

STRIDE Coordinator Interim Report to Baltimore Yearly Meeting Khalila Lomax October 2021

Khalila - STRIDE Coordinator

This camp season was extraordinary in a variety of ways. It was my first "official" camp season. I was finally able to experience the camps in season and the joys and challenges of a summer camp season. While this summer camp varied from previous years, due to the pandemic, so much of what campers and families were excited for remained.



STRIDE has shown me the beauty in friendship, siblinghood, and radical transformations as a staff person. The process of radical transformations involves two parts. The first part is radical thinking. STRIDE embraces a revolutionary thought process. STRIDE is unafraid to think outside of the box. STRIDE embraces letting go of previous ideas we thought would work and brainstorming new ideas and methods. The second part is transformative action. This involves action taken to address inequities and utilize restorative justice. STRIDE used a restorative justice approach to advocate for a justice-centered incident report. This justice-centered incident report went into effect this

summer, and STRIDE is looking forward to implementing new changes in the future. STRIDE is committed to the physical and emotional of all campers. During our STRIDE retreat, I was also able to host a session around discipline and students of color for STRIDE members and STRIDE liaisons. We were able to discuss how procedures can often affect students of color disproportionately. While it's true that the summer camp season is essential for STRIDE, STRIDE is a year-round program. The groundwork laid during the camp off-season is also necessary, and it helps create wonderful summer experiences for our STRIDE campers.

During our "off-season," STRIDE gets to work towards camp season by applying for grants, building connections with families, recruiting camp staff, and preparing themselves to work throughout the summer. STRIDE also builds



relationships within Baltimore Yearly Meeting, connecting with STRIDE liaisons, partner organizations, and the many wonderful Friends who support our work. We host and facilitate numerous fundraising opportunities related to their values of diversity, equity & inclusion. In addition, we host community events for STRIDE campers and families to foster deeper relationships year-round. Throughout this year, when thinking of STRIDE members, I am consistently reminded of the Margaret Mead quote, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." STRIDE is a committed group of individuals invested in diversifying the camping experience and making it a place where all feel valued; with this commitment, they have and will continue to shape the camp experience for the better for years to come.

STRIDE Coordinator and STRIDE members

This summer, STRIDE sent twenty-two campers to camp! We provided Covid-19 testing, tuition, gear, logistical support, and guidance during the orientation process for these



campers. Campers expressed excitement about the return to camp! Our campers reiterated how camp is a unique and one-of-a-kind experience. Our campers missed camp. They missed the camping community, the outdoor educational experiences, and the sweet potato biscuits. The absence of camp during the 2020 season only made the return during the 2021 season much sweeter. One camper wants to return to camp for a month and become a counselor! One of our Opequon campers, fueled by the artsy environment at

camp, created a jewelry line! We were able to purchase the jewelry and gift it as prizes for our Trivia Night. STRIDE prides itself in aiding leadership opportunities for youth and young people.

This year sixteen of our twenty-two campers attended Opequon Quaker Camp. This included campers from Baltimore and Philadelphia. Four of our campers beamed with pride about their accomplishment of completing two Cabin Intensives. At Opequon, all campers participate in a multi-day camping trip called a Cabin Intensive or CI. While this is often cited as the most challenging part of the camp, it is also gratifying.

Care

Baltimore STRIDE also provided care packages for campers and their families. We planned two rounds of care packages; the first round included materials for a collaborative camper-led workshop held on Zoom. The second round included materials and instructions for workshops to be completed by campers within their own families. The workshop held on Zoom was a craft workshop led by one of our campers, providing STRIDE campers the opportunity to flex their creative muscles and develop leadership skills. The family workshops included a series of prompts and activities related to nature journaling, a kitchen herb gardening kit, and numerous art supplies including suggestions for artistic projects and activities. With this programming, STRIDE ensured that our families continued strengthening their relationships and the larger BYM camp community. With these programs, we provided high-quality and COVID-19-safe camping experiences in nature, and campers also got the opportunity to engage with the natural world in their neighborhoods.



Sustaining Community

Throughout the summer of 2020, STRIDE worked with families to help fulfill other needs instead of prepping for camp. For example, we provided a camper who had expressed interest in attending a virtual filmmaking camp with the necessary equipment. We also made individualized care packages. In 2021, Members also partnered with a partner organization, Puentes de Salud, and a camp parent to host an online info session about BYM camps. Philly STRIDE detailed "A day in the life of a STRIDE camper." These helped participants understand what camp is like and how camp has changed for Covid-19 safety protocols. Philly STRIDE was also able to have a practice hike at the beginning of the summer. Baltimore STRIDE also held brainstorming sessions with another partner organization, the McKim Center, around camp and healing spaces. DC STRIDE was able to volunteer to Horton's Kids Covid-19 Emergency Response.

STRIDE Liaisons

Growing Diverse Leadership Committee (GDLC) named liaisons remained active with the STRIDE groups. Each liaison is in touch with their group and typically joins its regular virtual meetings. Each also helps support fundraising and enters STRIDE "movie night" and other events. This year we hosted a Trivia Night, and it was a great event amongst STRIDE members, STRIDE friends, and liaisons. STRIDE also has liaisons on the Camping Program Committee (CPC) and the newly formed anti-racism subcommittee. STRIDE remains active with the Reparations Action Work Group (RAWG) and Working Group on Racism (WGR). GDLC, WGR, RAWG, and STRIDE will release a toolkit this fall.

STRIDE in collaboration with the Camping Program Committee is committed to creating an Opequon STRIDE liaison. This liaison would assist with communications from camps to STRIDE. The liaison would also serve as a familiar face and resource for STRIDE campers needing extra support. Eventually, we hope to add this liaison position to Catoctin and Shiloh. We want all of our campers to have a familiar face and resource available to them while at our camps.

Reflection

During this pandemic, STRIDE has reflected on how we can best serve our campers, their families, and their communities. Part of this reflection involves how we examine our institution's procedures? How are we able to self-reflect? How do we critique institutional racism we are a part of? Working to disrupt patterns of institutional racism requires that we center the voices of those most impacted. Beyond our queries on racism, engagement with BIPOC campers, counselors, and staff about their experience is necessary.



Authentic engagement means that their experiences are validated and that they have the opportunity to co-create solutions for improving camp.

This year, encouraged and led by STRIDE members, we were able to have a moment of transparency and accountability with community partners and our camper families. We

shared previous racist events that occurred at camp. In response to these failures and shortcomings, we have committed to implementing the following by next camp season:

- Enhanced EDI (Equity Diversity Inclusion) training, professional development, and support for staff to facilitate the creation of genuinely inclusive and welcoming spaces for all campers.
- Increased opportunities for caucuses/affinity groups / safe spaces for staff of color and campers of color.
- Precise and robust policies and protocols around responding to racist incidents and all threats to emotional and physical safety, both inside and outside our camps.

STRIDE is committed to advocating for these steps to be acted upon fully, carefully, and lovingly, with the input from those most affected. STRIDE also held brainstorming sessions with partner organizations around camp and healing spaces. This session aided STRIDE in conversations around organizing, mobilizing, and re-imagining. We look forward to collaborating with our community partners and creating community experiences that best serve our STRIDE communities.