



Friday, July 30, 2010

Order of the Arrow Boy Scouts repair BWCAW and Quetico Park portages

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While celebrating the 100th anniversary of one of the nation's largest youth organizations, the Boy Scouts of America continues to provide life changing experiences through the Order of the Arrow Wilderness Voyage and Canadian Odyssey programs at the Northern Tier High Adventure Bases based out of Ely.

The Order of the Arrow (OA) is the national honor society of the Boy Scouts of America.

The organization recognizes scouts chosen by their peers who best exemplify the Scout Oath and Scout Law in their daily lives.

At the heart of the OA are the ideals of brotherhood and cheerful service.

The OA Wilderness Voyage and Canadian Odyssey programs put these ideals to the test by gathering honored Scouts from across the United States to provide high quality repair work to frequently used portage trails of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and the Quetico Provincial Park.

Order of the Arrow Wilderness Voyage foremen Chris Rollins and Kevin Sylvester inspecting their newly built turnpike!

The OA Wilderness Voyage program started building a partnership through various service projects with the Kawishiwi Ranger District of the United States Forest Service in 1999. Since that time over 900 scouts have had the opportunity to serve the Northwoods through this program.

Last summer the OA Wilderness Voyage was presented with the 25th Anniversary Region 8 Silver Award from the US Forest Service for connecting citizens to the land.

This award is given to one group or organization through out the entire eastern 19 states of the country who have given countless man hours to restoring our Nation's most precious natural resources.

The OA Wilderness Voyage accepted the award and strives to maintain this high standard of volunteerism and service again this summer.

Now in the 12th summer of the program and after one million dollars worth of trail work, the program has been asked to expand its reach of service to the La Croix District of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

The Scouts are currently working on the Elm Portage at Little Indian Sioux and the Little Loon Lake to Slim Lake portage.

Because of the OA Wilderness Voyage program's unique reputation of cheerful and diligent selfless service in the BWCAW, the program has developed into an international alliance with the Order of the Arrow and the Quetico Provincial Park.

The two organizations formed the extension of the OA Wilderness Voyage program aptly named the OA Canadian Odyssey in the summer of 2009.

In this second summer of OA Canadian Odyssey the Scouts are working on the Maria Lake to Jesse Lake Portage in the Quetico Provincial Park.

Both programs incorporate a week of portage trail rehabilitation and construction and a week of wilderness canoe trekking throughout the Boundary Waters or Quetico.

If anyone has worked on a portage trail before, they know it comes with many long hours and sometimes tedious tasks.

The OA programs are no different. They use what the wilderness provides them. This means moving heavy boulders, smashing their own gravel with sledge hammers, and applying the right mix of soil, sand and granite dust to make a trail that will last another 100 years.

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