

THRIVING (NOT JUST SURVIVING) ON YOUR WINTER CAMPOUT

Winter Campouts have a lower attendance than the Fall and Spring Campouts. There are three main concerns that arise and leave even the most stalwart of camping fathers frozen in their tracks: weather, distance and activities. But take heart, follow these instructions and you will thrive on your Winter Campout.

Distance

Some of our camps are a long way. Don't fret over the miles. The drive is important time spent with your son or daughter! Get them off their iPod and talk. Visit. Let the roadway roll by and get to know your kid. And let your kid get to know you. You'd be surprised what you can learn about each other while held captive in a car. Or sing silly songs, play word games, or slug bug. Your kid will love the time alone with dad.

If your tribe is assigned to a distant camp, adjust your schedule, allow more time for travel and make the absolute most of it. My daughter and I were assigned to the very first winter campout at Camp Pinewood in Michigan two years ago. On the way home we stopped for a late lunch on the shore of Lake Michigan. From the safety of our car, while eating sub sandwiches, we watched the waves and ice pile up against the shore and talked. She and I both remember it well. Although we can't remember what we talked about, we both remember our time watching the wintry lake. This never would have happened had I decided Camp Pinewood was too far.

Weather

Attending a campout in poor weather means different things to different people. For some, it's the thought of too much snow, for others it's the prospect of no snow with fog and drizzle. But there is no such thing as poor weather on a campout because you're not at the campout for the weather. You are there to spend time with your child! That main purpose transcends all weather conditions.

You'd be surprised the fine memories that adverse weather provides. My eldest son in college still remembers his first Indian Guides Winter Campout at 22 below zero with a seventy below zero wind-chill. I kid you not, and we have a special patch to commemorate that deep chill. On the opposite extreme is my daughter's final Indian Princess Winter Campout at Sherman Lakes last year: damp, mild and foggy. Yet for my daughter and I, the weather didn't matter. Read what nice thing she said to me at www.yigp.org; click on "Keokuk's Corner," and read "Campout Community." Her quote will warm the heart of any parent.

Activity

Sometimes our camps will not have as many activities for winter as they do for fall and spring. Horses may not be available, maybe the climbing tower is closed due to poor weather or the lake is not frozen for skating. But those things take a back seat to your own inventiveness that you should bring to the time you spend on a campout. Indian Guides, Indian Princesses and Trailblazers is what you make it. Take ownership in the activity for your campout. Invent a new tribal game for the entire camp to play, devise an activity for your tribal members to play in the dining hall or in the cabin, celebrate the awards and ribbons when you distribute them, or create a tribal cheer that will be a signature song. The list is as long as your imagination will allow. Be responsible for your own meaningful time. Work on it. With some thought you'll be inspired and then you'll inspire others.

But above all things: attend the campout. I guarantee that if you go to the campout, (even in lousy weather, even at a long distance, even with an anticipated activity closed for the winter), you will find a moment with your child that will be memorable. Whether it's a small part of the campout or major chunk of an afternoon, you will stumble upon a moment. It will be a gem that will live in your memory as a distinct spot in time, that will renew and uplift you as you go through the ordinary rounds of daily life.

I also guarantee you that if you do **not** attend the campout, you have shut out any possibility of creating a campout memory. There is no alternative tribal activity; there is no day at home; there is no other event that can take the place of a Federation Campout. There are treasured and anticipated by children.

So think like your child. Treasure and anticipate the campout. Be open to the possibilities, and get out there.

Peace,

John C. Lorenzen, Federation Chief Keokuk