



# Uniform: You're Kidding, Right?

by Ian Mitchell



I recently sat at a meeting of the National Youth Advisory Committee listening intently to the youth representatives as they spoke about the challenges they saw for the future of Scouting.

One presentation by Chris von Roretz, Quebec Youth Commissioner and Deputy Camp Chief for CJ'07, shared the results of an informal survey that was taken during CJ. Chris spoke to the importance of camping within our programs, how friends were very important to youth and how youth members feel they could be involved more in the planning of their programs; nothing new here I thought. Then he delivered this "bomb". A significant number of youth commented that if they could change one thing in Scouting, it would be to have an activity uniform.

The room went silent for a minute. Then someone offered, "We already have an activity uniform for the older sections." With that the room filled with uniform discussions. Tee-shirts, sash, one badge or two, jeans, red berets, and the list went on. When all was said and done and the focus was back to the original point, the group was distressed to think that there were youth members of Scouting who had not heard, nor been told, that they had a choice of what uniform to wear.

How could this be? Youth set the direction for the uniform choice for Scouts, Venturers and Rovers back in **May 2002**, nearly six years ago. To refresh your memory, here's a portion of a *Leader Magazine* article from March 2003.

## "Bring on the Adventure!"

That's what people should think about when they see Scouts, Venturers or Rovers being active within their communities. To help us "Bring on the Adventure" to more young people – as well as promote the active, outdoor programs that we offer – youth members of Scouts Canada have set the future direction of uniform usage within the older age sections (Scouts, Venturers and Rovers).

After a number of years of study and research, in May 2002 the National Youth Committee recommended that Scouts Canada add options to the current uniform for the three older sections. Almost immediately the proposal gained the full support of both the National Commissioner and the National Management Committee.

The uniform direction includes three key points (listed below) that pertain to the Scout, Venturer and Rover sections.

1. *Recognition that Scouting needs several official uniform options for both "program activities" and "formal activities."* Youth have continued to tell us that they want a choice when it comes to uniform. Some people find that the tan shirt is acceptable for all occasions; others find it okay for Scouting functions only. But, a growing number of youth members do not like the uniform at all. Research shows that the present uniform is a barrier to membership. In other words, the uniform *stops* some people from joining Scouting.
2. *A need to empower youths to choose which uniform option suits their needs best.* After the most recent uniform discussions, it became evident that

adult leaders were deciding how and when youth members would wear the uniform within the sections. However, often the youths found these directions both impractical and inflexible. The result: they started leaving the organization in ever-growing numbers. What's more, program structures designed to allow for youth decision-making were not being implemented or employed as they should.

3. *A need to continue to wear a necker, when appropriate.* A necker is the one standard uniform item recognized by most Scouting organizations around the world. It also serves to identify individual groups on occasions where more than one group is present. In addition, the necker can be used during emergency situations.

## Options, Options, Options

Choice: that's what the new direction for uniform wear (*in older sections only*) revolves around. Who will make this choice? Youth individuals and their parents will make the choice of uniform wear on all occasions. Adult Scouters will *not* make this decision." (To see the entire article, go to Scouts Canada's web site, [www.scouts.ca](http://www.scouts.ca), click on Leader Magazine, Archives and then March 2003.

## Communicate

Upon further reflection, the group concluded that we all, youth and adult members alike, must ensure that youth driven issues/challenges remain in the forefront of this Movement if they are to be carried out over time. We must

Photo: Demaris Photography Inc.



## What Defines Us

"Our uniform doesn't define us as Scouts Canada members. We define ourselves through our actions and values. We don't need a tan shirt on our backs to know that we are part of the largest and best youth development organization in the world. It's time to stop bickering about the clothes we wear while participating in Scouting activities, accept the reality of change, and get the focus back on providing adventurous, educational programs to more youth across Canada."

— Tyler Arrell, past Youth Committee Chair and International Commissioner.

Photo: Garth Holder

Speak about them, write about them and yes, periodically remind people of them once in a while. So please take this article as your reminder.

Mike Scott, past National Commissioner wrote in March of 2002, "Making decisions is a large part of what leadership is all about. To make good decisions, a leader must have good information and be able to communicate it to enlist support for the decision based on it.

I witnessed such leadership from our National Youth Committee at our most

recent national meetings. These young people have set a direction for this organization based on sound research and input. They have enlisted support for a uniform direction that allows for choice; not only for choice of what can be worn, but possibly more important, who actually gets to choose.

I ask every leader to support this new direction."

#### Help Required

The National Youth Advisory Group wishes your help in ensuring

that no member of Scouts, Venturers or Rovers ever scribbles again a need for an activity uniform. Please promote the uniform options for Scouts, Venturers and Rovers that youth worked so hard to have put in place. After all, we are a Movement for youth. ^

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## Lookin' Good

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**Cool, fun and challenging. That's what Scouts Canada programs are, and what we want people to know. Members of our senior sections (Scouts, Venturers and Rovers) can now choose from the following exciting uniform options when participating in program or formal Scouting activities.**

### Program Activity Uniform

**T**his uniform is appropriate to wear to weekly meetings, to camps, while travelling, and on outings. Let's consider some questions and answers that members may have.

**Q:** Who may wear the new uniform?

**A:** All members of senior sections (i.e. Scouts, Venturers, Rovers and their leaders) may wear the uniform.

**Q:** What uniform options will a Scout, Venturer or Rover choose from?

**A:** The member will choose either the tan shirt we have today, or the new t-shirt and vest option.

**Q:** How will youths display badges?

**A:** For the immediate future, the sash will remain the appropriate method for youths to display their badges. The sash is typically worn during opening and closing ceremonies, and investitures.

**Q:** What do leaders give out at an investiture ceremony?

**A:** They may present group badges, along with the group necker. Only those who wear the traditional shirt will receive epaulets.

**Q:** How do we identify those who have earned the Chief Scout or Queen's Venturer Award?

**A:** They will wear the Chief Scout or Queen's Venturer Award woggle.

### Formal Uniform

**T**his uniform is appropriate to wear for major award ceremonies, civic meetings, and Remembrance Day ceremonies. Let's consider some questions and answers that members may have.

**Q:** What options will a Scout, Venturer or Rover choose from?

**A:** The member will choose either the tan shirt we have today or the new white shirt and Scout tie option.

**Q:** Is the tie worn by everyone?

**A:** There is only one tie for both youths and adults. Female members who do not wish to wear a tie may substitute the section lapel pin.

**Q:** May youth members wear the sash with the new uniform option?

**A:** Yes, they may if members wish to display badges while in formal uniform.

**Q:** What about pants?

**A:** For the new uniform option, blue or tan pants are the approved colour for formal wear. Only blue pants will be worn with the traditional uniform.

**Q:** What about female members?

**A:** For formal activities, females may wear blue or tan pants or skirt with a white blouse, or a blue or tan dress. They may also opt to wear either the Scout tie or section lapel pin.

