

WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

I was driving to our campout with my friend, Pale Leopard. (Now there's an original Native American name!) Our kids were in the back of the minivan wrapped up in some DVD playing on the screen overhead. After traveling for some time, chatting about work and family, we settled into the drive. My mind started wandering and the thought struck me: why are we doing this? I was on my twenty-third campout and am still counting, and will be counting for years to come.

I thought about dads who just attended their very first campout. For those new dads, twenty-three campouts may sound like an impossible amount. But man! They go by quickly. Twenty-three campouts may seem like a lifetime. In fact, it is a lifetime. The lifetime of my young son who just made passage from Guides. Now I am camping with my daughter. Twenty-three campouts and still counting. I once heard that the unofficial record number of campouts is sixty-three. And I've heard rumor of one dad who has been on over 100. Yikes! But regardless of the number, I kept wondering, why do we continue to do what we do?

Not only do we go on campouts, we attend Tribal Meetings, Federation Events, Tribal Outings and Civic Projects. Many of us take positions of leadership as Tribal Chiefs or Nation Chiefs. We organize events, meetings, parades, outings, projects and activities. And we can't forget tribal property which takes on a life of its own. But we embrace all this, hand and hand with our children, enjoying events, making tribal property and filling our vests with patches. But what is the reason that powers us to do all that we do? I kept thinking as the wheels under the van hummed quietly on the road. The kids in the back had nodded off while the movie still played on the van's seven inch screen.

I thought about the preparation for this campout. The tribal chief sent around a reminder, promoted the campout at our Tribal Meeting and got the entire tribe committed to attend and then collected our money. Then in a blink it's the Friday of the campout. I pack up my gear, pick up my friend and his kid, stuffing the van to the last cubic foot of space and off we go. Before I know it, Sunday will be here, we will be re-stuffing the van and heading home after a weekend which will be a blur of activity. I know that by the time I vacuum out the van on Sunday afternoon, from what looks like the remnants of the Taste of Chicago, my weary body will want to head to the couch for a power nap.

So why do all this? Then the reason hit me! Hello? How could I forget?! The reasons were all around me in the back seat sleeping quietly as we headed to camp.

We do this for our kids. First and foremost, it's the kids! You've seen the excitement and joy on your child's face as they come home from campouts recounting how they won a ribbon. They show off their new patches, talk about the horse they rode, "the" rifle range shot or the cool looking craft. I think about my kids telling my wife how they spent a neat afternoon with Dad walking around the camp grounds. The smiles and wonderment of our children are worth every bit of exhaustion on Sunday!

We do this for friendship with other Dads. The friendships you make through our Federation are the greatest. I have neighbors who have been out of the program for twenty years who still get a twinkle in their eye as they reminisce about their time in Guides, Princesses and Trailblazers. There is something to having "roughed it" in a cabin with a group of dads and kids that brings about a bond – a sort of Band of Brothers.

We do this to teach our children. We teach them about companionship. We teach them that they are important. We are living examples at campouts, meetings, events and civic activities. They look up to us and model our behavior. We teach our children about friendships and generosity and community. We teach them to be responsible, to live the Six Aims, and along the way, have fun with their friends and with their dads.

We do what we do because, we care for our kids. We do what we do because we embrace fatherhood seriously. The result is a lifetime of memories, friendships and a depth of companionship with our kids that is ...priceless.

Tom Estey, Federation Chief, Silver Cloud