

CIT - COUNSELOR-IN-TRAINING

The CIT program is Tamakwa's leadership training for campers at age 16.

IN A WORD, IT'S ABOUT "TRANSITION"... FROM CAMPER TO STAFF

The CIT experience has a three-fold purpose: **fun, training, and tryout**. By tryout, we mean it is their opportunity to show what they have to offer in the quest to being hired on staff the following year. We actually call it their **reference summer**, the summer we refer to when evaluating them for staff positions. They are supervised by our CIT Director, the administrative staff member who coordinates the entire CIT program. As a group, the CIT presence is felt everywhere, as keepers of tradition and tone setters of camp spirit.

Training Includes

Assisting at activities, a counselor apprenticeship ("practicum"), staffing canoe trips, land duty (watching dock areas during free-play), planning a program, planning "Final Banquet", helping to serve meals, and participate in workshops in safety, programming, and counseling.

Learning Skills

Advancing their activity skills is very important. To prepare them for the required staff lifesaving qualifications, CITs who are not yet certified may be able to take a Bronze Medallion and/or Cross course. By doing so at camp, CITs are spared the financial and time commitment of taking the course in the off-season. We will also try our best to organize an exam at camp for those in the Bronze class towards the end of the summer.

Rewards & Perks

Above all, this transition will be FUN. Hallmarks of the CIT summer are the close bond of camaraderie, opportunity to make a positive impact, and a sense of accomplishment and responsibility. CITs also get some staff perks & privileges, such as evening staff rec and snacks, special staff programs, and CIT group events. Add to that a sense of independence: they live together as a group (separated by gender).

What younger campers (and their parents) should know in advance

FROM AGE 14, CAMPERS ARE ADVISED TO BEEF UP ACTIVITY SKILLS

Just about every camper that comes up the ranks is a desirable CIT candidate. However, given Tamakwa's size, the CIT program has a finite capacity. In some years, the number of eligible candidates exceeds the number of spaces, making the selection process somewhat competitive. When that happens, the camp administration has no choice but to make some very difficult choices and select CITs based on some very fine distinctions. The general criteria include things like: activity skills & involvement, attitude, team spirit, leadership, and tenure at camp. No single one of those supersedes the others, but when all things are equal, **a 16 year old with high-level activity awards has a definite advantage**. After all, part of the camp's mandate when selecting staff is to hire the most capable and skilled people to teach our activities.

In those "competitive" situations, receiving (and delivering) the news that the CIT group cannot accommodate all those who are eligible is no fun at all. To help kids prepare and maximize their chances for that potential circumstance, starting at age 14 – in both summers leading up to the CIT year – they are given an advance orientation about the **importance of activity involvement and high level awards**. They receive a handout with explicit definitions of high and mid-level activity awards. They also hear (and read) an explanation of the CIT process. The premise is that the same camp that nurtured them like family and cultivated their loyalty suddenly has an added role in their lives, the role of potential employer. Like many facets of life, it is also true of camp that when you reach teen age, there are new demands, which are often competitive ones. But even though the camp may give them two years notice about how best to use that time wisely, only the campers themselves can make it happen and heed the call.

LIFE AFTER THE C.I.T. YEAR

The CITs will have an incredible summer together, learning and having tons of fun. The question at the end of the summer is how well they made the transition and demonstrated a positive attitude, enthusiasm & energy, cooperation, motivation, reliability, initiative, and high award skill levels. Another key characteristic is learning how to effectively and appropriately work with children. The answers will determine their future potential on staff.