



## Brightwater Site

### Survival Sessions at Brightwater

Sample lesson created by Paul Szaroz and Marcia Klein fall 2003

**Learning Site:** in the bowl area by the main camp or on the SPS land by the Creek/ fire pit area behind the old bungalow. Be careful not to leave ANY impact from shelter building at either site.

Possible related novel studies: Hatchet by Gary Paulsen and all the rest of the Gary Paulsen books, Call of the Wild by Jack London, "To build a Fire" by Jack London, Lost in the Barrens by Farley Mowat, Touching Spirit Bear by Ben Mikaelson, Long Claws by James Houston, Julie of the Wolves by Jean Craighead George and many more terrific survival books. Adventure and Wilderness Survival Kit from the CMC is available.

There are enough program suggestions listed below to take up an entire three day camp (or longer) - Chose the ones that suit the students and you the best. This program requires some advance prep of materials (such as kindling). Please communicate with the project leader at 373-4169 to give a heads up about the program you intend to lead so that the best location can be determined. Thank you.

### What is survival?

Define or describe survival. Give examples of when you have been lost in the woods (or in the mall). Make a web of all of the concepts around the idea of survival (using markers and scrap paper) or list them in a small group. Consider the skills needed as well as the qualities of a person who survives in the wilderness. Skills/ Needs: water, shelter, fire, food gathering, clothing, first aid. Qualities: creativity, confidence, awareness, intuition, luck, etc

### Hug a Tree

When lost, what matters the most is we don't wander around and get more lost/ injured or hypothermic. Instead the students should hug a tree – stays put, and assess the situation, cry out for help and make a plan for survival. Refer to the book

Lost in the Woods by Colleen Politano ISBN 0-919931-04-9. Excellent book with good demo games. A video was made of this book as well. Great for younger kids or older ones with care partners.

## Shelter

Climb under the parachute outside and have a little chat about different kinds of shelters. Function, materials, ....If students have done the straw bale hike already, then ask them what kind of construction samples they have seen done by animals. What are the qualities of a good shelter and a poor one? What materials can be used? We won't use natural materials but still good to list. We could make a lean-to using the old Xmas tree stems on SPS land. The tipi is also a shelter and can be discussed too.

## Quinzhee

Snow shelters made by piling snow, letting it sit overnight and hollowing it out creates a great shelter that will be about +1 C for sleeping at night if opening is well closed. Building one for people is pretty involved and should only be done by experienced people. Also building a quinzee is fine with lots of adult supervision for safety in case the quinzee collapses. But you can build one that would fit a fox or Soleil and still get the idea of the way the shelter could save a life. It needs to sit for about an hour for the snow to crystallize and bond together. Then you can hollow it out and use thermometers to compare the temperature. History – the Dene people of Saskatchewan made this type of shelter from snow.

<http://www.call-wild.com/quinzee.html>

<http://www.gigglemoose.com/artcl-quinzee.htm>

<http://www.ed.mtu.edu/esmis/id197.htm>

<http://johanna.wandel.ca/SnowShelters/>

## Tarping 101

Give the kids the problem that they need to put up the tarp as a group using the nylon rope. It must be able to keep the entire group dry from rain and protected from wind. Areas to do this are down by the clearing near the house or by the playground. Watch for the Hawthorn bushes in the paths by the playground! This usually takes about 10 –15 minutes for the kids to figure out then do a tour of the tarps looking at different features. Discuss geometric solids – the shapes of things to consider the best design. Locate in a place where a fire could potentially be built as well as to take advantage of the sun and away from the wind.

Take the tarp down at the end of the program for the next session. What other shelter designs have they seen and what type of materials were used for construction?

Material: 4 ropes, one 6x8 foot blue tarp for each group of four students

## **Fire**

Fire is important for survival – for hope, food, water purification, heat. Go to woodpile by campfire area and figure out which wood is best to burn. New or rotten wood will not burn or will smoke. It is best to have old seasoned wood which is about one year old and lighter than new heavy wood. Do a hold test to demonstrate this idea. If you feel ok with axes, show kids the difference between tinder, kindling, and larger fuel. Consider size by suggesting kindling will be the size of the pinky finger and smaller than the size of index, then wrist, arm, etc. Or have some cut up ahead of time. Show ways to build a fire – log cabin, tipi, log base and then build tipi/ cabin model. If you have enough wood prepped, let kids have a competition between groups how many matches are needed to build a small demo fire.

Discuss the fire from the First Nations' perspective/ language. How to we show respect for fire? Elder teach that we never throw things in fire, jump over the fire or show any disrespect to an element that can have as much power as to keep us warm and cook our food and provide spiritual warmth. How was fire transported in the past? (Birch Bark fungus fire holder wrapped in leather to transport the embers) What are other ways to make fire? Bow drill – also think of Cast Away with Tom Hanks where he just pushed on the tinder, for a day or two! What about magnifying glasses – safety caution there in this dry prairie...

Material: axe, wood from wood pile, do in fire pit NB cut kindling before students arrive. They are NOT ALLOWED to use the axe.

## **Food:**

Take a walk along the creek trail looking for possible food products or other material for tools. Use the plant cards as cheat notes for the students. This is the study of Ethnobotany or plant uses. NOTE: limit the impact of collecting. Only one berry should be tasted as we have 100s of other kids who need the experience plus a few birds who also dine!

High Bush Cranberry – berry can be eaten, even though it is a bit musty taste.

Chokecherry – berry we crush, lots of coyote eat this in the fall so watch for scat with the pits. Good berry to eat but not too much. Referred to ‘gut berry’ by Brain in the book Hatchet by Gary Paulsen, thick branches also used for tent pegs for tipis.

Saskatoon – can make jams, pies,

Rose Hip – three rosehips have as much vitamin C as one orange. But don’t eat the berries as they are hairy – show the kids by taking ONE berry to open up and pass around. The Cree word for the plant means ‘itchy bum berry’ as the seeds irritate the gut.

Protein – hard to come by unless you can hunt or snare

We have lots of books on this topic that we could further explore for the program....

## Water

Make a solar still in the playground sand in spring or fall. But don’t tell the kids they will be doing this.

Spring or fall Problem: You don’t want to get beaver fever from the creek caused by a parasite so you need to find a way to get water in other ways. Brainstorm ways. Tell them you have clear plastic, a cup and the borrow some rocks from the trench areas as long they PUT THEM BACK afterwards so Murdy’s drainage project is not compromised. Thanks.

Let the kids figure out how to make a solar still. Basically, they dig a hole, put the cup in the bottom, put the plastic on top and anchor with rocks and sand with one rock in middle directly over the cup so the evaporating water drips in the cup. But don’t tell them that. Ask questions to help the students figure out how the physics works.

Material: clear plastic, plastic cup – also used for digging, rocks

Winter – melt snow in coffee cans, adding enough so it does not scorch, then see which can boils fastest – competition between groups after building the new fire. Use wood tongs to remove the can carefully.

## Follow the trail – Tracking animals and people

**Animal Tracks** - Go for a walk along the trail to look for animal tracks. Use the rubber feet in the backpack to look for tracks and match them to the books/ diagrams. Discuss animal habits in winters, survival strategies and basis needs.

Could also tie in basic snaring, but we don't do that on this land. Discuss importance of using the entire animal and the relationship to conservation.

**Setting a trail for a friend:** Use the enclosed cards to set trail for a friend in the paths by the playground. Don't let trails cross over. Then ask a buddy to try to follow the trail you made. Make a large circle by the playground for the 'I have gone home' sign. The rest of the explanation is on the purple cards. If you use rocks or sticks, please put them back where you found them. Thanks.

Material: trail making sign cards, rocks, branches

### **Wrap up**

Revisit the qualities needed for survival in the wilderness. The choices a person makes and what will keep him or her alive to be found.

Also to close, think about survival of nature. What role do we have in ensuring the balance of nature survives? How much do we take? What role does conservation have? Students need to understand that they do not collect out at Brightwater or anywhere else unless they need to for survival.