



Wilderness  
Inquiry

Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund  
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Wilderness Inquiry

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*A group of English language learners from Washington Technology High School in Saint Paul explore the Mississippi River, a cultural icon of Minnesota.*

### **Canoemobile: Preserving Our Heritage as an Outdoor State**

Wilderness Inquiry traveled throughout the state, bringing Canoemobile to thousands of Minnesota youth. Through place-based education programming, students from diverse backgrounds connected to their local waterways and public lands to learn about the rich cultural history and natural resources of Minnesota. In addition to single-day events, Wilderness Inquiry engaged hundreds of youth on multi-day trips, deepening their connection to the outdoors and increasing awareness of outdoor-related career pathways. Canoemobile helps preserve Minnesota's outdoor history, culture, and heritage by bringing these hands-on experiences to diverse groups of youth and supporting Minnesota history standards in collaboration with teachers and school districts.



*Artifacts used for an educational fur-trading activity lay on display in a Wilderness Inquiry handmade Voyageur canoe during programming in Rochester (left). Students from the South High School All Nations Program practice building a fire using a bow drill (right).*

**Project description:** Wilderness Inquiry will connect more than 7,500 youth to their local lands and waterways through place-based education and hands-on outdoor experiences. These experiences will focus on the cultural history of the area to connect students to Minnesota's rich outdoor heritage. Of the 7,500 youth, more than 800 will take part in overnight and multi-day camping, training, and service learning trips throughout the state of Minnesota to deepen their connection to place and build their stewardship ethic.

**Project appropriation:** Through the generous support of the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund, \$490,000 over two years was appropriated to Wilderness Inquiry to preserve Minnesota's outdoor history, culture, and heritage by connecting Minnesota youth to natural resources. As of 6/30/2018, Wilderness Inquiry has received \$245,000 for project expenses and has completed 52% of the project based on number of students served.

**Additional funding and leverage:** The project has leveraged additional funding from private sources including: Askov Finlayson, Marbrook Foundation, McNeely Foundation, Target, and additional corporate, foundation, and individual supporters. Legacy funding also helped Wilderness Inquiry leverage additional funding for Voyageur canoes.

**Duration of project:** FY 2018-19

**Number of full-time equivalents funded:** 1.3 for FY 2018

**Additional Information regarding the Canoemobile Program can be found at:**

<https://www.wildernessinquiry.org/programs/canoemobile/program-overview/>

**We also highlighted our partnership with Legacy in our 2018 Year in Review:**

<https://www.wildernessinquiry.org/current-news/news-notes/celebrating-40-years-of-adventure/>



## Proposed Measurable Outcomes

- 7,500 Minnesota youth experience state history through hands-on, outdoor learning opportunities.
- Teachers and school districts have more support and resources for implementing place-based curricula and opportunities to connect underserved youth to educational, recreational, and career opportunities across the outdoor sector.
- Wilderness Inquiry streamlines its partnerships with multiple Minnesota school districts to boost academic achievement through the educational, social, and emotional benefits of place-based education in outdoor settings.
- Minnesota's outdoor culture, history, and heritage is preserved by connecting youth to our natural resources.

*A windy day on the Whiteface Reservoir in the Cloquet Valley didn't stop youth from enjoying an afternoon of canoeing (right).*



*A high school student learns about Minnesota's plentiful natural resources while fishing at Fort Snelling State Park (left). Youth spot a resident bald eagle while canoeing down the Mississippi River (right).*

## Actual Measured Outcomes

In the first year of the project, Wilderness Inquiry served 3,905 youth across Minnesota, delivering Minnesota history in a hands-on way. Project locations included: The Twin Cities and surrounding communities; Rochester; Henderson; Alexandria; and the greater Duluth area. Of these students, 2,594 identify as a person of color, and 262 have a disability. We are on track to serve more than 7,500 underserved youth throughout the state by the end of the project. Highlights include:

- **July 2017:** Wilderness Inquiry introduced 56 girls from Girls Inc. - YWCA to the Mississippi River through a day-long canoeing adventure in the heart of the Twin Cities. National Park Service rangers attended the event to provide supplemental interpretive information on the cultural and geographical history of the river gorge.
- **August 2017:** In partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, Fond du Lac Natural Resources Department, and Twin Cities Native Lacrosse, 12 youth participated in a multi-day camping trip in the Cloquet Valley. Activities included canoeing and fishing to learn about the state's natural resources, as well as interactive historical lessons on native lacrosse.
- **February 2018:** 20 high school students from EdVisions Schools braved the cold and spent a week in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, skiing, hiking, dog sledding, and learning about career opportunities in natural resources. EdVisions Schools are a network of public charter schools that support student transformation through empowerment and project-based learning. Nothing builds a stronger connection to Minnesota's outdoor heritage than a winter adventure in the Boundary Waters!
- **June 2018:** In continued partnership with Saint Paul Public Schools, over 1300 K-4th grade summer school students participated in outdoor educational activities including fur trade history, animal tracking and adaptations, and Minnesota mussel ecology.



*Saint Paul Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Joe Gothard canoes towards the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers confluence with students from the American Indian Education Program (above).*





*State Senator Carla Nelson visits Canomobile programming in Rochester, MN (above). More than 15 legislators observed the program in action last year.*

### **Thank you!**

Wilderness Inquiry is able to reach thousands of underserved youth throughout the state of Minnesota and foster connections to our natural resources due to the support of the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. These unique and immersive experiences have a lasting impact on many participants. One Washington Technology High School student summarized her experience on a Wilderness Inquiry winter trip in a hand-written thank you letter.

*"It was really fun keeping fires and "hunting" for bison. I enjoyed the whole experience, especially the marshmallow roasting! Thank you for this experience!"*

Wilderness Inquiry and ACHF share a commitment to preserving Minnesota's outdoor heritage through hands-on education and programming, fostering student development as recreationalists and natural resource stewards. We thank you for the opportunity to bring Canoemobile to thousands of students across the state!



*Students from EdVisions Schools take a break in the sun while snowshoeing during a trip to the BWCA.*

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*Traditional wooden stick lacrosse being played on the Fond du Lac reservation in Minnesota. WI partnered with US Forest Service, Fond du Lac Natural Resources Department, and Twin Cities Native Lacrosse.*