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Trappers Association delivers survival skills musts

Trappers Association attendees get a lessons in survival techniques with Russ Meades.

[Sandy Doucet](#)
Jul 23, 2024 9:22 AM

Russ Meades presented a survival tips presentation at the Barrhead Trappers Association event on July 12 | Sandy Doucet

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The Alberta Trappers Association provided a survival skills presentation hosted by Russ Meades at its convention in Barrhead July 14.

“Most people think that equipment will save your life. It's not,” said Meades.

One of Meades’ favourite quotes from Mors Kochanski is, “The more you know, the less you carry.”

The survival triangle consists of three critical elements in survival.

The first shows that the will to live or the belief that you can survive is key. Without it you may succumb to your environment.

Knowledge is the second part of the survival triangle, said Meades. Learning as much as you will make you better prepared, according to Meades.

The third part of the triangle is tools, and Meades explained that you don't need a lot of tools.

A knife, a means to make a fire and a cooking pot to boil water is really all you need.

The first 24 hours are critical. Fire, water, shelter and food are the most important priorities when in survival mode and the ability to make a fire is key to keeping warm.

Gather dry tinder and kindling and firewood, Meades said. Focus on small goals and as you achieve each small goal that builds our confidence that you can survive your situation. Your mindset can make or break your success of survival.

When out in the wildness always have a fire starter whether that is a lighter, fire stick, or dry matches on your person, noted Meades.

Backpacks can get lost or can be separated from you, depending on the circumstance.

When starting a fire Meades said to light the tinder first, which can be dry grasses rolled in a ball. Rolling the dry grasses in your hands breaks down the fibers which allows for it to burn more easily. Once the tinder is burning you will add small dry branches and using small items to start to build your fire will encourage a good fire.

Meades explained that you can last 3 hours in the environment in dire circumstances, most can last longer.

Lasting three days without water is the general rule of thumb. If you have the means to collect water and treat it, such as a small cooking pot, you have an advantage.

In the winter, eating snow might sound like an easy way to get water but it chills you from the inside out and that contributes to your body losing heat faster according to Meades. You can collect snow to heat it to have water.

“You can last up to three weeks without food,” Meades remarked.

People can start to lose hope when their stomach starts growling.

“People have an emotional connection to food and if you can switch that off it can give you an advantage,” commented Meades.

Fasting can be good for your body, and you can go for days without food as long as you have water but there are plants you can eat in the wild.

Dandelions are edible including the flowers, leaves and you can roast the roots for tea or a coffee substitute, said the expert. Horse tail, which looks like a scrub brush are weeds you can eat but the young shoots taste the best.

Stinging nettle is edible. You can eat the leaves, cook them like spinach and the seeds are high in protein, said Meades. The top of the flowers can be eaten fresh. The plantain weed that grows flat leaves on the ground and has spikes of seeds is edible. The young leaves and seeds can also help with digestion while the leaves can reduce inflammation and bleeding.

Yarrow will stop bleeding by rolling up the leaves into a ball and applying them to a wound, said Meades. It can also be an excellent mosquito repellent.

Self-care is the priority if you are injured before you worry about fire, shelter, and water.

“It is a lifetime of learning,” said Meades. “You are always learning new skills in survival.”

Meades has been perfecting his survival skills since 1987 and still considers himself a student.

About the Author: Sandy Doucet

Sandy Doucet joined the Barrhead Leader as a reporter in May 2024. Sandy is always interested in hearing your stories and news tips

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