

Chris Wilke Memorial Scholarship – Part 1 & 2

Trapping has always been a part of my family. My mom grew up trapping with her dad on our family trapline. My dad became a self taught trapper at the age of 13. I spent many days checking traps, and skinning animals after the school day.

I have also worked at various places of employment, such as, working on the family deer farm, forestry contractors, carpentry, farmers and recently oilfield. Through work & school, I have successfully completed Standard First Aid, Dangerous Goods Training, HSE safety, and WHIMIS. All the while, I have taken advanced schooling, and managed to maintain over a 70% average. Over the school years, I was awarded two most valuable player awards, and one most improved. I received a healthy body/mind award, and several student of the month awards. I have volunteered at various local organizations, including the Catholic Church, and local Board of Trade.

I am a member of the Alberta Bow Hunters association, and the Alberta Trappers Association, both of which I actively participate in. I have completed many courses that interested me, such as nine levels of swimming lessons, babysitting course, boaters license, and graduated drivers license. I have always been a part of school sports, including volleyball, badminton, curling, and baseball. I enjoy the outdoors, hunting, trapping, fishing, snowmobiling & ATV's. This is what has led me to choose a career in Forest Technology. I have been accepted into NAIT, for this fall.

Once I graduate from NAIT, I hope to secure a career in the forest industry. My dream is to have a career where I not only provide financial security, but also spend time in the outdoors, which I love so much. My family has two traplines, and I hope my career path leads me back to the Manning area, so I can carry on our family tradition of trapping.

I appreciate your consideration, to accept me as a worthy recipient for the Chris Wilke Memorial Scholarship.

Sincerely,
Branden Soroka

Chris Wilke Memorial Scholarship – Part 3

Regulated trapping is the key tool used by Alberta, to proactively manage furbearer populations. These regulations are in place to create a balance between people, species of mammals, and the available habitat. Advancements in trap design and trapping techniques have contributed, to improve the welfare of the captured animal.

I believe that being an active member of the Alberta Trappers association is crucial for the future of trapping in Alberta. By going to the local meetings we find out what issues other trappers are having and also get updated on new laws and changes. At these meetings we are able to talk directly to the government wildlife biologists to voice any concerns of furbearer management we may have. We are their eyes out there and they are really willing to hear from us. We know as trappers that they have listened to us and have made changes to the regulations from our meetings. Trapping education is also very helpful in managing a trap line. Educating non trappers of what we are actually doing out there is also very critical as they are uneducated when it come to trapping and need the real facts, not what they hear from the media.

Growing up on the trap line, has taught me a lot about furbearer management. I believe that responsible use of a trap line is the key to successful fur management. Trapping keeps furbearer populations more balanced, by reducing the major fluctuations that are seen in nature. In Alberta, the government has quotas for certain species that require mandatory registration, so the numbers harvested are monitored. I agree that this law is a good practice because it keeps populations more in check. Another good idea that has been implemented, is the different seasons for different species, this helps to ensure that they are harvested when pellets are in their prime.

On our fur management units, we watch for tracks & sign of species we want to trap. If we notice a decline of a specific population in a given area, we will only harvest a small portion of the quota. On the contrary, if sign shows that we are on peak cycle, we will do our best to fill our quotas, to help maintain and balance the populations.

I feel that it is good trapping practice, to harvest different portions of the trap line, in different years, to let the furbearing populations stabilize. This can be accomplished, by having an actual harvest plan in place that includes a map of areas previously, trapped. The Harvest plan can also include harvest records from past years, along with future plans for the line. This can only be accomplished on larger trap lines, as the size of the line will dictate what level of conservation measures can be put into effect. By implementing a “harvest plan” one can monitor how the populations are effected over time. This will help maintain our furbearing animal populations, so that we can continue harvesting fur.

My family has two trap lines, in which we have implemented this type of harvest plan. In some ways, this is what my grandfather used to do. The traditions were passed down to my parents, and now onto me. I feel a sense of responsibility and pride in being a successful and responsible trapper, and hope that someday I will have children to pass this lifestyle onto.