

Parents & Scouters:

There has been some very valid concerns brought up to Saskatchewan Council and National about the Hunger Games Training Camp theme of the SK Cub Camp. The Camp Committee takes these very seriously and want to share the process, thought and due diligence that goes into choosing a theme.

It started with a vote by the cub aged youth at the last cub camp. It was the most popular suggestion, which surprised me, as I thought it was for older youth. My own children had read the books and seen the movies, I had not. But my children are older (at the time my youngest was 15). I was honestly surprised that cub aged children (and a lot of them) had suggested this theme. I only had limited knowledge of the stories and was under the impression that they are for a more mature audience. So I consulted other scouters & older youth who had read the books or seen the movies. We discussed the theme and possibilities for positive, fun, appropriate activities for cubs with the offer of service scouts, venturers and scouters who were at camp and around HQ at that time. The consensus was, that if we focused on the skills & training side of the story, there was so much that we could do that fit with scouting. I then thought about a few of the last themes. I know that my own children at cub age had not seen Star Wars or Indiana Jones, but it didn't stop them from enjoying those themes. So based on those things, we made the decision to go ahead with the theme the cub aged youth chose and make the announcement.

To do my due diligence and research to understand the theme further, I came home after camp, and watched all four of the movies within the next few weeks. I felt it was very important to be able to make an informed decision and be responsible as a Scouter to fully understand and give defined direction to ensure that activities would be cub age appropriate. I have to agree with those that have expressed concern that the movies are not only rated for a more mature audience (PG-13) but understandably so. So - I then considered other similar movies that I knew cubs were familiar with - Harry Potter (at least two of these were rated PG-13), Star Wars (also some rated PG-13) and Indiana Jones (interestingly enough - Indiana Jones & the Temple of Doom was originally going to be rated R because of it's graphic nature - you may recall the scene involving the removal of a still-beating heart during a human sacrifice while the Thugs worship the goddess Kali - but Steven Spielberg used his influence in the film industry to actually create the PG-13 rating for this movie; before that PG-13 didn't

exist). Both Star Wars & Indiana Jones have been very successful, recent Cub Camp themes. And finally, the Hunger Games books themselves are rated by Scholastic as Grade 5.3 (which is older cub age).

When my kids were cub aged, I did not always agree that they should read or watch what other kids were watching. Harry Potter was huge and controversial, and even Star Wars was not really for kids. Family Guy, Simpsons, were also big, both of which I felt were adult content. In our family, we chose to never watch the latter two... ever - even just us adults, but I knew lots of kids who watched them. With Harry Potter (good vs bad, war between the sides and definitely fighting to the death, and more mature content with each book/movie) I chose a different tact. I chose to read them first. I then read the first couple with my younger kids. I actually made them wait until they were older to read the last couple, because I felt they were getting mature in content. But, I also know a lot of parents who chose to not let their kids read the books or watch the movies at all.

First and foremost, we need to respect the parents and their wishes, without judgement. Upon deciding to proceed with the theme based on the above, we then said, how can we keep it appropriate, and make it fun & challenging? The answer was to focus on the survival and outdoor adventure training parts. In watching the movies, and learning the story we have learned that it is about:

- Standing up for what you believe in
- Supporting those that you love
- Learning what your talents/strengths are and how to use them in life
- Challenging yourself to build on those talents/strengths
- Working together - you can accomplish more and go further than by working alone
- and that although there are bad things in our world, we can recognize that they are wrong, disagree with them, and stand up to make a difference, and work together to change them. We can make a difference.

These are all points that we as a camp committee feel fits very well with Scouting and with developing young people as is Scouts Canada mission.

We have tried to set the tone in our email that went out to all youth & scouters the other day by using a quote from the movie from the Training

Officer that starts off saying there will be no fighting. We have discussed and have started planning how we will set the tone in our camp opening, and to emphasize all of the good points in the Scouts Own on Sunday. The SK Service Corps will be doing the Scouts Own, and we have one of their Venturers as a liaison on our camp committee and this has already been discussed with her. Other ideas to address the concerns have been:

- to send out a welcoming letter to every group that registers (both cub packs and offer of service scout/venture groups) that sets out some ground rules and expectations with regards to theme
- to discuss at camp with the youth that if they haven't seen them yet, that's ok, but all the cool stuff that they do in the story, we don't need to read about or watch - we can actually DO IT.

I believe it is possible to have a great camp with this theme. We are looking at archery, fire lighting, sling shot, puzzle challenges, orienteering, etc for our activities. I also know that my own group's youth have used Pinterest & Google to find crafts/games and decorating ideas for Indiana Jones, Star Trek & even the Western Theme - without actually watching the movies. By focusing on the survival skills/wilderness side of things groups & scouters can set a framework from which to guide the youth in their planning & ideas.

Please be assured that the camp committee is committed to keeping the theme and activities cub age appropriate for all and focusing on the positive messages/story line.

And finally - we need lots of help. We are certainly looking for registered Scouters & screened resource parents from around the province who would like to participate in some of the planning and idea sessions and therefore feel involved in the decision making, informed and able to continue to give feedback.

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