



Okpik Winter Camping Experience Participant Guide

On behalf of the Okpik staff, we thank you for registering to participate in the Okpik Winter Camping Experience! It is the goal of the staff to provide you an opportunity to meet new friends, learn and develop skills, and use those skills for a fun weekend of cold weather camping and program. The staff has been working as a team to develop a program that will allow us to share our knowledge and experience in the framework of a fun cold weather camping weekend. We are counting the days and look forward to meeting you in person! This guide has been assembled to help you prepare for the weekend and the Okpik Winter Camping Experience.

Please be sure to attend the Okpik Participant & Staff Connect on Zoom Sunday January 10th at 7pm. This will be an opportunity to ask questions about gear and connect with staff prior to the program weekend.

Sincerely,

Liz Muller
Jane Richardson
Garvin Louie
2026 Okpik Program Directors

Okpik Participant Zoom Meeting Information:

Topic: Okpik Participant & Staff Connect

Time: Jan 11, 2026 07:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://nhscouting.zoom.us/j/81900678480?pwd=pi2xpREjSWVv9T8DcEd86g3bVf1i2PY.1>

Meeting ID: 819 0067 8480

Password: 496192

One tap mobile

+13017158592,,81900678480# US (Washington DC)

+13052241968,,81900678480# US

What is an Okpik?

The Inuit people of the northern polar regions refer to the snowy owl as Okpik (OOK'-pic). Okpik are native to the cold; they do not just survive, they thrive! The Okpik Winter Camping Experience began at the Northern Tier High Adventure Base in 1971. The Northern Tier Okpik winter camping program was developed with input from both Scouting America and other partner agencies with expertise in winter camping, travel and program. The result was a truly innovative program for Scouting America members across the nation. Since 1984, Okpik has been the approved name and symbol of National winter camping programs for Scouting America. Okpik is no longer limited to Northern Tier; several Scouting America councils around the USA offer Okpik programs based on the original program at Northern Tier.



Where will the Okpik Winter Program Experience take place?

Okpik Winter Program Experience will take place at Griswold Scout Reservation in Gilmanton Iron Works, New Hampshire. Specifically, the majority of the program will take place within Camp Bell Scout Camp. The program headquarters for the weekend will be in Camp Bell Lodge.

Driving Directions:

159 Manning Lake Rd
Gilmanton, NH 03237
43.486687°, -71.346196°

<https://nhscouting.org/outdoor-programs/directions-to-camps>

When should I arrive?

Please arrive at Camp Bell Lodge between 5:00 pm and 6:45 pm on Friday January 30th 2026. You will be met by staff members at the Camp Bell Lodge in the main parking lot of Camp Bell Scout Camp. Group activities will begin at 7:15 pm please work to be on time so you do not miss out.

Will dinner be served Friday night after arrival?

No. Please eat dinner before you arrive at the Okpik Winter Camping Experience. There will be a cracker barrel the first evening for the Snowbirds & Adventurers. The Explorers will be departing for the back country shortly after arrival.

Who will be attending?

Participation in Okpik Winter Program Experience is open to individual Scouts, Venturers & Sea Scouts. There may be multiple members of any particular Scout Troop, Ship or Venturing Crew. However, please do not assume you will be paired up with members of your Troop, Crew or Ship by default. You will be assigned to a provisional patrol based on the program you registered for. As a patrol you will participate in the various program activities that have been planned. Each patrol will be assisted by Staff Guides who will work with the patrol to ensure safe and high quality experience.

Will there be adult program participants?

No. The Okpik Winter Camping Experience is intended for youth participants. There is a separate training course for registered adult leaders called Cold Weather Leader Training which will be run separately on the same weekend. If you know a leader who would like to participate please visit: scoutingevent.com/330-CWLT

Will I be with my friends in my Troop, Crew or Ship who registered?

Maybe. We will be assigning participants to provisional patrols for the weekend. Your patrol will first be organized by program, Okpik Snowbirds, Okpik Adventurers or Okpik Explorers. In the end assignments will depend on the number of participants registered.

What should I bring?

Regarding fabrics:

Wool & Synthetic Blend: Ideal, warmth of wool easier to dry if damp.

Wool only: Will keep you warm when wet, but does not easily dry when wet.

Cotton: We do not recommend cotton as it will not keep you warm once it gets damp. Out on the trail you will not be able to dry cotton clothing. If all you have is cotton, bring all of it because as soon as it gets damp you will need to change it. You have probably heard it before 'Cotton Kills'.

Participant Clothing List:

2-3 Winter Hats (Wool, fleece/wool combination, etc)

- *be sure that your hat will cover your ears!*
- *avoid non-breathable hats such as leather & fur combinations*

2 Pairs of synthetic long underwear

- May be heavy weight or mid weight, this layer should fit snug, but not tight, and involve a wicking material designed to keep you dry when sweating.
- No cotton.

2-3 pairs of Mittens

- They may get wet and there will be no opportunity to dry.
- Mittens will keep your hands warmer than gloves.

1-2 Pairs of glove liners

- Optional but recommended
- Thin knit gloves to provide some protection while allowing dexterity. These will be worn under thicker gloves or mittens. Should be loose enough to allow for good blood flow to fingers

2-3 Pair of Heavy Wool or Heavy Synthetic Socks

- Should be loose enough that they don't restrict blood flow to feet.

2-3 pairs of Synthetic Sock liners

- Optional but recommended, these assist in wicking sweat away from the feet.

2 Pairs of pants

- Wool blend or fleece
- No cotton based fabrics such as jeans.
- Snow pants will work but may become sweaty and useless.

2 Sweaters

- Wool or Fleece
- No cotton sweatshirts

1 Wind/Rain Jacket or pullover Anorak

- Large enough to wear over all other layers.

1 Pair of Wind/Rain Pants

- Large enough to wear over all other layers.

1 Pair High Ankle Insulated Winter Boot

- Boots with removable liners are recommended but not required.
- You will be outdoors for many hours during the weekend, be sure to wear warm comfortable boots!
- Make sure your boots fit comfortably over the heavy winter socks.

Snowbirds Program - Participant Equipment List

1 10x10 tarp

- Should be large enough to completely wrap your sleeping bag.

1 Sleeping bag

- You will be sleeping indoors both nights in a bunkhouse (above freezing)

1 Closed cell full length foam sleeping pad

1 mess kit with fork, knife and spoon

- Plastic/Poly preferred but metal will do (Metal gets cold and sticks to skin).

1 pair Snowshoes (if you have them)

1 pair Microspikes (if you have them)

1 Water Bottle

- Nalgene style / non-metallic

Sunglasses (Optional)

Lip Balm (Optional)

Basic toiletry kit

Okpik Adventurers - Participant Equipment List

Backpack

- A backpack to carry your gear to the outdoor camping destination.
- Be sure to pack early to see if all your gear will fit!

1 10x10 tarp

- This will be your sleeping bag shell when camping outdoors. Should be large enough to completely wrap your sleeping bag. Be sure your tarp has no holes!

1 Sleeping bag

- Best choice, a bag that is rated below zero.
- If you do not have a sub zero bag can you borrow a sub zero bag from a peer?
- If you cannot borrow a bag can you nest your coldest rated bag with another bag for improved winter performance.
- If all you have is a summer bag let us know. We may be able to arrange a loaner.

2 Closed cell full length foam sleeping pads

- Please note that 2 is the ideal for the worst winter conditions but you will survive with one. Do not bring an un-insulated inflatable air mattress. Compressed sleeping bag insulation on top of cold air will effectively extract your warmth and you will be cold quickly.

1 mess kit with fork, knife and spoon

- Plastic/Poly preferred but metal will do
- Metal gets cold and sticks to skin

1 pair Snowshoes if you have them

1 pair Microspikes if you have them

1-2 Water Bottles

Nalgene style / non-metallic

Sunglasses (Optional)

Lip Balm (Optional)

Basic toiletry kit

Okpik Explorers - Participant Equipment List

Backpack

- A backpack to carry your gear to the outdoor camping destination.
- Be sure to pack early to see if all your gear will fit!

1 10x10 tarp

- This will be your sleeping bag shell when camping outdoors. Should be large enough to completely wrap your sleeping bag. Be sure your tarp has no holes!

1 Sleeping bag

- Best choice, a bag that is rated below zero.
- If you do not have a sub zero bag can you borrow a sub zero bag from a peer?
- If all you have is a summer bag let us know. We may be able to arrange a loaner.

2 Closed cell full length foam sleeping pads

- Please note that 2 is the ideal for the worst winter conditions but you will survive with one. Do not bring an un-insulated inflatable air mattress. Compressed sleeping bag insulation on top of cold air will effectively extract your warmth and you will be cold quickly.

1 mess kit with fork, knife and spoon

- Plastic/Poly preferred but metal will do
- Metal gets cold and sticks to skin

1 pair Snowshoes if you have them

1 pair Microspikes if you have them

1-2 Water Bottles

Nalgene style / non-metallic

Sunglasses (Optional)

Lip Balm (Optional)

Basic toiletry kit

Will there be a trading post?

Maybe. At the time of writing this guide we do not have formal plans for a trading post however we may have a small number of surplus items (stickers, water bottles, patches, etc) they may be for sale. We will have more information on the January 10th Zoom call.

