



2021

Parent Handbook



Who are we?

Purpose

Camp Valaqua is a Christian ministry of the member churches of Mennonite Church Alberta. It extends the ministries and congregational life of these churches by providing facilities and Christian programs in a unique setting close to Creation.

Camp Valaqua also serves as a ministry outreach to the larger community by inviting others to participate in the use of its facilities and Christian ministry.

Mission Statement

Camp Valaqua is dedicated to proclaiming the Good News that God is the Creator, we are God's people, and the earth is placed in our hands as a gift and a trust.

We give campers the opportunity to:

- develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
- live with others in Christian community
- learn how to care for God's Creation
- have fun in a safe and accepting environment

Adapted from Helmut Harder's statement, 1998.

What that means for you and your children

Camp Valaqua is committed to creating intentional Christian community with all who gather here. We strive to be a place where campers feel loved as they are and challenged to grow.

Whether it's climbing higher than ever before on the climbing wall, cooking supper over an open fire, or singing with wild abandon around a campfire, your kids will be challenged to try something new and will do so with the loving support of Camp Valaqua's dedicated staff.

We hope that your kids will experience acceptance and grace at Valaqua. We hope your kids will get caught up in the magic of camp. We hope your kids will experience God in Creation. We hope your kids will grow in all sorts of directions!

Accreditation

Camp Valaqua is a long-time member in good standing of the Alberta Camping Association (ACA). The ACA sets standards for camp operation that must be met or exceeded by accredited camps. Valaqua works hard to exceed these standards to ensure our programs are as safe as possible. For more information on ACA Standards, visit albertacamping.com.

Staff

We can't wait for you to meet our staff team! Valaqua's Counsellors, Counsellors In Training (CIT), and Leadership staff are carefully selected and trained to ensure your child experiences a safe, fun, and loving environment. Most of our Counsellors have been part of Valaqua's story for many years, growing into amazing role models and leaders.

Our staff are vetted carefully including personal and faith references and criminal record checks.

Once they have been hired, our staff go through a very intensive week of training, covering everything from helping homesick campers to teaching archery. Our staff training has been tweaked and modified over several decades and gets a little better every year!



Meet some of our leaders!

Jon Olfert, our Camp Director, has been in the role at Valaqua since 2006. He brings a long history of camp experience, having worked in leadership roles at Day Camp, Out-trip, and Sleep Away programs in both faith based and secular programs since 1997. As a loving dad to three boys, Jon appreciates the incredible gift you give us when you entrust us with your children. Jon is passionate about creating a strong Christian community each summer and loves to see the incredible growth of our campers, staff, and volunteers.

Kaya Thiessen, our Program Director, has served in a variety of roles at Valaqua including CIT, Counsellor, and Office Manager since her first season here in 2014. Kaya is passionate about creating an inclusive and welcoming camp environment.

Camper health

Camp Valaqua's cabin staff (Counsellors and CITs) are here to make sure that your child is eating enough, staying hydrated, and applying sunscreen. Our Counsellors and Leadership Staff are trained in First Aid and CPR and are looking out for your child at all times.

When our summer camp programs are running, we have a Designated Medical Personnel (DMP) onsite. The DMP is responsible for proper storage and administration of medication, administering first aid when necessary, and documenting medical incidents. The DMP is available for you to meet when you register your child.

All medications (including over the counter, vitamins, and supplements) will be stored in a locked cabinet in the lodge. All medication administration will be supervised by a staff member. EpiPens and as needed inhalers are the exception and can be carried with the camper and stored in the cabin. Please pack your child's medication separately and clearly label it with your child's name. You will be required to complete a medication administration form (available in the online registration system or at the registration table) if your child has any medication requirements.

We contact parents/guardians if:

- A camper is transported offsite for professional medical treatment
- A camper is injured or ill to the point that they are unable to participate in the program
- Something out of the ordinary occurs (seizure/accident/illness)

If your child is sick or injured beyond the everyday bumps and bruises, we will make sure you are in the loop.

If there are any special considerations that would help your child have a great week at camp, or if your child's needs change between registration and program start date, let us know!

Bedwetting

Bedwetting is a common challenge for growing bodies, especially growing bodies that are in an unfamiliar environment on an unfamiliar schedule. To combat the fear and shame that can be associated with bedwetting, our staff deal with bedwetting with compassion and discretion. If bedwetting occurs unexpectedly, Counsellors and support staff will launder the camper's clothes and sleeping bag while the cabin group is away from the cabin. If your child wears nighttime underwear (goodnights or underjams), our staff will place a fresh pair in the child's sleeping bag during the day. The camper can then change in their sleeping bag before bed and change back to underwear in the morning. Our staff will replace the used pair with a fresh pair the next day.



Dietary Needs

Our kitchen offers a wide range of nutritious and kid friendly meals and strives to meet the needs of all our campers and staff. If your child has dietary needs or food allergies, let us know and we will pass it on to our kitchen staff. We work hard to accommodate dietary restrictions and have a thorough food allergy policy in place complete with separate utensils and preparation and service areas when necessary. In some cases, we may need your help to meet your child’s needs and may ask you to provide foods.

Camp Valaqua is a NUT AWARE site and does not serve or stock nut products in our kitchen. We cannot guarantee the site to be nut free as campers often bring snacks to be consumed in cabins. We suggest that caution is used for parents registering campers with extreme nut allergies.

Cabin groups

Each of Valaqua’s comfortable cabins holds 4-6 campers paired with two staff. Campers are paired with other campers of a similar age and gender.



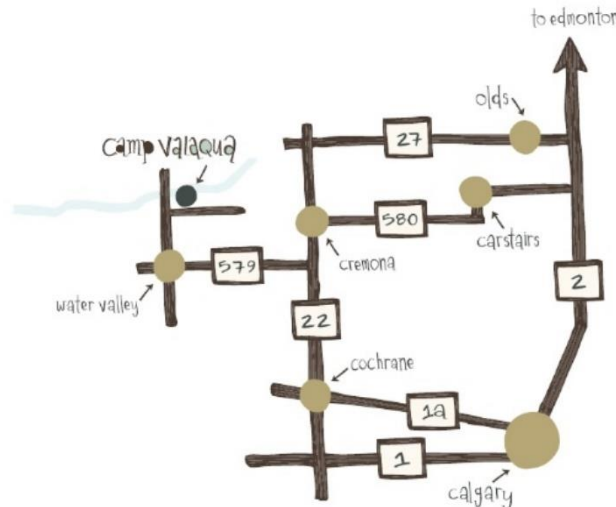
Having a familiar face in a cabin can be a comforting thing for many campers in the first days of a camp week and we do our best to honour cabin mate requests made during the registration process.

Drop off time

Drop off time for a week of sleep-away camp is **between 3-5pm** on the first day of your child’s program with the exception of Discovery Days when it is between 9 and 930 each morning. We normally offer a brief closing program on Friday evening but due to COVID 19 precautions, we are forgoing this in 2021 and will be sending an end of week email with a short video as a follow up. Campers will be picked up directly from their cabins between 6-7pm on Friday evening.

How to find us

Camp Valaqua is located on 250 beautiful acres on the Little Red Deer River. We are 45 minutes northwest of Calgary and 5km north of Water Valley.



Financials

Valaqua is committed to offering camp to everyone, regardless of financial constraints. We are happy to work with you to set up a payment strategy that works for you and offer a Campership Aid Program if the cost of camp is out of reach for your family. Simply contact us or indicate in the registration system that you would like help and we will work with you to get your kids to camp.

Cancellation policy

Cancellations more than 30 days prior to the camp start date will receive a full refund less the \$50 deposit amount. Cancellations less than 30 days prior to camp start date will receive a refund of 50% of camper fees. No shows will not be refunded. Exceptions may be made in the case of illness or injury. Campers who are unable to attend due to COVID 19 symptoms or quarantine will be refunded in full.

If programs are cancelled by Camp Valaqua for any reason including low registration or pandemic response, a full refund will be issued.

Connecting with your child

Parents and Guardians are welcome to contact the camp office at anytime (403-637-2510, camper@campvalaqua.com). Campers are not often in the lodge, but messages can be passed on and return calls can be arranged if necessary.

Homesickness

Homesickness is a very real challenge for many campers and can occur even when a camper has had success at camp in the past. Our experience tells us that parent visits and phone calls often increase, rather than decrease, homesickness. While campers are permitted to call home at any time, we do discourage calls at bedtime as campers can be particularly emotionally fragile at this time. We believe that overcoming homesickness helps a camper to generate self confidence, but we also know that sometimes the challenge is too great. If a camper is homesick to the point that they cannot participate in the program or are experiencing no joy at all, then the decision, in consultation with parents and camper, may be made to send the camper home. Campers are always welcome to return to the program – sometimes a good night's sleep in a familiar bed can change the way the world looks!

A Typical Day at Camp Valaqua

Morning activities (optional) – crafts, gaga ball, or something else for those who are all done sleeping

Breakfast

Personal Hygiene Time – Cabin cleaning, showers, and getting ready for the day

Chapel

Activity time – Climbing Wall, Waterfront, Archery, Crafts, Nature, or Camp-skills

Lunch

Flat On Bunk (FOB) – quiet time to recharge

Activity time – Climbing Wall, Waterfront, Archery, Crafts, Nature, or Camp-skills

Supper

All Community Event – a wide game or maybe an all camp swim

Snack

Campfire

Bedtime



What to Pack

- 3-4 changes of clothes for the week
- warm jacket, sweatshirt/sweaters
- rain Jacket
- hat, sunscreen 30 SPF (or higher)
- swimsuit, towel
- old shoes or crocs to wear in the river
- running shoes for field games
- sleeping bag, pillow, pajamas
- extra blanket (nights can get cold)
- bathroom stuff: toothbrush, soap, shampoo
- bug repellent
- bible, if you have one... don't go buy one special
- sturdy hiking shoes or boots for breakaway camps
- backpack, for overnighters (campers ages 10+) – sized to carry a sleeping bag is optimal
- water bottle
- flashlight or headlamp
- face coverings – up to 10 nonmedical face coverings
- camera – optional

What **NOT** to pack

- mp3 players, ipods, laptops, tablets, cellphones, electronic games
- fancy, hard-to-clean clothes
- money
- pocketknives
- snacks that you do not want to share
- clothing with offensive ads/decals
- revealing swimsuits/clothing
- cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana (all forms), and illegal drugs

Come prepared for all kinds of weather, including sun, rain, cold and heat. Please label things with your child's name! Lost and found will be kept on-site until the end of summer and then taken to the MCC Thrift store.