

THRIVING... IN THE WINTER



OKPIK AND KAPVIK PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK

OKPIK

The word Okpik (ook'-pic), which means Snowy Owl in the Inuit language, has identified the Winter Camping program at Northern Tier since it began in 1971. Representing innovation in the field of winter camping, the Okpik program has grown to nationwide proportions. Since October 1984, Okpik has been the approved name and symbol for the Boy Scouts of America's National Cold Weather Camping Programs.

The Charles L. Sommers Canoe Base of Northern Tier, located 22 miles northeast of Ely, Minnesota, is the site of the Boy Scouts of America's National Cold Weather Camping Development Center. At this site, from December through March each year, Scouts, Scouters, Venturers can participate in a variety of exciting cold weather adventures.

Gerber Scout Reservation near Muskegon, Michigan is the site of Kapvik, Northern Tier's newest Winter Camping Opportunity. Kapvik is the Eskimo word for Wolverine and identifies this program in Michigan which is traditionally known as the wolverine state.

DOWNLOAD ADDITIONAL COPIES @ www.ntier.org/resources/winter

ACTIVITIES

All groups start their program by setting up camp (except for Cabin Stay and Musher Camp). Once that is done, there are a number of activities to choose from. Participants are encouraged to try several activities but because of limited daylight hours during the winter months and varying snow conditions there may not be the opportunity to try them all. Your group may decide to spend most of the time traveling to a remote site, building shelters and setting up and living in a winter camp. The activities available are outlined below:

SHELTER-BUILDING: Although there will be shelters available at some of the campsites, we highly recommend that you learn to build your own. Probably the best shelter to learn to make is the quinzee (kwin-zee), which is a Native American shelter used by the Athapaskan (Ath-a-pas-can) Indians. It is made by piling snow, packing it then hollowing out the pile. Another type of shelter you may want to try is the thermal shelter, which uses a framework of poles with snow over it.

SKIING: Skiing is, of course, one of the most popular activities. There are several miles of ski trails in the area that Okpik participants can use. We provide instruction to get you started and a map of the trails. If you would rather forge your own trail, that's fine too!

SNOWSHOEING: If you would like to travel in more rugged terrain, and explore the frozen wonderland while taking in some of the sights and sounds of the northwoods winter, snowshoeing may be the way to go.

ANIMAL TRACKING: Winter is the perfect time to see what animals are up to and how they live. Tracks in the snow can be like a storybook. There are many to be seen, including the snowshoe hare, fox, wolf, moose, deer, otter and members of the weasel family.

WINTER GAMES: What more perfect place for *Fox & Goose* or *Snowshoe Soccer* than a frozen lake?

ICE FISHING: Nearby lakes offer Northern Pike, Walleye, Rainbow Trout and Splake. The challenge is there for those who are up for it! If you have your own equipment, bring it. Limited equipment is available for crew issue. Equipment and licenses may also be purchased in the Trading Post.

DOG SLEDDING:(Ely Only) Each group attending an Okpik weekend will be visited by a musher and a dog sled team. A demonstration of dog sledding will be given and a very short ride will be offered for youth and adults by the Musher Camp participants.

AWARDS

Participants will receive the Okpik Winter Camping or the Okpik Cabin Stay emblem to wear proudly on the right pocket of their uniform. Bizhiw, Zero Hero, Okpik Trek, Musher Camp and Dogsled Trek awards are available if the requirements have been met. More information can be found on ntier.org



FISHING LICENSES

All participants who wish to ice fish during their Okpik experience must possess a valid Minnesota fishing license. The best way to purchase a fishing license is to do so online before you arrive.

- To purchase your fishing license online go to <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/licenses/fishing/index.html?type=fishing>
- Please refer to the Minnesota DNR website for all fishing regulations and rules:

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/regulations/fishing/index.html>

All Kapvik Participants who wish to ice fish must possess a valid Michigan fishing license. These must be purchased before you arrive

https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-350-79119_79146_82448---,00.html

WHAT TO BRING

We provide Okpik participants with supplemental clothing, but we can't provide everything. Therefore, it is important that you plan carefully, using the enclosed equipment list to make sure you have everything you will need. Some items are required; other items are recommended if you have them available. If you have something not on the list but are comfortable with it or want to try it, bring it along. The Okpik staff will instruct you in how best to use what you brought and will outfit you with the supplemental clothing you need.

As you prepare for Okpik, there are several important points to remember about proper insulation and keeping yourself comfortably cool. The central flap of this handbook explains these points in greater detail and should be referred to as you make decisions about what to bring. Briefly, some of the more important points to remember are:

1. Wool is a much better insulator than cotton. Even when wet, wool retains much of its insulating value while cotton loses all insulating value when wet. Do not use cotton blue jeans or t-shirts for winter camping!
2. Down, even though a good insulator, is difficult to use in a field-type situation. Once it's wet, it has no insulating value and is difficult to dry. Use down as an insulator only if you are familiar with how to handle it.
3. Synthetic fibers and fabrics are excellent insulators. Polypropylene, Thermax™, Polarfleece™, Hollofil™, Quallofil™ and Thinsulate™ are several examples of the many appropriate synthetic fibers.
4. Wear clothing loose and in layers as illustrated in this handbook.

TRADING POST

Northern Tier maintains a well-stocked Trading Post with patches, souvenirs and camping supplies and equipment. Participants spend an average of \$80 each. If major items are desired more money will be required. Available items include fleece jackets/vests, ski hats, mittens and socks. Pre-order your items at www.northerntiertradingpost.org.

GROUP GEAR LIST

Most of the gear needed by the group for cooking, shelter and travel such as stoves, pots, tents, sleds and skis, is provided for you. **The only gear each crew must provide is a fully stocked first aid kit.**

EVERY CREW MUST BRING ONE FULLY STOCKED FIRST AID KIT

All BSA troops, packs and crews should carry a first aid kit. The kit can be personalized to meet the demands of the crew. The following items are recommended by the BSA National Health and Safety Committee to be used by Scouting and Venturing units doing High Adventure activities. The crew's first aid kit should be stored in a waterproof container for use en 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 ointment
- Disposable alcohol wipes
- Triangular bandage
- Acetaminophen
- Ibuprofen tablets
- Antacids
- Antihistamine
- Steroid cream
- Anaphylaxis kit (if needed)
- Throat lozenges
- Cold caplets
- Small bar soap
- Lip balm
- Thermometer
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Safety pins
- Side cutters
- Nitrile or latex gloves
- Barrier device for resuscitation
- Sunscreen
- First aid manual

ANY PERSON REQUIRING prescribed medication should personally carry the medication with a back-up supply in the kit, controlled by the adult advisor.

WHAT KEEPS YOU WARM? - When you really study what keeps you warm, it becomes clear that it is you! Your body produces all the heat you need. Your clothing is designed to hold in whatever heat you need to feel comfortable under a variety of conditions and activities. You will notice all our clothing is loose. That is because tight clothing constricts the flow of blood so the body heat cannot move around. That is why tight boots mean cold feet and a tight belt means cold legs.

C-O-L-D

That is an easily remembered key to keeping warm.

C Keep yourself and your clothes **CLEAN**. Dirt and body oils which build up on clothing destroy its insulating properties

O Avoid **OVERHEATING**. Clothing is designed to be taken off or added to in layers to maintain an even body heat.

L Wear clothes **LOOSE** and in **LAYERS**.

D Keep **DRY**. Wet clothing removes body heat 240 times faster than it will dissipate through dry clothing. Wet is trouble.

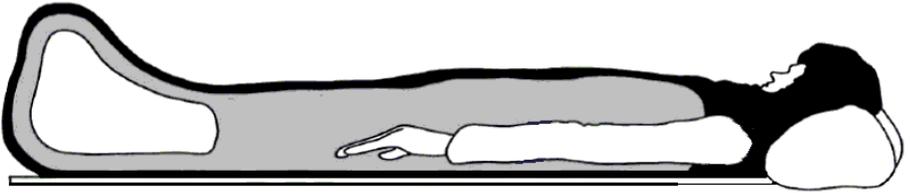
VENTILATION—To regulate the amount of heat, yet not get overheated and wet with perspiration, adjustments can be made to loosen up the waist, the cuffs and the neck opening, allowing more heat to escape.

WET, WINDY, COLD—This is the combination that spells danger to the winter camper. We avoid it by keeping dry, getting out of the wind when possible and wearing the correct clothes.

Your Sleeping System is Designed to Keep You Warm

Essentially, you are sleeping in several layers of insulation with an additional layer underneath you to insulate you from the frozen ground. It is important to first make sure your feet are warm. Using polar fleece or other types of socks will give you an inner layer of insulation around your feet. The inner bag is a regular sleeping bag with or without a hood and has a drawstring to be tightened down slightly in order to capture heat. The outside layer is a hooded sleeping bag which covers the entire system from feet to head and which has a drawstring allowing the opening to be pulled snug around the face to prevent loss of body heat.

Inner 3-Season Sleeping Bag (Self-Provided)



Foam Pad

Stops Cold from Below

SLEEPING PADS—These are essential for insulating the body from the cold ground: Closed cell foam pads are the best option for cold weather camping.

Hooded Outer Bag Covers Everything
(Okpik Provided)

TYPES OF BAGS—Inner bags and outer bags should be made of synthetic fiber which can be stuffed compactly for travel and dries easily.

Your Sleeping System Works Best When Kept Clean and Dry

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT LIST

When packing for Okpik, consider protection for each part of the body.

PLEASE BRING THESE ITEMS:

- A COMPLETED BSA Health and Medical Record (Parts A, B, C and D) signed by a doctor in the last twelve months (this applies to both adults and youth). The parent or guardian of the youth must also sign the form. This form is available online at: <http://www.ntier.org/Resources/Winter.aspx>
- 2 Winter Hats (windproof synthetic or wool)
- 2-3 pairs of synthetic long underwear (tops and bottoms; **NO COTTON**).
- 2 pairs liner gloves
- 2-3 pairs wool or heavy synthetic socks
- 2-3 pairs synthetic liner socks
- 3-season sleeping bag. This will be combined with an Okpik issued Cold Weather sleeping bag to form your extreme weather sleeping system.
- Headlamp or flashlight and extra batteries (MUST HAVE – days are short in the winter, so if you plan on staying up later than 5-6 PM you will need some light)
- Toiletry articles (toothbrush, toothpaste, etc.)
- Plastic Cup, bowl and spoon
- Stuff sack or small duffel bag for all personal gear
- Items for showering (towel, soap, etc.) and clothes for the trip home
- Scarf or Neck Gaiter
- Sunglasses or Snow Goggles

THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE AVAILABLE FOR OUTFITTING THOUGH YOU MAY FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE IN YOUR OWN:

- 2 sweaters—preferably wool or polar fleece – NO COTTON
- 2 pair wool or fleece pants
- 2-3 pairs of mittens (mittens are warmer than gloves)
- 1 outer wind layer jacket
- 1 pair wind pants
- Skis and snowshoes
- Warm winter boots (e.g., Sorels or Kamiks) with removable liners

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

- Suspenders (better than a belt in cold weather)
- Fleece Vest
- Pocketknife/matches/bandana
- Sunscreen and chapstick
- Camera and Film

PLEASE NOTE: While Northern Tier strives to have clothing available for all sizes, we are limited in the number of XX-L items. For these sizes or larger, we recommend that participants bring their own.

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR PICTORIAL REPRESENTATION OF CLOTHING

WHAT ARE THE HEIGHT AND WEIGHT REQUIREMENTS?

The following table shows the recommended weights for each height, as well as the maximum weight for that height. *Northern Tier strongly recommends that each participant not exceed the maximum weight on the 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)
<i>Minimum Allowed Weight</i> <i>***Participants weighing less than 100 pounds will have a very difficult time and are discouraged from attending. Not Applicable to Cabin Stay.</i>		<i>100 pounds</i>
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
<i>Maximum Allowed Weight</i> <i>***No participants weighing more than 295 (250 for dog program) pounds will be allowed to participate.</i>		<i>295 pounds</i>

WHAT ARE THE RISKS? (RISK ADVISORY)

The Northern Tier National High Adventure Programs have an outstanding safety record. The Boy Scouts of 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 the Boy Scouts of 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, frost bite, severe allergies and asthma or diabetes related conditions; accidents such as cuts, embedded fish hooks, burns or falls; 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 Participant 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 info@ntier.org

HOW DO I PREVENT PROBLEMS?

KNOW FIRST AID - Make sure your crew is trained in First Aid and carries the required first aid kit. At least one advisor in each crew must be currently certified in **CPR** and **Wilderness First Aid**.

PURIFY ALL DRINKING WATER - All water from natural sources **must** be purified by bringing it to a rolling boil or through use of a water purification filter. Chemical treatments are less effective in the cold.

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, BSA vehicles or near maintenance areas; only in designated areas on base.

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 BSA 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 BSA 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.

WHAT ARE THE POLICIES?

ADULT LEADERSHIP - Two registered adult leaders 21 years of age or over are required at all Scouting activities, including meetings. There must be a registered female adult leader over 21 in every unit serving females. A registered female adult leader over 21 must be present for any activity involving female youth. Notwithstanding the minimum leader requirements, age- and program-appropriate supervision must always be provided.

ADULT LEADERSHIP TRAINING – All adult participants are required to present proof of BSA Youth Protection training upon arrival at Northern Tier. At least one adult in each crew must have proof of current CPR, Wilderness First Aid and Weather Hazards training.

BSA HEALTH AND MEDICAL RECORDS – All Northern Tier participants must present a current (within one year of the end date of your trip) BSA Health and Medical Record , signed by a doctor, upon arrival to base. Youth must have a parent or guardian signature as well. This form is available online at <http://www.ntier.org/>.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS - All youth must be registered as a Scouts BSA member or Venturer.

AGE REQUIREMENTS – Age requirements vary for each Okpik program option. To participate in Okpik Cabin Stay youth must be a registered Scouts BSA member, Venturer. Youth participants in all other Okpik programs must be 14 years old or in the 8th grade during their trip.

Your Clothing is your Key to Winter Comfort

HEADGEAR—This is personal preference but is always a good idea to have at least two wool or fleece caps. One for use under a parka hood and one for use in the sleeping bag. Soft, insulated caps with ear flaps are good, but should be loose-fitting.

EYE PROTECTION—Goggles are best, but sunglasses and homemade snow shields will reduce glare from sun off snow; a situation which can cause “snow blindness.”

SCARF or NECK GAITER—Wool or synthetic fiber makes an excellent cold weather protector, but make sure it is plenty long.

PARKA—The anorak or pullover should be windproof, reach almost to the knees and be large enough to fit over all other garments. It should also have a hood.

JACKET—A lightweight wool or fleece jacket used in combination with other outer garments makes a better “layering” system than one thick, heavy jacket. A hood for extreme cold is a welcome addition.

VEST—This insulated garment keeps the vital organs—heart and lungs—warm. Best style has a flap in back to protect the kidneys. Detachable sleeves convert a vest to an insulated jacket.

SWEATER—Wool or fleece synthetic.

HAND COVERING—This is a personal preference which can be made up of any loose-fitting combination of the following: wool gloves, wristlets, wool mittens, insulated mittens, leather over-mitts or wind/waterproof expedition mitts. Mittens are warmer than gloves.

Your Clothing is your Key to Winter Comfort Continued

LONG UNDERWEAR—May be wool and/or synthetic fiber. Keep a spare set for emergencies. and sleeping.

WIND PANTS—Those equipped with snaps down the inseam are ideal. They may be put on or taken off without removing the boots.

PANTS—Wear full-cut, preferably with suspenders. In extreme cold, light-weight, windproof pants may be worn over everything. Wear suspenders rather than a belt to help your circulation.

BOOTS—Proper footgear is essential. In the Okpik program we use a variety of footgear, designed for different needs. A boot should fit somewhat loose for warmth, but the adage “cool is comfortable,” is true; the foot should not sweat profusely. The boots we use are rubber bottom pacs. We sometimes us a combination of a light boot for travel and a thickly insulated boot for camp.

SOCKS—Wool or wool/synthetic are good. Sometimes synthetic fiber liner socks are worn next to the skin for added warmth, comfort and to wick moisture.



LOOKING FOR YOUR NEXT ADVENTURE?



Check out our summer canoeing programs for your next Wilderness Adventure that Lasts a Lifetime!

ntier.org