

Dear Parents, Guardians and Participants,

On behalf of the Northern Youth Leadership (NYL) staff and Steering Committee I would like to thank you for making the 2016 Leadership through the Drum camp a huge success! All of the boys followed the rules, engaged in the programming and had a great time. It was amazing to watch them throughout the week as they tried new things and learned about living on the land. They were all an absolute pleasure to work with!

I am sure that you have already heard tons of stories about camp, but I wanted to send out a summary of what we did as well.

#### **October 11th**

Tuesday was the road trip to Fort Simpson. The boys were up early and we left Yellowknife at 7:30am in two vans. We stopped briefly in Fort Providence for some lunch and then continued on to Fort Simpson, arriving at 3:30pm. One of the vans had a DVD player, so the boys spent the drive watching movies they purchased at Wal-Mart. In Fort Simpson, youth took a short boat ride across the river to the camp. The camp included 5 McPherson Canvas Tents, a large Teepee, a wooden storehouse, and a kitchen area. After a good dinner, the boys were in their tents and asleep pretty early.

#### **October 12th**

Wednesday was the first full day at camp. After breakfast, NYL staff met with the boys to create a group contract outlining what they expected of each other in order to make the camp a success. Examples of items on the contract were 'participate' and 'shush when the Elders are talking'. Chief Gerald Antoine of the Liidlil Kue First Nation visited the camp for a traditional ceremony to open the camp, and to share stories about the traditional territory. One of the boys from Cambridge Bay presented the Chief with an offering of Tobacco on behalf of the group. In the afternoon, three of the boys went on a Moose Hunt by boat while the others went for a hike. The boys didn't see any Moose but they brought back lots of wood for the camp. Before bedtime, the boys spent time in the Teepee learning how to drum.

#### **October 13th**

Thursday after breakfast, the boys learned how to make and set rabbit snares. Later in the morning, the Dehcho Grand Chief Herb Norwegian visited the camp and spent some time speaking with the boys and sharing stories. In the afternoon four boys went hunting by boat while the other three remained at camp and removed the hide and babiche from some donated drum frames. The boys also had the opportunity to learn about and practice fleshing a fresh moose hide. After dinner, the boys did a quick activity on trust, coping mechanisms and support systems. The highlight of the day was when NYL leader Gordie Liske found and shot a Grouse (chicken) while the boys and him were out collecting wood.

#### **October 14th**

Friday started with a prayer song in the Teepee and then the boys checked their snares and helped with camp chores. The boys spent the morning preparing their drum frames with hand planes and sanding them down. Then they put them in a steamer to make them easier to shape. While the frames were in the steamer the boys taught each other Dene hand games and northern arctic games. The boys also got creative during their downtime building bows and arrows, wood boxes, brooms, spears and candleholders. The Elders taught the boys about healing plants such as Chaga and Spruce Gum, and how to fish using a rock, string and fish tail. The boys were really excited when they caught a Jackfish that evening. One of the boys cut up the fish and then reused the fishtail bait that night. Unfortunately the frames that came out of the steamer that night cracked when they were being shaped, so we took the night off to replenish our energy to try again in the morning.

### **October 15th**

Saturday started with a team meeting. Some of the youth were frustrated about the frames cracking the previous evening and so NYL staff felt it was important to spend time highlighting their accomplishments and acknowledging their contributions to the camp and the group. After the meeting the youth went for a hike, tied up the moose hide for scraping, and worked on new frames with hand planes and sanders. Four of the youth decided to make their frames from scratch and three of the youth decided to use frames from donated drums. In the afternoon, the boys worked on making their drumsticks and on scraping the hide. They also managed to catch their second fish! After dinner, the group did an activity about goal setting and identifying positive traits they had. The highlight of the day was when the four frames came out of the steamer and were successfully shaped for the drums! To celebrate, the kids spent the evening playing hide and go seek in the dark with walkie-talkies, and one of the youth helped the cook skin two rabbits. Everyone went to bed feeling a sense of accomplishment and looked forward to working on the newly shaped frames once they had dried.

### **October 16th**

Sunday morning we woke up to snow! After breakfast, we decided to give the boys some free time until lunch while their frames dried a little bit more. It was one of the cooks' birthdays so two of the boys built a wood box for her and all of the boys made her a card. A number of the boys also took the opportunity to play hide and seek some more. During free time the instructors put the moose hide into some water to soak and helped the boys drill holes in their frames one at a time. After lunch, all of the boys laced their drums and then with Gordie and Michael's help they stretched the hide over the frames. During the day some of the boys also took a walk and caught another Grouse (chicken). In the evening the boys practiced their drumming and then were treated to some fireworks in honor of the cook's birthday!

### **October 17th**

Monday was the final day at camp! After breakfast the boys helped with camp chores and collected wood. Then it was time for the Bushman Competition which included the following events: a log toss, spear competition, log sawing, kindling chopping, quiz, and finally a race to see who could start a fire and melt a can of snow the fastest. After lunch they laced their drums and then posed for individual pictures with their drums. An Elder passed away in Fort Simpson during the camp and so the boys honoured her with a prayer song at 2pm. The boys had some smores in the afternoon and then after dinner we had a closing ceremony where each boy was presented with a personalized certificate recognizing their accomplishments during camp.

### **October 18th**

Tuesday was another long road trip! The boys were up early packing up their tents and belongings. After a hearty breakfast, we all departed at 9am for Yellowknife. Since we didn't have as many stops this time we arrived around 4pm.

Thank you again to everyone for making this camp a success!

If you have any comments and/or suggestions, please feel free to send me an email or give me a call. We had an amazing camp and on behalf of the NYL staff and Steering Committee, I want to thank you and your family for helping to make this camp such a great experience for everyone.

Sincerely,

Ali McConnell  
Project Director-Northern Youth Leadership