



Wilderness Forever Grant Mid Season Report

July 26, 2016

The Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness' Thomas Flint Canoe Trips are underway in Northern Minnesota. Over half (28) of the 50 projected young people are either currently on trail or have very recently returned from their wilderness trips.

Through a partnership with YMCA Camp Menogyn, youth are paired with highly trained wilderness trail counselors that facilitate travel while helping youth develop valuable leadership skills and conservation ethics that last a lifetime. Wilderness experiences like those provided by the Thomas Flint program have been pivotal in the lives of underserved urban and rural youth who may not otherwise have the opportunity to experience wilderness adventure. These trips have proven time and again that wilderness travel plays a critical role in helping foster healthy relationships, communities, and a love and respect for the natural world. It is driving part of the program's mission, to inspire urban and rural youth and facilitate opportunities for them to build a relationship with wild landscapes and inspire their own life and career paths. In the 2016 season the program is going well despite several severe thunderstorms over the first half of the season that impacted unrelated BWCA groups, including several rare fatalities.

Participants spend 168 hours in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness as part of a small group of six to nine people. This season, boys and girls have attended from Hiawatha College Prep, a high quality 96% free or reduced lunch middle school, Breakthrough Twin Cities, a summer school assistance program and the Sioux YMCA, a reservation based YMCA in South Dakota. The young people in these programs would never have had the opportunity to visit the Wilderness without specific funding to make it possible. The total hours spent in the wilderness for the youth to date is 4,704 hours. The full amount the Friends raised, \$27,750, has been sent to the camp and they have used \$15,540 so far this year.

This is the first year the Sioux YMCA has had a group visit the Boundary Waters Wilderness. This is particularly exciting as that has been a goal of the camp and the Twin Cities/Sioux YMCA's for several years.

Some photos from the base camp preparatory activities show the hard work and anticipation these youth are engaged in. The Camp Director has not sent me any trail photos yet but he is collecting those from the group leaders as they return.



The Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness is a 501(c)3 organization.



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Some quotes from participants include

- *I'm glad I overcame my fears of canoeing, spiders, etc*
- *It was hard but a great experience*
- *It was really, AMAZING! I enjoyed ALL of it.*
- *Lay-over day was amazing, portages were the "perfect" amount of difficult*
- *Got me more connected with nature*
- *It was life changing because you see the world in a different perspective*
- *Surprisingly really enjoyed trail*

There are two, possibly four more groups coming out in August 2016 including another set of Breakthrough Twin Cities groups, Learning Works and a Minneapolis based Cambodian youth group totaling a minimum of 25 youth. A full report will be available at the end of the season.

Thank you so much for your support of this impactful experience!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Danicic".

Paul Danicic
Executive Director