served as staff members in later years echoed similar sentiments. Planning and leading a camp-wide program or being given autonomy over an activity signaled to them an acknowledgement of their talents and trust in their judgement. They viewed these responsibilities not just as logistical tasks, but as opportunities to shape the Camp Seneca Lake experience for others. When staff were “empowered to lead,” they felt recognized not just for what they could do, but for who they were becoming as mentors, facilitators, and community builders.

***“Everything that I have from leadership is because of Camp [Seneca Lake]. It allowed me to create other leadership opportunities at school and then in work. I would not be the leader I am today without camp.”***

**Alumni consistently emphasize that the Camp Seneca Lake community felt like a family.** From the moment they arrived at camp, participants described feeling enveloped in a warm, welcoming environment. Small, yet meaningful acts—being cheered for during meals, invited into group games, or included in bunk traditions—carried powerful signals to campers that one participant described as: “You belong here. You are part of this.” For many alumni, Camp Seneca Lake came to feel like “a second home”—not just a place they visited each summer, but a place where they were truly known. When alumni return for reunions or alumni events, it is often to reconnect with that feeling: the comfort of being among people who “get you,” the joy of shared tradition, and the affirmation that, at Camp Seneca Lake, everyone belongs.

***“I don't think there is a single memory that would do justice to how included and valued I feel at camp, but I will say that [Camp Seneca Lake] feels like my second home. I feel more comfortable around most camp people than anyone else, I have become myself from camp, and I have been coming back as a staff member for [many] years. All of this is because of how inclusive and amazing camp is.”***

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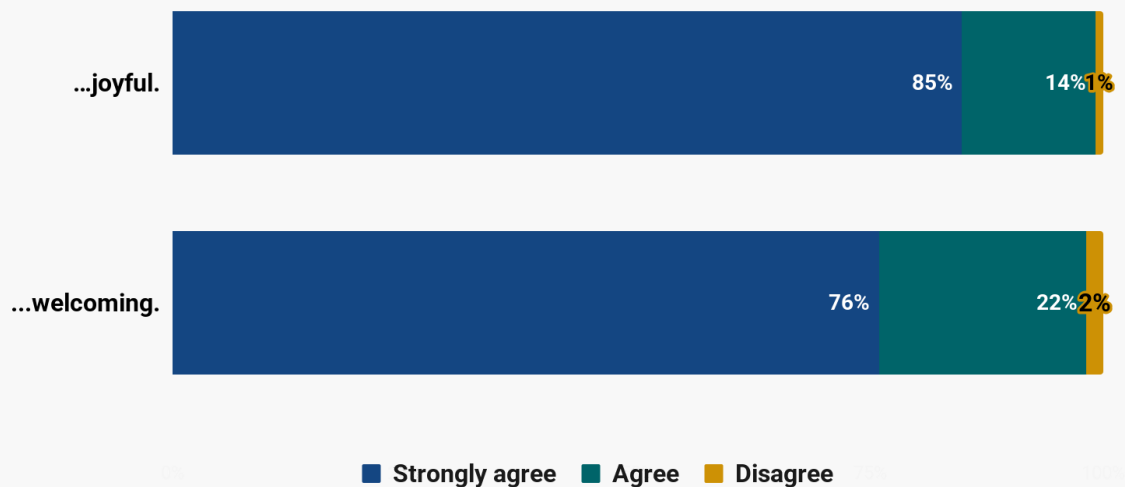
**Outcome 2: Participants experience camp as a joyful, welcoming environment**

**Overall Trend:** When asked how Camp Seneca Lake made them feel happy, welcomed, or supported, alumni painted a picture of a community where joy and acceptance are woven into the everyday rhythms of camp life. Across survey responses and focus groups, alumni emphasized four mutually reinforcing themes: a deep sense of community and belonging, the freedom to express one’s authentic self, the formation of lifelong friendships, and a positive, personally meaningful connection to Jewish identity.



**The majority of participants feel welcomed and joyful at Camp Seneca Lake.** Nearly all respondents reported a highly positive experience at camp, with 99% describing their overall experience as joyful and 98% as welcoming. These findings reflect a strong sense of emotional satisfaction and inclusive community among respondents. See Figure 5.

Figure 5. Respondent agreement on feeling that their overall camp experience was...



Source: 2025 alumni evaluation survey. Note: n=112. Response options for “Neither agree nor disagree” and “Strongly disagree” are not shown, as 0% of respondents selected these options.

**Intentional program design creates a deep sense of belonging and inclusion.** Participants described Camp Seneca Lake as a place where they felt “instantly included and welcomed in the camp community.” Small moments—being brought into a dance circle, waited for at the pool, or invited into a bunk ritual—created a powerful sense of social belonging. Many alumni attributed this to the camp’s “organic yet intentional” program design, which thoughtfully encouraged interaction across bunks, villages, and age groups. Rather than sticking with familiar friends, campers were encouraged to connect beyond their usual circles, helping them to expand their social skills and understanding of community. These inclusive practices not only shaped their camp experience but also laid the foundation for what many described as the most important relationships of their lives.

***“Attending Camp Seneca Lake was one of the most joyful experiences of my life. The combination of being surrounded by my best friends in the world, making meaningful memories, and challenging myself to grow as a person and leader in a supportive community is an experience that is so singular and unique to camp and a testament to the strong traditions and sense of identity forged at and by Camp Seneca Lake.”***

**Camp Seneca Lake offers a culture of acceptance that helped campers to express their authentic selves.** Camp Seneca Lake provided what many participants described as a “rare and transformative”

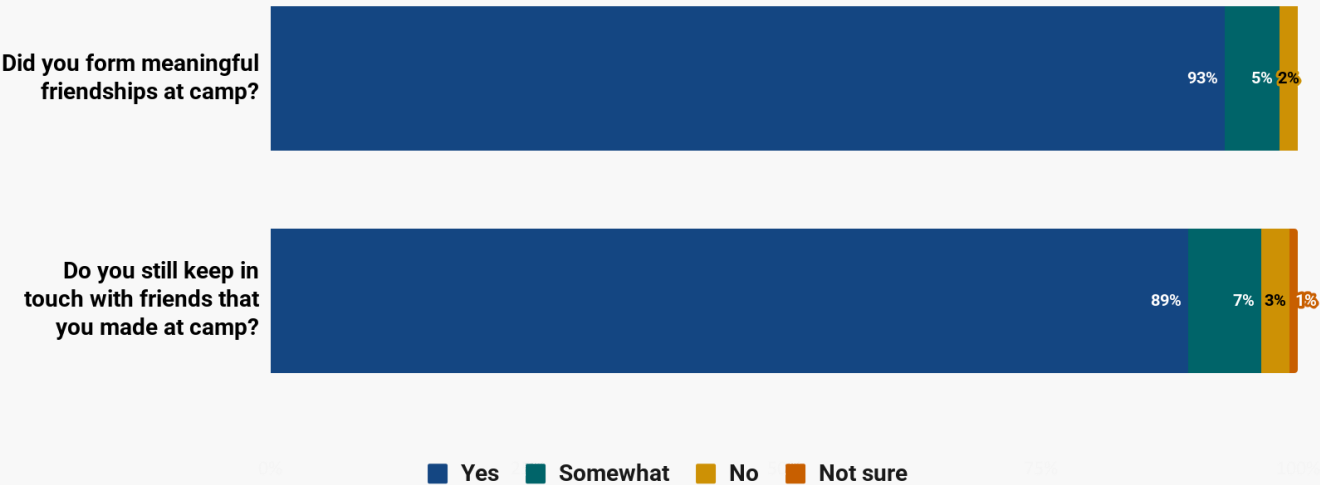
space: one where they “always felt comfortable...to be uniquely [themselves].” Participants reflected on how camp gave them permission to express themselves freely—whether that meant being goofy during a talent show, trying something new without fear of failure, or simply being “weird, loud, or whacky” without judgment. This sense of emotional freedom was reinforced by role models in the form of staff and counselors who brought their full, authentic selves to their roles. Their example helped participants to feel safe enough to take risks, be creative, and explore who they were. Camp Seneca Lake became a place where individuality was not only accepted—it was celebrated.

### Outcome 3: Participants develop meaningful relationships with their peers

**Overall Trend:** Camp consistently emerged as a place where young people formed deep, lasting, and uniquely meaningful relationships. Across both survey responses and focus groups, participants described how the camp environment, programs, and shared experiences contributed to the development of strong peer bonds. These relationships were not only central to their camp experience, but also remained significant in their lives long after their final summer at Camp Seneca Lake.

**Camp Seneca Lake fosters strong friendships, with most alumni maintaining connections well beyond camp.** Most survey respondents reported forming meaningful friendships at camp (93%), and 89% indicated they still keep in touch with those friends. This highlights Camp Seneca Lake’s role in building enduring social connections that extend well beyond the camp experience. See Figure 6.

Figure 6. Respondents Form and Maintain Meaningful Camp Friendships



Source: 2025 alumni evaluation survey. Note: n=112.

**Shared experiences, both structured and informal, lay the foundation for deep, lasting connections among campers.** Alumni described how participating in camp activities together, from major events like Color War to day-to-day programs and rituals, helped them to connect with others.

These experiences created a sense of collective accomplishment and fostered interdependence. Alumni felt that doing hard things together, whether during formal team-building challenges or informal moments of homesickness, created a “trial by fire” dynamic that forged deeper connections. Several participants reinforced this theme, emphasizing that these shared experiences helped to build a common identity among campers. Even unstructured time played a meaningful role; conversations during meals, rest hour, or general swim helped campers to deepen their connections in a more relaxed and authentic way. These bonds were so strong that even after years apart, a simple reconnection could bring camp friends right back to a familiar sense of closeness—“we’re back in it.”

***“Someone once said to me that Camp Seneca Lake is made in the ‘in-between moments.’ Whether through euchre, trading jibbitz, or other seemingly benign activities, Camp Seneca Lake is built and structured in a way that encourages relationships to form during activities - but gives all the time required for them to flourish and become lifelong.”***

**Friendship is one of the most enduring, meaningful, and joyful aspects of camp life.** Alumni consistently described the friendships formed at Camp Seneca Lake as uniquely deep, authentic, and lasting. These were not seen as typical summer connections, but as life-defining relationships grounded in shared experiences, communal living, and Camp Seneca Lake’s values and rituals. The camp environment allowed peers to see one another at their most unfiltered and honest, fostering a level of acceptance and intimacy rarely found elsewhere. Many alumni described these friendships as a primary source of joy and support, noting they “outweigh all others” in emotional significance. One participant recalled meeting a fellow alum for the first time and being able to “instantly connect on these common practices and rituals and experiences,” highlighting how Camp Seneca Lake’s shared language continues to build connections. These bonds often extend into adulthood—sustained through alumni events, group chats, and shared traditions—and continue to shape alumni identities and communities long after camp.

***“I made some of the strongest relationships of my life at camp. By separating you from your devices and forcing (for lack of a better word) you to try new things, you really get to bond with other campers and form life-long friendships built on trust and genuine connection.”***

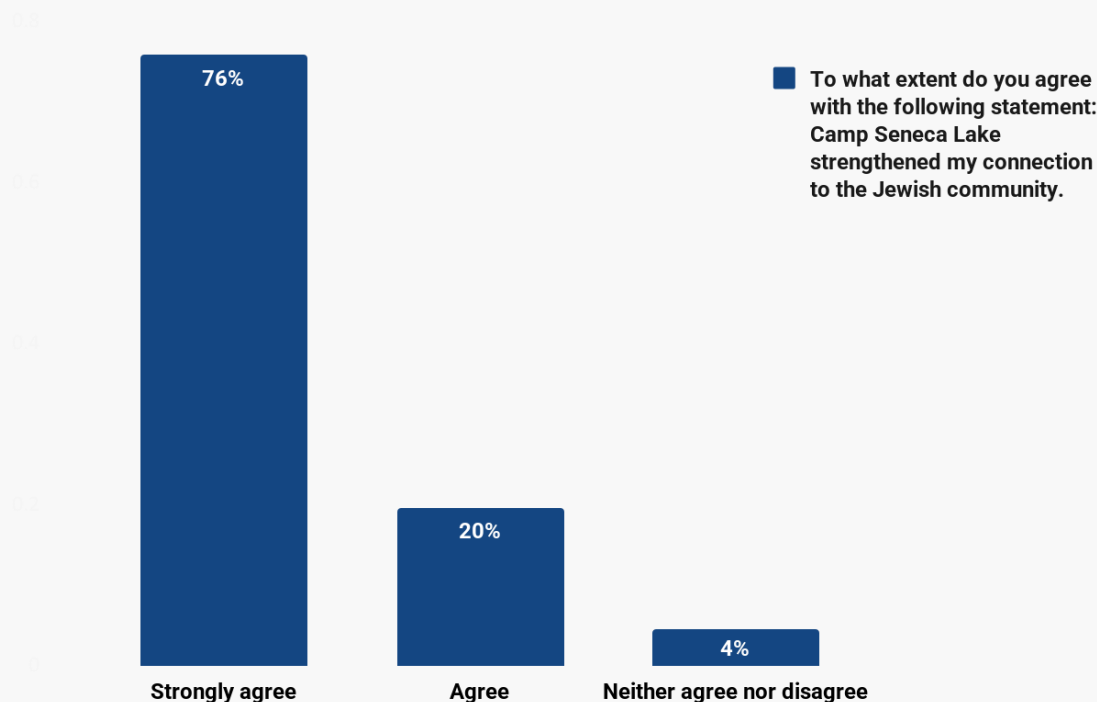
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#### **Outcome 4: Participants feel more connected to the Jewish community**

**Overall Trend:** Participants emphasized how Camp Seneca Lake provided a unique environment to connect with Jewish peers, particularly for those who grew up in areas with small Jewish populations or attended schools with few Jewish students. For many, the opportunity to immerse themselves in a vibrant Jewish community at camp was transformative. Camp helped form friendships that served as a vital support system for staying connected to Jewish life outside of the camp environment.

**Camp plays a vital role in building Jewish communal ties and fostering belonging.** The majority of survey respondents (96%) agreed or strongly agreed that Camp Seneca Lake strengthened their connection to the Jewish community, underscoring the camp's role in fostering a sense of belonging and communal identity. See *Figure 7*.

*Figure 7. Respondents Agreement on Strengthening Connections to the Jewish Community*



*Source: 2025 alumni evaluation survey. Note: n=112. Response options for “Disagree” and “Strongly disagree” are not shown, as 0% of respondents selected these options.*

**Camp Seneca Lake reinforces participants’ connection to Jewish identity and provided a framework for future engagement in Jewish life.** Participants highlighted how Camp Seneca Lake created a space for Jewish campers to build close, lasting ties with people who shared similar values and experiences. For individuals from areas where Jewish communal life was less visible, this was especially important. As one participant explained, “at camp, I didn’t have to explain traditions or feel different.” In addition, the relationships formed at camp often went beyond the summer months, as campers continued to connect through milestone events like Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, attending Jewish youth groups such as B’nai B’rith Youth Organization (BBYO), and celebrating holidays together.

***“Camp was the place that I could have Jewish friends and I think what it really taught me is to continue seeking out those Jewish communities in my adult life.”***

**Camp plays a formative role in shaping Jewish identity and personal connection to tradition.** For many participants, Camp Seneca Lake was a place where they could feel proud of their Jewish identities, especially if they had previously struggled to connect with their Jewish roots. For those who had limited exposure to Jewish traditions before camp, Camp Seneca Lake became the “defining

moment” of their Jewish journeys, where they discovered the richness of their heritage and developed a sense of pride in being Jewish. As one participant shared, “I never once felt ashamed or embarrassed to sing a prayer at camp or display any aspect of my Jewish identity.” Other participants also explained that camp encouraged an understanding of Judaism that was less focused on strict religious observance and more about community and shared values. The camp’s pluralistic approach to Jewish identity—emphasizing that “it’s okay to practice however you want” and that “everyone is still Jewish” regardless of differences in practice—created a foundation for inclusivity.

***“I felt distant from my Jewish identity before coming to Camp Seneca Lake. My experience at camp opened my eyes to the many different ways in which someone can be Jewish, and [I] was able to carve out my own place and understanding rather than trying to fit an existing mold.”***

**Camp Seneca Lake’s influence extends beyond summers—shaping careers, communities, and sustained Jewish connection.** Many alumni spoke about how their camp experience helped them to identify “what’s important” and motivated them to continue exploring Jewish life and culture. Some went on to pursue careers as Jewish professionals, working for Jewish nonprofits or becoming involved in community leadership roles. Others worked to recreate the “camp vibes” in their own Jewish communities by organizing events that reflected the inclusivity and warmth they experienced at camp. In addition, alumni described how Camp Seneca Lake’s impact was not just a momentary experience but a sustained influence on their ongoing Jewish involvement. Whether by participating in Jewish rituals, leading Jewish youth groups, or even traveling to Israel together, many found ways to keep the camp community alive in their adult lives.

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## **Special Key Finding: The Centrality of Shabbat**

**Overall Trend:** Shabbat services at Camp Seneca Lake emerged as a defining feature of the camp experience. For many participants, these weekly services were deeply meaningful and provided a key opportunity to connect with others and experience Judaism in a vibrant and accessible way. Both survey responses and focus group discussions emphasized how Shabbat at camp differed significantly from more formal Jewish practices at home, making it a unique and cherished tradition.

**Shabbat services create powerful moments of shared ritual and community.** Services, particularly those held outdoors at the fire circle by the lake, were described as moments where the entire camp community came together to celebrate. As one participant noted, Shabbat services were a time when everyone was “doing the same thing” and actively participating in the ritual together. Survey responses also emphasized how this communal aspect of Shabbat deepened campers’ sense of belonging, as they felt like they were part of something much larger than themselves. The shared experience of singing the same songs, reciting prayers, and participating in Shabbat rituals created bonds among participants that extended beyond the services themselves, fostering a deeper connection to the Jewish community.

**Shabbat at Camp Seneca Lake nurtured personal, spiritual, and joyful connections to Jewish life.**

For many alumni, Camp Seneca Lake offered their first experience of Shabbat in a welcoming, accessible way that emphasized joy, music, and community over formality. These traditions created lasting memories and helped alumni to see Jewish practice as something personal, flexible, and deeply connected to both nature and relationships. These traditions, which brought the community together in a unique way, are often the memories that alumni reflect on most fondly when looking back at their time at Camp Seneca Lake.

***“...my love of music and nature was started at camp, and the unique Camp Seneca Lake Shabbat service, which is reinforced by the gorgeous view of the lake and the acoustic guitar, is very special to me. Camp Seneca Lake was the first time I genuinely felt a spiritual connection to Judaism, just from something about feeling such a part of our little community week after week at the Fire Circle, really propelled my connection and interest in joining Jewish organizations later on.”***

**Shabbat practices at Camp Seneca Lake were integrated into daily life, reinforcing Jewish identity and connection.** Several participants highlighted how Shabbat practices at Camp Seneca Lake were not limited to Friday night services. Many aspects of Jewish tradition were woven into the daily life at camp, helping participants to internalize these practices and make them a regular part of their routine. For example, activities like baking challah on Thursday or Friday and reciting Birkat HaMazon (the blessing after meals) daily helped participants to integrate Jewish rituals into their everyday lives. This constant reinforcement of Jewish practices allowed them to feel more connected to their Jewish identities, even outside the formal observance of Shabbat.

**Participants view Shabbat as a cornerstone of their ongoing Jewish practice, helping them to stay connected to their faith and community during times when they might otherwise feel disconnected.** For some alumni, returning to camp for Shabbat or participating in virtual Shabbat events became a "tether point" to reconnect with Jewish life and community. These events allowed alumni to maintain the deep connections to Jewish tradition and community that they had formed at Camp Seneca Lake. Replicating the camp-style Shabbat experiences outside of the summer months was seen as a way to preserve these meaningful connections and continue the practice of Shabbat in a way that felt authentic and fulfilling.

***“To this day, Friday night services at camp are the most meaningful part of my Jewish identity. Being surrounded by so many Jewish people in such a beautiful place allowed me to connect with the aspects of Judaism I value the most.”***

## Alumni Considerations

*This section highlights individual key findings from focus groups that, while not directly tied to the core evaluation questions, may hold significance for Camp Seneca Lake's broader planning and strategy, particularly for future alumni engagement. Some of these insights touch on larger organizational themes and strategic opportunities that emerged during the evaluation process. By including these considerations, this section aims to provide additional value and inform future decision-making beyond the immediate scope of the evaluation. It is important to note, however, that these recommendations reflect participant perspectives and do not account for the logistical, staffing, or operational considerations that Camp Seneca Lake would need to address in order to implement them.*

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Participants offered several suggestions for how Camp Seneca Lake could help its alumni to stay connected to the Jewish community. Many participants expressed appreciation for the recent increase in alumni engagement opportunities with Camp Seneca Lake, a positive shift attributed to a new hire dedicated to this initiative, and they voiced interest in continued, intentional programming in this area. A strong emphasis was placed on continuing to build and nurture the alumni community through organized events, reunions, and consistent communication. Creating accessible touchpoints, both physical gatherings and online engagement, was named as crucial. Additionally, providing opportunities for continued Jewish learning and engagement, potentially in creative and engaging formats that reflect Camp Seneca Lake's unique approach to Judaism, was suggested as a way to deepen connections and make it easier for alumni to find Jewish community in their adult lives.

- **Provide opportunities for storytelling and sharing memories:** Alumni deeply value being able to share their memories and stories with others who understand the unique and pivotal camp experience. A few participants specifically noted that seeing “comments on the Facebook feed, people sharing stories and comments” is a valued form of connection. Posting more frequently, perhaps featuring staff members (especially counselors, who alumni deeply relate to) talking about Jewish themes or prayers for Shabbat, could further strengthen connections to the community.

***“One of my favorite things during the off season of camp is to look through the social media and the YouTube and the Facebook and the Instagram for any old pictures...I think people love to see pictures of themselves and other people at camp because it is such a unique shared experience that is so special.”***

- **Organize more regional social hours and events:** Hosting meetups in different cities was mentioned as something that is already happening and is “good for socializing” with peers. Continuing, and potentially expanding, these regional events could be a way to “get the people together” and keep the feeling of community alive among Camp Seneca Lake alumni.
- **Conduct more virtual events:** Remote events, such as virtual Shabbat during the COVID-19 pandemic, were described as a “pretty cool” and “a positive way” to interact with other alumni. Alumni events and opportunities to connect outside of the summer are seen as vital for

maintaining these relationships. Virtual gatherings allow participants to reconnect with familiar faces and experience the feeling of the Camp Seneca Lake community again. The importance of these connections is particularly felt during challenging times, as they provide a way for alumni to seek support from the broader community.

- **Make the physical camp space more accessible to alumni groups, when logistically feasible:** Allowing alumni to use or visit the physical camp grounds more often was suggested as a way to help sustain the institution and its mission. Opportunities for alumni to come back to camp outside of dedicated weekends help them feel appreciated and allow them to maintain their connection to the place and the community.

***“I think one thing camp does well for alumni that I think is unique to Camp Seneca Lake is bringing them back for Shabbat over the summer...And I don't think a lot of other camps do that. And it's nice to like see camp and see like current campers and see your friends who are visiting and for like current staffing campers it's cool to see their old staff.”***

- **Replicate the camp experience in the off-season:** Creating occasional "touchstone" events throughout the year that "replicate that [camp] experience" can keep people engaged, especially among teenagers who primarily want to be with friends and sing songs. This could be an in-person Shabbat dinner that emulates the feeling of being at camp through elements like lighting candles, sitting in a semicircle, or even projecting a picture of Seneca Lake on a screen. These events should be for both staff and campers, supporting their ongoing development.



# Appendices

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## Appendix A: Methodology

### Introduction

This report is based on data collected through 1) an evaluation survey administered to Camp Seneca Lake alumni and 2) focus group discussions with camp alumni. The methodology aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of alumni experiences, long-term engagement with the camp, and the perceived impacts of their camp experiences on Jewish identity, community, and personal growth.

### *Survey Design and Administration*

The survey was developed by the Third Plateau evaluation team and reviewed by key contacts at the Farash Foundation and Camp Seneca Lake to ensure that it aligned with the language and experiences of alumni, accurately reflecting their perspectives and capturing relevant data in a meaningful and culturally appropriate way. The survey included a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions, allowing for both statistical analysis and deeper insights into respondent perspectives.

**Research Sample** An invitation to complete the survey was sent from Camp Seneca Lake using a structured outreach plan across multiple communication channels and a staggered approach in March-April 2025. The outreach was focused on alumni aged 18-35, leveraging peer networks, social media, newsletters, and direct email to maximize engagement. We selected this particular age range as it reflects alumni who are more likely to have experienced recent iterations of Camp Seneca Lake programming, which has evolved significantly in the past decade. Additionally, the data collected from this work will inform the development of a subsequent longitudinal study with current campers, and this age range provides a more relevant point of comparison for understanding the trajectory of campers and younger alumni over time.

The survey employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative survey data and qualitative feedback from open-response questions to assess the impact of Camp Seneca Lake on alumni experiences, Jewish identity, and community engagement. This approach was designed to capture a comprehensive understanding of alumni engagement, long-term connections to the camp, and the perceived value of the camp experience. A total of 112 alumni completed the survey.

**Data Collection and Methods** The survey was distributed electronically using an anonymous survey link developed with the survey software Qualtrics. The survey was designed to be user-friendly and accessible on various devices, including smartphones, tablets, and computers, in order to maximize response rates. Respondents were given three weeks to complete the survey, with reminder notifications sent at specific intervals to encourage participation. Participants who completed the survey were offered a \$25 incentive, which they could choose to receive as a Visa gift card, a gift certificate to BookShop, or as a donation made in their name to Camp Seneca Lake.

Data Analysis	Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical methods in Qualtrics. Frequency distributions, mean scores, and percentage analyses were conducted to summarize responses. Qualitative data from open-ended survey questions were analyzed thematically. Responses were coded in Qualtrics and categorized into key themes to identify common patterns, sentiments, and insights. This qualitative analysis provided context and depth to the quantitative findings, enriching the overall understanding of respondent experiences and broader program impact.
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### *Focus Group Discussions*

Data collection for this stage of the project focused on gleaning insights and perspectives on camp experiences and connections to their Jewish identity among participants.

Research Sample	At the conclusion of the main survey, respondents were provided with a link to a form where they could indicate their interest in participating in a focus group discussion. From this group, outreach was sent to 39 potential participants. A total of 16 participants engaged in four focus group discussions, which were designed to capture diverse perspectives and experiences.
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Data Collection and Methods	This project employed a semi-structured focus group format. This format was ideal because it effectively allowed participants to provide as much detail as possible about their experiences while limiting bias. Third Plateau used the survey findings and the guiding evaluation learning questions to build out an initial focus group guide. Representatives from the Farash Foundation and Camp Seneca Lake then reviewed and provided feedback on the focus group guide. Individuals were invited to participate through an initial outreach email from Third Plateau. Follow-up outreach for non-responsive individuals was also conducted by Third Plateau. All focus groups were conducted between April 9, 2025 and April 22, 2025. All focus groups were 60 minutes in length and took place remotely via Zoom. Canonical social scientific research procedures for obtaining consent were followed. Participants who completed the focus group were offered a \$50 incentive in the form of a Visa gift card.
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Data Analysis	Focus groups were conducted and transcribed in Zoom. Collected materials were then analyzed using a thematic analysis approach.. While the overall evaluation was guided by a logic model, the qualitative analysis was conducted inductively by using grounded-theory informed coding techniques to allow themes to emerge from participant responses. Grounded theory is a reliable social scientific approach that helps researchers to understand complex issues by carefully studying and analyzing real-world information from an objective lens. It begins by first gathering key data related to the research topic and then conducting an iterative coding process that repeats and builds upon itself until saturation is reached. This ultimately reveals the complete picture expressed by the data, much like putting together pieces of a puzzle. All analysis procedures for this part of the project were performed using a flexible qualitative data software program called MAXQDA that allows for in-depth coding, indexing, and evaluation of trends across complex datasets.
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### *Limitations*

While the methodology described above provided robust data, several limitations should be acknowledged:

*Sampling Bias:* Respondents who completed the survey and expressed interest in participating in focus groups may be more positively inclined toward Camp Seneca Lake or more actively engaged in alumni networks. As a result, their perspectives could overrepresent favorable experiences compared to those of less engaged or more critical alumni.

*Self-Reported Data:* The reliance on self-reported data in surveys and focus group discussions may introduce social desirability bias, where respondents could provide responses that they believe are expected rather than representative of their true feelings or behaviors.

*Survey Respondent Sample Composition:* The composition of survey respondents is limited to alumni ages 18-35 and therefore does not fully represent the broader alumni population in terms of age, camp era, or potentially engagement level. This could limit the generalizability of the findings to the entire alumni community.

*Focus Group Sample Size:* The relatively small number of focus group participants (n=16) may have limited the diversity of perspectives captured, particularly from underrepresented segments of the alumni base.

Despite these limitations, the combined use of quantitative and qualitative data across the survey and focus groups offers a well-rounded understanding of alumni experiences. This mixed-methods approach allowed the evaluation to balance breadth and depth, supporting meaningful conclusions and actionable recommendations.

## Appendix B: Survey Language

### *Opening Language*

Camp Seneca Lake, in partnership with the Farash Foundation, is seeking to understand how effective its programming is in achieving positive outcomes for campers. To help with this, they have engaged our organization, Third Plateau. A key part of this effort is understanding your experience as a former camper, and we would greatly value your input. This 10-minute survey will ask you about your experiences at Camp Seneca Lake and your Jewish identity. As a thank-you for your time, participants who complete the survey will receive a \$25 item of their choice: a Visa gift card, a donation to Camp Seneca Lake, or a gift certificate to BookShop. Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary, and there won't be any negative consequences if you choose not to participate. You can also stop the survey at any time. However, please note that if you choose to stop, we may still use the data you have already shared unless you ask us not to. Your individual responses will be kept confidential within the Third Plateau project team and will not be shared with anyone outside of our team. We will only share aggregated findings (presented in a summarized form) with Camp Seneca Lake and the Farash Foundation. If you have any questions about the survey or encounter any technical issues, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at [surveys@thirdplateau.com](mailto:surveys@thirdplateau.com). We are here to assist you with any questions about the research, your rights as a participant, or any difficulties completing the survey.

### *Background Questions*

1. Would you like to participate in this survey?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
    - i. We are sorry to see you go. If you are willing, please tell us why you would rather not take the survey.
2. What year were you born?
  - a. 1989
  - b. 1990
  - c. 1991
  - d. 1992
  - e. 1993
  - f. 1994
  - g. 1995
  - h. 1996
  - i. 1997
  - j. 1998
  - k. 1999
  - l. 2000
  - m. 2001
  - n. 2002
  - o. 2003
  - p. 2004
  - q. 2005
  - r. 2006
  - s. 2007
  - t. Other
3. About how many summers did you attend Camp Seneca Lake as a camper?

- a. 1 summer
  - b. 2 summers
  - c. 3 summers
  - d. 4 summers
  - e. 5 summers
  - f. 6 summers
  - g. 7 summers
  - h. 8 summers
  - i. 9 summers
  - j. 10 summers
  - k. More than 10 summers
4. Which of the following activities have you engaged in during the past 12 months? (Check all that apply)
- a. Participated in a Jewish leadership experience
  - b. Attended synagogue or Jewish services
  - c. Observed Jewish holidays
  - d. Celebrated Shabbat
  - e. Participated in a Jewish social group or organization
  - f. Engaged in Jewish learning (e.g., Torah study, classes)
  - g. Read about Jewish or Israeli topics
  - h. Other (please specify)
  - i. I am not currently involved in any Jewish activities
5. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: I feel a strong connection to my Jewish heritage.
- a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neither agree nor disagree
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree

### *Outcome Questions*

We are interested in learning more about your overall experience at Camp Seneca Lake and how it has impacted you. Please take a moment to reflect on your experiences before responding to the questions below.

1. How much do you agree with the following statements?
- a. I felt a sense of belonging at Camp Seneca Lake.
    - i. Strongly agree
    - ii. Agree
    - iii. Neither agree nor disagree
    - iv. Disagree
    - v. Strongly disagree
  - b. I felt valued at Camp Seneca Lake.
    - i. Strongly agree
    - ii. Agree
    - iii. Neither agree nor disagree
    - iv. Disagree

- v. Strongly disagree
  - c. I felt included at Camp Seneca Lake.
    - i. Strongly agree
    - ii. Agree
    - iii. Neither agree nor disagree
    - iv. Disagree
    - v. Strongly disagree
- 2. Can you share a memory of when you felt particularly included or valued at Camp Seneca Lake?
- 3. How much do you agree with the following statements?
  - a. My overall camp experience was joyful.
    - i. Strongly agree
    - ii. Agree
    - iii. Neither agree nor disagree
    - iv. Disagree
    - v. Strongly disagree
  - b. My overall camp experience was welcoming.
    - i. Strongly agree
    - ii. Agree
    - iii. Neither agree nor disagree
    - iv. Disagree
    - v. Strongly disagree
- 4. In what ways, if any, did attending Camp Seneca Lake make you feel happy, welcomed, or supported?
- 5. Did you form meaningful friendships at camp?
  - a. Yes
  - b. Somewhat
  - c. No
  - d. Not sure
- 6. Do you still keep in touch with friends that you made at camp?
  - a. Yes
  - b. Somewhat
  - c. No
  - d. Not sure
- 7. How, if at all, did camp help you to strengthen your relationships with other campers?
- 8. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Camp Seneca Lake strengthened my connection to the Jewish community.
  - a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neither agree nor disagree
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree

9. Can you share an example of how your camp experience influenced your connection to the Jewish community?

*Closing Language*

1. In appreciation of your participation, the Farash Foundation is offering a \$25 gift through one of the following ways: 1) a donation to Camp Seneca Lake, 2) a gift card to the BookShop, or 3) a Visa gift card. If you would like to receive one of the following items, please provide your full name and gift selection below. Your name will only be used for the purpose of sending the selected item and will not be associated with your survey responses. Please allow 7-10 business days to receive your incentive. If you do not want to receive a \$25 gift, please move to the next question.
  - a. Name
  - b. Email Address
2. Form of gift
  - a. Donation to Camp Seneca Lake
  - b. BookShop gift card
  - c. Visa gift card
3. Would you like to make the donation in honor or memory of someone?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
4. Camp Seneca Lake's broader evaluation will also involve virtual focus groups facilitated by Third Plateau. If you would be interested in potentially participating in one of these focus groups, please select "yes" and you will be redirected to an additional form after completion of this survey. If selected to participate, participants will receive a \$50 item of their choice: a Visa gift card, a donation to Camp Seneca Lake, or a gift certificate to BookShop. Your name will only be used to indicate interest in the focus groups will not be connected to your survey responses.
  - a. Yes - please see link on the following page to submit interest
  - b. No

## Appendix C: Focus Group Protocol

**Date and time:**

**Facilitator:**

**Note Taker:**

**Participants:**

### Introduction [4 minutes]

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm a \_\_\_\_\_ at Third Plateau, which is a social impact consulting firm.

We have partnered with Camp Seneca Lake to help us understand the relationship between attending camp and feeling connected to the Jewish community. We are specifically interested in understanding your experiences at Camp Seneca Lake and how they may have influenced your sense of community and identity. The experiences and perspectives you share in this focus group will help to shape our understanding of camp's impact and inform recommendations to enhance camp programming.

- Your participation in this conversation is completely voluntary, and our discussion will take approximately 60 minutes.
- I will be leading us through this conversation [*and \_\_\_\_\_ will be taking notes*].
- If at any point you need to pause or take a break, please feel free to do so.
- Because there is a lot to get through in a short amount of time, I might gently nudge us along to make sure we cover everything and to also ensure that we end on time.
- Anything we talk about will be confidential within the Third Plateau team. We may paraphrase or use direct quotes from the information you share, but we won't attribute any of the information directly to you.
- We encourage all participants to respect the confidentiality of what is shared in this focus group. While we cannot guarantee complete confidentiality, we ask everyone to be mindful and avoid sharing others' experiences or comments outside of this discussion.
- We'll be speaking with about 12-20 individuals total. After we complete all of the focus groups, we will synthesize our key takeaways from these conversations and share these with Camp Seneca Lake to inform their future work.

**Do you have any questions before we begin?**

**Would you like to participate in this focus group?**

**Do I have your permission to transcribe this conversation in Zoom?** It will only be used for our internal notes and will not be shared with anyone.

### INTRODUCTIONS

*Before we dive into the focus group questions, I would like everyone to get a chance to introduce themselves and share more about their connection to Camp Seneca Lake.*

1. What is your name?
2. Where do you currently live?
3. What was your favorite tradition, activity, or event at Camp Seneca Lake [this can be anything, whether it was a formal part of the programming or something that you created informally with your friends]? What makes it your favorite?

**Research Question 1: To what extent, if any, does attending camp increase the likelihood that a Jewish child identifies with and celebrates their Judaism as an adult?**

*Now I would like to shift gears a little bit and ask specifically about Jewish traditions or practices that you engaged in at camp.*



1. Are there any Jewish traditions or practices from camp that inform the way you practice Judaism today?
2. What is one way that attending Camp Seneca Lake influenced how you think about being Jewish?
3. Can you describe a moment at camp that made you feel more connected to Jewish life or Jewish tradition?

**Research Question 2: To what extent, if any, do camp alumni feel positively connected and engaged with the Jewish community?**

*We are also interested in learning more about the connections that campers developed with the broader Jewish community while attending Camp Seneca Lake.*

1. How would you describe your connection to the Jewish community today?
  - a. *Facilitation Note: Jewish community just means however you define it. This could be a Jewish community or communities you are a part of, if you identify as part of the American Jewish community, global Jewish community, etc.*
2. Looking back, how did Camp Seneca Lake shape your understanding of what it means to be part of the Jewish community?
  - a. *What about your sense of belonging to the Jewish community?*

**Research Question 3: What variables, if any, impact long-lasting Jewish connections and engagement for alumni?**

*Finally, we would like to ask a few questions about how attending camp has influenced your current engagement with the Jewish community.*

1. When you look back on your camp experience, what, if anything, has made it easier to stay engaged with the Jewish community?
2. What about harder or more difficult to stay engaged with the Jewish community?
3. If Camp Seneca Lake could do one thing to help current campers to stay connected to the Jewish community after they leave, what should it be?

## Appendix D: Crosswalk Table

Research Question	Related Outcome(s)
To what extent, if any, does attending Camp Seneca Lake increase the likelihood that a Jewish child identifies with and celebrates their Judaism as an adult?	Participants form lasting connections with Jewish peers and feel a sense of belonging within a Jewish community
To what extent, if any, do Camp Seneca Lake alumni feel positively connected and engaged with the Jewish community?	<p>Participants form lasting connections with Jewish peers and feel a sense of belonging within a Jewish community</p> <p>Participants experience camp as a joyful, welcoming environment</p> <p>Participants feel more connected to the Jewish community</p>
What variables, if any, impact long-lasting Jewish connections and engagement for alumni?	<p>Participants develop meaningful relationships with their peers</p> <p>Participants feel more connected to the Jewish community</p>

