

## **Wilderness Scholarship Program**

Scouts Canada aims to develop youth physically, spiritually and emotionally. As a result, the youth which participate in Scouting gain skills to enjoy and survive in wilderness situations while becoming self-assured, responsible, environmentally conscious citizens. In Saskatchewan, the mandate of Scouts Canada is addressed through the three Provincial program camps which occur in July and August. These camps, Camp Pianue, Campanoe Challenge and Wilderness Rendezvous, are nine day programs that include land and water based activities. The camps are progressive programs, for youth age 11-17 which range from 4-7 years in length. There is a great emphasis placed on leadership training, the continued development of backpacking and canoeing skills, wilderness survival and personal development. As well, during Wilderness Rendezvous and Camp Pianue, the youth spend time on trail both solo and as groups, without adult supervision. As a result, the youth are challenged to use problem solving skills and their leadership training to complete the program without the direction of leaders. It is apparent upon completion that the youth are more mature, self-confident, determined and responsible as a result of the time spent on their own. Most importantly, the youth experience the outdoors in pristine locales of Saskatchewan while creating life-long friendships.

Based on the attendance and retention of our Scouting youth, it is obvious these three summer camps are outstanding. In this respect, Saskatchewan Scouting provides experiences which ensure the growth and success of young people. But, unfortunately, not every youth has the opportunity to experience these life-changing programs. The average cost of one of these camps is \$1000.00 per youth. Although the program costs are low, compared to summer camp standards, all three of these camps require specialized equipment to ensure the youth have an enjoyable experience. For example, youth must have quality rain gear and hiking boots, warm sleeping bags, water filters, and light weight backpacks. As one can imagine, this specialized equipment is quite expensive. As well, all youth must be registered as members of Scouts Canada. Although some of the youth in Scouting come from affluent or at least middle class homes, many come from blue collar families. Although financially self-sufficient, these families do not necessarily have an excess of funds to send all of their children to summer camp. As well, the Scouting program includes numerous children of single parent homes and those below the poverty line. We, as an inclusive movement, must ensure that these youth have the same opportunity as those of means. Most importantly, these youth, who have lesser opportunities, can achieve more and benefit greatly from such opportunities, which are typically inaccessible.

In order to provide such quality programming to all youth, we are proposing the creation of the Wilderness Scholarship Program. Within this program, youth who are recommended or apply to the scholarship will have the significant costs of these summer camps paid. The scholarship will not be all encompassing as we believe the youth and families do not want a "hand out" as they will feel pride in contributing some aspects of the finances to attend. While our main focus will obviously be to provide assistance to our existing membership, the long term goal is to offer these programs to "inner city" or "core area" youth, who are not in the Scouting program, thereby providing positive experiences which will prevent them from participating in potentially harmful activities. Since Scouting is available to youth of any gender, race or religious affiliation, no child should or will be left behind. The Scouting program is already changing lives every day. With the inclusion, and support of the Wilderness Scholarship, we will continue to make a better world for tomorrow, one day, one child, one donation at a time.