MAJOR CONCLUSIONS: LWLBC INC. ASSESSMENT

Paul Hill, author 8/2015
With thanks to the many contributions of the LWLBC, Inc. Team and Constituency

Guiding Principle for this Assessment:

In his book, *The Five Mistakes of a CEO,* author Patrick Lencioni states that CEO's should seek "clarity over harmony". Obviously, we all like to get along, and church people even more so. However, the price of seeking harmony can cloud our honest judgment of things. As a result, necessary clarity and change can be delayed, avoided, or ignored. LWLBC Inc. has a long and successful history. This is to be acknowledged and celebrated. In addition, following a long tenure it is good for an organization to review itself from "stem to stern". This is necessary and it is also healthy. This is the rationale for this assessment.

Purpose:

The purposes of this six-month assessment of LWLBC Inc. are to:

1. Offer an independent review of LWLBC Inc. following the long tenure of a beloved leader.
2. Listen to key stakeholders, users, and all team members of LWLBC Inc. for the purposes of assessment and future planning.
3. Create a healthy and critical dialogue amongst the team, board, and membership regarding the past ministries of LWLBC Inc.
4. Create a healthy and critical dialogue amongst the team, board and membership regarding future organizational development and ministries of LWLBC Inc.
5. Identify any short-term or immediate issues that need to be addressed.
6. Create new one-year team member contracts based upon a program, organizational, personnel and budgetary review.
7. Stage the team, board and organization for future strategic designs.

The Methodology for this Assessment:

This assessment has been conducted since Feb. 1, 2015 by the new executive director in consultation with many team members, outside experts and stakeholders, and member constituencies. It should be noted that this assessment took place concurrently with LWLBC Inc. undergoing a $1,300,000 capital campaign, the purchase of Wilderness Canoe Base, the initiating of a new board structure, and the managing of various historical and current camper issues. Thus, the assessment took a little longer than initially planned. The assessment included the following activities:

- The new executive director initially interviewed every year-round team member. These interviews ranged from 1-5 hours in duration.
- The new ED did multiple repeat interviews and dialogue conversations with year-round team members throughout the winter, spring and summer.
- The new ED held 26 face-to-face member congregation, pastor, youth worker, and leader interviews throughout the winter and spring of 2015.
- A "Strength Finders" inventory was done of the entire LWLBC Inc. year round team and a one-day processing retreat was facilitated by Rev. Nancy Lee Gauche.

- A "Provolutionary Curve" survey was done with the Executive Committee and year-round team members.
- Approximately 20-25 boat cruises, dialogues, and interviews were held at WAPO, Ox Lake, and Luther Dell with participating pastors, youth workers, donors, stakeholders, and leaders.
- Approximately 30 face-to-face, or phone conversations took place with various stakeholders, elders, founders and leaders of the various sites and constituencies.
- Informal conversations with the ED have taken place at "boat-ins", special events etc.
- A statistical comparative review of camper usage over the past five years was done.
- A statistical comparative review of the budget over the past five years was done.
- A walk through review and inventory of all four LWLBC Inc. sites and facilities.

What this Assessment does not currently include:

The crunch of time and the need for involving larger assessment teams limit what has been reviewed and/or not deeply explored. Any future strategic design work would, and should, expand the number of eyes and ears involved in further review of both the internal and external issues and items relating to LWLBC Inc. A non-exhaustive list of items that require further review would include:

- Age appropriate methodologies for all programs, activities, Bible studies, worships etc.
- Operational review of various camp activities especially as it relates to the targeted audiences (i.e. family camp practices vs. summer camper practices)
- Deep and thorough review of the Twin Cities and Amery markets and constituencies.
- Deep and thorough sociological, cultural, demographic, ethnic, and familial changes as they relates to the programs and program designs at LWLBC Inc.
- Exploratory study of future markets, clients and ministry opportunities.

Assessment Conclusions:

1. **LWLBC Inc. has a strong and healthy tradition of connecting with and serving the congregations of its membership.**
    a. Summer camper enrollment on the WAPO site is booked by congregation thus linking summer camp back to the congregational context. The "whole congregation" comes to camp!! This is unique in the industry and a huge strength.
    b. The model referenced above, applies less to the other sites depending upon location and facilities.
    c. Currently, the membership model, primarily at the WAPO site, shows a slight increase in camper day usage. There is lots of room for growth with current and new congregations to renew the "whole congregation" approach to outdoor ministries.

2. **LWLBC Inc. has a strong Lutheran identity expressed through evangelical outreach and personal piety.**

a. This particular "brand" of Lutheranism has a long, faithful, and historical following in the Twin Cities and with international partners.
b. LWLBC Inc. has a good sense of historical and theological identity.
c. LWLBC Inc. also has a reputation for being less flexible theologically as it relates to gender and sexuality, patriarchal/non-inclusive worship language, and atonement theologies (to the exclusion of other expressions.)
    i. For example, age appropriate understandings of Jesus could be nuanced for the wide range of summer youth campers.
d. Significantly, as the WCB/WAPO relationship has developed over the years, significant theological flexibility and maturing has taken place.
e. There is wide and tolerant theological "broad band" within the team (especially the site directors) to respect a variety of theological points of view.
f. The LWLBC Inc. system manages a wide variety of theological perspectives well such as; conservative evangelical, liberal, Greek Orthodox, mainline Protestant, etc.

3. **LWLBC Inc. has a strong and healthy tradition of identifying and training summer staff and leaders, and building multiple generations of loyalty to the ministries of LWLBC, Inc.**
    a. Loyalty of summer staff to the various sites and ministries is a hallmark of the organization.
    b. The site directors are strong leaders and some of the most vital assets to the organization.
    c. Staff selection, especially summer staff, has not evolved to include the changing demographics of the Twin Cities and surrounding communities.

4. **A major advantage of the WAPO site is its proximity to the Twin Cities, and the largest Lutheran population in the United States. There is also a real danger to the organization because of this.**
    a. This proximity masks a pending challenge for the organization, that being, "member" congregations and the ELCA are in decline. (See Appendix). Many congregational leaders interviewed talk of the struggle of involving youth, families, declining worship attendance etc.
    b. A review of the Minneapolis and St. Paul Synod parochial reports shows a decline of 6% in baptisms and 15% in worship attendance from 2009-2013. Be mindful that 40% of the congregations of these two synods use LWLBC, Inc.
    c. LWLBC Inc. has some limited time to expand and grow new ministries before the repercussions of the decline of the ELCA manifest themselves even more than is currently shown.
    d. Staff selection, especially summer staff, has not evolved to include the changing demographics of the LWLBC, Inc. constituency and surrounding communities.
    e. New strategies for connecting with non-white, non-middle class, non-Lutheran, non-heterosexual audiences are desperately needed.

5. **LWLBC, Inc. has performed significant good service to the church by supporting struggling outdoor ministries. This service has also created significant confusion within the system.**
    a. WCB is the particular beneficiary of this good service despite differences with the WAPO ministry in theology, culture, program and personnel. LWLBC, Inc. has done the regional and national church a great service by saving this site and ministry. This effort may be the most significant accomplishment in Lutheran camping nationwide in more than a decade. It should be noted that 30% of summer programming at WCB comes from Project Success. This is good outreach work.
    b. It is less clear how purchasing Luther Dell has been beneficial, or has significantly reversed the trajectory of Luther Dell. The Luther Dell site is most physically in decay, but significant progress has been made, even this past summer. Distance presents a real challenge to the viability of the site, even though the final destination is beautiful and the facilities are improving. Unlike the other sites, there is no large and natural constituency for Luther Dell. There are a couple emerging member constituencies. It is unclear if this is trending.
    c. Having "saved" a couple camps, it is critical to note that "due diligence" was **not** done regarding ascertaining viable business, program, marketing, site, user, staffing, or strategic designs or plans when these sites were purchased/taken over. This lack of study and preparation to absorb these sites has left the staff, board, and membership somewhat confused and unfocused as to why and how to maximize these sites.
    d. The lack of clarity regarding how all the sites fit together has created constituencies for each site, but not necessarily a unified voice for the whole system. There is the danger, and some evidence of it, that these constituencies are competing with one another.

6. **LWLBC, Inc. has a healthy tradition of engaging users and supporters in a wide variety of events and event traditions.**
    a. Dinner theatre, golf events, boat-in, Stillwater dinner and boat cruise etc. play a vital and vibrant role in the life of the organization.
    b. Nearly all these events are staff driven.

7. **LWLBC Inc. practices in hiring and developing year round leaders and staff is "complicated".**
    a. More open processes for hiring, clarity of job descriptions and duties, adequate human resources training, and continuing education opportunities are needed.

8. **On the STRENGTHFINDERS profile the LWLBC Inc. team shows areas of dramatic strength, and significant areas where human resource development needs to take place.**

a. Not surprisingly, the LWLBC Inc. team scores very highly in two of the four STRENGTHFINDERS clusters; RELATIONSHIP BUILDING and EXECUTING.
    i. The RELATIONSHIP BUILDING cluster of strengths is defined in this way:
    Those who lead through Relationship Building are the essential glue that holds a team together. Without these strengths on a team, in many cases, the group is simply a composite of individuals. In contrast, leaders with exceptional Relationship Building strength have the unique ability to create groups and organizations that are much greater than the sum of their parts.
    ii. The EXECUTING cluster of strengths is defined in this way:
    Leaders with dominant strength in the Executing domain know how to make things happen. When you need someone to implement a solution, these are the people who will work tirelessly to get it done. Leaders with a strength to execute have the ability to "catch" an idea and make it a reality.
b. Significantly, (and this goes a long way to explaining how matters of planning, board development, and "exercising due diligence" have been neglected) the team scores very low in the areas of STRATEGIC THINKING, and INFLUENCING. The highest score for full-time team members in the STRATEGIC THINKING cluster is a 3 out of a possible 5 (and there is only one), meaning that no one on the current team has STRATEGIC THINKING as their highest strength. The highest score in INFLUENCING is a 3 out of a possible 5, and none of these people are full time employees. **Footnote:** These scores do not reflect the previous or current executive director strengths.
    i. The STRATEGIC THINKING cluster of strengths is defined in this way:
    Leaders with great Strategic Thinking strengths are the ones who keep us all focused on what could be. They are constantly absorbing and analyzing information and helping the team make better decisions. People with strength in this domain continually stretch our thinking for the future.
    ii. The INFLUENCING cluster of strengths is defined in this way:
    Those who lead by Influencing help their team reach a much broader audience. People with strength in this domain are always selling the team's ideas inside and outside the organization. When you need someone to take charge, speak up, and make sure your group is heard, look to someone with the strength to influence

9. LWLBC Inc. lacks clarity regarding the overall mission of the organization and how that mission is widely owned and carried out at each site.
a. For example, international programs and involvement, while widely publicized, are not deeply owned or appreciated within the staff.
b. There is no consensus regarding how each of the sites fit together with one another (if they should), or what the unique and vital "niches" are. This is particularly true as it relates to Ox Lake and Luther Dell.

c. Full board engagement and restructuring is needed to address this matter.

10. **Lack of clarity regarding the mission stems, in part, from a board that has not served as an equal partner with the executive director.**
    a. The board has functioned to react rather than initiate, and to approve rather than frame and direct.
    b. The board needs to work in close partnership with the membership, executive director, and team to set a clear mission, specific strategies, core values, specific "ends", and outcomes expected.

11. **The current board structure is insufficient to address the items addressed in #10, and needs to be redesigned with new bylaws and limitations documents.**
    a. The eager willingness of the board to completely reinvent itself along the lines of a modified Policy Based Governance model is of major significance and import for the future of LWLBC Inc.

12. **LWLBC Inc. is great at a few things, and good at too many others. The efforts on the "good" are depleting LWLBC Inc. of the things at which it should be great.**
    a. "Good is the enemy of Great" (Jim Collins) is most true in the LWLBC Inc. system.
    b. Difficult, but necessary, conversation at the board/team level needs to take place to give direction to what the organization needs to be "great" at now and into the future. Otherwise, the "good" things will continue to drain the "great" things leaving the whole organization exhausted and less impactful. Some examples of this principle include:
        i. WAPO is great as a residential summer camp, however, lack of development of the site (dining hall, parking etc.), and pressure to "pack more people in" is leading to WAPO sliding into good.
        ii. WAPO retreating is "good" and could be "great". However the lack of upgrades to the facilities, plus hosting and hospitality issues prevent the retreating ministry from being "great".
        iii. WCB has regained its "great" status as a high adventure camp done with expertise, and reaching out to underprivileged audiences as well as church audiences.
        iv. The "greatness" of Luther Dell and Ox Lake remains less clear.

13. **While there is, by no means, consensus regarding the trajectory of the ministry of LWLBC Inc. there is significant clustering of opinion amongst the team and executive committee.** (These results don't necessarily reflect the reality of the system, or any individual camp, but they do show what people "think" or "feel" is the reality.)
    a. Based upon the PROVOLUTIONARY CURVE (see appendices) the following general conclusions can be made: (NOTE: the difference in numerical responses reflects that some respondents marked the curve for LWLBC Inc. as a whole, while others broke it out by camp.)

i. A majority (19) see WAPO having peaked and moving into the early stages of institutional doubt, leading to a "conserve it" rather than "grow it" mentality. Only three respondents see WAPO still on an "up and to the right" trajectory, with 3 others seeing it in "operational doubt" and in need of "reform".
ii. Six respondents see WCB in an "up and to the right" growth trajectory, with seven others seeing it in the very early stages of decline.
iii. Six respondents see OX in an "up and to the right" growth trajectory. Significantly, seven respondents see OX in early or mid-range decline with 6 respondents reporting it at or below, the "critical point".
iv. Five respondents see Luther Dell in an "up and to the right" trajectory, while 12 respondents see Luther Dell in "operational or ideological doubt".

14. LWLBC Inc. guest usage varies widely based upon the site and season. There is great variety and complexity in guest usage, thus "all the eggs" are not in one basket. This is a strength of the system.

a. The overall system shows a decline in usage (2010-16,883 compared to 2014-16,199) of 684, or a 4% decline.
b. Significantly, the system shows a dramatic increase in usage when comparing 1997 to 2014 of 6,179 guests, or a 38% increase!

15. Summer camper usage shows (2010-2014) modest growth to plateauing on the WAPO site, a dramatic and steady decline at the Ox site, and some modest growth at Luther Dell (2014) and WCB (2013 and 2014).

a. WAPO: 2010 vs. 2014: 356 camper increase of 8%.
   i. Camper days up 3% from 2009-2014.
b. OX LAKE: 2010 vs. 2014: 182 camper decrease of 25%
   i. Camper days down 40% from 2009-2014.
c. LUTHERDELL: 2010 vs. 2014: 127 camper decrease of 17%
   i. Camper days down 31% from 2009-2014.
   ii. Luther Dell showed a **spike increase** in 2014 vs. 2013 of 92 campers, or a 15% increase.
d. WCB: 2010 vs. 2014: 242 camper decrease of 25%
   i. Camper days down 22% from 2009-2014.
   ii. WCB does trend upward in 2013-778 campers and 2014-761 campers as compared to 2012-556 campers, or a 27% increase

16. Year round (retreat) usage at the WAPO site makes up a significant portion of the ministry and budget of LWLBC Inc. Further study regarding the demographic usage and time of the week usage needs to be done.

a. Overnight stays by retreat groups are longer, but the groups are smaller.
b. More adult groups coming to the WAPO site for retreating means there is a need for more comfort, more amenities, and better facilities.
c. Retreat revenue is up 3% from 2011-2014.

d. Single day users/banquets has dropped by 24% from 2010-2014.

17. Currently, the Ox Lake and Luther Dell facilities do not lend themselves to significant retreat usage beyond the summer months.

a. Regarding retreating and year round usage, Ox Lake in particular seems like a "diamond in the rough". As a strategic planning process gets underway, the question of how to better maximize Ox Lake year round should be addressed.
b. The low and high ropes course provides some opportunities for Spring and Fall retreat groups at Ox Lake.

18. WCB retreat usage figures vary significantly from year to year. It is unclear why this is the case.

a. Distance is a major issue for WCB regarding weekend retreating and the costs for winter heating is high.
b. More study needs to take place to get a clearer picture of what can, and cannot be done at WCB year round.

19. LWLBC Inc. has not seriously engaged the many cultural, ethnographic, social and familial changes taking place in the larger society.

a. Demographic shifts are not reflected in users, board, or staff. LWLBC Inc. board, staff, constituency is mostly white, middle class, older (board), heterosexual.
b. The many changes in the family structure and how the family experiences time and time pressures are not considered in planning deliberations.
c. Strategies for reaching poor, immigrant, or multi-cultural populations are in need of being developed further.

20. The financial accounting system at LWLBC, Inc. serves the organization well.

a. The many years of diligent tending by the accounting team are a hallmark of the organization.
b. The debt load of LWLBC Inc. seems manageable, but a future capital campaign should include debt reduction as a part of the appeal.
c. Financial trends trend slightly downward (see Appendix D).

21. The physical plant and facilities of WAPO and WCB are in excellent condition, despite their age and heavy usage.

a. The Crossfire building at WAPO, in particular, is a wonderful and flexible facility. The usage is heavy and it is now 10 years old. This raises the question of the need for refreshing and upgrades.
b. Whereas progress is being made, the physical plant and facilities of Ox Lake and Luther Dell are in significant need of upgrading and repair. The question to consider is how much effort should go into these sites given their usage and trend lines. Remember, "good is the enemy of great." Clarity of the mission of both of these sites will help determine whether and types of upgrades to be made.
c. Replacing Paul Halverson is a critical priority on the WAPO site.

d. Bill Middlesworth provides excellent work and leadership for the physical plant at WCB.

22. The technology/software at LWLBC Inc. is poor or passable. Both registration and development software need upgrading.

a. The current team needs to be empowered to resolve these problems at this time. Outside consulting is needed.

23. LWLBC Inc. needs to develop a robust, full spectrum development program to support a sophisticated and large camping ministry.

a. Proactive enlistment and election of new board members.
b. A growing pipeline of individual and organizational major donor prospects.
c. A concerted planned giving focus, especially during the current period of wealth transfer.
d. A growing sustained/annual giving program.
e. Evaluating and reconstructing event fundraising/friend-raising strategies.
f. A growing number of engaged volunteers.
g. A development services function.
h. A communications function.

24. A system wide strategic assessment and plan needs to be developed.

a. This effort should be the top priority of the newly designed board of directors.
b. A coherent, system wide strategic design and plan will drive effective fundraising and volunteer efforts.

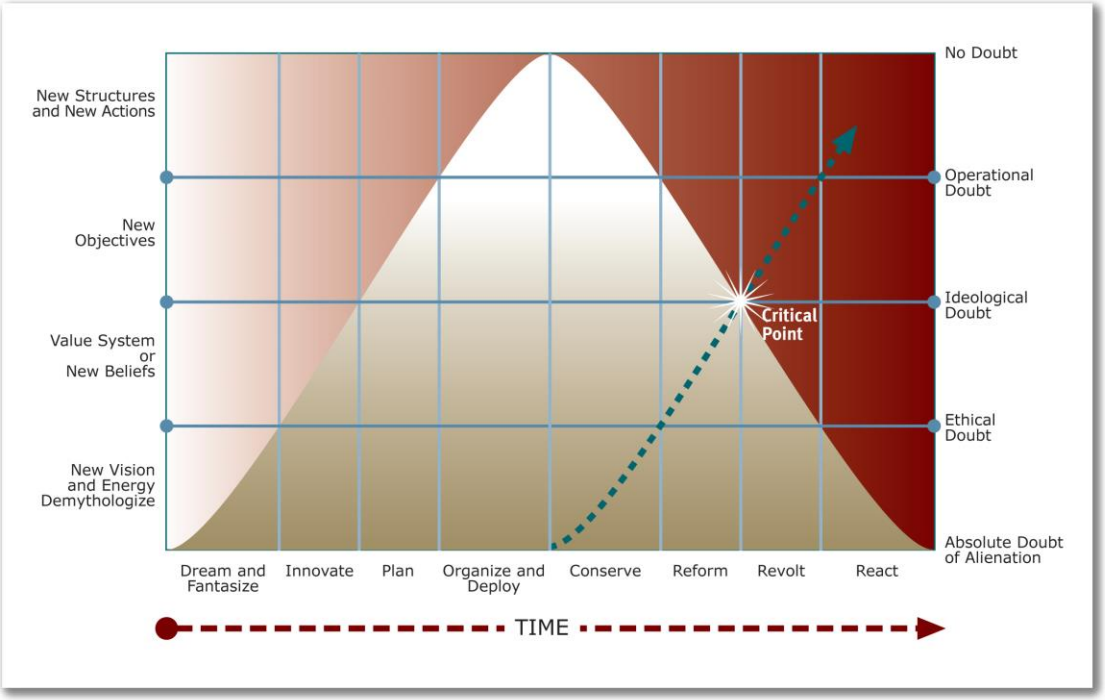
25. Without clarity of mission a sustainable business model does not exist for LWLBC Inc. and is difficult to imagine.

a. This assessment ends where it began. LWLBC Inc. has incredible strengths, program services, sites and facilities.
b. In order to maximize the ministries of LWLBC Inc. there is a continued need for the following:
    i. A strong board,
    ii. Effective executive director and team,
    iii. Engaged donors and volunteers,
    iv. Strategic partnerships with members,
    v. Passionate commitment to innovate and adapt,
    vi. Faith that God will bless our efforts.

Appendix A

The Provolutionary Curve

This curve shows how all organizations develop, peak, and go into decline. First, it shows how most organizations make an "up and to the right" launch into rapid growth (i.e. think Amazon, Netflix). Secondly, it shows what is happening within the organization operationally and ideologically regarding where the organization is at…(i.e. *New Structures and New Actions* means there is *No Doubt* within the organization ideologically, and it is *Organized and Deployed* operationally). Third, it shows that as organizations enter into decline there comes a "Critical Point" where the organization either reinvents itself (think Apple Computers with Steve Jobs the second time around), or declines unto death (think Blockbuster, Circuit City).



Appendix B

Lake Wapogasset Lutheran Bible Camp, Inc and the Mpls and St Paul Synods
7/29/15
Research by Jen Hellie

There are 270 ELCA Lutheran Churches in the Mpls and St Paul Synods. 28% (76) of the churches in the Mpls and St Paul Synods are Members of the LWLBC Association. 39% (107) of the churches in the Mpls and St Paul Synods are Members and/or Users of the LWLBC Association.
The data below is based on information provided by the ELCA about churches in the Mpls and St Paul Synods.

ALL CHURCHES IN THE MPLS AND ST PAUL SYNODS

Baptized Membership	2009	327,667
	2013	309,006
		6% decrease
Average Attendance	2009	87,578
	2013	74,952
		15% decrease
Undesignated Giving	2009	$140,166.721
	2013	$139,985,208
		.1% decrease
Designated Giving	2009	$17,796,790
	2013	$19,179,723
		7% increase
Mission Support	2009	$5,547,664
	2013	$4,856,534
		12% decrease

USERS/MEMBERS

Baptized Membership	2009	182,181
	2013	166,436
		9% decrease
Average Attendance	2009	46,801
	2013	39,653
		15% decrease
Undesignated Giving	2009	$75,928,178
	2013	$74,836,310
		1% decrease
Designated Giving	2009	$9,395,197
	2013	$10,796,894
		13% increase
Mission Support	2009	$2,558,520
	2013	$2,395,496
		6% decrease

Members/Users within the Mpls and St Paul Synods

39.3% (42) of our Members/Users had an increase in baptized members from 2009-2013.
15.8% (17) of them had an increase in average attendance.

Appendix C

Camper Days

LAKE WAPOGASSET LUTHERAN BIBLE CAMP, INC.

UPDATED BY DEEDEE GOULD, 8/5/15

Definition of a camper day: A typical camper day would be a 24 hour period of time including an overnight stay. If a person arrives at camp on Friday evening and leaves Sunday at noon we would count that as two camper days. Single day use groups are counted as half days.

SUMMARY OF CAMPER DAY NUMBERS	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	
WAPO	30,549	29,420	32,145	30,779	31,621	3%
OX LAKE	4,273	4,026	3,815	3,247	2,571	40%
LUTHER DELL	5,394	4,199	3,366	3,569	3,747	31%
WILDERNESS CANOE BASE	6,197	4,984	3,995	5,815	4,813	22%
TOTALS	**46,413**	**42,629**	**43,321**	**43,410**	**42,751**	8%

Appendix D

Column1	Column2	Column3	Column4	Column5	Column6
	Lake Wapogasset Lutheran Bible Camp, Inc.				
	5 Year Revenue Comparison				
	2010	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**
PUBLIC SUPPORT					
Member Contributions	$125,665	$120,025	$121,056	$118,673	$120,514
Gifts	300,016	370,738	448,959	462,714	341,714
Special Event Revenue	58,003	71,050	74,168	95,052	96,745
Special Event Expense	(24,640)	(26,229)	(28,792)	(28,828)	(35,431)
In-Kind Contributions	33,993	20,647	42,305	17,859	12,186
TOTAL PUBLIC SUPPORT	$493,037	$556,231	$657,696	$665,470	$535,728
	18%	20%	23%	22%	19%
REVENUE					
Camp Fees	$2,117,946	$2,072,855	$2,085,924	$2,223,225	$2,181,421
Canteen & Crafts	132,100	121,275	124,588	131,447	134,867
Interest Income	4,345	3,210	4,653	6,155	9,362
Gain/(Loss) on Sale of Assets	(4,206)	412	1,577	895	4,764
Unrealized Gain/(Loss) on Investments	7,536	(6,306)	8,510	13,376	2,099
Miscellaneous	25,310	16,429	17,509	17,662	16,527
TOTAL REVENUE	$2,283,031	$2,207,875	$2,242,761	$2,392,760	$2,349,040
	82%	80%	77%	78%	81%
TOTAL PUBLIC SUPPORT & REVENUE	$2,776,068	$2,764,106	$2,900,457	$3,058,230	$2,884,768
			*	*	
*Years budget was met					