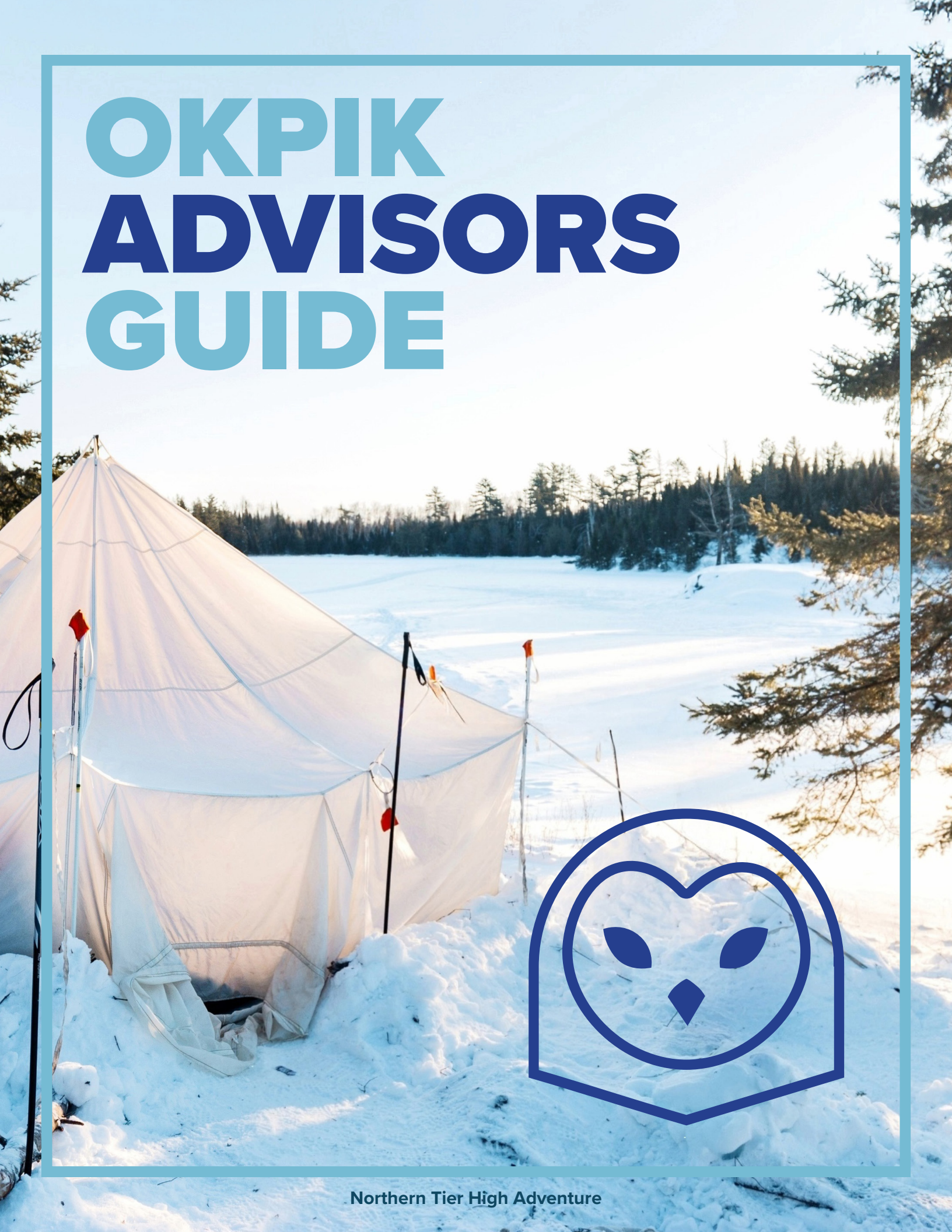
OKPIK ADVISORS GUIDE



Northern Tier High Adventure



Dear Scouter,

For over fifty years the Okpik program of Northern Tier National High Adventure has provided safe, exhilarating, and challenging adventures for thousands of youth and adult participants. The name, Okpik, comes from the Inuit word for the Arctic or Snowy Owl which has been used as the symbol for the Okpik program since it began in the early 1970's.

Okpik Participants learn how to cross-country ski, snowshoe, dogsled, ice fish, build snow shelters and enjoy life in extreme weather conditions and temperatures. All groups are accompanied by a trained staff instructor, called an Interpreter, who serves as a teacher of cold weather camping skills. The Okpik program fully outfits crews with group gear and almost all necessary personal clothing (see the included gear list). The goal of the Okpik program is to instruct crews on how to see low temperatures as an opportunity, not a barrier, to turn a 3-season camper into a year-round camper.

Okpik is hosted at the Charles L. Sommers base of Northern Tier, outside of Ely, Minnesota. Crews explore the Superior National Forest and the famed Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, a massive wilderness area that lies directly adjacent to the base property. No city lights, no noise, simply wilderness.

Okpik is the premier Cold Weather Camping Program of Scouting America. We are excited by your interest in cold weather camping, and we look forward to introducing you to the wonders of a North Woods winter.

Leslie Thibodeaux

Northern Tier General Manager

Why Winter Camp?

Many people view winter merely as an unpleasant season to endure, surviving only thanks to the warmth of their homes. However, for the initiated, winter is one of the best times to be outdoors.

For those willing to brave the cold, a new adventure awaits. The summer crowds vanish, leaving the lakes quiet and intimate. Gone is the hum of insects (indeed, many claim the lack of mosquitoes is the season's best feature). In its place, one finds the howling of sled dogs and the profound silence of the snow-dampened wilderness.

Winter also unlocks new activities and areas of the wild rarely accessible in summer. At Okpik, Scouts snowshoe over frozen swamps, cross-country ski on our groomed trails, dogsled deep into the backcountry, or build their own warm shelters (quinzhees) out of snow. Almost everyone tries something new at Okpik—and develops a fascinating new skill in the process.

We believe every participant will be entranced by the sun glittering on the snow, the brilliance of the night stars, the clear-cut tracks of animals prancing through the snow, and the simplicity of the still winter world. The Okpik program is designed to introduce these joys, teaching campers how to thrive in comfort as they navigate the exciting challenges of winter camping.

How to Use this Guide (Chapter Overview)

Planning a Northern Tier Okpik trek requires quite a bit of prior preparation. The goal of this guide is to support you from the beginning of the planning and brainstorming process all the way to returning home from Northern Tier. This Guide consists of eight Chapters that are important to the success of your trek. Please read through the following Chapter descriptions and Table of Contents to ensure that you find all the information you need to have a fun, safe, and successful trip to Northern Tier Okpik

Chapter 1 General Northern Tier Information

This section of the guide will run you through how Scouting America Policies like Youth Protection relate to Northern Tier and what requirements your crew and individual participants will need to meet to attend Northern Tier

Chapter 2 Trip Selection

This is where you can learn more about the different options available. Combine this information with information from ntier.org like pricing and dates to help your crew select the option that you would like for your Okpik Adventure

Chapter 3 Reservation and Payment

Our up-to-date pricing and available dates are always on ntier.org. This section covers some of the information you will need to know prior to registering on registration day (Oct 1st)

Chapter 4 Verifying Requirements to Attend

Ensuring your crew meets all the requirements outlined by Requirements to Attend is critical to the success of your trip. This section outlines how Northern Tier verifies that your crew meets all the requirements so you can ensure crew readiness prior to arrival

Chapter 5 Crew Information

The crew section outlines information about the crew breakdown at Northern Tier and what you can expect from the dynamic. It also covers certain items the crew will need to prepare for like a crew first aid kit, and fishing licenses

Chapter 6 Transportation to Northern Tier

This section will run through when you should plan on arriving and departing Northern Tier as well as information on some of the most common travel logistics for getting to Northern Tier

Chapter 7 Additional Information about Northern Tier

Additional information is home to other items that you will want to know prior to arrival. We encourage you to browse through this short section to learn more

Chapter 8 Appendix

The Appendix includes many of the important list that you will need in order to have a successful trek including the packing list, first aid kit list, and arrival check list to ensure you did everything you need to prior to arriving

Pronunciation Guide

Ely - ee lee

Quinzhee - quin zee

Okpik - ook pick

Bizhiw - bee zhoo

Table of Contents

Why Winter Camp? 1

How to Use this Guide (Start Here) 3

Chapter 1 General Northern Tier Information 7

- Risk Advisory 7
- Risk Prevention 7
- Requirements to Attend 8
  - Everyone Coming to Northern Tier Okpik: 8
  - Okpik Program Age Requirements: 8
  - Requirements for the Crew 8
- Co-ed Crews 8
- Buddy System 9
- Tenting Policies 9

Chapter 2 Trip Selection 10

- Cabin Stay 10
- Cold Weather Camping 10
- Musher Camp 10
- Remote Musher Camp 10
- Dog Sled Trek 11
- Remote Dog Sled Trek 11
- Awards 11

Chapter 3 Reservation and Payment 12

- Specific Program Registration Information 12
  - Holiday Stay 12
  - Okpik Cold Weather Camping 12
  - Dog Sled Treks 12
- Refund Policy 12
- Expenses not covered by Northern Tier 12
- Crew Number 13
- Crew Photographs 13

Chapter 4 Verifying Requirements to Attend 14

- Gateway and CampDoc 14
- Scouting America Registrations 14
- Gateway and CampDoc 14
- Health and Medical Records 14
- Adult Leadership Training 14

Chapter 5 Crew Information 15
The Crew 15
First Aid Kit 15
Clothing provided By Okpik 15
Crew Equipment Provided by Okpik 16
Mental and Physical Preparation 16
Fishing Licenses 16
Chapter 6 Transportation to Northern Tier 17
When to Arrive 17
When to Depart 17
Holiday Stay Only (Dec 27 – Jan 3rd) 17
Regular Season Winter Adventures (Trips after Jan 3rd) 17
Early Departures 17
Remote Dog Sled Trek Departure 17
Getting to Northern Tier Okpik 17
Transportation options 18
Overnight Options in Route to Base 18
Chapter 7 Additional Information About Northern Tier 19
Staying in touch with friends and family 19
Emergencies on Trail 19
Trading Post 19
Emergency Phone Number 19
Food at Northern Tier 20
Dietary Restrictions 20
Camperships 21
Insurance 21
Housing at Northern Tier 21
Chapter 8 Appendix 22
Okpik Arrival Check List 22
First Aid Kit Packing list 23
Packing list 24-25
Trip Schedule Outline 26
Height Weight Table 27
Suggested Reading 28

Chapter 1: General Northern Tier Information

Risk Advisory

The Northern Tier National High Adventure Programs have an outstanding safety record. Scouting America and Northern Tier emphasize safety through education and strict adherence to established policies and procedures. The safety of your group is dependent upon your attention to these procedures as well as being physically fit, properly equipped and trained for the rigors of cold weather camping.

Northern Tier and Scouting America's policies and procedures, if followed, will minimize these risks as much as possible. Parents, leaders, and participants should be advised that despite our best attempts at risk management, it is not possible to remove ALL risk from a cold weather wilderness expedition.

• Possible risks include (but are not limited to) motor vehicle accidents; severe weather conditions such as extreme cold temperatures and high winds; medical conditions such as heart attack, appendicitis, hypothermia, dehydration, frostbite, severe allergies and asthma or diabetes related conditions; accidents such as cuts, embedded fishhooks, burns or falls; frost-nip/bite risks associated with being on frozen lakes; and encounters with wildlife.

• Medical evacuations and search and rescue services are coordinated by Northern Tier in close cooperation with local authorities.

Please carefully read the information in this Okpik Advisor Guide and share it with your crew(s), leaders, and parents. If you have any further questions about risk management, contact Northern Tier by phone 218.365.4811 or email Kimberly.Taylor@scouting.org

Risk Prevention

- **Know First Aid** - Make sure your crew is trained in First Aid and carries the required first aid kit. At least one 21+ advisor in each crew must be currently certified in CPR and Wilderness First Aid.
- **Purify Drinking Water**- All water from natural sources must be purified by bringing it to a rolling boil. Chemical treatments are less effective in the cold and water filters freeze.
- **Tobacco** - It is strongly suggested that adult participants limit the use of tobacco on the trail. Smoking is not permitted in the presence or vicinity of youth, tents, Northern Tier buildings, Scouting vehicles or near maintenance areas; rather only in designated areas on base. (This includes vapes & smokeless tobacco products.)
- **Alcohol and Drugs**- Possession or use of alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs or the misuse of prescribed drugs is prohibited. Groups or individuals found in violation of this National Scouting America policy will be sent home, as arranged with the council office or parent.
- **Abuse** - Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse (including hazing) of a camper by his or her peers or by an adult leader is unacceptable anywhere. Local, county and state authorities as well as the Scouting America council representative will be contacted if abuse is suspected.
- **Prescription Drugs and Medication** - If an advisor or crew member is on regular medication, their physician should be consulted. Be sure to consult your physician to determine the effect cold weather may have on your medications (i.e., inhalers or epinephrine) or effects your medications may have on you in cold-weather conditions.

Requirements to Attend

Everyone Coming to Northern Tier Okpik:

- Must be a registered member of Scouting America.
- Must fall below the maximum 295 pounds (250 pounds for dogsled programs) and it is strongly recommended that no participant weighs less than 100 pounds.
- Must have a current (within 12 months) and complete the Scouting Annual Health and Medical Record. The doctor completing the form must review the Northern Tier Risk Advisory included with the form. The Northern Tier form can be found at scouting.org/health-and-safety/ahmr/
- Must have health forms and training documents uploaded into the Gateway and Camp Doc 7 days prior to arrival at Northern Tier.

Okpik Program Age Requirements:

- Okpik Weekends/Trek Programs/Dog Programs: Must be at least 14 years old OR currently enrolled in 8th grade and be at least 13 years old prior to participation.
- Cabin Stay Program: Any registered Scout age 11 or above is eligible. Participants in this program only stay in cabins for the duration and therefore is not eligible for the Triple Crown or Grand Slam Awards.

Requirements for the Crew

- Each crew must have two registered adults that are 21+ that will serve as Advisors
- If the crew is Co-ed at least one of your 21+ Advisors must be female
- Every member 18 or older is required to have Safeguarding Youth training
- Each crew must have one 21+ Adult trained in Hazardous weather through Scouting America
- Each crew must have one 21+ Adult trained in CPR and Wilderness First Aid through an approved school. For currently approved schools click here.

Co-ed or Single Gender Crews

Crews may be all-male, all-female, or coeducational. Coeducational Troops and Venturing crews must meet the leadership standards for coeducational units as outlined in the Guide to Safe Scouting. Please contact the Northern Tier registrar with any questions about leadership requirements.

Single Gender crews must follow the Scouting America Troop leadership guidelines as outlined in the Guide to Safe Scouting. Please refer to the Guide to Safe Scouting and ensure your crew is following the leadership standards required for your unit type scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/

Age	Scouting America Youth Protection Policies
Under 18	Must be registered in a Youth Position
18-21	Must be current in Safeguarding Youth Training Must be registered in an Adult position
21+	At least two registered leaders 21+ are required Registered female adult leader 21 years of age or over must be present for any activity involving female youth Must be current in Safeguarding Youth training

Because of the great concern Scouting America has for the issue of child abuse in our society, the Youth Protection program has been developed to help safeguard both our youth and adult members. Northern Tier will strictly enforce Youth Protection policies, which include the Barriers to Abuse within Scouting. This means all participants 18 years old and older registered in Venturing, Exploring, Sea Scouting, or as an adult volunteer must have current Safeguarding Youth Training, and will provide training documents prior to arrival at Northern Tier. For more information on Scouting's Youth Protection programs, visit: scouting.org/training/youth-protection

Buddy System

Scouting America's Buddy System policy is as follows (from Scouting.org):

- The adult unit leadership oversees and approves buddies.
- Buddies are two and can also be three to prevent youth members from being alone.
- Buddy pairs of 2 people cannot be mixed gender, where appropriate a 3rd youth must be added (for a buddy group of 3). EXAMPLE: Buddy pairs of 2 cannot be mixed gender. However, a third youth/participant may be added to allow for a mixed gender buddy group of 3.
- Youth siblings of the same gender may serve as buddies regardless of age with permission from their parents or legal guardians.
- Except for siblings, it is recommended that the age gap between buddies be at most three years for all non-sleeping activities but must be no more than two years for all tenting.
- When exceptional circumstances warrant, a parent or legal guardian may serve as a buddy for their child's Scouting activities, but youth buddies meeting the above criteria, if available, are always preferred.

Tenting Policies

Tenting arrangements at Northern Tier follow Scouting America's tenting requirements scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/ and must meet the requirements shown below:

- Separate tenting arrangements must be provided for male and female adults and male and female youth
- Youth (14-17) cannot share tents with anyone 18 or older (including parents)
- Youth under 18 may share tents only if no more than 2 years age difference
- Spouses may share tents
- Tenting policy also applies to Quinzhee snow structures.

Chapter 2: Trip Selection

Most trips occur over weekends throughout the winter months (January to the first weekend of March) except for our Holiday Stay Program. The Holiday Stay opens the season (December 27 – January 3) and allows crews to take longer trips and to customize their experience to a greater degree.

Cabin Stay



Participants will be able to experience a full range of winter activities while still being able to enjoy a heated cabin at night. Crews will take day trips out to lakes in the area, learning how to ski, snowshoe and ice fish in the process. They will also learn how to cook breakfast and dinner meals in winter conditions. Minimum age is 11 or must be a registered Scouting America member by the time of arrival at base. Crews with multiple Scouts under the age of 14 are urged to bring additional adult leadership to help manage the needs of the crew. Maximum group size is 11 and minimum group size is 6. Participants will receive the Okpik Cabin Stay Award. Okpik Cabin Stay does not qualify for the triple crown award.

Cold Weather Camping



Provides a basic introduction to camping in winter conditions. Participants will hike out to a wilderness lake, towing their gear in sleds (pulks), set up a campsite and spend their trek camping in the winter wilderness. In addition, they will be exposed to a wide variety of winter activities: snowshoeing, ice fishing, skiing and more. Minimum age is 14 or 13 and in 8th grade by the time of arrival at base. Maximum group size is 11, and minimum group size is 6. Groups over the size of 8 will not be able to travel into the Boundary Water Canoe Area Wilderness but will instead travel into Superior National Forest. Participants will receive the Okpik Cold Weather Camper Award.

Musher Camp



Provides participants with an introduction to dog sledding. Crews spend their entire weekend with the dogs: going on runs of up to 8 miles every morning and afternoon, providing other Okpik participants with information about dog sledding, feeding the dogs breakfast and dinner, sleeping in a rustic cabin adjacent to the dog yard and cooking meals in the winter. Trip length: 3 nights, arriving Friday and leaving Monday. Minimum age is 14 or 13 and in 8th grade by the time of arrival at base. Maximum group size is 7 and minimum group size is 6. Participants will receive the Okpik Cold Weather Camper Award and may purchase the Okpik Musher Camp Award.

Remote Musher Camp



Provides participants with an introduction to dog sledding. You will be shuttled to a Dogsled Kennel and set up a base camp using snow shelters or tents. You will learn and take part in daily chores around the dog yard. You will work with experienced mushers who are excited to teach you all about these amazing animals. Along with daily chores and taking the dogs for runs, you will also have a chance to ski/snowshoe in your downtime. This program provides a great balance of winter camping and the dog program. Trip length: 3 nights (including one spent on base) arriving Friday and leaving Monday. Minimum age is 14 or 13 and in 8th grade by the time of arrival at base. Maximum group size is 7 and minimum group size is 6. Participants will receive the Okpik Cold Weather Camper Award and may purchase the Okpik Musher Camp Award.

Dog Sled Trek



The Dog Sled Trek involves taking 18 Alaskan Huskies out on the ice and camping for two nights! After setting up a base camp, crews will explore the pristine and remote wilderness on morning, and afternoon runs of up to 6 miles. Participants should be prepared to run, hike or snowshoe several miles in addition to dog sledding. Trip Length: 3 nights (including one spent on base) arriving Friday and leaving Monday. Minimum age 14 or 13 and in 8th grade by the time of arrival at base; maximum crew size is 7. Participants will receive the Okpik Cold Weather Camper Award and may purchase the Okpik Dog Trek Award if at least 1 night is spent out on the ice.

Remote Dog Sled Trek



This program will travel more significant distances from the Northern Tier Base, sometimes even departing from or returning to another location all together. Crews will get a more robust winter experience, in more extreme conditions. This program is better suited towards those with previous winter camping experience but it is not required. Trip Length: 3 nights (including one spent on base) arriving Friday and leaving Monday. Minimum age 14 or 13 and in 8th grade by the time of arrival at base; maximum crew size is 7. Participants will receive the Okpik Cold Weather Camper Award and may purchase the Okpik Dog Trek Award if at least 1 night is spent on the ice

Awards

Your crew will receive participation patches during check-out from Northern Tier

The Okpik Winter Trek award is available for any crews that spend at least 2 nights camping off base in the woods, change campsites at least once and travel at least 7 miles.



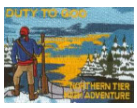
The Zero Hero patch is available to any participant who camps outside on a night where the temperature drops below 0 degrees Fahrenheit (which means -1 or colder).



The Bizhiw Patch is available to any participant who spends two nights off base.



The Duty to God award is available to Scouts and adults who participate in at least one daily devotional while at Northern Tier and lead grace before one meal while on ice.



Award Patches are available for purchase in the Northern Tier Trading Post

Chapter 3: Reservation and Payment

To get registered you will need to know which program and dates you would like to attend. You can visit our website ntier.org to see the available dates schedule and pricing. You can also give us a call at 218.365.4811 and talk with our Registrar to learn more. Below is some general information about registering for each program.

Note that some programs and dates can fill fast so we recommend registering on opening day if possible

Specific Program Registration Information

Holiday Stay

Holiday Stay has two fixed date sessions so your crew will need to pick which session your crew wants and register.

Okpik Cold Weather Camping

Our cold weather camping treks are fully custom in length. Work with your crew to decide on arrival and departure day before registering.

Dog Sled Treks

Dog sled treks are done on a lottery-based system as of 2026.

Refund Policy

All fees (deposit, first payment and final payment) are non-refundable and non-transferable in event of cancellation. Exercise caution in making reservations or paying fees for anyone who has not made a financial commitment. Northern Tier High Adventure Programs must commit financial resources to employ staff, purchase food and supplies, and prepare for base operations. Participants are, therefore, also required to make a financial commitment to attend. Be conservative in making reservations to avoid losing fees due to cancellations.

In rare & extenuating instances, we may determine that conditions do not allow us to present the Okpik programs. In this instance, you will be notified, and all fees will be refunded or transferred to future trips.

Expenses not covered by Northern Tier

- **Food en Route:** An evening meal is available for any crew arriving prior to 7:00pm. Crews that plan to arrive after 7:00pm or get delayed should plan on eating dinner in route to the base. A list of restaurants in Ely can be found by going to ely.org.
- **Fishing Licenses:** All participants who wish to Ice Fish during their Okpik experience must possess a valid Minnesota fishing license. Fishing Licenses may be bought online in advance of your trip. This is the best way for you to purchase your license.
    - To purchase your fishing license online go to. dnr.state.mn.us/licenses/fishing/index.html?type=fishing
- **Additional Patches:** Program patches for extra Bizhiw, Zero Hero, Winter Treks, Dog Trek, Musher Camp and Duty to God can be purchased (if requirements are met) in the Trading Post.

Crew Number

In your confirmation email, you will be given a crew number. This number should be referenced in any correspondence with Northern Tier. Your crew number is assigned to you based upon which program you are participating in, the date you are arriving and the number of crews that you have

Crew Photographs

When you arrive at Northern Tier each crew has a photograph taken. You can order copies of pictures online at photos.ntier.org



Chapter 4: Verifying Requirements to Attend

Northern Tier must verify that each member of the crew meets the requirements to attend Northern Tier. **Failure to provide the correct paperwork could lead to delays upon arrival or prevent you from embarking on your trip entirely**. If at any point you have questions about paperwork, please give us a call at (218) 365-4811 and we would be happy to assist.

Gateway and CampDoc

Northern Tier currently uses two software systems to manage crew information and paperwork prior to arrival. The Northern Tier Gateway collects roster information and training certificates. Your Lead Advisor will receive access to the Gateway in November to enter crew information. Once a crew roster is put into the Gateway, each participant will receive a link to CampDoc. This system manages all Health and Medical Records and patient care while at Northern Tier.

Scouting America Registrations

All adults and youth who are present at the activity must be registered with Scouting America. Ensure that everyone is registered through your local council and Northern Tier will verify this prior to your arrival.

Health and Medical Records

All participant medical records must be uploaded into our Camp Doc system 7 days prior to your arrival at Northern Tier so that our medical team can review the physical ahead of your arrival.

The Scouting America Annual Health and Medical Record must be signed by a medical doctor who has reviewed the Northern Tier Risk Advisory. The combined medical form and risk advisory can be found here.

Okpik is a physically taxing program in a rugged area and participants must be fit enough to meet the challenge. For those reasons, Northern Tier strongly recommends that all participants fall within the recommended Height/Weight range found on the medical form and in the appendix pg 27 for the reasons of safety and enjoyment of the programs. **Those falling above 295 pounds (250 pounds for dog programs) will not be permitted to participate in any way**.

Adult Leadership Training

- All Safeguarding Youth training must be completed online at least 7 days prior to your trek. For Northern Tier to verify certificates, all rosters also need to be completed in the Gateway 7 days prior to your trek (Required for any one 18+)
- Scouting America Weather Hazards training needs to be uploaded into Gateway 7 days ahead of your expedition
- Wilderness First aid and CPR training through and approved school must be uploaded into Gateway 7 days ahead of your expedition

Chapter 5: Crew Information

The Crew

All Northern Tier participants belong to a crew. Crews vary in size (during Okpik crew size can range from 6-11 members, dog crews have a maximum size of 7 participants, but all crews consist of at least two adult leaders, a youth crew leader and a majority of youth participants (Including Venturing young adult participants). A Northern Tier Interpreter accompanies all crew members.

Larger troops will be divided into "sister" crews. Though sister crews may know each other, they will have independent experiences while at Northern Tier to maintain the integrity of the wilderness program. Sister crews will have limited interaction in the wilderness.

The Crew Leader

The Program of Scouting America is specifically designed to develop youth leadership. A well-qualified Scout or Venturer should be selected as the Crew Leader early in the planning of each Northern Tier Expedition. The Crew Leader is responsible for leading the discussion of the Crew's route selection, organizing the pace of travel during the day and establishing the Crew duty roster for camp chores.

The Advisor

The Crew Advisor serves as a counselor and coach to the Crew Leader. The Crew Advisor is also responsible for ensuring the safety of everyone in the crew: all Crews are required to have an adult with training in Wilderness First Aid and CPR. Finally, the Crew Advisor addresses crew conflicts that may require appropriate discipline.

The Interpreter

The Interpreter is a Winter Camping Counselor who serves as a teacher and resource for the Crew Leader and Crew. The Interpreter has received special training in the best practices for winter camping adventures. The Interpreter aids the Crew Advisor in ensuring the safety of the crew. Finally, the Interpreter is responsible for imparting the unique flavor, history, culture, and adventurous spirit of the North Country to the crew.

First Aid Kit

Each crew is responsible for bringing a complete First Aid kit. See Appendix pg 23 First aid kit packing list for a full breakdown of items needs

Clothing provided By Okpik

Fleece pants and Fleece jacket - this is your warm layer, designed to provide insulation and trap the warm pocket of air created by the heat of your body. Multiple thin layers provide ample protection and allow you to regulate body temperature by shedding layers as your activity level increases.

Wind pants and Wind jacket - this is your wind layer, designed to block wind from blowing away the warm bubble of air contained in your warm layer. Usually, a thin weatherproof layer is designed to block the wind. Wind jackets typically come with a hood and extend below the waist. This layer will also provide protection from snow and moisture when sitting, sledding, or hollowing quinzhees.

Mittens - Northern Tier provides mittens in layers consisting of a fleece or wool warm layer and a nylon or leather wind/moisture proof layer. This combination provides warmth and protection from moisture. For maximum versatility you'll want to provide your own pair of liner gloves to provide protection when you also need dexterity.

Boots - Northern Tier provides each participant with a sturdy pair of winter boots with removable liners. Our boots are rated to temperatures lower than -40 degrees Fahrenheit.

Insulated Water Bottles – Northern Tier Provides insulated water bottles that prevents your drinking water from freezing.

A full packing list can be found in the Appendix for items not provided by Northern Tier

Crew Equipment Provided by Okpik

Okpik makes winter camping easy and simple by providing crews with almost everything they need. All cooking gear – stoves, fuel, pots, utensil kit, etc. – await your inspection upon arrival. All the tools necessary for spending several nights in the elements are provided. In addition, recreational equipment is available free of charge. Snowshoes, cross-country skis, and basic ice fishing equipment are all stocked ready-for-use in our Bay Post.

Mental and Physical Preparation

Winter Camping requires a good deal of stamina. The cold temperatures drain energy, as the body spends more effort working to keep itself warm. While out on the ice, you can expect to expend far more calories than you normally would – 4,000 - 5,000 would be a good estimate!

Because of these factors, arriving at Okpik in good physical condition will enhance the enjoyment of your trip. Try to exercise for thirty minutes three times a week for at least the month before you arrive at Okpik. We recommend, in particular, high amounts of cardiovascular exercise. Pulling a sled, snowshoeing, skiing, and dog sledding all require significant cardiovascular capacities. Run, swim and be active to prepare for your trip; ankle weights help to simulate the experience of walking in winter boots. It is also a good idea to do at least one overnight preparation trip before you attend Okpik. Dog sledding, in particular, requires significantly more running than you might expect, if you are signed up for a dog program be prepared to run and jump in your winter clothes and boots.

Fishing Licenses

Northern Tier recommends that all Fishing Licenses be purchased online in advance of your trip. If youth under the age of 16 (for fishing in Minnesota) would like to fish, they can fish under the license of a single adult. However, their catch will be restricted to this adult's limit.

All individuals, 16 years of age and older need to obtain a license to fish. Licenses can be purchased in advance over the phone by calling 1-888-665-4236, or online. For current pricing and license information visit dnr.state.mn.us **NOTE: Regulations in Minnesota may be different than what you are used to at home. Make sure to review these regulations when you purchase your license.**

Chapter 6: Transportation to Northern Tier

When to Arrive

Crews should plan on arriving any time after 1pm on the day of your arrival. There is no lunch provided on that day so crews should be sure to get lunch in route to Northern Tier. Your first day at Northern Tier is busy with preparing for your trek so we encourage you to arrive as close to 1pm as possible. If your crew plans to arrive after 7pm you should also plan to get dinner along your route. Please enter your travel plans into the Gateway in your crew dashboard.

See Appendix: Tip Schedule Outline for a full breakdown of arrival day activities.

When to Depart

Holiday Stay Only (Dec 27 – Jan 3rd)

Your last night at Northern Tier will consist of dinner on base followed by breakfast in the morning. You can leave any time after breakfast

Regular Season Winter Adventures (Trips after Jan 3rd)

Your last night at Northern Tier will be on trail in the wilderness. You will have a trail breakfast to make in the morning then will return to base camp for a hot lunch in the dining hall. You can depart any time after lunch

Early Departures

We understand that crews sometimes need to depart Okpik early due to flight schedules or long drives. While we encourage you to stay for the entirety of your trek, it is possible to return to your cabin early and depart early. With prior notification we can provide bagged lunches or breakfast for crews who are departing before their final meal at Northern Tier

Remote Dog Sled Trek Departure

Remote Dog Sled treks may take place off-site with a 50-minute drive from Northern Tier depending on conditions. Crews have the option to depart directly from the location to head home the morning of their departure should they choose. The standard option is for the crew to return to Northern Tier for lunch prior to departing.

Getting to Northern Tier Okpik

The Okpik program takes place at our Charles L. Sommers base at the following address

Northern Tier High Adventure

14790 Moose Lake Rd

Ely, MN 55731

Driving to Northern Tier in the winter requires extra precautions on the road. The Department of Transportation in Minnesota does an excellent job of keeping the roads clear; however, there will be slippery conditions in parking lots, side roads, and sometimes on the main road after a snowstorm. Driving slowly is critical to the safety of your crew. Ensure you are factoring in some extra drive time beyond what your GPS says to account for slower driving conditions. See more information on winter driving from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety here

Transportation options

The Ely Canoe Base is 130 miles from Duluth, 270 miles from Minneapolis, 100 miles from Hibbing, and 20.2 miles northeast of Ely. Crews using public transportation will need to arrange charter transportation to the Base.

GROUND TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Shubat Transportation	LCS Coaches	Voyageur Bus Co	Spirit of the Wilderness
Hibbing, MN	Cloquet, MN	Duluth, MN	Ely, MN
shubat.com	lcscoaches.com	voyageurbus.com	elycanoetrips.com
888-874-8228	218-879-3391	218-724-1717	218-365-3149

Overnight Options en Route to Base

NEW! Northern Tier has an add-a-night option where you can arrive one night early and stay on base, with food and lodging included. This is subject to availability but gives your crew a morning to explore Ely before your trek begins. To learn more and check availability call 218-365-4811.

Crews traveling through Minneapolis or Duluth may plan to overnight at Northern Lights Shuttle and Lodging located at Giants Ridge Ski Resort in Biwabik, MN. Giants Ridge offers lodging, food service, and recreation for Scouting groups at very reasonable rates. Call 218-780-2556 for more information or giantsridge.com

If you plan on spending the night in Minneapolis, consider staying at Northern Star Council's Base Camp, an urban camp located just a few miles from the Minneapolis – St. Paul airport, reservations can be made through blue sky adventures at blueskyadventures.net/northern-tier

For other lodging opportunities in the Ely area you can visit ely.org/lodging



Chapter 7: Additional Information About Northern Tier

Staying in touch with friends and family

Remember that you will be embarking on a Wilderness Trek. Crews are strongly encouraged to leave connections to the urban world on base when out on the trail and cell phones use is discouraged while in the wilderness. You may want to use cell phones to take photos, however there is additional risk to phones in a wilderness environment and it is carried it at your own risk. We recommend airplane mode to save battery and help you disconnect.

While on base, some cell phone coverage may exist however, due to the remote location of the base, we cannot guarantee any cell phone coverage. Similarly, Northern Tier has limited internet connectivity available to crews.

If there is an emergency at home while you're on trail, Northern Tier may be called at 218.365.4811 and we will get the message to you as soon as we are able. Please note that this means we will not be able to get the message to you until after you get off the ice. We do not maintain regular contact with our crews. Remember, you're in the wilderness. Enjoy it!

Emergencies on Trail

Northern Tier treks are true High Adventure experiences, and your crew will be in a vast wilderness area.

All Northern Tier crews are issued either an Emergency Radio or a Satellite Phone, depending on their route. Your Interpreter is trained in the operation of these devices and will in turn train your crew. Unless otherwise incapacitated, your Interpreter is solely responsible for any communication with the base.

Northern Tier does NOT maintain regular communication with our crews as it is not necessary and is a drain on resources. If an emergency does happen while on the trail, your Interpreter will immediately contact the base, and our management team will work with the Interpreter and Crew to determine the best possible solution.

Northern Tier has an amazing safety record, and we rarely must evacuate someone. When we do have to make that decision, please realize that evacuations can take several hours as our primary method is to evacuate people on foot. This is why it is imperative that every crew have an advisor certified in Wilderness First Aid, CPR, and Weather Hazards, and every crew must have a well-stocked First Aid kit.

Trading Post

Northern Tier's Trading Post sells a large supply of gear, souvenirs, and snacks. Each participant spends on average $150 at the Trading Post. For more information go to store.ntier.org

Emergency Phone Number

If there is a home emergency while your crew is attending Northern Tier, **please contact Northern Tier at 218.365.4811.**

Food at Northern Tier

Your crew will typically eat three meals on base. The day you arrive; you will eat dinner in our dining hall. The next morning before you hit the trail, breakfast will be served in the dining hall. You should plan on wearing your trail clothes to breakfast, to expedite your departure on the trail.

After you get off the trail, you will eat lunch in the dining hall before you leave.

Holiday stay crews will spend their last night on base and will have dinner the night they come off trail as well as breakfast the following morning in the dining hall.

While on the trail your crew will take part in some of the best trail food in the business. Our commissary is stocked according to an expertly crafted menu. Your Interpreter spends the morning before you arrive at base packing your food. After you arrive, your Interpreter will go through the trail food with you and explain what is included. This also allows you and the Interpreter to double check and makes sure everything is packed. Your trail food will be waiting in your cabin when you arrive.

Dietary Restrictions

Dietary restrictions will be communicated via the Roster and Camp Doc system. Please make sure your dietary restrictions are adequately entered so Northern Tier can review and ensure your Scouts have what they need for a successful trip.

A member of the Northern Tier team will reach out to those individuals indicating allergy issues in their profiles. They will be seeking clarification on these allergies, severity, how they are managed, food needs, etc.

- If we can meet those needs, we will notify you and add the additional charges to your crew's registration.
- If we cannot meet those needs, we will also notify you so that you will prepare substitutions to bring for your own meals.

Northern Tier can accommodate the following dietary needs and allergies (ingestion only) on trail.

– Gluten-Free

– Peanut

– Tree Nut

– Vegetarian

For an additional $75 fee for Northern Tier will make substitutions for these dietary needs listed above. Please notify us at least 7 days before your arrival and the commissary team will work with your assigned interpreter to swap those items into your crew's food kits.

Dietary needs beyond those listed above, such as contact allergies, airborne allergies, or vegan diets cannot be accommodated at this time. Participants with such dietary needs will need to provide their own food to ensure their health and safety in those situations. Please refer to the menu and substitution chart for suggestions on suitable items that meet their caloric needs while on trail.

The Northern Tier Trading Post has a very limited variety of backpackers meals and allergen-free snacks available. Please plan and prepare accordingly, as you and your parents will know what items will best meet the needs of your participants.

The current menu can be found at ntier.org/resources/food.

Camperships

Youth with extenuating financial circumstances who are participating in an Okpik program may apply for funding assistance to attend Okpik. Camperships are determined on a need basis. The campership application is found on our website at ntier.org. The completed application form(s) and other required documents must be returned by mail to Northern Tier no later than September 1. The camperships are reviewed in November with notification given to the crew advisor prior to the final crew payment due date.

Insurance

Northern Tier fees include accident and sickness insurance coverage. This applies for your travel to and from the Northern Tier base as well as your Northern Tier Expedition. This policy is secondary to a family policy. All participants with family insurance should include the insurance company name and policy number on their Annual Health and Medical Record form and should also submit a copy of the insurance card with the medical form. A Scouting America Camper's Accident and Sickness Insurance pamphlet is available online at ntier.org.

Northern Tier highly recommends that crews purchase trip cancellation insurance for coverage in the event of sudden cancellations due to weather, medical emergencies, or other covered reasons. CampDoc provides an option for participants, but there are a variety of options available on the market for this type of coverage.

Housing at Northern Tier

Housing provided by Northern Tier consists of rustic heated cabins with a nearby shower/sauna building. These cabins are outfited with bunks that sleep a maximum of 8, have electricity and electric heaters, and have a temperature range of 40-70 degrees depending on the outside temperature. You will have access to a -20 degree sleeping bag for cabin use if needed. During the holiday weekends, Okpik crews may be expected to share cabins with other crews following Safeguarding Youth policies. There are no laundry facilities available to crews on site.

Chapter 8: Appendix

Okpik Arrival Check List

Check list of things that need to be done and when they need to be done

- ☐ Adults and youth have a completed Northern Tier Scouting America Health and Medical Record signed by a doctor within the last 12 months. Youth also have a parent or guardian sign the form. All forms have been uploaded into CampDoc and all profiles are at 100% complete. (Please submit no later than 7 days prior to your arrival to Northern Tier.)

- ☐ Copies of required certification cards: Safeguarding Youth Training for all adults over 18. One adult must have proof of Wilderness First Aid, CPR and Weather Hazards all uploaded into Gateway.

- ☐ Required medications – two of each with one for user and one for advisor in case of loss.

- ☐ Adequate personal gear (see packing list in this book)

- ☐ Financial needs (cash, credit cards, checks, travelers' checks, etc.)

- ☐ Submitted a Participant Roster via link provided by Northern Tier into Gateway (Please submit no later than 7 days prior to your arrival to Northern Tier.)

First Aid Kit Packing list

Every crew must bring one fully stocked first aid kit

All Scouting America crews are required to carry a first aid kit. The kit should be personalized to meet the needs of the crew. The Scouting America National Health and Safety Committee recommend the following items for Scouting and Venturing units participating in High Adventure activities. First aid kits should be stored in waterproof containers for use in route as well as at Northern Tier and should contain the following items.

- ☐ Adhesive bandages (assorted sizes)
- ☐ Knuckle and fingertip bandages
- ☐ Steri strips
- ☐ Moleskin/molefoam
- ☐ Second skin
- ☐ Gauze pads—3″ x 3″
- ☐ Adhesive tape—1″ x 15′
- ☐ 1″ or 2″ roll of gauze
- ☐ 4″ elastic bandage
- ☐ Oval eye patch
- ☐ Antibiotic ointmen
- ☐ Disposable alcohol wipes
- ☐ Triangular bandage
- ☐ Acetaminophen
- ☐ Ibuprofen tablets
- ☐ Cold caplets
- ☐ Antacids
- ☐ Antihistamines
- ☐ Steroid cream
- ☐ Anaphylaxis kit (if needed)
- ☐ Throat lozenges
- ☐ Small bar soap
- ☐ Lip balm
- ☐ Thermometer
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Tweezers
- ☐ Safety pins
- ☐ Side cutters
- ☐ Nitrile or latex gloves
- ☐ CPR Barrier device
- ☐ Sunscreen
- ☐ First aid manual

Share his list with all crew members, advisors, and parents prior to departure for Northern Tier.

Check all medical forms prior to departure for Northern Tier, ensuring allergies and other special considerations are noted. Be prepared to explain important information upon arrival.

Prescribed medication should be supervised by an adult advisor. Any person requiring a prescription medication should personally carry the medication. A back-up supply should be in the kit.

Okpik Participant Packing List

Personal Items

- ☐ Stuff sacks (33 liter or less) or small duffel bag for all personal gear

  A few small bags will help to organize your stuff on your sled and prevent losing items on trail. These are very helpful for keeping organized. (You will not be able to fit large backpacks on the sled easily)

- ☐ 2 Winter Hats (preferably fleece)

  Beanies or bomber hats work well, hats must cover the ears.

- ☐ 2 pairs of synthetic long underwear (tops and bottoms; **No Cotton**)

  Can be heavy weight or mid weight, this layer should fit snug and involve a wicking material designed to keep you dry when sweating.

- ☐ 2 pairs liner gloves

  Thin knit gloves to provide some protection while allowing dexterity. These will be worn under thicker gloves or mittens. Should be loose enough to allow for good blood flow to fingers.

- ☐ 2-3 pairs wool or heavy synthetic socks

  Should be loose enough that they don't restrict blood flow to feet.

- ☐ 3-Season Sleeping bag. This will be combined with an Okpik issued Cold Weather sleeping bag.

  No temperature rating requirement, a summer weight bag (20 to 30 degrees) would work well.

- ☐ Headlamp or flashlight and extra batteries (Extra batteries are a must since daylight are shorter in the winter)
- ☐ Toiletry articles (toothbrush, toothpaste, etc.) *
- ☐ Plastic Cup, bowl, and spoon
- ☐ Items for showering* (towel, soap, etc.) and clothes for the trip home
- ☐ Scarf or Neck Gaiter*

  Fleece or wool work well

- ☐ Sunglasses* or Ski Goggles

  Important to protect the eyes from bright sunlight reflecting off the snow.

The following items are available for outfitting, though you may feel more comfortable in your own:

- ☐ 2 pairs wool or fleece pants

  Northern Tier provides all participants with fleece pants if needed, this is your warm layer which traps heat radiated by your body.

- ☐ 2 sweaters* – preferably wool or polar fleece

  Multiple warm layers can be combined to increase insulation on trail allowing people to adjust layers depending on weather and physical activity.

- [ ] 2-3 pairs of mittens* (mittens are warmer than gloves)

  Northern Tier provides fleece mittens with a nylon shell, large enough to wear liner gloves underneath.

- [ ] 1 wind jacket

  Should have a hood and extend well below the waist, pockets are beneficial, this is your outermost layer so should be big enough to go over multiple other clothes without restricting movement. Breathable fabric helps allow moisture to pass while you sweat.

- [ ] 1 pair snow pants or rain pants

  This is your wind layer bottom, should be water resistant and breathable. Must be big enough to go over multiple

- [ ] Layers without restricting movement.
- [ ] Cross Country Skis and snowshoes

  Northern Tier provides a variety of skis and snowshoes, participants are welcome to bring their own as well.

- [ ] Warm/winter boots (e.g., Sorels or Kamiks) with removable liners

  Must have removable liner to dry overnight, waterproof boots are preferred. Northern Tier provides all participants with 1 pair of Sorel Glacier XT (rated to -100) or Sorel Caribou (rated to -40) participants should bring some sturdy boots to use before outfitting so that you can travel to the cabin the first night.

The following items are recommended but not provided by Okpik.

- [ ] Suspenders (better than a belt in cold weather)

  Holds pants in place without restricting blood flow or heat distribution between legs and torso.

- [ ] Fleece or Puffy Vest

  Retains more heat in your core while not adding bulk to your sleeves.

- [ ] Pocketknife/matches/bandanna *
- [ ] Sunscreen and Chapstick *
- [ ] Camera
- [ ] Day pack or fanny pack
- [ ] 2-3 pairs synthetic liner socks

  Assist in wicking sweat away from the feet.

- [ ] Compass

  If liquid filled will need to be kept warm

Please Note: While Northern Tier strives to have clothing available for all sizes, we are limited in the number of XXL items. For these sizes or larger, we recommend that participants bring their own clothing. If you have questions you can give us a call at (218) 365-4811
***These items are available for purchase in the Trading Post or online at** ntier.org

Trip Schedule Outline

Arrival Day

Arrive between 1:00 and 3:00 PM and meet your Interpreter. You can eat in town prior to arrival, or you can eat dinner at the base provided you arrive before 7:00 PM

Complete Check-In: pay any final fees, ensure all digital records and discuss the specific trip goals of your crew

Get situated in your on-base accommodations and complete a Gear Shakedown

Get outfitted with group gear and supplemental personal gear

Visit the Trading Post– remember, our Trading Post carries some of the items you are required to bring (just in case you forget)

Trip Start

Breakfast at 7:30 AM in the program center

Finish checking out group equipment and food. Prepare for hitting the trail

Start your Okpik Adventure!

Final Day Holiday Stay Treks Only (Dec 27-Jan 3rd)

Morning: Enjoy your last day on the trail. Begin preparations to return to base

Mid-afternoon: Arrive back at base. Return borrowed gear, take a shower, and settle back into on-base accommodations

Dinner will be served between 5:00 and 7:00 pm in the dining hall

Depart the next morning after breakfast

Final Day Regular Season (After Jan 4th)

Breakfast in the backcountry or made at your cabin

Travel back to base

Return equipment

Eat a hot lunch on base in the dining hall

Final Trading post visit and departure

Height/Weight Table

Northern Tier strongly recommends that each participant not exceed the maximum weight on the following-table for their height. Northern Tier requires that you fall below the maximum (295 pounds and 250 pounds for dog programs) allowed weight for participation. Additionally, Northern Tier strongly recommends that no Okpik Cold Weather Camping, Musher Camp or Dog Trek participant weigh less than 100 pounds. Smaller participants will have a very difficult time due to the strenuous nature of the trek.

Weight-to-Height Table Northern Tier National High Adventure Programs		
Height	Recommended Weight (pounds)	Maximum Weight (pounds)
Minimum Allowed Weight ***Participants weighing less than 100 pounds will have a very difficult time and are discouraged from attending. Not Applicable to Cabin Stay.		***100 pounds***
5' 0"	100 - 138	166
5' 1"	101 - 143	172
5' 2"	104 - 148	178
5' 3"	107 - 152	183
5' 4"	111 - 157	189
5' 5"	114 - 162	195
5' 6"	118 - 167	201
5' 7"	121 - 172	207
5' 8"	125 - 178	214
5' 9"	129 - 185	220
5' 10"	132 - 188	226
5' 11"	136 - 194	233
6' 0"	140 - 199	239
6' 1"	144 - 205	246
6' 2"	148 - 210	252
6' 3"	152 - 216	260
6' 4"	156 - 222	267
6' 5"	160 - 228	274
6' 6"	164 - 234	281
6' 7" +	170 - 240	295
Maximum Allowed Weight ***No participants weighing more than 295 (250 for dog program) pounds will be allowed to participate.		***295 pounds***

Suggested Reading

- Conover, Garret and Alexandra. A Snow Walker's Companion: Winter Trail Skills from the Far North
- Dunn, John M. Winterwise: A Backpacker's Guide. Lake George, NY: Adirondack Mountain Club, 1997.
- Field Book. Irving, Texas: Boy Scouts of America, 1984.
- Forgey, William W. Basic Essentials: Hypothermia. Old Saybrook, CT: Globe Pequot Press, 1999.
- Gilpatrick, Gil. Building Snowshoes. Skowhegan, ME: Gil Gilpatrick, 1998.
- Gorman, Stephen. AMC Guide to Winter Camping: Wilderness Travel and Adventure in Coldweather Months. Appalachian Mountain Club, 1991.
- Hampton, Bruce, David Cole and Denise Casey. Soft Paths: How to Enjoy the Wilderness Without Harming It. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1995.
- OKPIK: Cold-Weather Camping. Irving, Texas: Boy Scouts of America, 1990.
- Prater, Gene. Snowshoeing, 4th Edition. Seattle, WA: The Mountaineers, 1997.
- Randall, Glenn. Cold Comfort. New York, NY: Nick Lyons Books, 1987.
- Stokes, Donald W. A Guide to Nature in Winter. Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Co., 1976.
- Watts, May T. and Tom. Winter Tree Finder Nature Study Guide. Berkeley, CA: Wilderness Press, 1970.
- Weiss, Hal. Secrets of Warmth for Comfort or Survival. Seattle, WA: The Mountaineers, 1992.
- Wilkerson M.D., James A. Hypothermia, Frostbite, and Other Cold Injuries – Prevention, Recognition, and Prehospital Treatment. Seattle, WA: The Mountaineers, 1986.

