

A Scout's Winter Camp

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February is here, so that means Scouts from all over Canada and the world go winter camping. Well, last weekend, the 52nd University Heights scout troop in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, the troop I am in, decided to go camping! We went to Shekinah Retreat Center, which is about one hour out of the city. This blog post is about my adventures at my Scout Winter Camp.

We all met in the afternoon on Friday, at our usual meeting place, and from there, the adventure began! The leaders were driving, and we divided ourselves into three groups of Scouts. Our group is somehow unusual as we are only two girls and about twelve boys. Now, I understand why most people refer to Scouts Canada as Boy Scouts. As said, I am always with the other girl. In most of the cases, we carpool and share our experiences during the drive. This time we talked about random things, like math, the news, the Prairies, and other stuff.

When we arrived at Shekinah we discovered some quinzhees built by other groups, so we decided to explore them. A quinzhee is a shelter made from a large pile of settled snow. In a campground, the Scouts came and build it one week in advance. Some days before the camp, some Scouters, "carve" the inside, and make it big enough to accommodate a person but small enough to prevent the heat from escaping. The camper takes a tarp, sets it on the ground, and finally they take their -40°C sleeping bag, and the Scouts may sleep there! Anyhow, it was my first time seeing a quinzhee built by someone else. I remember making one when I was smaller in my backyard, but it was not the best. I discovered that the smaller the quinzhee is, the warmer, and at one point one could take their gloves or hat off, and not freeze to death. Maybe not freeze to death, but when it is lower than -25°C with the wind-chill, your hands may have frostbite. Overall, I enjoyed my experience seeing the quinzhees, but I would not sleep in them!

In my perspective, camps are also about socializing. We played many card games during this camp, and I think that is an essential and fun part of it as I got to learn more about my fellow Scouts.

I experience a lot of things during my Scouting journey, but some still fascinate me, such as seeing the stars. Every camp, I gaze at the stars, and I am always captivated by them. I brought my camera with me at this particular camp, but it was too dark for it to capture images but imagine this dark sky, with a blue-ish line at the horizon, and the sun almost having set. Then, look up, and the stars invade your space from everywhere. You squint, and you can see part of the galaxy. Your friend points to Orion, and you find the Big Dipper farther away. You are mesmerized. You lay in the snow, and you can just stare at them. That was the view I was seeing, but twice as magnificent.

In our camps, we usually do not do many things on the first day, as we typically arrive there when it is dark, so it is time to talk about the next day.

In front of the cabin we stayed at was a pond, and in the winter, the owners of the centre froze it. We could do multiple activities on it, one of them being a type of curling. There was this single big circle dived into four smaller circles on the ice; a big blue one, a medium transparent one, a smaller red one, and small transparent one in the middle of the red one, as you can see in the picture beside. The blue one was worth five points, first transparent one ten points, red one fifteen points, and the smaller transparent one twenty. We used ten milk jugs in red and blue, as stones. Each player had to slide the jugs to the middle, hoping to get the highest score. We were facing each other, and the winner took the blue jugs, until they got defeated, and so on. I managed to win against a “champion” -as we called him- in the bonus round, as it was a tie, but I got myself beat reasonably easily. I enjoyed this game, as I spend time outdoors, in the snow!



The curling circle, I am the person shooting with the pink jacket

One of the reasons I go winter camping is to experience the outdoors, and that is just what we did! My group went sledding up the big toboggan hill, and another Scout and I decided to climb higher to enjoy the view. I brought my camera with me, as I wanted to take some pictures of one of the most breathtaking views that my eyes have ever come across. However, you might have noticed that the picture beside this story is not of a hill, but of a tower. It was about -20°C and I did not have the best camera with me. So, my poor little camera decided it was too cold for it, and after I was opening it, it shut off. I repeated that a few times until I became frustrated with it and decided to stop trying and enjoy the view. After that event, the leaders lead us through a long hike around the North Saskatchewan River, and we went up this tower, which had a beautiful view of the river, and the leaders took a picture of us. After the hike, we were all tired, but we had fun!



The tower with my whole group

Later that afternoon, some of the Scouts, me included, got the opportunity to be a role model for some Cubs as we got to organize a game for them. We decided to play “Mission Impossible,” at night, at the Quinzhees. Mission Impossible is a game where you have to touch an object or a structure without being seen. We had chosen one of the quinzhees to be the spot they had to touch, and we said that there could only be two spotters with flashlights guarding it. However, we had two lights and four people, and the Cubs did not really like that. So, the Cubs would walk up to us and flash their flashlight in our eyes, which wasn’t the most pleasant sensation, especially since we had said that they could not have any flashlights with them. It was hard to play the game in an organized

manner, but we still enjoyed our time with them and had fun. For anyone attempting to do this, I would strongly suggest planning the activity better than we did and try to organize the event more so that you may maximize the fun!

Do you know when the saddest or the worst moment of a camp is? The part when we are packing up on Sunday! Usually, I pack up after breakfast, and it takes me about half an hour. This time, it took me less than fifteen minutes before the meal! I did not do much different, except maybe putting my stuff away when I used it, and that did the trick. I had to clean up the cabin because Scouts leave things better than they found it. It was not hard, I just had to sweep the floor, stock up the woodpile, and wash some dishes, but it is necessary!

When Baden-Powell created Scouting, he intended it to be for boys. Now, anyone can experience nature, socialize, and experience leadership skills. At every camp, I come home with more organizational skills, new acquaintances, loads of dirty clothes, tons of fun, new memories and without some stuff – the last part happens a lot; this time I lost my camera- ! After each camp, I remember how everyone has fun learning something, and always has a smile on their faces! So, let's celebrate Scouting and Lord Baden-Powell this week – or what is left of it!