

Scouts can keep Camp Sheldrick after all

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In September 2004, Scout Canada - Voyageur Council announced the closure of 20 of the 200 scouting camps in Ontario. One of them was Camp Sheldrick which serves the needs of Kemptville and surrounding area scouting groups. "We let groups know that there was an appeal process in place," said Susan Mackie, Director of Communications, Scout Canada's National Office in Ottawa. Upper St. Lawrence area scouts, which include Kemptville, did in fact appeal the decision with success and late last month the council announced that it would not close camp Sheldrick but would work with area scouts to help the camp succeed over the next four years of its lease. Of

the 20 camps that were to be closed 14 have been spared. Nine of them are owned by Scouts Canada and five are leased properties.

According to Mackie, the Camps were slated for closure for financial reasons.

"Membership in scouts is not what it used to be in the 60s," said Mackie. There used to be 300,000 scouts in Canada during the 60s, now membership is only one third of that, or approximately 100,000. The organization is having to divest itself of properties in order to maintain its programming and support of individual scouting groups according to Mackie.

Camp Sheldrick is leased from South Nation Conservation (SNC) and was started in 1984 by long-time area Scouter Bill Sheldrick. Over the years the camp has been developed and managed



Youth from Kemptville Scouts and Oxford Mills Cubs pose on the pioneering tower they helped build at the recent international Can-Am gathering at Camp Sheldrick.

by the scouts who used it, and supported by local charitable organizations. For instance during the last 10 years six area Lions Clubs donated the materials and labour to build a pavilion on the property to shelter guests during inclement weather explained Tom Graham, Upper St. Lawrence area Co-Commissioner. The camp serves the needs of over 400 young scouts from Morrisburg to Brockville and North from Kemptville to Winchester. Just two weekends ago Camp Sheldrick hosted 120 scouts from Canada and the US at the 30th bi-annual International Can Am Camp.

In a press release issued by Upper St. Lawrence area scouts, John Boyce, Council Commissioner said that he and the council were convinced into supporting the camp after they had taken a walkabout tour of

the facility in early May. Denis O'Grady the SNC's general manager accompanied the scout council on the walkabout.

"Conservation and scouting are a good fit," said O'Grady according to the press release, "We're pleased with this partnership. They take good care of the property, and it's in line with SNC's current goals for passive recreation opportunities."

Apparently the natural beauty of the location and the evident potential of the camp, as well as the obvious efforts that had been made to improve the camp's appearance and function impressed Voyageur Council enough to reverse their decision.

"We're very pleased to have Scouts Canada's continued support and involvement," said Graham.