

Camp Widjiwagan

Summer Camp Handbook

Updated 2025



Our mission is to develop, in young people, respect for self, community and the environment, through wilderness adventure and environmental education.

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Communication from Camp

Prior to Your camper's Arrival

Families of registered campers can expect to receive pertinent information for their campers once a month and a week before their camper's trip starting in March. Keep an eye out for these and make sure your preferred email address is subscribed to emails from the YMCA in your registration details.

During Your Camper's Camp Experience

In general, Widji operates on a "no news is good news" system. During almost all sessions at Widjiwagan camp will not update families about their camper's trail experiences. Groups carry a satellite phone with an extra battery that they can use in case of emergency or/and in need of assistance or advising from Widjiwagan's administration. Widji will get in touch with families before a group's session end date **only** on occasions when a group's planned itineraries are significantly impacted following an event. These events can include significant injuries, illness, weather events, or trip disruptions that alter a group's route or necessitate an evacuation from the field. Please note that our administrative team will prioritize using our resources towards supporting groups in the field before communicating with families. This may mean that families experience a delay in communication.

While at trail campers will not have access to cell phones or other communication devices. We feel this disconnection from technology is integral to an immersive trail experience. Widjiwagan will update our social media pages with photos of groups following each session after they have returned from trail.

MAIL AT CAMP

Letters from family and friends are appreciated by campers after they arrive from trail. Please do not send packages with food, beverages, or candy. You can send packages to camp by addressing them thus:

Camper name, camper session (Ex. Quetico, 6/15-6/29)

YMCA Camp Widjiwagan

3788 North Arm Road,

Ely, MN 55731

Camper Expectations

ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA (EEC)

Please ensure you and your camper understand our Essential Eligibility Criteria for a wilderness trip at Widjiwagan.

If you are not able to meet certain criteria or if you have questions regarding your camper's health, medical, and accessibility needs before registration please get in touch with us. We may be able to make reasonable accommodations unless they change the trip's fundamental nature, compromise camper's safety, the safety of counselors, or place an undue financial or administrative burden on Widjiwagan. Another YMCA camp may be able to accommodate your camper if Widjiwagan cannot.

After instruction all campers must be able to...

- Understand verbal and/or visual instructions.
- Understand basic safety instructions or directions in English in an emergency.
- Communicate personal distress, injury, or need for assistance.
- Be self-sufficient in basic self-care and hygiene, such as hydration, nourishment, bathroom use, & dress.
- Adhere to medication, treatment plans outlined by parent/guardians or medical professional(s) if needed.
- Refrain from using alcohol, tobacco, vape pens, controlled substances, and misuse of prescription or OTC drugs.
- Understand environmental and equipment-related risks when explained and follow instructions related to those risks even if Wilderness trip staff is not present.
- Adapt to the physical and emotional rigors of a wilderness environment, at minimum a day from advanced medical care, for the entire length of the wilderness trip.
- Walk unassisted over uneven terrain.
- Likely to, or does, result in damage to one another's personal belongings and/or surrounding space
- Involves any physically escalated interaction with campers and/or staff
- A Camper is not open to feedback or willing to work towards improvement
- Involves acts of bullying, teasing, emotional taunting of others, or hate speech;
- Willingly contribute to group tasks and responsibilities.
- Contribute to and maintain a physically, mentally, and emotionally safe environment for self, group members.
- Respect the wilderness environment and adhere to Leave No Trace principles.
- Act independently and as a part of the community.

CANOE TRIP SPECIFIC EEC:

- Carry packs & gear weighing at least 40 lbs. over rough terrain for up to 1 mile with rest breaks as needed.
- Wear a Personal Flotation Device, maintain a face-up position in the water while wearing a PFD.
- Sit in a canoe for up to 4-6 hours a day with stretch breaks as needed.
- Grip and control a paddle.
- Enter and exit a canoe independently.
- Re-enter a canoe from the water with assistance.

BACKPACKIGN TRIP SPECIFIC EEC:

- After instruction, each camper must be able to carry a backpack weighing at least 50 pounds while hiking over rough terrain for 4-6 hours, with rest breaks as needed.

CODE OF COMMUNITY

Campers and their parents/guardians must read and agree to Widjiwagan's code of community. We expect all members of the Widjiwagan community to behave maturely, responsibly, inclusively, and respectfully, and as a reflection of the YMCA's five core values: caring, honesty, respect, responsibility, and equity.

Camp Widjiwagan reserves the right to dismiss any camper who does not follow behavior expectations as outlined. If a camper is dismissed due to behavior we will not refund their session fees and parents/guardians will be held responsible for the camper's early transportation home from camp. Our staff works as hard as possible to help campers with homesickness or other behavioral issues. No clothing or materials with vulgar language, obscene gestures, racial slurs, sexually explicit, drugs/alcohol/illegal, represent discriminatory imagery, or anything that may contribute to a hostile environment or would be considered inappropriate in our Camp. We do not issue refunds for campers that leave early due to those reasons.

STAFF CODE OF COMMUNITY:

Camp believes that a secure and positive environment provides the best experience for growth for all of our campers. This begins with selection and training of staff. Training includes child abuse prevention, emergency procedures, and provides ways for staff to set appropriate boundaries with Campers. We expect staff to model the values of caring, honesty, respect, responsibility, and equity. We expect them to abide by Camp policies, which includes no use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs, and committed to providing a safe, fun and enriching experience. Every staff member is aware of these expectations upon hire.

BEHAVIORS YOU AGREE NOT TO ENGAGE IN AS A WIDJIWAGAN CAMPER:

- Using abusive or vulgar language, name-calling or shouting at others in anger.
- Physical contact with another person in an angry or threatening way.
- Any demonstration of sexual activity or sexual contact that impacts others.
- Engaging in exclusive relationships.
- Harassment or intimidation by words, gestures, body language or any other menacing behavior.
- Theft or behavior which results in the destruction of property or the natural environment.
- Carrying, concealing, or using objects as weapons (An exception is made for camping knives that with blades less than three inches long and fillet knives. These must be used respectfully and appropriately.)
- Using or possessing alcohol, tobacco, vape pens, controlled substances, and misuse of prescription or OTC drugs on YMCA property and throughout the experience.
- Engaging in repeated or ongoing risky behavior that endangers the wellbeing of self or others.

BULLYING POLICY:

At Camp Widjiwagan, bullying is inexcusable, and we have a firm policy against all types of bullying. Each camper is expected to treat others with respect and to help each other achieve the best possible experience. We ask that you encourage your camper to be a positive influence on other campers and advocate for your camper to talk with a staff member if there are ever any issues. Campers can contribute to their own safety if they know what is acceptable and what to expect from staff, volunteers, and other campers to be empowered to let employees know. Failure to meet Widjiwagan's standards of respectful behavior may result in communication with Parents/Guardians for assistance and potentially the dismissal of the camper. Our leadership addresses all incidents of bullying. We train all camp staff to identify bullying and to promote honest communication between themselves and campers. Our goal is to work together as a team to ensure that campers gain self-confidence, make new friends, and go home with fond memories of their camp experience.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION:

We work hard to ensure your children have a safe and fun-filled camp experience. Our staff are selected to work at camp following a rigorous screening process that includes interviews, reference checks, background checks, and motor vehicle reports. Our team is trained in comprehensive practices around child safety and held accountable for modeling the values of honesty, caring, respect and responsibility to help your children stay safe in our care. The trust that you, as parents and guardians, place in us to care for your children is important to us and we do not take that trust for granted.

You can help your Camper contribute to their own safety by helping them to understand a few basic expectations prior to coming to Camp. Some examples include:

- Campers will be asked to stay in groups of at least 3 while at Camp – never 1 on 1 with another participant or staff
- Campers should expect staff to be in cabins while campers are present
- Staff are expected to supervise areas and times that offer privacy (bathrooms, showers, changing clothes).
- If at any time your camper feels uncomfortable, they should reach out to the Program Director, Executive Director, or any of our Staff.

We urge you to talk to your children regularly about their experiences at the Camp. Ask them about their counselors, trip leaders, and other staff. If, as a result, there is ever a concern regarding the safety and protection of your child, please notify us immediately. If you would like to report a concern anonymously, you can contact Customer Service. Otherwise, you can reach out to our Program Director or the Executive Director.

Preparing for Camp

WHAT TO EXPECT

As soon as campers arrive at Widjiwagan they learn that we have one essential rule: **Respect**. We discuss how respect applies to themselves, others, the environment, and equipment.

Campers can expect to learn a lot and be challenged! Widji counselors will teach and review necessary skills such as how to paddle a canoe or carry a backpack. Widji trips can be physically strenuous at times and preparing for the physical challenge by building strength and being physically active before a camper's session will allow for a more enjoyable experience. Walking, running, and playing sports are all great ways to get in shape for Widji. Campers can also expect to grow their leadership and communication skills as they meet new people and build positive relationships within their trail group.

Campers can expect to make their experience their own! Campers spend the first 2 to 3 days and last night of their session on Widjiwagan's campus where campers sleep in rustic log cabins. Cabins are situated along the shore of Burntside Lake. Each has an affiliated outdoor toilet, or Biffy. Campers spend these days planning their group's route, menu, checking equipment, and refreshing skills with your group. Campers set their own goals and help plan their trip while at camp. However, *most* of a camper's session is spent away from camp on trail.

Campers can expect to spend most of their time in the outdoors! On trail campers will be immersed in the backcountry, either canoeing or hiking to new campsites daily, sleeping in tents, and cooking meals over a fire

or camp stove their trail group. Campers use outdoor latrines or dig their own catholes to go to the bathroom and set up handwashing stations at each campsite. After returning from trail and before heading home, campers can take a shower and sauna at camp.

Campers Mental Health: If your child takes medication during the school year, we encourage consistent use during camp to support a successful and positive experience.

Expect adventure! Trail includes a variety of conditions including, rainy days, sunny days, relaxing days, hard portages, steep mountain passes, bugs, and gorgeous sunsets. A positive attitude and enthusiasm for adventure are the best things you can bring to camp.

PAYMENTS

All fees are due by May 15

- Payments are due in installments on February 15, March 15, April 15, and May 15.
- If you register your camper after one or more of the installment deadlines, you will be charged the deposit for your trip as well as the amount due for all installments to date.
- You may pay using a credit card (VISA, Discover, MasterCard or American Express) by phone or mail.
- There is a \$25 service charge for all returned checks and credit card payments.
- If your child earned part of his or her fee by selling products through one of the other YMCA of the North branches, please indicate this with the name of the Branch and amount credited (not sold) when you return the payment card and payment.
- Any changes made to session dates or type of session will require a \$25 service fee.

TRIP INSURANCE

Health and accident insurance coverage for each camper is the responsibility of the parents/guardians. We highly recommend trip insurance. Common trip insurance packages are available through CampDoc. You will be billed by the medical facility or Camp for any medical/ prescription charges incurred on your camper's behalf for immediate reimbursement to Camp. Any questions about your insurance policy or your coverage should be directed to the insurance provider. Any documentation should be submitted directly to the insurance provider as requested. Camp will work with you to provide support as needed following your request.

REQUIRED FORMS

It is important that we understand your campers needs, strengths, desires, and expectations before they arrive at Widjiwagan so we can create balanced groups and prepare our instructors. Most forms can be completed digitally via CampDoc.com. You will be invited to make a profile and complete this paperwork on CampDoc.com via email following your registration.

All forms are due by May 15

Forms required for ALL campers:

- **Contact information & Agreement form** – campers, parent/guardian review & sign via CampDoc.com.
- **Physical Examination Form** – per ACA regulations each camper must have a physical exam within 12 months of arrival at camp. You must have a licensed physical sign the form.
- **Camper Questionnaire** – Campers can complete this form via CampDoc.com.

Required for Quetico, Explorer Canoe, Advanced Explorer Backpack, & Voyageur Campers:

- **Valid Passport Photo** – You must upload a photocopy to CampDoc.com by May 15.
- **Valid Passport Original** – Campers must bring their physical passport to camp. Once at camp, passports will be kept secure by counselors. Once on trail, passports will be kept in first aid kits.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarships are available for qualified campers. Families start by applying through the YMCA of the North's general scholarship process. If families do not qualify for a scholarship through the YMCA they may make an appeal directly through Widjiwagan's board. Visit www.ymcanorth.org/adventure/scholarships for more.

Please follow these steps:

1. **Compete the initial YMCA scholarship application** online or via paper form. The initial application considers your annual income and the number of adults and dependents in your household. Scholarships are awarded to align with your individual circumstances. You will receive an email notification from the YMCA Customer Service Center indicating initial scholarship amounts available.
2. **If the initial scholarship award does not meet your family needs** respond to the email from customer service with a request for an exception and indicate Camp Widjiwagan as your program of interest. You will be able to make an appeal and provide a narrative that explains your family's individual needs to Widjiwagan's Camper Services Committee.

You will be asked to answer the following questions:

- Are there any additional circumstances that we should be aware of and take into consideration? Please include unusual expenses or debts that affect your monthly budget as well as any financial changes that may have happened over the last two years.
- If applicable; please have your camper share why they want to attend camp this summer.

Widjiwagan's Camper Services Committee will receive and review these requests in an anonymous format and consider additional scholarship awards. Please note, committee review can take up to 14 business days. You will be notified of the outcome via email.

We recognize that Widji trips stretch the financial resources of many families. The Widji Administrative Team and Board raise funds annually to ensure that these experiences are accessible. We encourage enthusiastic, committed campers to register and apply for a scholarship. Most families who apply for a scholarship receive some assistance.

WHAT TO BRING

We have separate packing lists for each trip at camp. These are found on our website as well as below:

Canoe Trip Packing Lists:

[Pathfinder, Intro, and BWCA Canoe Trip Packing List](#)

[Quetico Canoe Trip Packing List](#)

[Explorer Canoe Trip Packing List](#)

Backpacking Trip Packing Lists:

[Porcupine, Bighorn, Rockies, and Explorer Backpacking Trip Packing List](#)

[Advanced Explorer Canoe Trip Packing List](#)

[Advanced Explorer Backpacking Trip Packing List](#)

[Voyageur Canoe Trip Packing List](#)

[Mountaineer Backpacking Trip Packing List](#)

You may find many of the items on our packing lists in your own closet. If not, here are some stores you may find helpful:

Twin Cities:

[Repair Lair](#) [REI](#) [Dick's Sporting Goods](#) [Cabela's](#)
[Sierra Trading Post](#) [Hoigaards](#) [Joes Sporting Goods](#) [Fleet Farm](#)

Duluth:

[Duluth Gear Exchange](#)
[Duluth Pack](#) [Trailfitters](#)

Ely:

[Piragis Northwoods Company](#)
[Ely Surplus & Outdoor](#)

WHAT NOT TO BRING

Any items prohibited by the code of conduct. These include but are not limited to alcohol, tobacco, vape pens, illegal drugs, controlled substances or legal THC products.

- Knives with blades longer than 3 inches. Large knives are unnecessary and hazardous on a Widji trip. (Exceptions are made for fillet knives brought by campers who plan to fish on their Widji trip.)
- Campers are encouraged to leave all electronics at home. If valuables such as phones, kindles, etc. are brought to Camp they will be collected and kept in the office until the end of the session.
- Candy, snacks, or soda. These create an attraction for Northwoods critters! Any food brought to Camp will be collected along with valuables and stored in the office until the end of their Camp session.

Transportation To and From Camp

WIDJIWAGAN BUS

A coach-style charter bus and/or van(s) drive campers to and from Widjiwagan and the Lakewood Hills Park (behind the White Bear Lake YMCA) on the opening day of each session. Campers and families will be greeted by Widjiwagan staff as well as our Transportation Coordinator at each destination.

Bus Drop-off and Pick-up:

At the drop-off location, campers are greeted by Widji staff. Each camper is checked in by a staff member as they get on the bus. Campers returning from camp at the end of their session are met at the bus by their parents/guardians. A Widjiwagan staff member will remain at the pick-up location until all campers have been picked up. It is imperative that parents/guardians **arrive at the pick-up location on time**, as the Widjiwagan staff need to proceed to the airport to drop off out-of-state campers. Your camper's safety is important to us. We will be requiring a government issued photo I.D to verify your identity prior to picking your camper up. Steps you need to know to ensure a smooth pick up process:

- Ensure the names of individuals authorized to pick up your camper are listed in your CampDoc profile.
 - Upon arrival, head to the SOC with your photo I.D.
 - Verify the camper you are picking up, collect your campers "Amnesty Bag", check the
- lost and found, and receive your camper check out card.
 - The "Amnesty Bag" mentioned above are items that your camper brought to Camp or food, drinks, electronics, etc.

- Enjoy exploring camp, hearing about all of the wonderful camp experiences and seeing their favorite places!
- *If picking your camper up from the bus, please note, campers will be released from the bus after their guardians ID's are verified. Thank you for your patience as we safeguard our pick up process!

Itinerary to Camp:

7:45 am – Check in and Load up
 8:00 am – Bus Departs
 10:15 am – Cloquet Stop
 12:00 pm – Lunch stop
 1:30 pm - Arrive at Widjiwagan

Itinerary from Camp:

9:00 am – Bus Departs
 11:15 am – Cloquet Stop
 12:00 pm – Lunch stop
 2:30 pm - Arrive at White Bear Lake YMCA

How to Register for Widjiwagan Transportation:

- Most families reserve Widjiwagan transportation online while registering for their trip.
- Changes to transportation can be made with no additional fees if camp is contacted at least a month prior to session start dates.
- Changes to transportation should be made as soon as possible. Changes made less than a month in advance of session start will include a \$10 charge. No changes may be made within a week of the session start date.

Lunch on the Bus

The Widjiwagan bus stops for lunch to and from camp. Campers should plan to either purchase or pack a lunch as lunch is not provided. \$15 is typically enough to pay for lunch.

OUT OF STATE

Many campers come to Widji from outside of the Minneapolis/Saint Paul area. Most can arrange their own housing in the Twin Cities and get to camp via the Widji bus. When this is not possible, Widji will provide transportation and housing for campers en route to or from camp for an additional fee. To request this service, please complete the enclosed “Out-of-State Transportation and Housing” form and send to the Widji office by May 15. <https://www.ymcanorth.org/adventure/paperwork>

Out-of-State Travel Requirements

- Out of state campers using Widji transportation **arrive to MSP between 2:00 and 7:00 p.m. the day before their session begins.**
- Campers should reserve return trip tickets **no earlier than 5:30 pm on the last day of the session.**
- In the rare event that you are unable to schedule your return trip for the date of the last day of the session, we may be able to accommodate an extra night of housing and meals for an additional \$185 (this would also include the cost of the bus ride to the cities). This is not always possible. Please contact us if you are unable to schedule your camper’s return trip on the last day of their camp session.
- If there are last-minute changes in travel plans, call the Widji Administrative Office immediately: 612-822-CAMP or 218-365-2117

*In case of bus breakdown or roadside emergency, Widjiwagan campers and staff will be instructed by the Northfield Lines bus driver to follow the protocols set by Northfield Lines vehicle breakdowns. Northfield lines will determine if a replacement bus is necessary and will make the appropriate arrangements to unload/load campers and staff in a safe manner and area. The Widjiwagan bus staff will contact camp and notify administration of the situation. Widjiwagan will contact parent/guardians to inform them of the situation and plan to continue with the transportation to or from camp.

PERSONAL VEHICLE

You may also drop off and/or pick up your camper. If you are bringing your camper to camp, please plan to **arrive between 12:30pm and 1:30 pm.**

Camper Drop off:

Arrive between 12:30 pm and 1:30 pm
Lunch is not provided but you can find many dining options in the Ely area.

Camper Pick-up:

Arrive between 8:00 am and 9:00
Camp will not supervise campers after 9 am the morning of session end.

Pets are not allowed at camp. Due to limited parking availability at Camp, campers are prohibited from driving their own vehicles to Widji. Saint Paul to camp drive time is approximately 5 hours.

How Programing Works at Widjiwagan

MONEY AND VALUABLES AT CAMP

Campers may bring small electronics such as cell phones, however, once campers arrive at camp all money and valuables will be checked into the camp office and stored in a secure location for the duration of each camper’s session. We collect money and valuables to prevent loss and to promote living in harmony with the natural world.

Please leave large electronic devices such as laptops at home. We do not have enough room to securely store large numbers of these items. Widji campers may want to bring money for our camp store. Campers can purchase items such as tee shirts. Journals, water bottles, or stickers. These are approximate prices and are subject to change:

T-Shirt: \$20 -\$25
Sweatshirt: \$50
Water Bottle: \$15

BASIC SESSION SCHEDULE

Day 1	Campers arrive at Widji, meet their group and counselors, check in with health professional and begin group building. In the evening campers enjoy games and a opening campfire with silly skits performed by counselors.
Days 2 & 3	Campers prepare for their trips by learning new skills, testing gear, packing food, and familiarizing themselves with trail procedures. This will include a “Swim & Swamp” which will include a practice of swimming with hiking boots on and learning to right a canoe if it is overturned. Pathfinders leave for trail on day 3 morning.
Day 4 Onward	Most campers depart for trail on the morning of day 4. While trail schedules can vary, most groups wake up early, eat breakfast, pack up, and hike or paddle through the day, stopping for lunch and rest breaks. Groups make camp in the afternoon or early evening. Schedules are determined by group needs, weather, and counselor assessments.

2nd to Last Day Groups return to camp from trail, check in with the health professional, and receive snail mail. In the evening campers will celebrate their accomplishments and take time to reflect with a closing campfire, banquet dinner, and sauna. **Families are invited to join in celebration during the closing campfire.**

Last Day Campers arrive to breakfast at 8 am with bags packed and cabins swept. Campers depart from the Sigurd Olson Center by 9 am, either by bus or parent transportation.

FOOD AT WIDJIWAGAN

We can accommodate most food allergies and dietary needs. Contact us with any concerns as our kitchen does source food from facilities that also produce common food allergens,. At camp before trail campers will eat meals cooked from scratch in Kirby dining hall. Meals often include classics such as spaghetti and meatballs, tacos, and wild rice soup! On trail, groups can tailor their menu to suit their tastes. Trail meals are mostly made with regular grocery items and some specialized dehydrated foods.

Typical Trail Breakfasts: granola, pancakes, oatmeal, cinnamon rolls, granola.

Typical Trail Lunch: cheese, sausage, raisins, GORP (trail mix), crackers, peanut butter, and tortillas.

Typical Trail Dinner: macaroni and cheese, calzones, burritos, soups.

LOST & FOUND

Yes, items get misplaced at Widji! We make every effort to return lost items while campers are at camp. To facilitate this, please write your child’s first and last name on their personal items. If a camper loses something while at camp, they can check the office or have their counselor check the L&F shelf. If you get home and realize you are missing something, you can check in at the office until September 30. After then all unclaimed items will be donated to a local charity. Please note families will be responsible for shipping costs of any lost and found items.

THE WIDJIWAGAN OPEN PROGRESSION

Grade in Fall after Trip	Available Canoe Trip	Available Backpacking Trip
6th	Pathfinder Canoe Trip	
7 th - 8 th	Intro to Canoe Trip	Intro to Backpacking Trip
7 th – 11 th	BOLD & GOLD Canoe Trip	
8 th – 10 th	BWCA Canoe Trip	Bighorns Backpacking Trip
9 th – 12 th	Quetico Canoe Trip	Rockies Backpacking Trip

Campers may register for any of the above trips with no prior experience but should consider the challenge that feels most appropriate given their experience in the outdoors and away from home. More information can be found about each trip through widji.org.

THE WIDJIWAGAN ADVANCED TRIP PROGRESSION

The Widjiwagan progression of challenge culminates with the advanced trips programs, which gives experienced, qualified campers the added challenge of traveling in more remote areas for a longer duration. Qualified campers refine their skills in wilderness travel, group dynamics and leadership. Campers must receive invitations to register for Widji Advanced Trips. This process is not competitive. We simply want to ensure as much as possible that campers we send on these trips are prepared for the remote and rugged nature of travel destinations and the extended time on trail. We invite campers to participate in our advanced trip programs who are currently in 10th, 11th, and 12th grades and who have demonstrated the technical competence, interpersonal aptitude, judgement, and enthusiasm for wilderness travel necessary to be successful on wilderness expeditions.

Grade in Fall after Trip	Available Canoe Trip	Available Backpacking Trip
11 th	Explorer Canoe Trip	Explorer Backpacking Trip
12 th	Advanced Explorer Canoe Trip	Advanced Explorer Backpacking Trip
High School Graduates	Voyageur Trip	Mountaineer Trip

On Trail Together

GROUP SIZE AND STRUCTURE

A typical Widji group will have three to six other campers and one-two experienced, well-trained, and enthusiastic counselors. Trail groups are created based on grade in school and experience at camp.

GENDER AND TRAIL GROUPS

The YMCA of the North Camping Programs welcome all participants into our programming including transgender, gender non-conforming, gender non-binary, and other gender expansive campers. Widjiwagan strives to provide a safe space for all campers to explore their identities and discover their life path and view this exploration as an integral part of adolescent and human development.

All YMCA Camps uphold the nondiscrimination statement of the YMCA of Greater Twin Cities which includes gender identity. As an institution, we do not tolerate discrimination and bullying of campers based on their gender identity and their perceived gender identity.

Widjiwagan offers single gender trips at every level and all-gender options for most trips grade 8 and above. We invite campers who identify as transgender, gender expansive, or cisgender to register for whichever group they feel most comfortable.

All-Gender trips are relatively new in our program and sometimes see low enrollment. We will continue to offer and promote all-gender trips alongside our gender-separate trips. If we do not have adequate enrollment to run an all-gender trip in a particular session, administration will be in touch with families to find the best solution for your child which could include session changes.

On -Site Implementation

1. We do not disclose participant medical information with other participants or their families.

- a. We recognize information related to a participant's gender identity, sex assigned at birth, and transition status as medical information. As such, we will not share this information with other participants and families.
2. The YMCA Camps will work with transgender or gender non-conforming participants and their families, in the case of participants who are under 18, to meet each participant's unique needs as we are able.
3. YMCA Camp Staff will not assume a participant's pronouns (He, she, they etc.), gender identity, or name. Camp staff will ask campers how they wish to be addressed at camp, including name and pronouns.
4. Camps will provide all campers, including transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) participants access to programming and facilities in a manner that is consistent with their gender identity and does not stigmatize them to the extent that we are able. Facilities that TGNC campers will be able to access based on their gender identity include but are not limited to bathrooms, changing rooms, saunas, and cabins.
 - a. At Widji, most campers use outhouses (all are gender neutral) or to go to the bathroom with indoor plumbing (gender separate based on binary). We empower campers to use the gendered bathroom that aligns best with their gender identity.
 - b. We offer gendered and gender-neutral shower options.
 - c. Camper in groups traveling to Canada will have their identifying documents reviewed when crossing the border and should be aware that this can be a sensitive time.
 - d. Please feel free to connect with Clara Pena-Hansen, Summer Program Director, at Clara.Pena-Hansen@ymcamn.org for more information on our practices related to gender.
5. If a YMCA Camp is not able to meet the needs of a TGNC camper or family due to current limitations in programming or facilities, our staff will be as transparent as possible about these limitations with campers and families.
6. We will do our best to accommodate any participant who expresses a need or desire for increased privacy by offering them access to alternate bathroom, showering, and changing spaces and will make our best effort not to stigmatize campers based on these accommodations.
7. We cannot not change the registration of a participant under 18 without the written consent of their parent / guardian.

FRIENDS AT WIDJIWAGAN

The majority of first-time Widji campers come without knowing anyone else. A big part of what makes Widjiwagan special are the strong friendships campers develop on trail. Therefore, we encourage campers to come to camp ready to meet new people and make friends. If you plan to come to camp with a friend, we can try to place you and one friend in the same trail group. However, if you do wish to come to camp with a friend please note that:

- We will not place groups of three or more friends together. This can create a difficult social situation for other members of the group.
- Both friends must request each other to be placed in the same group.
- At the advanced trip level, we do not honor friend requests.
- We will not place siblings in the same trail group. Siblings wishing to attend camp during the same session can be placed in the same cabin. Groups share cabins while at Widji during the first three days of their session and on the last night of their session.
- Both campers must be the same age and/or grade.
- Both campers must be attending the same session.

STAFF

Leadership is the key to a quality wilderness experience. Widji Trail Counselors are teachers, role models, and mentors. All Widji counselors have participated in our extensive staff training and hold current lifeguard, CPR and Wilderness First Responder certifications. We select staff members based on their personal and professional experience, interest in wilderness trips, and working with teens as well as their judgment and leadership ability.

FISHING ON TRAIL

Campers are required to carry their own fishing license as required by the state or province where they will travel with their group.

Fishing in Minnesota:

- Any person younger than 16 who is a MN resident can fish without a license. Any person younger than 16 who is NOT a resident of MN may fish without a license IF a parent or guardian has a valid MN nonresident fishing license. Otherwise, they need their own MN non-resident youth fishing license. All persons 16 or older need to have their own fishing license.
- MN youth fishing license is \$5, and information can be found here: <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/licenses/fishing/index.html>.
- You can purchase a MN fishing license online. If you do so, please **forward the confirmation email and photo of the actual license to info@widji.org**.

Fishing in Ontario:

- All non-residents (including under 18) are required to hold a valid Outdoors Card and fishing license.
- An Outdoors Card must be purchased first. Then you add a fishing license to the Outdoors Card. An Outdoors Card costs \$9.68 and more information about Outdoors Cards can be found here: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/getoutdoors-card>.
- Ontario website with information about a fishing license for non-residents: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/fishing-licence-non-residents-canada>.
- People who are traveling as part of an organized group (which includes Widji) are restricted to Conservation licenses and limits. The annual conservation fishing license for a nonresident is \$56.17. The website that has the various fees is here: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/fishing-licence-fees-non-canadian-residents>.

Fishing in Other Areas:

- Montana: <https://fwp.mt.gov/buyandapply/fishinglicenses>
- Wyoming: <http://www.eregulations.com/wyoming/fishing/licenses-fees/>
- Alaska: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=sportlicense.main>

Evacuations:

We know how invaluable a trail experience is and having to leave a trip part way through can be a difficult situation for both campers and parents/guardians to navigate. There are several reasons an evacuation could occur, but most fall into two categories – medical and behavioral. If a camper needs to leave their Camp

session due to the circumstances surrounding their trip evacuation, parents/guardians will be contacted as soon as possible to discuss the process.

Health & Wellness on Trail & at Camp

RISK MANAGEMENT

Widjiwagan has a proven safety record that spans more than 90 years. While we cannot guarantee accident-free travel, our priority is the health and well-being of all our campers. Our attitude and investment in accident prevention and incident response enables our staff to respond appropriately and situationally. We train our staff members in professional-level wilderness first responder skills, provide them with a thorough knowledge of the areas we travel through, and have established policies and procedures designed to reduce the likelihood of illness and injury. In addition, we provide communication devices to our trip leaders to allow them to access additional resources whenever technology and the environment allow. We use Satellite Phone or Garmin Inreach providing two-way communication, location sharing, weather updates, navigation, and emergency response coordination service. In the event of an illness or injury, it is important for parents and campers to acknowledge that communication with emergency medical services is not always possible due to the remoteness of our trips.

HEALTH SERVICES

- At Camp Widjiwagan our Health Service Office is staffed by volunteer Health Professionals who rotate on a weekly basis.
- Widjiwagan's advising physician oversees the Health Service Office as well as the implementation and stocking of Widjiwagan's standing orders on trail.
- If your Camper has any health care plans that would apply to Camp such as anaphylaxis, severe asthma, diabetes, seizures, etc. Please be sure to include such information in CampDoc and plan on connecting with staff prior to camp experience
- Ely has a well-equipped hospital located 15 miles from camp.

MEDICATIONS

- **All medication needs to be in the original bottle** when it arrives at Camp. This includes both prescription and over the counter medications.
- You must have written instructions on dosage, route, and frequency from your doctor, either on the bottle or on a separate piece of paper, for all prescription medications. Dosage and frequency information for over-the-counter medications should be indicated by the parent/guardian on the Health History Form.
- Widji Staff give prescription medication as prescribed and detailed on bottle or doctors note. Sometimes, like with ADHD medication, a doctor will verbally tell a patient they can adjust the medication like only take as needed when the prescription says take once a day, but that we will have to give the medication as it is written on the bottle or doctors.
- Be sure that there is enough medication for the entire session, plus a few days' extra supply
- We will **NOT** administer medication that is improperly labeled or not prescribed by a physician
- In case of an accident or serious illness, parents/guardians or the emergency contact will be notified.
- Because of the isolated nature of Widji trips, all campers **must** have had a tetanus shot or booster within the last ten years. Campers who have not had a tetanus shot or booster within the last 10 years will not be allowed to go on their trip.

- If your child takes medication during the school year, we encourage consistent use during camp to support a successful and positive experience.

*NOTE: Any unused prescriptions will be returned to the camper on the morning of closing day

Closing Celebrations

Family and friends are invited to join in the adjourning of their camper’s session. Campers will share a banquet dinner then connect with friends and family afterward. We have a brief social hour, tour of camp, and a closing campfire to reflect on the trail experience. There is no fee for the Closing Celebration, but registration is required. For more on closing Celebrations and to register click [here](#).

SCHEDULE

- 5:45 - 6:00 pm – Family and Friends arrive at the Sigurd Olson Center
- 6:00 - 6:15 pm – Campers arrive at the Sigurd Olson Center
- 5:45 – 6:45 pm – Camp Store open (cash & check only)
- 6:45 - Camp Tour & Social Time
- 7:15 pm - Closing Campfire

Food & Lodging in Ely

There are many dining options in Ely. Insula, The Boathouse Restaurant and Brewpub, or Stony Ridge are some of our favorites. Zup’s grocery store is typically open until 7 pm on weekdays in the summer, and Mitska’s Market is open until 5:30 pm.

Family and friends should find their own accommodations after attending closing celebrations. There are many places to stay in the Ely area. The Grand Ely Lodge or The Adventure Inn are some of our favorites, but there are many more inns or motels in town. There are also great camping spots nearby camp. Fenske Campground is the closest to camp. Fall Lake Campground is another good spot for tent camping.

Session Cancellations

General Policies

- **No refunds are available for cancellations after the payment-in-full date of May 15.**
- Cancellations must be in writing.
- If cancellation requests are submitted before May 15 Widjiwagan will refund fees except the registration deposit.
- Camp session change requests received one month or more prior to the session start date will be made, pending availability, and charged a \$25 change fee.
- Campers who do not show up to a session will not receive a refund. Program deposits are non-refundable and non-transferrable.
- No payment adjustment will be made for late arrival, early departure, or dismissal from camp. No adjustment to registration cost will be made for campers who are tardy, absent from camper days or are restricted due to disciplinary reasons, or inability to manage pre-existing conditions, current illness, injury, or dismissal.

Extenuating Circumstances

If your camper is experiencing a physical/mental illness or injury prior to the session that prevents them from participating, a medical provider will need to provide proof of illness or injury to consider a partial refund. If you pay in full, refunds will only be eligible until May 15.

Widjiwagan cannot refund payments in occasions when sessions are cut short or canceled because of environmental factors. These can include wilderness area closures, forest fires, flooding, or other climate and environmental hazards.

Thank You

Please contact us for any unanswered questions.
We look forward to seeing you this summer at Widjiwagan!