

“Leave no trace.”

Three words ingrained in me since first grade.

First grade, when I joined Cub Scouts.

Spending time outside.

Making fires with what you can find.

“See the moss growing on this branch?

That makes very good kindling.”

Remove

Five years after joining Cub Scouts,

I became a Scout (formerly Boy Scout).

Helping Cub Scouts learn to make fires.

Being taught how to make larger fires.

My first service project,

a park cleanup.

Picked up countless cigarette butts.

Remove.

Another service project.

Planting trees that were damaged in a storm.

Replace.

More fire tips:

Live trees don’t burn.

Don’t cut them down.

Respect.

Another park cleanup.

Another service project.

More trees left standing.

Remove. Replace. Respect.

Repeat.

“Leave no trace.”

Make nature seem completely natural,
even after a weekend camping trip.

Leave it better than you found it.

Remove.

Came across a knocked-over burrow of
some rodent.

Tried my best to make it livable again.

It’s the thought that counts.

Replace.

Some younger Scouts were pulling on a
downed tree.

“If it’s not loose, let it be.”

It may still be alive.

Respect.

Remove. Replace. Respect.

Repeat.

Remove. Replace. Respect.

Repeat.

Remove. Replace. Respect.

Repeat.

“Leave no trace.”

Reciprocity, responsibility, and preservation
in perpetuity.

These values found

within *Braiding Sweetgrass*

I have held for a decade.

These values found

I have spread for a decade.

I will for decades more.

I chose to write about the values of reciprocity as taught in Scouts. I was in Cub Scouts for a little over four years, crossed over into Scouts (formerly Boy Scouts), and stuck with that for a little under seven. For eleven years, I was taught to respect nature, to leave it be, to Leave No Trace. In my last year of Scouting, I was my Troop's Leave No Trace Trainer. I was responsible for making sure the campsites are clean, for setting up a proper axeyard, and for passing down these important values and lessons to younger Scouts — or Scouts who act younger than they are.

I professed these for many years before my time as the LNTT. As Patrol Leader, I pushed my patrol to have the cleanest tent area. As the resident expert for the simple kitchen fly, which always seemed so complicated at 8:00pm on a Friday, I made sure we placed it somewhere that would not be too disruptive to the foliage below. As a leader in the troop, regardless of position, I always said it was better to put food waste in the trash instead of throwing it into the bush.

Since my time in Scouting, I share the frankly awesome composting program the campus and city at large have implemented. When going on bike rides, I try to avoid riding on the grass, only doing so when no space is available on the sidewalk. I will always advocate for safe camping, which involves ensuring that all food is safely stored, all tents are properly placed, and all fires are responsibly lit.