



# Wilderness Canoe Handbook



Camp Stephens is owned & operated  
by YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg

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# Transportation Information

## Camp Buses

All buses depart and return from the West Portage YMCA-YWCA, 3550 Portage Avenue.

We use highway coaches to transport the campers to and from Kenora. The bus ride from Winnipeg is approximately 2 ½ hours. You may pack a light snack for your camper for the trip to camp. We also recommend wearing a light sweater or a jacket as the bus and boat ride to camp can be chilly. We will have a supervisor on each bus.

**\*\*Campers will be departing/returning with their specific cabin or trail groups, therefore, siblings may not be on the same bus.\*\***

### Boarding time/West Portage Drop-off:

Buses will be departing between 7:00 AM & 9:00 AM. You will be contacted by email with the exact time your bus will be leaving 5-7 business days prior to the start of camp.

### Return Time/West Portage Pick-up:

First camp bus return approximately at 2:30 PM, weather and traffic dependent. You will be contacted by email, with an approximate time your bus will be arriving, 24 hours prior to the arrival date.

**Note: information is sent via email only, please ensure we have your current email address on file!**

## Personal Transportation

Families who are arranging for their own transportation to Kenora must meet at the Kenora Harbourfront located beside the MS Kenora

Kenora Arrival/Drop-off : 9:30 AM

Kenora Departure/Pick up: You will receive an email with a rough estimate of your child's arrival time.

\*Camp Stephens provides boat transportation from the Harbourfront in Kenora to the island. The boat ride is approximately 15 minutes. We will provide a lifejacket for each camper. Please make sure luggage is well-labeled and waterproof.

# Sign-in Procedure

## **10 business days prior to departure:**

To ensure accuracy and regulate camp transportation, changes to the following information must be received by our camp office **10 business days** before your camper's departure:

- Transportation options – Camp bus or personal transportation
- Authorized persons to sign (other than parent/guardian specified on their registration)

## **Bus sign-in procedure:**

Day of departure from West Portage:

- Ensure your camper has all necessary items prior to boarding the bus. Unless it is an emergency, parents are discouraged from boarding the buses.
- Give any medications to the staff designated to collect them.
- Each highway coach is allocated a bus #. Please:
  - Deposit your camper's luggage to your designated bus.
  - Sign in your camper with the designated staff & promptly board the bus.

Buses depart exactly at your designated time from 3550 Portage Ave. and are not allowed to stop on the road to pick up passengers.

If your camper misses the bus, you will be responsible to transport them to camp.

## **Personal transportation (to Kenora) sign-in procedure:**

- Give any medications to the staff designated to collect them.
- Deposit your camper's luggage with the staff designated to load the boat.
- Sign in your camper.

# Sign-out Procedure

## **10 business days prior to day of arrival to West Portage**

To ensure accuracy and regulate camp transportation, changes to the following information must be received by our camp office **10 business days** before your camper's return:

- Transportation options – Camp bus or personal transportation
- Authorized persons to sign (other than parent/guardian specified on their registration)

Any names that are not included on our list are not authorized to pick up the camper. If you are unsure of the names provided on the registration form, please contact the camp registrar.

## **Bus sign-out procedure:**

Day of arrival to West Portage:

- Check the buses' estimated time of arrival (via your email).
- Keep note of registrar's announcement regarding which set of campers are on the bus.
- Campers who have been given permission by their parents/guardians to sign themselves out will disembark first and should collect their baggage. Once signed out, campers are free to depart.
- Campers whose parents must sign them out must stay with camp staff until parents sign them out.
- Claim your camper's medications from the camp staff assigned.
- Take your camper's belongings only once unloading of everyone's luggage is finished.

## **Personal transportation sign-out procedure:**

- Claim your camper's medications from the camp staff assigned.
- Pick up all your camper's luggage at the Harbourfront.
- Sign-out your camper with our staff.

# Wilderness Canoe Program Overview

With over 50 years of extended wilderness canoe trips, our legacy speaks for itself. Camp Stephens' wilderness canoe trips are full of adventure and challenge amidst the beautiful backdrop of the Canadian wilderness. Throughout their trip, participants are encouraged to test their limits and explore new abilities with the support of an encouraging community. Time and again, these wilderness experiences have proven to be instrumental in developing leadership, self-confidence, responsibility, teamwork, and memories for a lifetime. We are glad that you've chosen to trip with us!

## Trippers

Two Wilderness staff – called Trippers – lead all trips. Being a Tripper goes beyond the requirements of having their Bronze Cross, Standard First Aid and CPR Certifications. In addition, Trippers must have multiple years' experience counselling, tripping and working with youth under their belt along with their Wilderness Advanced First Aid. Trippers are hand-selected for their love of the wilderness, superior communication skills and commitment to the "Y" philosophy of helping young people learn and grow.

## Safety

A camper's care is a responsibility that we do not take lightly. Prior to leaving Camp Stephens, each trip's route – with help from detailed information from past years and/or from the Ministry of Natural Resources – is planned meticulously. At base camp, the Wilderness Coordinator has a detailed, day-to-day itinerary of each trip and closely monitors the trip's progression. All trips are required to check-in daily using their GPS tracker or cell phone. If trips are significantly late for their check-in, or if they request assistance, an emergency procedure is immediately implemented.

Our trips offer amazing opportunities for those who want to experience nature's raw beauty. However, the routes are physically and mentally challenging, and will take your canoeist into remote wilderness areas. It is important that parents and participants fully comprehend that outdoor adventures can be unpredictable – from wildlife encounters, to accidents, to the vagaries of weather.

## Trips

During their adventure, each group has approximately six to eight hours of paddling per day. Each night they stop at a different spot, set up tents, cook their evening meal and get some rest for their next day's journey.

### Two-Week Explore

During this trip, canoeists paddle on large open bodies of water on Lake of the Woods (as well as the surrounding area), with the potential of a few portages. Groups travel together under their own strength, exploring the lake, camping outdoors, cooking on stoves or over fires, etc. The trip focuses on the joy of being in the wilderness and the skills necessary to enjoy life on trail.

### Two-Week Advanced

Canoe trips travel on Lake of the Woods and surrounding area (typically going into unpopulated and secluded lakes). Canoeists will be paddling on large, open bodies of water with multiple portages throughout their route. Groups travel together, pushing themselves further into the wilderness and increasing their knowledge and outdoor skills.

# Wilderness Canoe Program Overview - cont'd

## Pathfinder Three Week Trip

Reserved for participants who have participated in a 2-week canoe trip, canoeists are introduced to river paddling and moving water. Participants start and end their trip in locations around Wabakimi Provincial Park (located by Thunder Bay, Ontario).

On the three-week trip, canoeists start carrying more weight over rugged portages and paddling longer distances. Part of the thrill of the 3 week is paddling in current and learning to shoot some basic rapids.

## Four-Week Canoe Trip

This trip is reserved for those experienced campers who have completed our Pathfinder or Leadership Development Program. The most remote and challenging of our canoe trips, participants will be paddling up to 8 hours a day, carrying as much as 100lbs on their back over rugged portage trails and shooting up to Class 3 rapids.

We recommend participants visit their doctor to discuss any medical concerns they may have, as they need to be physically fit and mentally prepared to embark on this trip.



# Health and Wellness

## Emergency & Health Information (ePACT)

By now you should have filled out the electronic Emergency and Health information on your ePACT account. If you did not receive the ePACT account sign-up email, please contact the registration team at [campregistrar@ymanitoba.ca](mailto:campregistrar@ymanitoba.ca). It is recommended that parents consider any restrictions to activities, medical issues or dietary needs that the camp should be aware of, and send further information if needed.

## Medications and Health Concerns

If your child is on any medication, please attach a note to the prescription, stating the medication usage instructions (e.g. – Ann must take one pill before each meal) and your signature. Please send all medication in the original container with the child's first and last name and hand it to a staff member on the bus. Medications are available for pick-up on the day of their return. If, after you have returned the form, your camper is placed on any new medication, please send the above information and signature to camp with your camper. If your camper has to receive medical attention above what we can provide at camp, our Wellness Coordinator will contact you with the information, e.g. ear and or throat infections, sprained ankles/wrists, etc. If it is necessary to obtain a prescription for your child while they are in attendance at camp, you will be contacted and informed of the situation. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to make arrangements for payment with the pharmacy directly.

**IMPORTANT:** Please inform the camp in writing of any changes (medical, social, emotional, family environment) that occurs between filling out these forms and attending camp.

## Contagious Illnesses

Please ensure that your child is in good health before sending them to camp. If your child arrives to camp with conditions that are highly contagious or cannot be effectively cared for at camp, you will be asked to pick them up in Kenora. Please do an extra check for cases such as head lice, pink eye, impetigo, COVID-19 and other contagious conditions prior to sending your child to camp. If your camper becomes ill prior to their arrival at camp, please call the camp office to discuss your options. On the first day of camp all campers are checked for head lice and given a basic medical assessment. If a camper develops a serious contagious illness while at camp they will be sent home at the parent's expense but will be welcome to re-join their program for the remaining time once symptoms have passed or a medical professional deems it safe to return.

## Camper Behaviour

To ensure everyone at Camp Stephens has a safe and positive camping experience, all campers must adhere to the Camper Behaviour Policy. If behavioural issues arise, Camp Stephens' counsellors quickly identify and resolve concerns within groups. Counsellors have a support network of supervisors and resource staff to aid them in situations and or concerns.

Camp Stephens will not hesitate to inform parents/guardians of their camper's behaviour if it endangers their own safety or the safety of those around them. It is our policy to communicate concerns immediately to parents/guardians to find a solution. However, if a solution is not found, the camper will be sent home at the parents' expense and there will be no refund of camp fees. Fighting, bullying, smoking, drinking, stealing, abusive language, hitting, vandalism and general misbehavior will not be tolerated and are grounds for being sent home.



# Camp Policies

**Behavior** – YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg’s Camp Stephens strives to be a fun, safe and active environment where everyone has a chance to be their best. All campers, staff and volunteers pledge to treat each other with dignity and respect. Behaviour that prevents others from enjoying a positive camp experience will not be permitted. Campers may be asked to leave based upon inappropriate behavior such as abusive language, aggression or use of prohibited items such as (but not limited to) tobacco, alcohol, non-prescription drugs or offensive printed materials.

**Photography/Video** – Photographs and/or video taken at camp may be used for public promotional initiatives by the YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg. All photos are the property of the YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg. To exclude your child from these initiatives, written request must be sent to the attention of the Camp Director prior to attending camp.

**Authorization** – All parents/guardians must complete and sign an Emergency & Health Form.

This form authorizes:

- your child to participate in the full range of camp activities
- the Camp Director and their appointee, in the event of accident or illness affecting your camper, to authorize on your behalf all procedures, including admission to hospital and necessary treatment therein, as they may deem essential for the care and well-being of your child. (Such action is to be taken only when immediate contact with the parent/guardian cannot be made.)

This form also outlines your responsibility to:

- accept financial responsibility in excess of the benefits allowed by Provincial Health and/or Medical Insurance. For campers coming from out of Canada, travel insurance is strongly recommended.
- notify the camp in writing of any changes that occur in your child’s health between completing the Emergency and Health form and attending camp
- notify the camp in writing if your child is exposed to an infectious disease during the three weeks prior to camp

**Assumption of Risk and Release** – YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg staff and instructors make every reasonable effort to minimize exposure to known risks. However, by registering your child in a YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg Camp Stephens’ program, your child will be involved in physical activities – and with any physical activity, there is a risk of injury. All parents/guardians must sign the Emergency & Health form that releases the YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg, and its respective officers, directors, employees, volunteers and agents, and their successors and assigns, from all liability for damages sustained in consequence of loss, injury or damage to yourself or your child, and from all other actions, causes of action, claims, demands or damages of any kind with respect to death, injury, loss or damages to any person or property including yourself or your child arising out of or connected with preparation for, or participation in YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg programs or activities.

**Cancellations & Refunds** - Cancellations must be submitted in writing no later than 30 days prior to the start of camper’s session in order to receive a full refund (less a non-refundable 20% camp deposit). No refunds will be provided for cancellations submitted after deadline. Camp fees are non-transferable.

**Returned Payments** - A service charge will apply for each returned payment. Service may be suspended until the account is paid in full. Camp Stephens reserves the right to cancel registrations with an outstanding payment. Unpaid accounts will be sent to a collection agency.

# Camp Packing List

## PLEASE LABEL ALL ITEMS WITH CAMPER'S FIRST AND LAST NAME

Divide clothes into three groups - dry, wet and traveling home. Dry clothes are for nighttime and around the campfire while wet clothes are for paddling. Have a change of clothing which is always kept dry ensures both hygiene and comfort. When packing for camp, think in terms of layering clothing - change in weather simply means removing or adding a layer of clothing.

### Personal Equipment List

- Sleeping bag and stuff sack lined with garbage bag to keep it dry
- Ensolite pad or Thermarest - used as a buffer layer between body and ground
- VERY IMPORTANT - Rain jacket and pants (please make sure this is waterproof and NOT water resistant) Windbreakers are not acceptable as a raincoat; raincoat that is large enough to accommodate a heavy sweater.
- 30L dry bag such as 'Seal line' or a stuff sack lined with a garbage bag. Everything to be brought on trail should fit into this dry bag
- 1 Cup - Thermal mugs are good
- 1-litre capacity water bottle – good for long portages

### Wet Clothes (for the day) - These will get VERY dirty and worn

- 1 – 2 pairs of nylon or cotton shorts
- 1 – 2 T-shirts
- 1 pair pants (No jeans or heavy materials): for sun - bug protection, worn for portaging
- 1 pair long johns: polypropylene or wool is best for warmth when wet
- 1 long sleeved undershirt; preferably polypropylene (no cotton)
- 1 long sleeved flannel or cotton shirt: for sun and bug protection
- 1 Bathing suit
- Warm fleece jacket or wool sweater – do not use cotton
- Toque and mitts (for cold windy rainy days)
- Hat – baseball cap or wide-brimmed to keep noses and ears from burning
- Underwear
- 2 pairs of wool socks (cotton draws heat away from cold feet when wet)
- VERY IMPORTANT - 1 pair of hi-top sneakers or hiking boots; these will get wet and must have plenty of ankle support for portaging and walking on wet slippery rocks (an old pair of good quality runners works well)

### Dry Clothes (for evenings)

- 1 pair of shorts
- 1 pair of pants: army pants or nylon pants are good
- 1 T-shirt
- 1 long sleeved shirt
- 1 set long underwear
- 1 warm sweater
- 2 pairs wool socks
- Pajamas or sleeping T-shirt and boxer shorts
- Underwear
- 1 pair dry shoes – light cotton runners, or sturdy sandals like "Texas" or "Chacos"

# Camp Packing List - cont'd

## Traveling Clothes (prepare for either warm or cold weather)

- 1 pair shorts
- 1 T-shirt
- 1 pair of pants
- 1 sweater

Because cotton does not keep moisture off skin when it gets wet, it is better to get polypropylene products for insulating layers next to the skin and wool or fleece for warmer layers: these materials have air pockets between the fibres, which serve as an insulator.

## Toiletries - On Trail

- Toothbrush
- Hairbrush
- Lip balm with sunscreen
- Sunscreen\* (with at least 30 SPF)

## Toiletries - At Camp

- Shampoo, Soap
- Lotion
- Deodorant
- Towel

\*reflection from water and canoes makes the summer sun very intense. Bring lots of sunscreen as you will need to lather up your ENTIRE body at least twice a day

## Optional

- sunglasses
- flashlight or headlamp
- camera and film in waterproof containers
- waist-pack to carry small personal stuff
- journal, pen or a book
- crafts (embroidery, thread, seed beads)
- Mosquito repellent - non-aerosol, consider citrus based repellents since DEET products (i.e. Muskol) are quite strong (they melt plastic) or a bug shirt/hat.
- Extra bathing suit to keep at camp for use upon returning to the island

## What not to bring to camp

Please help us ensure that these items do NOT come to camp:

- Electronic devices such as smartphones, tablets, handheld gaming devices, etc.
- Cellphones
- Knives, weapons, tobacco products, electronic cigarettes, alcohol and drugs

Please avoid new or valuable clothing as camp activities can be very rough on clothing

# Mail

While wilderness participants will not have access to daily mail, it is sometimes nice to return from a trip to a letter from loved ones. For those going on 3, 4 or 6-week trips, a letter to read on the long van ride back to camp is often cherished.

The mailing address for Camp Stephens 2024, once confirmed, can be found online at:  
[ywinnipeg.ca/camp-stephens/contact-us](http://ywinnipeg.ca/camp-stephens/contact-us)

Please do not use a private courier company as they cannot reach us on the island nor will they leave packages in our mailbox. There is no fax or email available for campers. Camp Stephens is not responsible for lost or undelivered mail, nor mail that arrives after the camper has gone home.

## Lost and Found Items

When the campers arrive at camp, they are requested to deposit all valuables to their counsellor who will place them in the camp safe. These items will be returned to them at the end of their session.

- At the end of each session, all available lost and found items will be displayed for all campers to see. Any unclaimed items will be sent to Winnipeg on the bus where it will be made available for parents to view upon picking up their returning camper. It is highly recommended that all parents look through it even if they do not suspect their camper is missing any items.
- Any still unclaimed lost and found items will be made available for parents to look through on a date in September. Date will be announced via email and website.
- Items not claimed by September 30<sup>th</sup> will be donated. Unclaimed medications will be safely disposed of at a pharmacy. Camp Stephens is not responsible for lost or damaged items

## Contact Information

Winnipeg Office (3550 Portage Ave., Winnipeg) – Please contact our camp registrar for inquiries about registration, payment information and other general camp questions.

Office hours: Monday thru Friday, 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM  
Direct line: 204-831-3157  
Email: [campstephens@ymanitoba.ca](mailto:campstephens@ymanitoba.ca)  
Website: [ywinnipeg.ca/camp-stephens](http://ywinnipeg.ca/camp-stephens)

Should you have questions and concerns about your child during camp session, please contact the Winnipeg Office and your message will be delivered as soon as possible. Due to programs running during the day, camp phone is not available for public.

**Important Parent Information** - The majority of correspondence is through email, please ensure we have your correct email address on file.