

# Canoe trip affirms IQ works

## Paddlers take on the North Arm

This past summer, despite COVID restrictions, the Ayalik Fund was able to provide potentially life-changing experiences for 14 Inuit youth from Nunavut through on-the-land experiences, which Inuit Quajimajatuqangit (traditional knowledge) affirms are instrumental in “making capable human beings” for the future. Seven boys and seven girls from five different communities in Kivalliq and Kitikmeot participated in two-week canoe trips organized and guided for Ayalik by Jackpine Paddle in Yellowknife.

Besides canoeing and paddling skills, other activities included learning about drumming songs from Dene youth, swimming, group discussions, on-the-land skills such as fishing, fire-building and cooking up the pikes they caught.

The Ayalik Fund is a privately funded charitable initiative that gives Inuit youth who would otherwise not have such opportunities a chance to build self-esteem and confidence through challenging outdoor adventure, meeting other young Canadians, and social-cultural exploration. [www.AyalikFund.ca](http://www.AyalikFund.ca)



Several of the youth caught (and ate!) pike for the first time. Here, Rebecca Oleekatalik, 14, from Taloyoak, proudly shows off the pike she just caught.  
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Makayla Saviakjuk, 14, from Coral Harbour, jumping into Great Slave Lake. Swimming in a big, freshwater lake was a new experience for all the girls. © The Ayalik Fund (6)



Jocelyn Illuitok, 14, from Kugaaruk, learns from Jackpine guide Colin Gisiger how to cook fresh pike on an open fire — another delicious meal coming soon!



Hector Inuksaq, 15, from Kugaaruk, on his second Ayalik-Jackpine canoe trip, wrote a note after this trip: "Last year I was just learning how to canoe and this year I was in the stern the whole time. Thank you for giving me this opportunity."

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Swimming in the big lake was a new experience for all of the girls and a lot of fun, especially on the hot days. Lifejackets were worn at all times when on, in, or near the water.

Front to back: Cady Angootealuk, Rebecca Oleekatalik, Makayla Saviakjuk, Jocelyn Illuitok, and others behind.



John Kayasark, 14, from Kugaaruk, cuts up sweet potatoes for the evening's stew. Preparing and eating delicious, healthy meals is all part of an Ayalik experience.



The Ayalik Fund canoe trip for girls paddled 160 km on Great Slave Lake over 12 days, outfitted and led by Jackpine Paddle. Front (L to R): Jocelyn Illuitok, 14, Kugaaruk; Rebecca Oleekatalik, 14, Taloyoak; Millie-Anna Aaruaq, 14, Baker Lake; and Akeesha Pudnak, 14, Baker Lake. Back (L to R): Allegra Oleekatalik, 14, Taloyoak; Makayla Saviakjuk, 14, Coral Harbour; and Cady Angootealuk, 14, Coral Harbour. **AB**