



# THOMAS FLINT CANOE TRIP PROGRAM

FINAL REPORT - SEPTEMBER 2016

The Thomas Flint Canoe Trip program works to foster the next generation of wilderness advocates and stewards by sponsoring youth on canoe trips in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. These underprivileged youth would never have this opportunity otherwise and it comes at a crucial time in their development. Thomas Flint Canoe trips have played a pivotal role in the lives of Minnesota youth by helping them grow healthy relationships, a love and respect for the wilderness world and a knowledge and optimism about conservation ethics.

2016 marked the fourteenth year in partnership with YMCA Camp Menogyn near Grand Marais, MN, adjacent to the actual BWCA Wilderness. Since 1922, Menogyn has been providing deep and progressive wilderness immersion experiences through canoeing, backpacking and rockclimbing trips with conservation and personal growth ethics. Youth can be part of longer and more remote wilderness adventures throughout their high school years culminating on invite-only expeditions of up to 50 days in length. It has also been a Twin Cities institution for people of all backgrounds, inner city, rural, wealthy and underprivileged. Menogyn has also proactively hosted new generations of wilderness visitors, newly settled and immigrant youth as they have moved into the state including African American, Hmong, Somali, Lebanese and from the early 1960's, Native American. The Thomas Flint canoe trips focus on youth of color with backgrounds other than the usual wilderness user groups.

There were slightly less campers this year in the program. Two formerly participating inner city youth groups lost their outdoors inclined leaders and the camp itself went through a leadership transition. This shows the degree of difficulty in securing ongoing wilderness components to existing programs. The Thomas Flint Program however, takes the financial barrier away from those youth leaders who understand the value and overcome cultural and other barriers to get these youth on trail. Recruitment is already going on now for next year's trail groups.

Success is measured by the number of youth served, the quality of the experiences as described on program evaluations (Some quotes included) the amount of returning campers (So far this year three have expressed interest in returning for a longer, more remote trip.) and comments from participating youth leaders (Quote included.) and debriefing with camp directors.

In the 2016 season, the Thomas Flint Canoe Trip Program had the following highlights:

- **42 campers sponsored**, Ages 14 – 16 on high quality 8-day BWCA Wilderness canoe trips
- **4 campers returned** from last year for a 15 day Wilderness Backpacking session
- **Each camper spent 168 - 216 hours within the wilderness.** Total: 7,248 hours
- **Campers came from**
  - Hmong Outdoor Leadership Training Program (8 total. 4 males, 4 females)
  - DZ Cambodian Immigrant Group (5 females total )
  - Learning Works (21 total. 5 males, 1 trans-identified male, 15 females)
  - Sioux Falls YMCA Camp Leif Erikson (4 total. 2 males, 2 females)

- **\$29,000 was raised from four foundations and four individual donors**

### **A Testimonial from a LearningWorks (LW) leader**

*Over the last sixteen years LW has spent considerable effort developing our academic curriculum, and we've made an impressive impact as a result: 99% of our students have graduated from high school, and 83% have enrolled in or graduated from college. In our efforts to achieve these results LW has focused primarily on academic skill building, offering our students nearly 81 days of extra school time during their formative middle school years. And while these results drive our continued success as an academic program, our experience working with primarily low-income students of color has led us to realize that our alumni who struggle most to achieve these expectations struggle not with the academic rigor of the high school or college experience, but with the "soft skills" associated with navigating an educational setting: namely perseverance, adaptability, and real-time task completion.*

*Recognizing this, LW has long worked to develop multiple applications of "soft-skills" curricula that might act as a complement to our current academic program. Past efforts towards achieving this goal have included summer and school year trips and workshops for students led by Wilderness Inquiry and Outward Bound. We know that the Thomas Flint Fund directly supports the value of small-group, multi-day wilderness activities to target the very "soft skills" of perseverance, adaptability, and real-time task completion that show us direct impact on long-term student success. And also give a conservation ethic important to the next generation.*

*While we always suspected that outdoor education had the capacity to build self-confidence, especially with students who've had little exposure to the outdoors in general, we couldn't have anticipated how impactful the canoe trip would actually be. The LearningWorks students who engaged in last summer's outdoor experience came back transformed -- they returned to our community more confident, more self-aware, and excited to engage new challenges.*

### **Allysha, a LearningWorks camper, had this to say about her canoe trip**

*"I am a city girl through and through, so when I found out LW had decided to send Leadership Academy on a camping trip, I was furious. I don't do canoeing; sleeping in tents and not bathing for days at a time is not for me, either. But to my surprise, I had a great time. I enjoyed the company of my peers and learned a lot about myself. I learned about teamwork, and that sometimes you can't do everything by yourself. We did everything together, like canoeing, setting up our tents, and taking them down, too. We even took turns cleaning up after meals. The trip definitely helped us to bond and was the reason we had a great summer. If I could do it again, I would."*

As Allysha indicates, wilderness education not only builds new skills for our students, but awakens a love of nature in many of them, too.

## Here are some 2016 Camper Quotes

- *Something I accomplished with your help was being able to detach from the city life and be able to be comfortable in the wilderness, and have fun. Now I will pick up after myself and do Leave No Trace even in the city. – Charlie*
- *I'll be back next summer, so look out! – Kawsar*
- *Thanks for teaching us how to steer and carry the canoes over portages and being patient with us and encouraging. - Elsa*

## Budget

Revenue		Expense	
Bazinet Foundation	5,000	Program Fees*	33,440
Richard & Carol Flint	10,000	Transportation	4,940
Cynthia & Stephen			
Snyder	1,000	Extra Personal Gear	565
Trillium Foundation	8,000		-
Wilderness Forever	5,000		-
YMCA Camperships	9,945		-
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$38,945</b>		<b>\$38,945</b>

\*Program fees include trained trail guides, permits, shuttle transportation, food & equipment

Thank you, Wilderness Forever, for your support of the Thomas Flint program. With the help of our community partners, we are able to recruit and sponsor youth from diverse backgrounds, economic situations, and communities. Your support provides opportunities for these youth adventurers to build a real relationship with the outdoors and inspire their futures. It is these young people today that will be the wilderness advocates of tomorrow. The Friends of the BWCA is working with them harder than ever to create that future. (Please see Conservation Fellows Program description attached. Participants are recruited for this from the Thomas Flint Canoe Trips)

Included are a few photos from the 2016 trips.

Sincerely,



Paul Danicic  
Executive Director  
Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness







B.W.C.A.  
WILDERNESS

SUPERIOR  
National  
Forest









## Conservation Fellows Partnership Program

The Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness seeks applicants for its Conservation Fellows Partnership Program.

### What it is:

A 10-month partnership between 5 to 7 high school students of color and the Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness. The program provides a mentorship experience that introduces students to:

- environmental advocacy
- wilderness and natural resource conservation
- higher education and career development
- professional networking
- college/employment references and support

Students will share their cultural perspectives with our organization about nature, wilderness preservation, and environmental advocacy to help shape our work to be more inclusive and relevant in our engagement with Minnesota's diverse population.

### Who is eligible:

Twin Cities Metro area high school students of color are eligible to apply. An interest in nature, environmental protection and ecology is important, but experience in these areas is not required. Five to seven students will be selected for the 2016-2017 program.

### How it works:

The program runs during the 2016-2017 academic calendar. Students commit to participating in two after-school cohort gatherings a week (generally Tuesday and Thursday afternoons), and occasional out of town day or overnight retreats or other excursions. Students meet with the Friends staff at our Minneapolis office to learn about addressing conservation issues and assist the Friends with our advocacy and outreach work. Students will also develop individual projects of significance that address an environmental issue of their choice (for example: organize an action in their school, create a piece of art or music, research and write a report, develop a presentation).

Fellows will also regularly be introduced to other organizations and individuals working in conservation, including:

- legislators
- scientists
- government staff
- nature-based businesses
- tribal governments
- other environmental non-profits

The Fellow's program concludes in May with a two to four week placement with one of these other partner organizations based on the student's interest. This provides Fellows with an opportunity to broaden their environmental network and experience.

Included in the program are opportunities for students to spend time recreating in nature by participating in an overnight orientation at a nature center, at the Friends' Winter Weekend at the edge of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, and on a BWCAW canoe trip that concludes the fellowship at the end of the school year.

The Fellows program begins in late August 2016 and completes in early June 2017.

**Important:**

Students will be provided with a stipend for their participation. The program also covers public transportation costs to weekly gatherings, provides all out-of-town transportation, and covers the cost of retreats, trips, and materials for student projects.

**Application Process:**

To apply, students should complete the Application Form. Finalists will be invited to an interview. The **Application deadline is April 22, 2016**. Students will be informed if they have been selected for participation by May 31, 2016. Application materials should be sent to: Betsy Daub, Science and Conservation Director at

betsy@friends-bwca.org

or

Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness  
401 North Third Street, Suite 290  
Minneapolis, MN 55401

**The Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness:**

The mission of the Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness is to protect, preserve and restore the wilderness character of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and the Quetico-Superior ecosystem. Our non-profit organization was established in 1976 to bring full wilderness protection to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW), which culminated in the passing of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Act in 1978. Central to our vision and programs, is a commitment to education, creative advocacy, and working within communities across the state to build relationships and support for wilderness landscapes.