

Lillian B.
March 28, 2007
Re: Skyler R.

Survival in the Bush, Inc.'s : Fall Survival Programme

Dear Dr. Ferri,

I have thought of writing you for some time but the couple of recent articles in The Sun Times by Paulette P. got me to sit down and do it!

About five year ago I took one of my kids to a school event at the ChiCheMaun and picked up a pamphlet for your Wilderness Survival Training courses. My husband has taken our three sons canoeing each summer starting each one when they turned eight and I thought our oldest might be interested in your course. That fall, our son Skyler R., a high school student at the time, took the survival course with (if I remember her name correctly,) Ms. Khan.

It was an intense experience! He came home exhausted each weekend, challenged on many levels. He took the material seriously and all of us listened intently to his stories, including his two younger brothers. They watched and listened as he practiced making a shelter, a fire starter kit, a blanket coat, etc., and talked about what it was like trying to function when cold, dehydrated and sleep-deprived.

Skyler went on to participate in Katimavik and then travelled with two friends, driving an old van all through eastern Canada and the States, spending as little money as possible, sleeping in the van or in tents, traveling with pails of water and bags of rice, flour and beans.

Travelling through Colorado in December, they found the weather getting uncomfortably cold and headed for the west coast. Studying their map, they found a secondary road that would cut hours off their trip. Mid-afternoon, they found the road and turned off. All was fine at first but the road gradually got narrower, steeper and rougher. Then they began to see snow. The road was so narrow and the sides so steep and rocky there were no place to turn around. From the map, they expected to be over the top of the pass shortly so they kept going until they turned around. From the map they expected to be over the top of the pass shortly so they kept going until they were mired in snow, wheels spinning and were forced to stop. There was no place to pull over so they simply stayed in the middle of the road. By now it was dark. They decided to make the best of it and curled up together in the back.

With all their bedding they were not cold but Melissa who has occasional asthma began to have trouble breathing and spent the rest of the night propped up, fighting for breath. Morning dawned, with the sky looking like more snow on the way. At first they had been afraid of a car hitting them, but by now they realized that there were no cars coming. Although Skyler had a strong sense from his course that they should not separate, the three decided after some debate that Jeremy should try walking out the way they were going as they thought it could not be more than about 15 miles to the main road. They made a fire, cooked food, and Jeremy set off. Skyler kept hot drinks flowing for he and Melissa and spent several hours gathering wood, walking some distance rather than gathering in the immediate area s he had been taught.

Jeremy is along distance runner and was in reasonably good shape. He walked as fast as he could and after several hours came upon a ranch. The rancher and his wife were home and able to take him back to the van with their four-wheel drive, pull it out and both vehicles were driven out. The rancher told them the road was closed in winter and posted with a sign, but the sign was sometimes vandalized. He also informed the three that a major storm was on the way that night and once it came there would have been no removing the van till spring. He also pointed out to Jeremy the cougar tracks following him!

Skyler has continued with work, travel and canoe trips including one last year with his girlfriend, two younger brothers and one of their friends. They were caught in the severe storms close to where the tornado touched down in Algonquin and had a real scare when their buddy had a severe allergic reaction to a wasp sting. Besides these episodes, I am sure there are many more events that I am not even aware of!

My point in telling you all this is that I believe that the course Skyler took with your company has given him the skills to survive a number of potentially dangerous situations. At the same time, that knowledge has been passed, at least in part, to all the members of his family and many of his friends. I want to express my appreciation for the work you are doing and remind you that what you teach your students will ripple far beyond those who have had a chance to attend one of your classes.

Thank you.

All the best,
Yours sincerely,
Lillian B.