

UNDERSTANDING THE CHIEF SCOUT'S AWARD

from The Leader files, written by Jim Nichols

“Scouter, I want to work towards my Chief Scout's Award. What do I have to do to come up with a challenging program? Can I copy it from a book?”

Have any of your Scouts asked these questions yet? Before offering an answer, let's look at past standards. When I was a troop Scouter, a frequent problem that kept arising concerned the “rules” imposed by Chief Scout Award requirements. These didn't always fit for every Scout's circumstances; sometimes the troop's locality worked against the youth. In other cases, leaders encountered difficulties applying what appeared to them as rigid requirements.

Program Roots

Today's Scout program features an underlying theme: “The opportunity for a Scout to learn to make choices.” As youth progress through the Scout program, the skills needed to make these choices should become increasingly demanding.

The Chief Scout's Award is designed to ensure Scouts take advantage of opportunities to make choices in their Scouting program. By making meaningful ones, Scouts Canada hopes youth will gain experience and skills uniquely suited to their individual needs.

Clarifying Requirement #6

Each activity area contains a number of sub-components that, as a whole, provide the attitudes, skills and knowledge required to achieve the Pathfinder Level Award. When developing a challenging program to earn the Chief Scout's Award, Scouts are expected to improve their skills to a level beyond what is appropriate for the Pathfinder level.

The Chief Scout's Award requirement #6 compels Scouts to extend their attitudes, skills and knowledge beyond the level they reached in the Pathfinder Award.

Scouts should choose activities that extend the skills acquired in each of the activity areas (Citizenship, Leadership, Personal Development, Outdoor Skills) by:

- a) delving deeper into the subject chosen for the Pathfinder level. For example, a Scout might have made the choice to explore the Block Parent program in their community, and report on it as part of the Personal Development Pathfinder Award. At the Chief Scout level, the youth could explore this project in greater depth by researching the Block Parent organization further on a national or international level, and then helping out locally in some way.
- b) choosing to explore a subject other than the one used to get the Pathfinder's Award. For example, the topic of “froshing” may interest Scouts. Scouts might decide to explore the community's position on this activity in the schools. Youth could further their knowledge and impact on the subject by volunteering as a member of their school's Student Council or other committee that tries to provide solutions to this problem.

What's an example of a choice in the Outdoor Skills activity area?

Scouts might choose to really hone their winter survival skills; in addition,

they could train in wilderness first aid, or search and rescue techniques.

The Chief Scout's Award does not require Scouts to address every component of an activity area to achieve recognition. However, the chosen activity must challenge the individual's skills, and the sharing of the learnings must exceed expectations of a Pathfinder Scout.

Scouter's Role

Troop Scouters play an important role when Scouts are deciding what challenges to accept and develop. Troop Scouters should act as “sound-ing boards” and offer advice when asked (or when a situation warrants it). Sometimes, Scouts need direction to get started on these tasks. Counseling will often help open up doors to their imagination. When their creative juices start flowing, a Scouter may be able to offer suggestions to make implementing the dream easier.

Process Is Vital

Never forget that the process is as important as the outcome. Offering plans for discussion and approval by peers and ongoing evaluation are integral parts of this most important requirement. X

– Jim Nichols worked as APC Scouts in Alberta during the Scout Review. As well, he headed up the group of Scouters who proposed revised Chief Scout's Award requirements.



THIS WINTER SKI TRIP WILL HELP US ACHIEVE ONE PART OF OUR CHIEF SCOUT'S AWARD.

Photo: Ali Eason