



# Camp Stephens Handbook:

## Your Guide to Life on the Island



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

# Welcome to Camp Stephens!

We're so excited to share this summer with your family.

At Camp Stephens, we believe camp is more than just fun—it's transformative. Every canoe paddle, campfire story, and team challenge is an opportunity for your child to learn resilience, independence, and leadership. Our staff are passionate about creating an environment where campers feel safe to try new things, overcome challenges, and where their successes are celebrated. Whether your child is part of camp for one week or five, they'll leave with memories and skills that last a lifetime.

We know sending your child to camp is a big decision, and we take that responsibility seriously. Safety, care, and inclusion are at the heart of everything we do. From our waterfront to our wilderness trips, our qualified staff follow best practices and maintain high standards to ensure every camper feels supported and safe. Our goal is for your child to return home not just with stories of adventure, but with a stronger sense of confidence and community.

We put this guide together to help you and your child prepare for their summer adventure. Please take the time to review it and reach out to us with any questions or concerns at [campregistrar@ymanitoba.ca](mailto:campregistrar@ymanitoba.ca).

Thanks for making Camp Stephens a part of your child's summer. We can't wait to welcome them to the island!

See you at camp!

Sara MacArthur  
General Manager, Camp, Youth and Program Equity

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# Preparing for Camp

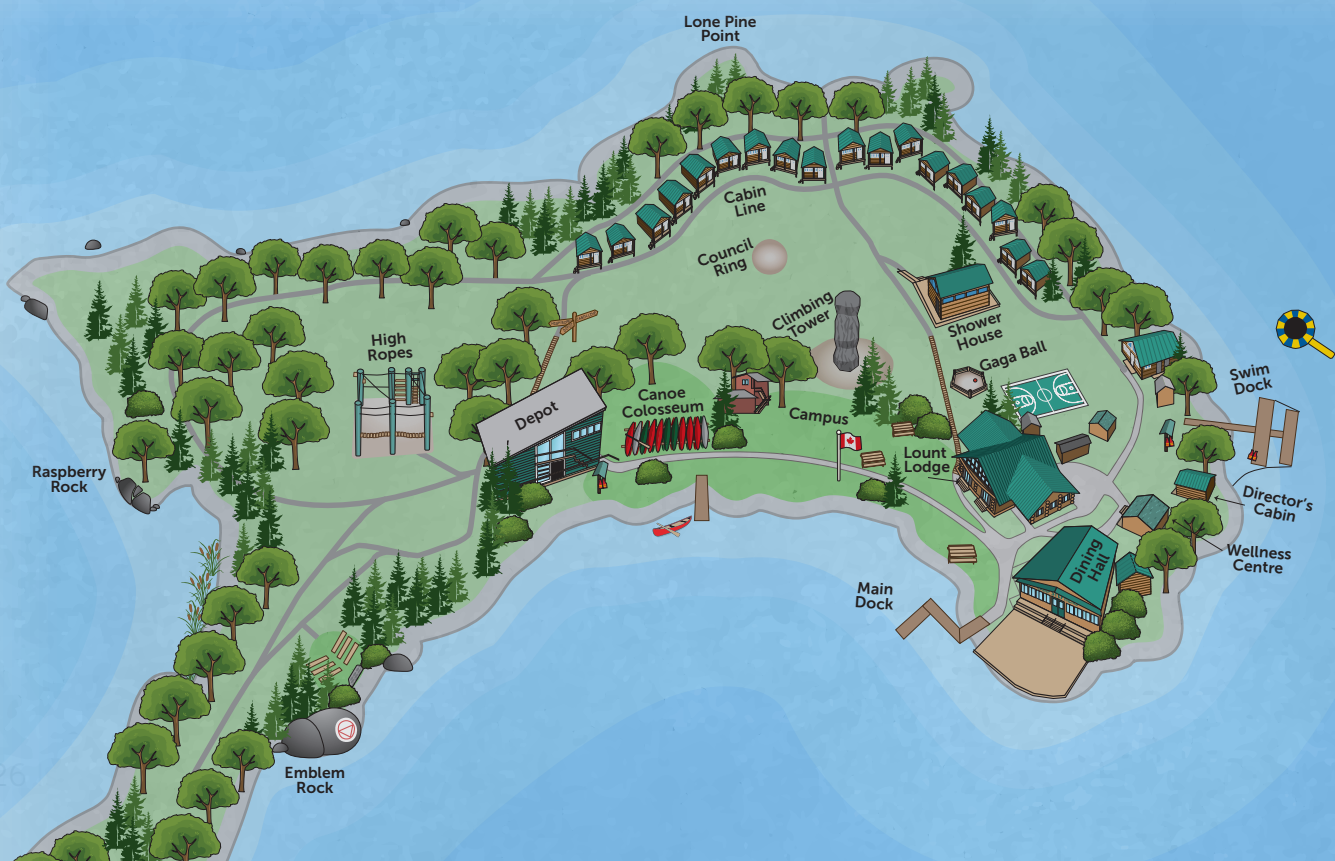
Going to overnight camp is a big milestone. While it's common to be excited, it's also common for campers to feel nervous about the experience.

Here are a few things you can do to support your camper through the possible highs and lows and preparing for camp.

- Read this handbook with your camper and talk about all the activities they'll do.
- Talk about what it's like living in a cabin. You can prepare for cabin living by having a friend sleepover in sleeping bags. Take the experience to the next level by making s'mores too!
- Talk to your camper about how to make new friends.
  - *A smile and a quick "Hi, can I sit with you?" goes a long way.*
  - *Share a little about yourself (things like sports, pets, favorite foods) and ask questions in return.*
- Talk about ways to solve problems at camp, *i.e. talking with a Cabin Leader*
- Focus on all of the great new experiences they'll have – from learning to paddle, to living in a cabin with a bunch of new friends, to learning all of camp's best songs.

## Important Reminders:

- **Forms:** Complete Emergency & Health information via ePACT at least 30 days before arrival.
- **Packing List:** We've made the list, you should check it twice.
- **Payment & Refunds:** If you need to make changes, contact our office as soon as possible.
- **Financial Assistance:** If you have questions about campships or barrier funding, please reach out.



## Cabin Living

Campers live in rustic cabins with up to 9 cabinmates and trained Cabin Leaders. This setup encourages friendship, teamwork, and a sense of belonging. Cabins are equipped with bunkbeds and storage cubbies.



Campers share responsibilities like tidying up and helping with daily routines.

For overnight canoe trips, campers sleep in tents.

## Meals at Camp

Mealtime is an important part of camp. It's when campers sit down with their cabin group to share stories and talk about their day. Meals are served "family-style", where campers eat with their cabin group. At every meal one camper is designated from each cabin group to be the "Hasher". This person is responsible for setting and clearing their table.

Throughout the day, campers are served three delicious meals and an evening snack. Our menu follows Canada's Food Guide. Our kitchen team is committed to preparing meals that kids like. Campers are encouraged to try new foods and enjoy a variety of meals, from hearty breakfasts to themed dinners.

Typical meals include:

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Pancakes	Chicken Burgers	Spaghetti
Bacon and Eggs	Grilled Cheese and Soup	Sausage and Pierogies
*Vegetables or fruit are served at every meal		

Dietary needs like allergies, vegetarian, lactose-free, or cultural restrictions are accommodated when noted on registration forms.

## Camp Culture and Traditions

Camp Stephens is rich in traditions that make the experience unforgettable:

- Polar Bear Swim – A refreshing morning dip for those who dare!
- Campfires & Theme Nights – Songs, stories, and laughter under the stars.
- Skill Clubs & Badge Challenges – Opportunities for campers to grow and celebrate achievements.
- Mass Camp Days – Whole-camp themed events that bring everyone together.

## A Day in the Life

Camp Stephens days are full of energy, fun, and variety! While no two days are the same, here's an example of a typical day at camp.

Time	Activity	
<b>7:20 AM</b>	Wake-up & Polar Bear Swim	Start the day with a refreshing dip in the lake
<b>8:15 AM</b>	Hasher Bell & Flag Raising	Cabin groups set tables and gather for camp pride
<b>8:30 AM</b>	Breakfast	A hearty meal to fuel the day
<b>9:30 AM</b>	Program Time	Activities like high ropes, canoeing, arts, and team challenges
<b>11:30 AM</b>	Free Time	Relax, play games, or write letters home
<b>12:30 PM</b>	Lunch & Rest	Cabin downtime for reading or quiet activities
<b>2:00 PM</b>	Program Time	More adventure and skill-building
<b>4:00 PM</b>	Clubs	Campers choose a skill club (e.g. climbing, swimming, crafts) for focused learning
<b>5:30 PM</b>	Supper	Shared family-style meals in the dining hall
<b>7:00 PM</b>	Evening Program	Campfires, games or themed activities
<b>9:00 PM</b>	Snack & Wind Down	Time to relax before lights out

## Homesickness

Even though camp is a fun and busy environment, being away from home can feel like a big adjustment for some campers.

Our cabin leaders play a key role in supporting campers through these feelings. They build strong connections within their cabins and are trained to recognize early signs of homesickness. With care, empathy, and encouragement, they help campers feel safe, included, and supported.

We often see that campers who experience homesickness leave feeling especially proud of themselves. Working through those emotions can be a meaningful part of their growth. We encourage you to talk with your child before camp about homesickness and reassure them that it's completely normal. Let them know their cabin leader will be there to support them.

*On rare times when a camper needs to leave early because of homesickness, please note that refunds are not provided.*

# Packing for Camp

Packing for camp is an important part of setting your child up for success. This section provides general guidance on packing for camp along with detailed packing list at the end.

## General Packing Tips

- Label everything possible! Use permanent markers or sewn-in labels for clothing and gear.
- Involve your child in the packing process so they can identify the clothing they'll wear.
- Waterproof Your Luggage: Pack items in a duffle bag with a garbage bag liner.
- Pack sleeping bags in a separate waterproof bag or in a stuff sack lined with a garbage bag.
- Leave electronics, jewelry and other high value or sentimental items at home.
- Pack clothes for exploration, fun... and getting a little marshmallow goo on them.
- Print off the packing list at the end of this handbook. Check items off the list as you go.
- Send the packing list with your camper to use when they're packing to come home.

## Lost & Found

Throughout the session, any found clothing or gear will be placed in the Lost & Found bin located in the dining hall. Our Cabin Leaders will take their campers to the lost and found regularly and we hold a Lost and Found fashion show at the end of every session in hopes of uniting campers with wayward items. For labeled items, we'll do our best to return these items to campers promptly.

At the end of each session, all unclaimed items are bagged, tagged, and transported back to Winnipeg on the first departing bus. These items are laid out at the West Portage Y for parents to look at during camper pick-up. After this viewing period, any remaining items will be donated.

# Transportation to and from Camp

Getting your camper safely to and from Camp Stephens is a top priority. Here's what you need to know about the first and last day of camp.

## Leaving from Winnipeg

- Campers depart from the West Portage Community Hub (3550 Portage Avenue).
- Families will receive an email 5–7 business days before camp with their camper's bus departure time (typically between 7 – 9 am).
- Parents must sign in their camper with designated staff and hand in any medications (see Health & Safety section).
- Campers board highway coaches accompanied by staff for the trip to Kenora.

## Arriving in Kenora and heading to camp

- Campers are brought to the Kenora Harbourfront dock where they'll board boats for the 15-minute boat ride to camp.
- All campers are fitted with life jackets for the boat ride.
- Our boat drivers are licensed under Transport Canada.
- We use Zag Fab boats and operate under Transport Canada's safety regulations.
- The boat is supervised by trained staff.

## Returning to Winnipeg

Campers return to the West Portage Community Hub by bus. Families will receive an email with return details, but the buses will typically arrive early afternoon.

## Kenora dock drop-off and pick-up option

If you choose to drop off and pick up your child in Kenora, please meet us at the Harbourfront Dock in Kenora at the designated pick-up and drop-off time. We will email you the approximate time to meet your camper beforehand.

## Tips for sending your camper on the bus

- **Snacks:** A light snack for the bus ride is great, but NO nuts or products that contain nuts.
- **Dress for Comfort:** The bus is air conditioned and the boat ride can feel 15 degrees colder than the air temperature. Have a sweatshirt, jacket and rain gear on hand.
- **Label All Luggage:** Clearly mark all luggage with your camper's name.
- **Waterproof your stuff:** Pack your clothes, sleeping bag and pillow in heavy duty garbage bags before putting them in your luggage.
- **Medications:** Hand all medications directly to staff during sign-in (do not pack in luggage).
- **Stay Positive:** A quick, confident goodbye helps your camper start their adventure with excitement!

# Communication

Staying connected while your child is at camp is important, and we want to make sure you know the best ways to reach us and send messages to your camper. Throughout their time at camp the campers will only be contactable by mail.

## How to Contact Camp

If you need to reach us during your child's session:

- Email: [campregistrar@ymanitoba.ca](mailto:campregistrar@ymanitoba.ca)
- Phone: Contact the Winnipeg Office at 204-831-3157. Messages will be delivered to camp as soon as possible.

Please note: Camp Stephens Staff are seasonal workers. An on-island emergency contact number will be shared closer to the start of session.

## Camper Mail

Everyone loves to get mail at camp! Campers will light up when they hear from friends and family back home. But sending mail by Canada Post has been unreliable, which leads to camper disappointment.



If you'd like your camper to receive a letter while they're at camp, please drop it off at the "Camp Mailbox" at the same time you drop off your camper. The "Camp Mailbox" will be available in the Winnipeg and Kenora drop-off locations in a visible location. Using the "Camp Mailbox" will ensure that your camper receives their letter at the midway point of their session.

Remember to address the mail with your camper's full name and the session they're attending.

**Don't drop off mail at the front desk of our Community Hubs in hopes of it being brought to camp.**

## Care Packages

We will no longer accept large packages for campers due to challenges in getting them to the island in a timely manner and because of concerns about package contents and dietary restrictions.

- What's Allowed: Letters and small, flat items like photos or postcards.
- What's NOT Allowed: Food, large packages, or bulky items.

## Social Media

Camp is fun and we want to share in the excitement with everyone! Every session we'll post an assortment of photos from the island – accomplishments, adventures, friendships and fun. We encourage you to follow us on Instagram, **@camp\_stephens**, to check out all the fun we'll be having and see if you can spot your camper in action.

Protecting the privacy and safety of children is a responsibility we take seriously. We'll only share photos if your child if you consented to doing so through the YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg Social Media Photo/ Video Consent Policy through ePACT.

We don't permit camp staff to connect with campers on social media, and ask that parents discourage your children from attempting to contact staff outside the context of camp.

## Technology Policy

To help campers fully engage in the camp experience:

- No Phones or devices: Cell phones, tablets, gaming devices, and other electronics aren't permitted at camp.
- Why? Camp is a time to unplug, connect with nature, and form friendships without distractions.
- If a camper brings a device, it will be stored securely and returned at the end of the session.

# Health & Safety

## Our Commitment to Safety

At Camp Stephens, your child's well-being is our highest priority. We maintain strict safety standards, provide trained staff for all activities, and have clear procedures for health care and emergencies. From daily wellness checks to emergency response, we're committed to creating a safe, supportive environment where campers can thrive.

## Medical Care & Wellness Centre

Our Wellness Centre is staffed by trained personnel who handle daily health needs, minor injuries, and medication administration. Every camper receives a basic health check upon arrival. If a camper requires care beyond what we can provide, parents will be contacted immediately, and arrangements will be made for local medical services. The Camp Director or camp staff will accompany the camper until a parent arrives.

## Prescription Medications at Camp

To ensure camper safety, all medications must follow these guidelines:

- **Packaging:** Medications must be in their original packaging with the medication name and dosage clearly identifiable.
- **Bubble Packing Option:** Medications can be taken to a pharmacy and bubble-packed for camp use.
- **Timing Matters:** Include written instructions for when and how doses should be given.
- **Drop-Off:** All medications must be hand-delivered by a parent/guardian at sign-in and not packed in luggage.
- **Unlabeled Medications:** For safety reasons, unlabeled medications will not be accepted.

## Medication Process

1. **Sign-In:** Medications are dropped into the designated bin at the bus during sign-in.
2. **Secure Transport:** The bin is sealed and transported to camp by a staff member.
3. **Logging:** Upon arrival, the bin is unsealed by the Wellness Coordinator, and all medications are logged into camp records.
4. **Tracking:** A tracking sheet records the medication name, dosage, and administration times.
5. **Administration:** Campers visit the Wellness Centre for their doses. If they're busy having fun, staff will track them down to ensure timely administration.
6. **Communication:** The Wellness Coordinator will call you if there are any questions while logging medications.

If you have concerns about your child's medication, please email [campregistrar@ymanitoba.ca](mailto:campregistrar@ymanitoba.ca) before camp begins.

## Over-the-Counter (OTC) Medications Available at Camp

Camp Stephens keeps a supply of common OTC medications for camper comfort and safety. These do not need to be packed from home. Please check your child's ePACT permissions before camp, if permissions are not granted, the Wellness Coordinator will call home before administering any OTC medication.

- Pain & Fever: Acetaminophen (Tylenol), Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), Naproxen (Aleve)
- Cough & Cold: Decongestants, antihistamines, cough suppressants, saline sprays
- Allergies: Antihistamines (e.g., Benadryl)
- Stomach Issues: Antacids, loperamide (Imodium), bismuth (Pepto-Bismol), laxatives
- Skin Conditions: Antifungal creams (e.g., Canesten)

## Emergency Procedures

- Immediate Care: All staff are trained in First Aid and CPR.
- Communication: Parents will be contacted as soon as possible for any significant health concerns or emergencies.
- Hospital Access: If hospitalization is required, the Camp Director or delegate will accompany the camper until a parent arrives.
- Authorization: Your signed Emergency & Health Form allows us to act in your child's best interest if immediate contact cannot be made.

## Accessibility & Inclusion

Camp Stephens strives to create an inclusive environment for all campers. If your camper needs accommodations like mobility support, dietary needs, or other considerations, please contact us before camp so we can plan appropriately. We've successfully adapted facilities and programming so that all campers are included.

# Behaviour & Expectations

Camp Stephens is a community. We believe camp is a place to grow, make friends, and have fun in a safe and respectful environment. To make this possible, we have clear expectations for all campers and a structured process for addressing behaviour concerns.

## Camper Code of Conduct

All campers are expected to:

- Respect themselves, others, and the environment
- Follow directions from staff
- Keep hands, feet, and objects to themselves
- Use kind and appropriate language
- Stay with their group and prioritize safety
- Contribute positively to cabin and activity groups

Expectations are introduced at the start of each session and reinforced throughout camp life.

## Bullying & Respect Policy

Camp Stephens has a zero-tolerance policy for bullying, aggression, or intimidation, be it physical, verbal, or social. We work proactively to build inclusion and kindness through cabin agreements, buddy systems, and team activities.

## How We Handle Behaviour

We use a tiered approach called the **Traffic Light Framework**:

**Green (Tier 1):** Minor behaviours - Gentle reminders and positive reinforcement.

**Yellow (Tier 2):** Moderate behaviours - Private conversation, reflection sheet, and parent contact if behaviour continues.

**Red (Tier 3):** Serious behaviours - Immediate removal from activity, leadership involvement, and parent contact.

If a camper's behaviour poses a safety risk or can't be resolved, they may be sent home. Parents/guardians must arrange pick-up within 24 hours of this decision.

## Our Communication Commitment

We believe in partnering with families to support campers. Here's what you can expect:

**When We Call:** Calls are made by a member of our Senior Staff. They are respectful, solution-focused, and centered on your child's well-being.

**Why We Call:**

- Repeated moderate behaviours (Yellow Tier)
- Any serious behaviour (Red Tier)
- Significant distress or safety concerns

**Our Goal:**

Every call is made with the same purpose—to work together so your camper can have a positive experience.

The Camp Director or Camp Manager reserves the right to send campers home if behaviour can't be resolved safely.

**What Happens If We Call You:**

- We'll explain what happened, what steps we've taken, and invite your input.
- We'll share next steps and collaborate on solutions.
- If leaving the island is necessary, we'll provide instructions and support for camper pick-up within 24 hours.

# Financial Information (post-registration)

## Refund & Cancellation Policy

- 30+ days before session start: Full refund minus a non-refundable 20% deposit.
- < 30 days before session start: No refund.
- Behavioral dismissal or illness after arrival: No refund.
- Returned payments: A service charge applies; unpaid accounts may lead to cancellation.

For questions about payments or cancellations, please contact [campregistrar@ymanitoba.ca](mailto:campregistrar@ymanitoba.ca).

## Contact Information

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

Office hours: Monday - Friday, 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Direct line: 204-831-3157

Email: [campstephens@ymanitoba.ca](mailto:campstephens@ymanitoba.ca)

If you have questions and concerns about your camper while they're at camp, please contact the Winnipeg Office and your message will be delivered to camp the same day.

Most of our correspondence is done through email, so please ensure we have your current email address on file.

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

## **What if my child gets homesick?**

Homesickness is common and our staff are trained to support campers through it. We encourage campers to participate in activities and connect with their cabin group. If homesickness persists, we'll contact you to discuss next steps.

## **How do you handle bad weather?**

Camp Stephens has detailed weather protocols. Activities are adjusted for safety, and campers are kept indoors during severe conditions. Canoe trips will be delayed or rerouted if necessary.

## **What happens if my child has food allergies or dietary restrictions?**

Our kitchen team accommodates allergies and dietary needs noted on your registration forms. Please ensure all details are updated in ePACT before camp.

## **Will I receive updates or photos during camp?**

We don't provide daily photo updates. We post photos on our social media channels. Campers are encouraged to write letters home.

## **What if my child loses something valuable?**

We strongly recommend leaving valuables at home. Lost & Found items are displayed at camp and returned to Winnipeg for pick-up after sessions. Labeled items are easiest to return.

## **How do I contact camp in an emergency?**

Call the Winnipeg Office at 204-831-3157. An on-island emergency number will be provided before camp begins.

## **What's your policy on electronics?**

Electronics are not allowed at camp. If brought, they'll be stored securely and returned at the end of the session.

## **What if my child needs to leave camp early?**

Please notify the Camp Registrar as soon as possible. Parents/guardians must arrange camper transportation for early departures.

## **Are there refunds if my child leaves early or is dismissed?**

Refunds aren't provided for early departures or behavioral dismissals. See Section 9 for our refund policy.

# Packing List

Print this list and follow the column of the program your camper is in. Check off items as you pack them. Send this sheet for your camper to use as they pack for home.

	5-days	1-Week	2-Weeks	3-Weeks
<b>Sleeping</b>				
Sleeping bag	1	1	1	1
Pillow ( <i>flat or travel pillow is best</i> )	1	1	1	1
Fitted single sheet	1	1	1	1
Stuffie	☺	☺	☺	☺
Pajamas	1	1	2	2
Large towels	1	1-2	2	2
<b>Clothing and Footwear</b>				
Undies	5	7	14	21
Socks	5	7	12	16
Shorts	3	4	7-10	10
Pants: <i>1 pair quick-dry</i>	2	2	3	4
T-shirts: <i>1 quick-dry</i>	4	4	7-10	10
Long-sleeve shirt	1	1	2	3
Warm sweater: <i>jacket or fleece</i>	1	1	2	3
Rain gear: <i>jacket and pants</i>	1	1	1	1
Hat: <i>one wide-brimmed recommended</i>	1	1	2	2
Runners: <i>required for high ropes course</i>	1	1	1	1
Wet shoes: <i>sport sandals with back strap</i>	1	1	1	1
Bathing suit	2	2	2	2
<b>Personal Grooming and Misc.</b>				
Toiletry bag	1	1	1	1
Shampoo/conditioner: <i>travel size</i>	1	1	1	1
Soap ( <i>optional facecloth</i> )	1	1	1	1
Toothbrush/toothpaste	1	1	1	1
Hairbrush	1	1	1	1
Sunscreen: <i>waterproof, SPF 30+</i>	1	1	1	1
Bug spray	1	1	1	1
Water bottle	1	1	1	1
Garbage bags	1	1	2	2
Flashlight/Headlamp: <i>check batteries!</i>	1	1	1	1
<b>Optional Items</b>				
Sunglasses	--	--	--	--
Journal and pen	--	--	--	--
Paper, pen, stamped envelopes	--	--	--	--
Book	--	--	--	--
Menstrual products	--	--	--	--
Sunshirt/rashguard	--	--	--	--
Enamel mug/cup	--	--	--	--
<b>In-Camp Trail (canoe trip)</b>				
Dry bag/Stuff sac: <i>sleeping bag stuff sack plus 1 more</i>	<i>optional</i>	<i>optional</i>	2	2
Sleeping pad	<i>optional</i>	<i>optional</i>	1	1