

A tip or two from Chief Keokuk

Our Prairie Trail Federation has been blessed with outstanding Sandpainters. (The Sandpainter is in charge of Patches.) Our patches are custom made, designed by kids or designed by the Sandpainter himself. Scott Denton served in this role for a number of years. He was spectacular and threw himself heart and soul into the job. When he stepped down, I was worried who would replace him. Now Paul DiVittorio has filled the role of Sandpainter with the same enthusiasm, joy, creativity and organization that we enjoyed in the past. In honor of Paul DiVittorio's outstanding work as our new Sandpainter, here are a few words I said before, but are worth repeating:

THE IMPORTANCE OF PATCHES

I heard a dad at a campout say, "My kid and I have so many patches. It's unbelievable! And they're all piled up somewhere at home!" Huh?! Take this guy out to the woodshed!

Display your patches! Wear them proudly! Each of your patches represents an event you experienced with your child. Getting a patch sewn on to your vest, and your child's vest, is a small investment in time compared to the time required to earn that patch. If you make the effort to attend an event, there is no point in hiding the patch in a drawer at home.

Don't underestimate the importance of patches to a child. Another patch may feel like a nuisance for some grown-ups, but for kids receiving a patch, it's payday! Patches are the wages of childhood. Our children are motivated by patches. They like 'em. Patches serve as a touchstone for memories of the meaningful time spent with dad.

GET 'EM ON YOUR VEST

I know a dad who sews on all of his patches with a sewing machine. He said he learned in junior high and it's easy. You can also sew them on by hand. I've even sewn on a button or two when in the wilderness. There is really nothing to it. Fabric glue is an option as well, but **not** recommended because sometimes the glue fails. Also kids may want their patches moved, to make way for others.

In our family, my mother-in-law was the sewer of all patches using a sewing machine. Two or three times a year, when my sons were in Guides and my daughter was in Princesses, we would carefully pin patches to our vests. This generated a lot of conversation: *Hey dad, remember this cam?. Wow, remember when that toboggan spun out. I liked that cabin. That parade was fun!* (This little sentimental journey enriches the father and child relationship.) After all the pinning of patches and talking about good times, we would hand the vests over to grandma for sewing. In exchange for hugs and kisses from her grandchildren, grandma would sew every patch onto their vests, including my two vests.

Another sewing source is K-Cleaners on Hillgrove near Brainard in La Grange. They will sew on your patches, but not for hugs and kisses. They charge a simple fee per patch.

EXPAND THE USE OF PATCHES

Our Federation's Patch supplier is The Patch Store in Elmhurst, 1-800-537-2824. They have a patch for every job in your tribe, and patches you haven't even imagined. A popular patch in my two tribes was the "My Dad Is" patch. A child gets this chevron, arc-shaped patch, and a patch of their father's tribal role (Tribal Chief, Wampum Bearer, Nation Chief) positioned below the arc that say's "My Dad Is." The kids love it and are very proud. Confused? Check out the website at www.thepatchstore.com.

Another source of pride is the "Six Aims Patch" from the Patch Store. In my tribes when a child memorized the Six Aims and recited them to the Tribal Chief, they earned the Six Aims Patch. I hope my old tribes are continuing with this tradition. Maybe you should try it? The Six Aims Patch is a great program tie-in and provides children with a sense of achievement.

The Patch Store can also custom-make a Tribal Patch based on your design. They have patches for everything. Think of it, and they probably have it. For example, at a campout long ago, two of our Arapaho boys swamped a canoe. We presented them each with a Canoe Patch, from the Patch Store, and they talked about it for years.

PATCHES AND THE TRIBAL CHIEF

Tribal Chiefs are the stewards of the patches for your tribe. Stay current. At every Longhouse our Federation's Sandpainter is there for your Federation Patch needs. All you need do is ask. Just email Paul DiVittorio at sandpainter@yigp.org. Paul has an archives of patches for those missing a patch from years past. Check with your tribal members. Get everyone up to date because patches are important. Each patch is a memory, an honor, an event. They contain meaning. Share them. Expand their use. Display them. Cherish them. I know your kids do. You should too.

Peace and Happy New Year,

John C. Lorenzen, Federation Chief Keokuk