

Local scout attends World Jamboree in Japan



By Tony Pearson

People will often go a long way to find harmony. As an example, Jonas Hill recently returned from a 15,000 kilometre trip for which that was the theme.

Jonas, who is 15 and lives in Wilberforce, was a Canadian representative at the 23rd World Scout Jamboree, held in south-eastern Japan between July 28th and August 10th. The Jamboree brought together 30,000 teenaged scouts from over 150 countries.

Hill was struck not only by the size of the event where he was part of a sea of tents, with flags seeming to go on forever but the lessons imparted by the event itself. The theme was expressed by the Japanese word 'Wa', meaning harmony and unity. Hill noted that although the range of cultures represented was vast, the young people present constantly recognized how similar their interests and values were. 'It was a representation of what the world could be,' Hill said; 'with the delegates dedicated to understanding each other and living side-by-side in peace, despite language and cultural differences.'

The peace theme also surfaced during a trip to the nearby city of Hiroshima, which suffered the world's first atomic bomb attack seventy years ago. Standing at the Peace Memorial there gave Hill a haunting feeling.

Hill also spent a day and a half in Tokyo, which despite having the largest metropolitan population in the world (over 30 million people) didn't seem overcrowded to him; he was impressed by the clean streets, clean air, and friendly people.

Another highlight of the trip to Japan was the visit to a technical high school in the Yamaguchi area where the jamboree was held. With a small student body of 480 youth (most of whom are high achievers), the school seemed to strike a balance between modern high-tech and tradition.

Hill has spent nine years in scouting, as a beaver, cub, and scout. This year, he completed the requirements to receive the designation 'Chief Scout' (formerly Queen's Scout), and will move next to the Venturers program.

Local roots in Scouting are quite deep. The first troop in Bancroft was set up in 1912, only five years after Baden-Powell set up the movement in Great Britain. Currently the group has about 20 youth, who participate in a range of activities. There are weekly meetings, with physical activities and learning components (e.g., starting a fire without matches), and monthly weekend programs like skiing, camping and building winter shelters. Scouts also undertake citizenship projects and experiences, like public park clean-up and learning what para-medics do. As for the outdoors, last summer Jonas planned and organized a week-long canoe trip to Algonquin Park (By the way, the troop is always looking for new adult volunteers). For more info on local scouting contact the registrar by e-mailing joelle_p@hotmail.com.