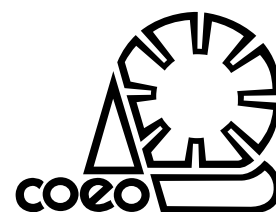


Pathways

THE ONTARIO JOURNAL OF
Summer 2010, 22(4)

OUTDOOR EDUCATION



paddle

poem

by jennifer payne

the joy and
bliss

that is canoeing is repetition with variation is not. every stroke a chance to make

minute

adjustments

u n t i l

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rhythm unbroken

stroke strength

stroke grace

stroke land

experience

paddling

Pathways

COEO

Formed in 1972, the Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (COEO) is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization that promotes safe, quality outdoor education experiences for people of all ages. We achieve this by publishing the *Pathways* journal, running an annual conference and regional workshops, maintaining a website, and working with kindred organizations as well as government agencies. Members of COEO receive a subscription to *Pathways*, as well as admittance to workshops, courses and conferences. A membership application form is included on the inside back cover of this issue of *Pathways*.

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Pathways

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Pathways is always looking for contributions. Please refer to page 36 for submission guidelines.

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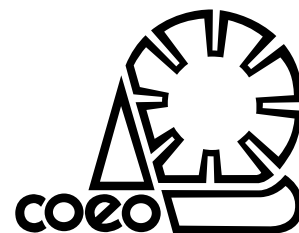
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Information for Authors and Artists

The poem that graces the front cover of this issue of *Pathways* was submitted for an outdoor experiential education course taught by Dr. Bob Henderson at McMaster University. The course was “an examination of skills, pedagogy and perspectives of outdoor education” that began with a nine-day field component, including a five-day canoe trip. Later in the semester, students were given the option to carve a paddle as part of an individual project. Student Jennifer Payne wrote “Paddle Poem” as part of her reflection on the process, but more generally on outdoor education and canoeing and the relationship between the two.

The poem, which explores themes of physicality, movement, practice and environment, provides the perfect jumping off point for this season’s issue of *Pathways*, which is concerned with the relationship between outdoor education and paddling across a range of times and places. From wilderness canoe trips undertaken with junior high school students in northern Ontario to urban paddling programs for kids with special needs in Ottawa, from ocean canoeing in transnational waters to journeys that traverse conceptual and physical territories, the articles that follow offer a variety of perspectives, both theoretical and practical, on how the canoe was, is and might be incorporated into outdoor education programs.

The decision to develop an issue around the themes of canoeing and outdoor education stemmed from a desire to revisit earlier conversations about the canoe as a space for outdoor learning. We were confident that reaching out to potential contributors from the COEO community and beyond would yield fresh perspectives on the opportunities that

canoeing creates for participants to encounter nature, others and themselves in meaningful ways. And based on the issue that stands before you, we were right!

We are especially pleased with the diversity of perspectives that the contributors to this issue bring — a diversity that we hope will yield fruitful reading and reflection for the *Pathways* audience. You will notice the inclusion of two critical reflections on canoeing accompanied by response pieces. The first, entitled “Returning to Wildness,” explores whitewater river canoeing as a way of relating to nature, while the second, “Canoe Tripping,” employs a unique narrative of acknowledgement to draw attention to the often-overlooked Aboriginal heritage of the canoe. Our hope is that the conversations undertaken by the contributors and respondents will initiate further dialogue beyond the pages of *Pathways* about ways we, as outdoor educators, might consider, re-think and enact the place of the canoe in our programming.

Guest Editors
Jess Dunkin and Bryan Grimwood

Jess Dunkin is a PhD Candidate in the Department of History at Carleton University. Her research explores women’s encounters with canoes and canoeing in eastern Canada and the northeastern US from the mid-19th century to the present.

Bryan Grimwood is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at Carleton University. His research considers responsibility, natures and encounters within an Arctic riverscape.

Sketch Pad – The art for this issue of *Pathways* was generously contributed by Chris Anderson (pages 4, 13, 20 and 24), Mark Blieske (page 9), Katie Hewett (pages 12, 19, 25 and 27), Josh Gordon (pages 6, 14, 16, 23 and 26), Elizabeth McManus (page 22), Paul Mason (page 30, www.bubblestreet.ca) and Jennifer Payne (cover). The photo on page 29 is courtesy of <http://www.flickr.com/photos/dailyinvention/17473337/>

Just the thought of the word *canoeing* seems to drop my blood pressure and relax my shoulders that are tense from computer work. I would like to think that all Canadians associate canoes with such restorative pleasures.

In a land so full of lakes and rivers the canoe represents a perfect metaphor for place. I can recall that for years I was fascinated with the notion of how the canoe came to be. Did someone notice a birch bark basket and wonder if they made a big basket could they float across the water in it? Or did the idea for a canoe come from washing deer ribs?

I felt honoured to have dreamt one night of a person floating away in what was a blend of folded cedar basket and canoe. My dream occurred when I was teaching among a First Nation, and according to Anishinabe traditions I should have made the item of my dream. It was in this way that I learned how dreams can answer questions and items like canoes can be birthed into reality.

As a long-time lover of paddling and canoes I look forward to reading this issue and want to thank the guest editors for all their work. If all goes well I will read it while floating in *Instinct*, the canoe I made.

Zabe MacEachren

COEO Conference Reminder

Learning to Live Well on This Land: Acknowledging Traditional Territories, Engaging Intercultural Dialogues, and Fostering Nature Interconnections

Sept 24–26, 2010 Kinark Outdoor Centre

As outdoor and environmental educators in Ontario we are living and teaching on Aboriginal traditional territory. This is respectful and appropriate for us all to acknowledge. As population increases and places become more culturally diverse, intercultural dialogue is critical to learning how to live well together on this land.

To reconnect our selves, experiences, technologies and teachings with the natural world that sustains us, we must re-imagine and re-learn how to live well in a place.

- In what ways can we engage creatively with the natural world?
- How might we honour calls from Aboriginal communities to respectfully foreground Indigenous ways of knowing?
- How can we come to know place-appropriate ways of living, learning and teaching on traditional territories?

COEO's 2010 conference intends to engage intercultural dialogues to work towards acknowledging traditional territories and building respectful relationships between all beings — in a common effort to learn how to live well on this land.

Please join us for this event, and contact Josh Berger (joshuacberger@gmail.com) or Scott McCormack (ws_mccormack@yahoo.com) if you have a presentation or workshop idea.

How a Canoe Trip Turned into a PhD Dissertation

By Anne Warner

My hands are callused. My legs are spotted with dried mud, and itchy from bites. My biceps are firm. My farmer's tan is obvious. My stretched cotton t-shirt is my protection, my towel, and my napkin. I let my naked feet dry out in the sun as I sit on an imposing rock overlooking the vastness of Lac Kipawa, in Quebec. I am fourteen.

It was on the 21-day canoe trip as part of my camp that my love for canoe tripping was born. I was 14 years old at the time. I had been on several canoe trips before, but this one was special and the longest. There were five campers and three staff, and it was one of those groups that just clicked. Regularly paddling 40 kilometres across infinite lakes, playing many games of euchre, and learning to live with quirky personalities, we went through our days.

Other than the few encounters with the boys' group also out on trip from my camp — and, wow, was that exciting — we saw few people. It was like we were the rulers of the Kipawa Kingdom! We portaged through old logging trails and even slept in an abandoned fishing hut one night. We visited the small town of Kipawa and devoured poutine and candy for an afternoon. We paddled strong, sang loud, raced through portages, ate heartily, and laughed hard — Kipawa was our home. And, at the end of it, I hadn't had enough. I wanted the simple life to

continue — to carry my food and shelter on my back, to transport myself swiftly and smoothly over mesmerizing lakes, and to be with the people who had become my family.

It is the end of August and I am on a bus on highway 400. Nothing can prepare me for the culture shock I am about to experience when I am dropped off among hundreds of parked cars at Yorkdale Mall, beside one of Canada's busiest highways, after living in the wilderness for three weeks.

After leaving Kipawa, my cabin mates and I were in camp for a couple of days before the August session ended. Suddenly, after seeing only each other for three weeks, we were thrust back into camp life. In the dining hall food was placed on the table before us. We sat on chairs at tables. My hair was clean; my t-shirt a brilliant white. The sound in the dining hall was deafening at meal times — my little world of eight turned into one of 200. I wanted to go back to Kipawa.

I have always remembered my Kipawa trip as special, even after doing a 36-day canoe trip with my camp the following year. It was something about the people on the trip and the emptiness of the lakes that made the experience stand out in my mind. Growing up, I went to three different sleepover camps, mostly for the whole summer. Needless to say, camp had quite an impact on my youth. Though I loved camp, as I got older I wanted more and more to be on canoe trip instead of in camp. I knew what an extraordinary thing it was to live out of a backpack with some friends and a canoe surrounded by lakes and trees. Canoe tripping taught me invaluable lessons at a young age about the wilderness, nature, society and life that I carry with me to this day.



I am now a PhD student studying sport history. My Kipawa canoe trip so long ago influenced my life so much that I am writing my dissertation about private Ontario youth camps in the 1920s and 1930s, with a chapter devoted to canoe tripping. It is fascinating to go back in time and learn about the history of the first camps and their founders. What was their motivation for starting a camp? Who went to the camps? What did they do at camp? What were canoe trips like? Is camp the same now as it was then? In the early years of Ontario camping, camp was seen as a place where youth could develop character traits not possible in the city. The perception of camp (and canoe tripping) as a character forming institution persists today. A canoe trip gives a 14-year-old a perspective on life that she would not have in the city. She develops an appreciation for wildlife, the wilderness, a simpler way of life and teamwork. In the words of a camp director whom I interviewed as part of my study, “You go on a canoe trip and you’re paddling all day long and you make your own meal and you put up your own shelter. Those are pretty fundamental things for a human being to do. And then you go on and live in a high rise building, you fly in jet planes and go to restaurants and have your meals made for you.” Camp and canoe tripping expose young people to the basics of living and gives them pause to consider what is really necessary to live.

As a historian, I believe that the past informs the future. In my research I have found that the traditions and philosophies established in the first years of the Ontario camping movement have continued in many of today’s camps. For instance, Camp Northway for girls, located in Algonquin Park and founded in 1906, stands true to the philosophies of its founder, Fannie L. Case. Case built her camp with the intention that camp life be as similar as possible to life on a canoe trip. She believed that living as simply as possible outdoors was most beneficial to the development of girl’s character. Thus, only the most necessary buildings were built, there was no running

water or electricity, and canoe tripping was a central feature of the Northway experience. Further, Case limited enrolment to 50 campers (Case, n.d.). Brookes Prewitt, the current director, has held firm to Case’s convictions by maintaining the simple nature of camp life at Northway, emphasizing canoe tripping, and capping enrolment at 50 despite pressure to expand.

There are also lessons in history through change. While traditions and core philosophies of camp have remained, developments in safety standards and youth education have affected the way that camp evolved through the decades. These new ideas have been woven into the philosophies and customs of camp creating a more progressive approach to educating youth. In 1929, Hedley S. Dimock and Charles E. Hendry published a book called *Camping and Character* based on observations of Camp Ahmek for boys located in Algonquin Park. The book examined the importance of character formation at camp and methods for improving character in boys. Conclusions made in the book led to changes in some of the practices at Ahmek. Thus, for the outdoor educator, history is an important tool for understanding not only the roots of outdoor education, but also the fact that the outdoors has been used as an educational tool for over a century.

Through my research, I have had the privilege of meeting and interviewing campers from the 1920s and 1930s. Years after their camping days, they tell me stories about how special camp and canoe tripping were in their lives. They, like me, were 14-year-olds once pulled by the tremendous power of the wilderness and the canoe trip. Youth camps and canoeing are part of Canada’s social fabric. The canoe was integral to the establishment of Canada as a nation and is a link to Canada’s rich Aboriginal history and enduring relationship with the wilderness. The history of youth camps and canoe tripping leads to a deeper understanding of the place of outdoor education in developing character



in Canadian youth, and the centrality of the Canadian wilderness in this process. As expressed by Joanne Kates, director of Camp Arowhon in Algonquin Park:

Wilderness is the context within which everything happens. Even though camp seems very noisy and busy . . . we are always in the wilderness. It permeates our consciousness. It feeds us deeply and changes us. . . . Even if the campers don't think about it every day . . . it lifts their soul. It teaches them to go deep inside themselves.

I lie in a tent shared by my long time camp friend, Liz. It is pitch black and noiseless, except for the sound of water lapping rhythmically on the shore. Liz and I have finally settled down for sleep, after chatting and giggling into the night as we did as teenagers. I reflect on the long day in the canoe in Killarney Park — the several

portages, drags through beaver dams and mud, and our hour-long search for a campsite. I close my eyes like I did 14 years ago amongst my cabin mates in the Kipawa Kingdom and fall into a deep sleep. I am 28, and it is my first canoe trip in Ontario for ten years. I have returned home.

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Case, F.L. (n.d.). *The story of Northway Lodge 1906–1942*. Trent University Archives, Ontario Camping Association Fonds, 72-007/1/19.

Dimock, H.S. and Hendry, C.E. (1929). *Camping and character: A camp experiment in character education*. New York: Association Press.

Anne Warner is a PhD student at the University of Western Ontario studying private Ontario youth camps in the 1920s and 1930s.

Kids in Canoes

By Mark Blieske

I have been an Industrial Arts teacher for the Lord Selkirk School Division in Manitoba for the past 33 years. Along with my regular teaching duties, I have developed extracurricular canoeing programs aimed at junior high school-aged students to help promote a love for canoeing and the great outdoors. Each year, students need to earn the right to participate in this unique experience. They are responsible for fundraising, volunteering around the school, running the canteen, attending all meetings, and absorbing as much information about canoeing and camp crafts as possible. As well, they work at repairing club equipment such as revarnishing cedar strip canoes or repairing tents and packs.

The initial sign-up for the canoe club in September usually draws between 50 and 75 potential candidates, all eager to camp out, have some fun, and miss a few days of school. However, the attrition rate rises rapidly as soon as the real work begins, and only those who can see the light at the end of the tunnel remain. By the end of January, there are 12 to 14 students who have braved all the duties, possess a terrific work ethic and really want to go on a canoe trip.

The true work now begins. Each student is required to design and build a hardwood or laminated bent shaft paddle. Through a series of lessons, they learn how to start stoves, pack a backpack, set up tents, plan menus, and so on. Over the years, the students have also tackled different canoe building projects, participating in many aspects of construction. To date, eight cedar strip canoes have been constructed during lunch hours and after-school work sessions.

Over time, the program has amassed enough equipment to outfit all the students with kitchen sets, boundary packs, personal floatation devices, tents, canoes, and of course, their own handmade paddles.

Guaranteeing that students have efficient, functional equipment ensures greater successes in the field, and encourages proper use and care. With respect to personal gear, students are provided with a highly refined list of essential items that includes what NOT to bring. All electronics, watches and make-up are left behind, encouraging them to explore and live nature to its fullest.

Most canoe/camp organizations cook for the students or have a communal kitchen with communal food. The program run at our school takes a different approach. Students divide themselves into two- or three-person food/kitchen groups. Each group is responsible for meal planning, purchasing food, packing food appropriately and conveniently, and preparing all meals. Sample menus are provided by the leaders, as well as suggested timeframes for each meal. Some mornings the game plan requires a quick breakfast, and we often enjoy lunch on the water, drifting together. Suppers are usually less rushed and can be cooked at a more leisurely pace. In the process, students learn to be flexible and “smart” with their food choices.

The first of our three trips, affectionately known as the “shakedown” trip, takes place in May and is, in essence, basic training. Students are given instruction on how to paddle and handle a canoe in accordance with Paddle Canada standards. Veteran students start out in the stern, while the rookies take their place in the bow, allowing them the chance to get acclimatized to the canoeing environment. Strokes are practiced in a sheltered area, with students repeating required skills until they reach an acceptable level of mastery. A four-hour paddle to a favourite camp spot reinforces what they have learned and lends itself to further correction in a practical setting. This is a time for developing skills, learning from mistakes and preparing for the next trip.

The second trip, which takes place in June, is a nine-day, 150-kilometre trek in northwestern Ontario, Canada's best-kept canoeing secret. While not overly difficult by most standards, it is challenging nonetheless. Throughout the trip, students are responsible for portaging canoes and equipment over an average of 15 to 20 portages, ranging from relatively easy lifts to more technical challenges. In addition to preparing their own meals, they are in charge of setting up their tents and maintaining the shared camp area, including the latrine, kitchen tent, and campfire. The trip is a communal effort dedicated to teaching responsibility, teamwork and respect. Surprisingly, we have few complaints about getting up at 4:00 am to "beat the wind," or paddling an 11-kilometre stretch against a headwind; the kids relish the opportunity to test their abilities. As the trip draws to a close, many try to extend the outing, suggesting that we call the school and inform them that we are wind bound, and unable to get home for a couple more days. My experience over the last 30 years is that junior high students, when faced with adversity, bad weather, bugs, cuts, breaks and sunstroke, persevere; they are resilient through the trials that await and eager to do it again.

The final trip, which takes place in the fall, is the reward for the veterans who have survived. Throughout this four-day trip students are expected to be independent and self-sufficient. The students take ownership of the trip, helping to plan the route and set up camp with minimal input from the leaders. This tests the students' abilities to work as a team and conduct a canoe trip in a controlled situation. The trip is much more relaxed than the previous ones — shorter, and with more emphasis placed on campsite life.

Even though these students come from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds, they basically have the same needs: to be respected, to be accepted, to be given self worth and, above all, to be in community. The outdoor education program provides

this, as well as organizational skills, team building and opportunities for independence. Each student is challenged outside their normal comfort zones in so many ways, which bolsters their confidence. I have been witness, many times, to that moment when a student changes from an awkward teenager into a confident young adult.

These excursions have provided much of the insight I have employed in approaching and dealing with students in the classroom. The lessons learned in the bush have provided motivation and encouraged my tolerance. I have been able to see the real person behind the junior high façade. If more adults were to spend time with these teenagers in a similar setting, both groups might come to have a different view of what the other is about.

Outdoor Education Survey

The following is a questionnaire given to 30 of my former canoe trippers. The survey was designed to aid Joe Mulligan, a researcher at the University of Saskatchewan, and me in answering this question: Does outdoor education have a lasting impact on students? In selecting the "participants" to answer the questionnaire I sought a cross-section of age and gender, although I was limited by the number of students for whom I could obtain mailing addresses. Respondents were both male and female, between the ages of 13 and 43. The unexpected side benefit came in the personal letters that were attached to the surveys. Each and every one of them thanked me, some much more than others, for giving them the opportunity to experience the canoe club and trips. I could do an article on those responses alone.

The survey was a study that turned out to be a revelation. Not because each former student is still canoeing and camping, or that the experience had a profound effect on their lives, but that they all remember with incredible clarity a time that for some happened 30 years ago. The only negative

response I received was that many were no longer able to go on canoe trips like the one they took in junior high for various reasons. Many even asked if they could come back as leaders, and many do.

The following are excerpts from their responses:

1. *What outdoor recreational activities are you presently involved in?*

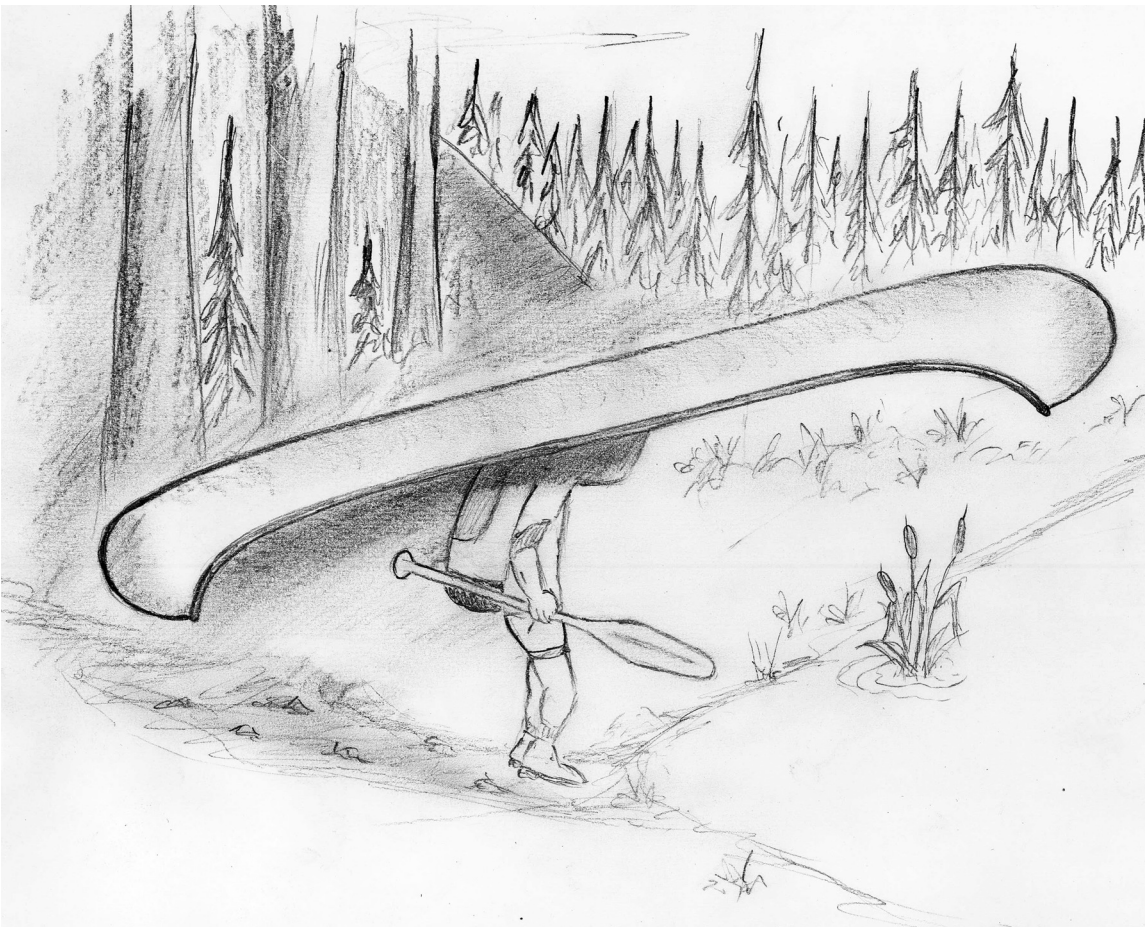
- In the summer months I enjoy going camping (in a tent) a couple of times a year. I also like to hike and backpacked through Europe for ten months in 2004. While there, I went on some intense hikes up some of Scotland's tallest "mountains," although these are quite small compared to Canadian mountains. I have whitewater rafted and scuba

dived in the past year and I am looking at becoming more involved with both in the future. I am also a camp leader in charge of outdoor games. (Female, 23).

- For outdoor recreation I still canoe for fun on the river near my parents' house, camp, play soccer, golf and softball, snowboard, snowshoe and have recently taken up mountain biking in Riding Mt. National Park. (Female, 24).

2. *How did the canoeing experience with the school outdoor education program influence your continued involvement in the outdoors?*

- It definitely made me a more "outdoorsy" person. Until then I hadn't been very involved in outdoor activities. In fact, my father made the



joke that I wouldn't even last through those eight days in the wilderness, and he was expecting an early phone call. Not only did I make it, I didn't want to come home. I think that it has made me try new and different things outdoors. It helped me to appreciate different kinds of physical activity and the enjoyment of them. (Female, 23).

- That canoe trip was my first real experience camping out on my own; it had a huge positive influence on me. I have owned a canoe and/or boat ever since I was 16 years old. It opened my eyes to the outdoors. (Male, 43).
 - My canoeing experience with Lockport School influenced my continued involvement with the outdoors by helping me affirm my love of the outdoors. There is something about waking up in the morning to freezing temps and a thin sheet of ice on the lake that just makes the crisp, clean air feel so good to breathe in. It is also a triumph to realize that even though you slept with a toque, multiple pairs of socks, and numerous shirts on just to keep warm overnight, you can wake up with a smile on your face looking forward to the adventures to come that day. (Male, 24).
3. *What important life skills did you develop because of the overall canoeing experience?*
- When I was 14/15 years old . . . I was unsure of myself. Seemingly mundane things like paddling a canoe across a lake, figuring out the best place to set up a tent, or just cooking your own meals can do wonders for an adolescent. It's important to keep in mind being in canoe club wasn't just about going on the trip, it was about working to be able to go. At SJH we fundraised, attended meetings all year, made our own paddles (I still have mine), and had to keep our grades up to be allowed to go. . . all required a year-long commitment. Another lesson that has served me well. I definitely developed respect for my classmates, my teachers, and my own accomplishments. (Male, 27).
 - [S]urvival skills, canoeing lessons, packing up everyday and setting camp, cooking, entertaining ourselves . . . these are all life skills that I developed during the course of the canoe trips, however there are too many to list and I'm assuming these are widespread lessons. The social aspect of the trip was definitely the most significant part. With everyone coming with completely different expectations, experiences, values, etc., it was crucial to quickly learn how to work with and respect one another. Working as a team member (whether it was in pairs or as an entire group) and always looking for the benefit of the group, being patient, understanding, so on and so forth was a challenge at times but came easier as the trip progressed. It was an unspoken test to push everything about ourselves aside and find common ground with one another. Not to mention, enjoy it at the same time! (Female, 23).
4. *Do you think you are a better person because of this experience? How?*
- Yes. Lasting appreciation for nature and the environment and what it means to work with nature (have to when canoeing — you don't make the rules, they're already made). The experience (a self-propelled journey in a canoe for a week outdoors) sets a balance for modern life — high tech, fast paced, intense schedule, etc. This knowledge and awareness positively affects effectiveness in other aspects of life. (Male, 40).
 - It's really hard to look back six or seven years and say that those two trips changed this and that about who I am today, but I can definitely guarantee it affected my life in only positive ways. I won't go as far as saying I'm a better

person for the simple reason that there is no way of knowing the alternative. The time spent with everyone on both trips is irreplaceable! It's all the little memories that add up in the end and there is no way in the English language to possibly express their affect on me. That I still think about those times today with a smile on my face shows the extent of their impact. (Female, 22).

5. *Thinking back on the canoe trip experience, what one moment sticks out in your mind the most?*

- The moment that I always seem to return to is a portage that we had to undertake along one of the lakes. It required the entire team to come together and spend approximately three hours going up a hill with packs, canoes and paddles only to descend to the other side. Our major challenge was the trail had become blocked by hundreds of saplings bent by the past winter's snow load. Mark led the way with his saw hacking and slashing trees while we carried our canoes up only to stop and return to the bottom and continue this exercise for the next three hours. What I remember is that no one whined or gave up; we all kept pushing and pushing until the job was done . . . It made me feel like I was part of something important and that others would do the same thing next year and every year following. (Male, 25).
- I refuse to minimize to one! The singing, the songs! I can remember one paddling partner that I had who enjoyed my singing and made requests for songs — great match! Lake lunches where we tie together and float along — so relaxing, talk about stopping to smell the pine! (Female, 28).

6. *How important was the mentoring during the 'overall' canoeing experience that was provided by the teachers and volunteers?*

- For me, the canoe trips were a time where I did a lot of self reflecting, and without the teachers' and volunteers' guidance I may not have arrived in the same mental space that I have arrived in, and continue to reflect on. (Female, 18).
- The required ingredients were a contemplative adult environment for an extended stay away from home and being interdependent with a few adults. It was a new experience for junior high kids to be treated like and counted on like adults. Can't easily replicate this in a normal school environment. Being treated like an adult (is what I remember), not like a student or a kid, was fascinating. It also created a respect for the teachers that we couldn't go back on or betray once we got back to school. (Male, 40).

7. *What would you like to tell me about your experience that I have not asked?*

- The more I think about it now (15 years later), the more I realize how special that program was and the influence it had on me and my classmates. I'm not in touch with very many of them now, but I do recall in the years that followed (through high school and university) that canoe club provided some of our best memories of junior high. It's my sincere hope that it continues and that more programs like it flourish. When I have kids I dearly hope they will have the same opportunities. (Male, 27).
- Wow, I could really go on for days. . . The trip was by far one of the best experiences I have had throughout my school years and I still wonder why programs such as Mr. Blieske's are not widespread. My junior high experience would never have felt as unique had I not had this opportunity and there is no way I would have stumbled upon the same bond with the teachers that were involved. (Female, 22).

- Away from the familiar comforts of urban womb, we have opportunity to truly measure ourselves in this world. This could never be accomplished on a family canoe trip, for we are always in the role of a child when in our parents' company. Trips such as these, involving the wilderness, strip away much of our familiar protection and ask for us to stand up, to be scared, to be strong, and to grow and move forward. Short of being orphaned, I know of no replacement for this type of experience that can allow a child to grow so much physically, emotionally, and spiritually all in the safe hands of a competent leader. (Male, 36).

The junior high years are, at best, a tumultuous time in a young person's life. For most, outdoor education was a bright spot in their junior high years. Outdoor education may not have changed their lives, but each one thanked me for the opportunity to own such memories. I thank my canoe trippers for continuing to surprise me, and for keeping canoeing a fresh and new experience for me.

Mark Blieske is an Industrial Arts teacher at Lockport School in Lockport, Manitoba. He has been teaching for 33 years at the junior high level in Woods, Metals and Graphics. Mark is able to combine his love for woodworking and canoeing in making paddles and canoes with students as part of the canoe trip experience.



Returning to Wildness: Of Whitewater Canoeing and Reconnection

By Fiona Hough

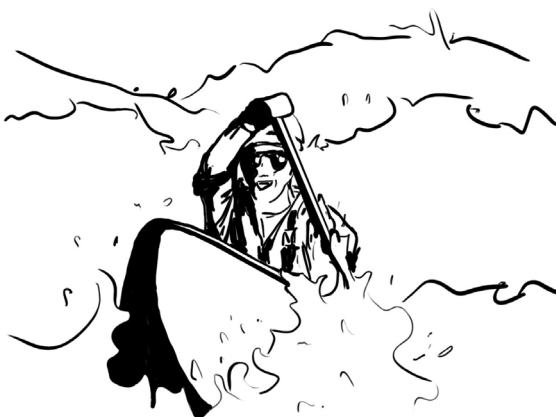
This article is dedicated to Clare Magee, who was the first to point out that canoes, whitewater and I had a special affinity.

Environmental philosophers and educators often refer to the disconnection between humans and nature. In Raymond Rogers' (1994) words, we have become "disembedded" from our place in nature. Deep ecologist John Livingston (1993) says we have forgotten our essential wildness, described as "not a recollection of the mind, but a tingling, prickling, participatory kindling of the flesh." Richard Louv (2005) points to the loss of unstructured play in wild places as the culprit of eroding human-nature relationships. As an outdoor and environmental educator, I have made a career out of playing in wild places with others. In this paper, I share some ideas about how the experience of canoeing a whitewater river can help people re-connect with nature, and themselves, as wild and playful beings.

In my experience, spending time in a whitewater canoe has the potential to remind people of their place in nature through bodily experience. Paddling propels us into the present moment, creating visceral opportunities for play in the powerful, natural flows of a river. While paddling whitewater we are intimately influenced by its elemental energy, for better or for worse. When used mindfully by instructors, whitewater canoeing can be a powerful tool for reconnecting our students and ourselves to nature by reminding us that somewhere deep down we are of the wild.

Focusing on the River

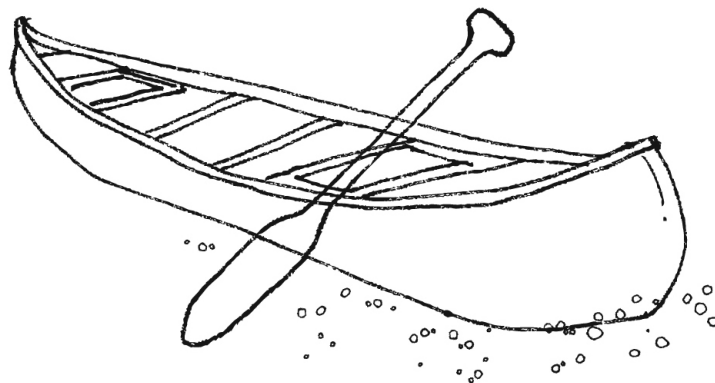
As a whitewater canoeist, I am interested in celebrating and exploring the experience of paddling an "open boat" in moving water, and its utility for reconnecting and re-integrating people and nature. I am concerned, specifically, with the



transformative power of *being* in whitewater, feeling the river's forces act on your boat, and by extension, on you. This can be a powerful reminder of the power and immediacy of the river, and can inspire in students and other learners a sense of presence in and connection to natural forces. Reconnection and re-integration with nature, however, are not certain byproducts of whitewater paddling. As instructors, we must be mindful of the tendency to see natural forces as something to be conquered, fought or overcome. The potential for reconnection, by contrast, lies in listening and working in harmony with currents, waves and eddies.

The Put-In

Canoes and whitewater have exerted a strong pull in my life. Initially, I worked as a canoe trip leader, and later discovered the world of solo play-boating. I see the canoe as a vehicle for play, and for the visceral engagement that comes from a day paddle down a spring-flooded river. Teaching on moving water, or enjoying it for myself, propels me into the present time and place. In the pure flow of careening in and out of eddies, surfing waves, and moving in concert



with the river, I reconnect and remember my own innate wildness. I re-learn what it means to be part of the natural world, intimately influenced by it. As an instructor, I believe I have the opportunity and the responsibility to pass these opportunities on to my students.

The “flow” experience is often associated with people participating in challenging and complex physical experiences. It describes a person’s state of being that is completely in the present (Czikszmenthalyi, 1990). In flow, “one stops being aware of oneself as separate from what is being engaged in.” When a balance of challenge and skill is struck, the flow experience can have the effect of negating humans’ separation from nature, inspiring a sense of “union with the environment” (Czikszentmihalyi, 1990). Our role as instructors is to help students to arrive at a place where they are being challenged, not pummelled, by the river. Too often, new canoeists are thrown into the “deep end,” resulting in negative experiences. To discover flow and therefore an awareness and connection to the river, students (and instructors) must paddle the line between effort and ease, intention and instinct. Instructors need to model this both in their approach to the river and the challenges they present to students.

When we learn to listen to and work with the river, rather than attempt to overpower it, small waves and eddy lines become direct and immediate allies. The best results occur when we act such that the river is part of us, rather than an oppositional force.

Getting Connected

A year ago, I watched a Merganser chick moving upstream on a class II rapid on the Petawawa River for well over 30 minutes. Learning to paddle whitewater is perhaps as close as we get to the experience of the Merganser, floating down stream, harnessing the eddy pools, or catching currents. Our paddle stands in for webbed feet, the canoe’s hull for a down-padded underbelly.

It has been a long time since humans have existed as closely with nature as fish or birds, interacting directly with and moving in tune with the elements. Many of us live in containers, and move around in vehicles. Even while walking, we seek layers to buffer us from all things wild and unmarked; we rely on paths, sidewalks, road signs and trail markers. We negotiate the world, and our communication with others, from behind lenses and screens, and within layers of cloth and concrete. Perhaps this has been out of necessity as our thin-skinned, furless, featherless, finless bodies would be hard pressed to emerge unscathed from direct contact with most biospheric conditions. However, as a result we have become separated from each other and from the world around us.

Whitewater canoeing has the potential to help us reconnect, though it is not something that necessarily happens automatically. New paddlers not familiar with the challenges of cold moving water can be gripped with fear, anxiety or discomfort. An overemphasis on technical details can overwhelm and

frustrate many, leaving no space for the river to function as teacher. The resulting experience can have the effect of turning some people off, reinforcing Evernden's (1993) position that our disconnection from nature has something to do with our perception of it as harsh, inhospitable and uncomfortable. Part of the instructor's job then is to introduce students to the river in a way that balances security with excitement, physical comfort with immersion and play, and technical skills with an intuitive "feel" for the river.

To this end, whitewater canoeing instructors must be aware of the way they model their interactions with the river. Do we paddle in co-operation with the flow, or fight against it? If the latter (inevitably we all have our moments), are we able to identify and discuss this with students? Are there moments when we emerge from a less than harmonious ferry demonstration and ask our students how the river could have been "felt" to better effect?

Going Beyond Whole-Part-Whole

Evernden (1993) also points to the human tendency to reduce things to their components as a reason for our disconnection. The whole is missed in favour of the parts. We often do the same thing while teaching paddling skills. Sports instruction approaches dictate that to perform a skill in its entirety, we need to break it down into technically specific parts. This practice is starting to shift in whitewater canoe instruction, as instructors are recognizing the intuitive capacity of beginners to tune in to the forces at play in river-canoe interactions. It is only after we shed this need to be technical that we start to embrace the "whole" in the "whole-part-whole" matrix and begin to experience the "tingling, prickling, participatory kindling of the flesh" that Livingston describes.

I have spent days learning the technical "parts" of whitewater paddling. Some might argue that as an advanced paddler I am "unconsciously competent," and because of that can experience flow and connection

with the river. I would counter by saying that in my years of practice I have learned the importance of attending to my intuition, which has resulted in success — and saved my butt — more often than a precisely placed stroke, perfect plan or timely roll. As such, there are times when we do whitewater novices a disservice by focusing our teaching on the technical specifics of each stroke and river feature. We overlook opportunities for the river to do some of the teaching. Many instructors understand the value of this, and encourage students to swim and play in rapids to foster a bodily understanding of the river. Finding a powerful, splashy wave to play in, simply for the purpose of "seeing what happens," can be a much better teacher than complex instruction about angles and momentum. As Livingston (1993) would argue, we have an innate connection to being wild that has been long forgotten. Properly framed, being on the river reminds us that "somewhere, deep and far beyond the shifting clouds of memory, sometime, one was *wild*" (Livingston, 1993).

When I surrender myself to forces beyond the technical correctness of a stroke, an angle or degree of boat tilt, I can tune in to the river itself. It is the river acting upon the canoe and by extension on my body, and not my years of practice and technical development, that tells me what to do next. I am no longer aware of the separation between body, boat, water and paddle. I have become part of the river, intimately informed by the direction, nuances of flow, and size and shape of each wave in the river.

New paddlers have a capacity to "feel" that is often overlooked, but easily accessed by presenting opportunities for play. It is possible to create situations for them to learn early on that they have an innate physical relationship with the river. Somewhere underneath the layers of technology and rationalism, novices have their own relationship to the river that has yet to be discovered. Instructors must foster a learning environment that allows for direct experience in a challenging, but non-terrifying environment. Play and experimentation on and in the river is imperative, so that

students can develop their own river understanding and relationship. Without needing to be an expert paddler, students can feel a sense of connection, a feeling of belonging, and the overwhelming calm of having arrived home by entering into the current.

Conclusion

Over the past 20 years, I have formed a relationship with canoes and rivers that has informed many aspects of my life. Whitewater canoeing has been a source of intense and visceral play, engaging my body, mind, spirit and emotions concurrently. Rivers have enabled me to engage many states of being: instructor, student, and perhaps most importantly, an adult at play. One of the most important lessons I have learned — and one that many believe roots contemporary ecological problems — is that we cannot control nature. In fact, it will generally kick our butts if we try.

Rivers have punished me for arrogance and a lack of attention, rewarded me for humility, courage, and the ability to commit, and invited me to trust and know my limitations and innate gifts. Canoeing whitewater can teach us the rule of non-interference with nature, of faith, of having, in a metaphorical

sense, “loose hips.” Let the canoe wobble and don’t resist the river.

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Fiona Hough has spent many years playing in rivers in canoes. She is currently working on a master's degree at the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Education.



On Skill and Environmental (Re)connections

By Philip Mullins

The role of adventure skills in shaping connections to nature is debated. Fiona Hough's article adds to works arguing that skill cultivates embodied knowledge through sensual interactions with environments (McCarthy, 2002; Mullins, 2009). Hough's conceptual basis, however, seems tied to problematic assumptions of a human–nature separation.

For example, the paragraph beginning “it has been . . . a few evolutionary cycles since humans have existed as closely with nature as fish” argues from a dominant urban white Western perspective that presumes a division between culture and nature, mind and body (Cronon, 1996; Martin, 2004). Romantic arguments of re-connection avoid addressing how people actually and might better inhabit environments (Cronon, 1996). They ignore people (e.g., some Indigenous and rural community members) who grasp their ongoing environmental interactions (borne not of a primordial nature, but of their lively activities and histories), as well as responsibilities for one's own everyday ecology (Cronon, 1996). Also, generalizing ills of technology severely limits understanding how they shape relations among and between recreationists and their surroundings. High-tech paddles, PFDs, boats and cars, for example, enable whitewater canoeing.

As an alternative to the contentious idea of human–nature separation, I start with Ingold's (2000) understanding of *enskilment*, a process of environmental engagement where one develops abilities to perceive and act in dialogue with one's surroundings. Technical practice and playful experimentation remain important ways of “fine tuning” one's relationship with the river, but through what Ingold called an *education of attention*. This perspective resonates with Hough's need to be “in tune” with a river that punishes for “failure to pay attention.” Intuitive abilities and competencies are brought to and developed through paddling in a highly active river environment. Neither “thin-skinned” nor “unscathed,” paddlers come to embody

their relationships with rivers: they develop sensitive hearing, strong backs and “loose hips.” Overtime, participants may come to feel “at home” in the river environment. Valuing the primacy of embodied knowledge suggests a need to think long term, over one's lifetime rather than a single program.

Embodied engagement challenges traditional explanations of outdoor adventure while evoking deeply familiar realities for participants. It also opens avenues to reflect on and improve one's roles in various contemporary environments and issues.

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Phil Mullins is a lecturer in Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management at the University of Northern British Columbia and has worked internationally facilitating field-based environmental education programs. His current research centers on canoeing as a way of understanding place.

Canoe Tripping

By Phil Dannenmann (with Kaaren Dannenmann)

I have learned from the teachers of Namekosipiink and Wanamanisaa'ikaniink, where I now reside, to begin my thoughts, written or spoken, by acknowledging both the Land and those whose traditional Land it is — the Anishinaapek. The women and men who have learned this basic protocol have also been my teachers.

I have undertaken this writing project because I want to share my experiences of the process by which the original people of this land have been made to seem invisible and how that process, in turn, can make cultural appropriation unrecognizable.

Becoming Aware of My Privilege

My family emigrated from Europe in the 1930s. Both sets of my grandparents and great-grandparents left Germany to escape Nazi fascism and found home in rural Wisconsin, US. Although I was raised in the city of Milwaukee, I spent many months with my grandparents and great-grandparents who taught me to love our adopted land. More importantly, they taught me to know and respect the people who were originally on this land. I met many local Anishinabe and learned to consider events from their historic perspective. While the newspaper headlines screamed vicious accusations at local first people fishermen, I understood that they were defending their ancestral rights to certain harvesting practices in particular places. I grew up observing such conflicts, and had lingering questions regarding historic justice, place, territory, occupation, appropriation and colonization that I could not easily articulate. How did Aboriginal People come to lose all their land? How was this fair? Is might really right? As an adult, I have been able to come to my own terms with some of these questions, but the answers are often as elusive as the wispy mist over a river in the early morning.

As a white man growing up in America at

the height of its imperialist power, I have had many privileges, a great number of which are unearned. Because of the colour of my skin, I was never questioned about entering certain restaurants, theatres or churches. I did not have to be concerned with where I sat on a bus. When I did well in challenging situations I was never called “a credit to my race” (McIntosh, 1990). I have come to learn that these were all privileges; I have watched my friends of other-than-white skin colour go through their daily lives without the same experiences. This awareness took me back to the questions of my early childhood and youth.

All my life I have used canoes. They have been a part of my hunting and trapping activities, my mode of travel on northern Wisconsin rivers. I love the smooth and quiet motion, where I can glide and stop whenever I want to look or listen, set or check a trap, or pick a campsite. The canoe enables me to go places where I can be alone, far from the noise and rush of what have become my weekly routines. The canoe has become a vehicle to my spiritual renewal during these cherished times. I am concerned, however, that having and using a canoe is a privilege that many Aboriginal people currently do not have.

With Awareness Came Responsibility

I still own a canoe, and I use it often, but I am disquieted by the fact that the places where I have bought or rented canoes, or the places that have outfitted a canoe trip for me, do not acknowledge the origins of the canoe. It seems not to be in their consciousness to think or talk about who first designed, built and used them. In terms of contemporary popular canoe activity, that history is invisible; it has been made invisible. Today, canoe talk is more commonly about the manufacturers, the latest materials, and the newest paddle designs. Like so much of Aboriginal land and knowledge, the knowledge of



traditional canoe design and construction has been appropriated, an appropriation from which I, too, have benefited. I often ask myself, How can I, as an individual, begin to give back? More importantly, how can I participate in the return of intellectual property to its rightful owners?

I am privileged to have been involved, peripherally, in the construction of two birch bark canoes. I was able to watch two small communities of Anishinaabe people re-learn some of the skills and knowledge that their ancestors had developed. While I am very interested in learning about the original designs, materials and building techniques, I am more concerned with the discourses, practices and events that prioritize the acknowledgement of the Anishinaabek, the Haudenosaunee, or the Haida craftsmen and women as those who founded, perfected and were superbly skilled in the construction and use of these crafts. For this reason, I stayed in the background of the birch bark canoe building. It would have been too easy for me to learn and internalize that precious knowledge, get extremely excited and in the process make myself, loudly, the expert and then find myself in the position of having just appropriated the whole project.

Taking on the Responsibility

For me, it is a life-long learning experience to know how to acquire information and understanding without appropriating that knowledge from my teachers. When I have asked Aboriginal people what is the most important aspect of not crossing that line of appropriation, the answer has invariably been that acknowledgement is key. In this case, then, acknowledging the origin of the canoe is extremely important. It means that we have to acknowledge, at every turn, the Land and our Aboriginal teachers, and to integrate into canoe programs lessons about where the canoe came from and about those people involved. Acknowledging the violent history of North American occupation and colonization of this continent in the last 517 years is a part of it. This is an extremely difficult thing to do because it demands that we think about where and how we live, and that we identify our privileges and the extent to which we are willing to give these up.

For some canoeists, I suspect, it would be easiest to remain in blissful ignorance and just keep on paddling or living as it were, and yet, I think that we have an obligation

to look at this question in a very serious way. We have to look at what this obligation would mean to us in everyday terms. How might our conversations be different? How would we behave differently? How could we begin to think, act and even paddle so that justice, fairness and reconciliation are a natural part of our consciousness? How can the effort to answer these questions become a major part of an outdoor education course for students of all ages?

Honouring the original designers and technicians is one step forward and, for me, this involves nurturing respectful relations. It is an ongoing effort to equalize the privileges that I have had all my life. Identifying my privilege is a complex and often painful process, but always fruitful. I am learning to ask Aboriginal people how they might to be acknowledged and honoured. I recognize that these discussions are just beginning and that easy solutions may be hard to come by, but it is the route I am choosing to take.

I am only beginning to articulate my musings. But I ponder all this whenever I meet a fellow canoe traveller, when I visit a provincial park, and, of course, when I take the grandchildren across the lake in our favourite old Nova Craft canoe.

In conclusion, I want to acknowledge some of my Anishinaabe teachers, with whom I have spent so much time on the land: the late Okimaawikaapow (Harald Einar Olsen), of Trout Lake, Ontario; Andrew Keewatin Jr. of Grassy Narrows, Ontario; Peter Paishk of Pikangikum, Ontario; the late Jimmie Perrault, of Red Lake, Ontario; Joseph Samuel Keesic of Red Lake, Ontario; Josie Angeconeb, of Trout Lake, Ontario; Charlie Angeconeb, of Trout Lake, Ontario; my mother-in-law, Tetipyaanimanook, of Trout Lake, Ontario; Ed Imbeault, of Red Lake, Ontario; my wife, Kaaren Dannenmann, of Trout Lake, Ontario; our grandchildren: Shayne Stevens-Campeau, Sarah Maria Dodic, Anton Patrick Dodic, Auna Kaaren Vermette and James Mackenzie Stevens, all of Red Lake, Ontario.



I also want to acknowledge some peace-worker friends who support Anishinaabe rights and have spent hours in deep conversations with me during our canoe trips: Matt Schaaf and Lisa Martens, of Winnipeg, Manitoba. I have to also acknowledge people from the academic world with whom I have had many valuable discussions and who have become close friends: Dr. Celia Haig-Brown and Dr. Didi Khayatt, both of York University in Toronto, Ontario.

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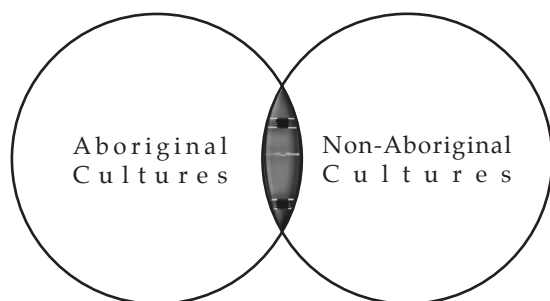
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Phil Dannenmann is a grandfather to five precious little ones. A man who questions his white skin privilege, he considers himself a recovering user and taker and wants to give back for how he has benefited from living on Anishinaabe land all his life at the expense of Others.

Pulling Together

by James Raffan

This impassioned jumble of sensibilities about canoes, appropriation and privilege brings to mind a Venn diagram with aboriginal people represented by one circle and non-aboriginal people represented by the other. The overlap, the place of natural connection, is surely the canoe. But with canoe cultures in Africa, Cuba, Patagonia, New Zealand, Polynesia, Siberia and throughout the Pacific Rim, to suggest that North American aboriginals were the first to design and build canoes is far from a sure thing. Who has appropriated what from whom seems a far less significant concern than exploring how common connection to the canoe by aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples in Canada might help heal the rift that time and circumstance have created since conquest.



Those skeptical that the recent instance of a rich cultural mix of proud Canadians paddling the Olympic torch in “canoes” is indicative of efforts to make reconciliation a natural part of our consciousness, could look to a remarkable series of river trips called Boreal Rendezvous (www.cpaws.org/news/events/rendezvous) or canoe program Pulling Together (www.pullingtogether.ca) as examples of canoe journeys being used to build relationships and bridge gaps in communication between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people. The canoe is a living cross-cultural connector.

Nowhere is this more visible than in the National Canoe Day (www.nationalcanoeday.net) initiative, sponsored by the Canadian Canoe Museum and now in its third year. National Canoe Day was officially created in a declaration, in English and Ojibway, by Keith

Knott, Chief of the Curve Lake First Nation, which began as follows:

Whereas the Anishinabeg have lived in this river valley since time immemorial; and whereas Canada is a nation of rivers, where the canoe is still the most appropriate vehicle for accessing much of this country; and whereas 400 years ago the Aboriginal Peoples across Canada welcomed Samuel de Champlain and those who followed from across the oceans; and whereas we shared with these visitors our ways, our technologies, our love of the land, the animals, the waters and the air; . . . and whereas this vessel was given freely as a gift to Canada from the Aboriginal Peoples . . . ; and whereas the canoe was adopted by the visitors and has become a symbol of the founding contribution of Aboriginal Peoples to this nation called Canada . . .

Perhaps too often we do not honour and celebrate our paddling and canoe building mentors and forebears, but that kind of conversation has begun and there are small if potent examples to which we can turn for inspiration. National Canoe Day, set this year for June 26th, is a citizen-driven, cross-country initiative limited only by the imaginations of organizers and participants. The hope is that the spirit of Chief Knott’s declaration will lead to other declarations in other places and other convergences of hearts and minds to thus continue the process of bringing cultures together and righting old wrongs.

The canoe has been an integral part of our past. For many — sadly, perhaps, more non-aboriginal than aboriginal — it is a significant part of our present. The challenge raised for us by Phil Dannenmann is to make the canoe vital and relevant to bringing aboriginal and non-aboriginal people back together in common purpose to build a united and equitable future for all.

Dr. James Raffan is the Executive Director of the Canadian Canoe Museum. He is also a full-time writer, speaker and consultant.

Kanu Haiku

By Greg Lowan

During canoe trips and other outdoor adventures, I often glimpse perfection in discrete, fleeting moments. Sometimes I attempt to capture these in haiku. Here are a few recent creations . . .

Hands turn paddle brown
Temeaugama sunset
Fav'rit red canoe

Kitchigami roars
A vast and icy blanket
Superior surf

Snow beneath my feet
This land running through my bones
Singing me back home

Surprise birthday fête
A delicious way to end
So proud these tired kids!

Eagles soar above
Honour your Father's wisdom
Bonding without words

Greg Lowan is currently a doctoral student in Educational Contexts and an Outdoor Centre Instructor at the University of Calgary. He welcomes correspondence at gelowan@ucalgary.ca.

Patience and Persistence in Paddling

By Amanda Kijewski

For the past seven summers I have worked as an Ontario Recreational Canoeing and Kayaking (ORCKA) Flatwater Instructor at the Barrie Canoe and Kayak Club, as well as at the Toronto Harbourfront Canoe and Kayak Centre. Last summer I was given the opportunity to coach children with special needs at Ottawa's Rideau Canoe Club in the club's inaugural year of the PaddleALL program. Introduced in 2006, PaddleALL is a project of Canoe Kayak Canada (CKC) aimed at recruiting individuals with special needs to participate in the sport of Canoe Kayak. With rather modest ambitions that included introducing the participants to the sport and encouraging water and boat safety, our team of three coaches gathered together seven paddlers between the ages of 10 and 18, with exceptionalities such as Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, and Asperger syndrome, to meet twice weekly for two hours of paddling.

We spent the majority of the summer learning the fundamentals of paddling often through play. With generous grant funds, we were able to purchase recreational and sprint kayaks appropriate for novice paddlers, such as "sit-on-tops" which offered increased stability and comfort for our physically challenged kids. Each week our paddlers were free to choose their boat so they could experience a variety of makes and models. The keystone of our program, however, was the group of dedicated volunteers who came out each week to paddle one-on-one with a designated "buddy." The volunteers were all members of the Rideau Canoe Club and experienced long-time paddlers. In addition to reinforcing on-water safety and providing their buddies with tips and pointers, their presence allowed the coaches to better evaluate each paddler's progress and offer "next steps" by spending time with a handful of partnerships each night.

As their development progressed, two of our youths chose to begin training

for the Sprint Canoe Kayak National Championships slated for September 2009 in Sherbrooke, Quebec. It was the first summer that a PaddleALL race was to be included in the National Championships and we were extremely excited to be able to enter two hard-working kids. One of these paddlers was Alex (name changed), a ten-year-old boy who faced unique challenges stemming from his Down syndrome and smaller size. Throughout the summer he worked tirelessly with me, developing his paddling skills in preparation for the National Championships, an event he became increasingly excited about. Yet there were many days that Alex grew frustrated with himself and with me, as he paddled against impeding winds or watched the older kids pass him by. Moreover, while Alex was incredibly self-motivated and excited to participate at Sherbrooke, he did not always recognize the value of his increased training sessions.

Our most pressing challenge was distinguishing between training time and paddling "for fun." During the first half of the summer, we often played on-water games in the boats, such as kayak polo, to help build the participants' paddling confidence. It was obvious that Alex kept kayaking because it was something fun and exciting and an activity at which he was becoming quite skilled; I saw the risk we ran by making the training seem more like work. Alex could have easily lost interest in paddling had the coaching team not been able to incorporate fun activities into his training sessions. At the same time, it



was important to mimic race conditions so that Alex would not be entering unfamiliar territory when we arrived in Sherbooke, which could be disconcerting and hinder his performance.

In the end, we created a tag-based game, which married fun with skill development. Using boundaries similar to a race course, Alex was challenged to paddle his hardest by chasing one of the volunteers on the water, or conversely, by being chased. Alex's favourite part of the game was trying to get away from the paddler who was "it." In addition to encouraging speed, the game reinforced his directional skills, which would help him on race day.

By the end of the summer, Alex's skills may have not been as advanced as our other athletes, but he had reached personal goals that were far more important. His self-confidence had improved greatly and regardless of his last-place finish, Alex triumphantly raised his paddle in celebration as we crossed the finish line together. Afterward, as he received his participatory medal, Alex told me he was so happy we had done this "together."

While it took many attempts and different strategies to implement a training program that was suitable for Alex, my team and I were always careful to be patient and to hide any of our frustrations. Sometimes it was as simple as taking a break and resting our arms; at other times we would offer incentives to sustain Alex's interest, such as letting

him splash us or tip us in our boats. The latter also taught him elements of water safety as he would watch us self-rescue in our flooded boats. In the end, however, it was our consistent patience that left Alex feeling supported and encouraged at all times as he prepared for the race.

While the other coaches and I relished the freedom we had to design a program that met the needs of the participants, we did so with limited resources. We could not have achieved what we did without the support of the club, the volunteers and the granting agencies. In the end, the outcome of our work was wonderfully rewarding: both the program and the success of our athletes far surpassed our expectations. Our paddlers were excellent examples of the importance of dedication and patience to success; their resolve was a constant reminder that they were capable of anything they set their minds to every time we embarked on the water. Perhaps the best decision our team made was setting high expectations for our paddlers: in exchange for their own boat, paddle and open water twice a week, they met every one of these and more.

Amanda Kijewski is a Master's student in the Department of History at Carleton University. Her thesis research concentrates on post-colonial East African Development efforts and women's education. For more information on the PaddleALL program, you can visit the Canoe Kayak Canada website at www.canoeKayak.ca/pages/eng/742.



Sea Canoeing: An Oxymoron?

By Nils Olof Vikander



For many years I have tried to understand the changes that have taken place in paddling the big waters. Is it just me who has wondered how it is that kayaks have been popping up everywhere, while canoes are increasingly conspicuous by their absence? In particular I have been mystified by what appears to be an orchestrated division of labour: sea kayaks for the big waters of seas and large lakes, canoes for small lakes and rivers. The mystery deepens when one notes that there is an overlapping dimension: in whitewater paddling, special purpose-built kayaks coexist with canoes. If canoes can handle water of this type, why is it that they (and whitewater kayaks) are not deemed to be able to handle challenging water at sea?

How to deal with these perplexities? What do my personal experiences tell me, from both North America and northern Europe? What do people whom I know and respect in the paddling culture on both sides of the Atlantic say on these issues?

[W]hen a gap appears between what one experiences as real and what is officially regarded as real, conflict is inevitable (Evernden, 1993, p. 25).

Though my paddling history stretches back more than half a century, it is only in the past 35 years that it has anchored itself deeply in my life pattern. In my early years paddling was sporadic but always in a canoe, while paddling in a kayak signalled the start of serious devotion. For a time, the kayak became my craft of choice, and it made sense in my solitary lifestyle. Paddling the big waters always intrigued me the most, and here I had my first marine collision resembling the Evernden scenario. I had some wonderful sea kayak trips in the Baltic Sea using a river kayak. In fact, comparing these with other archipelago trips in sea kayaks, they

were in some ways more satisfying; the shape and diminutiveness made moving with the waves a joyful harmony that was difficult to achieve with the large sea kayaks. Experience thus confronted official correctness.

In 1981 the Evernden insight surfaced again on the west coast of Vancouver Island during a memorable summer in the outdoor leadership program at the Strathcona Outdoor Education Centre, now operating as the Canadian Outdoor Leadership Training program. Ocean paddling at Strathcona took place in canoes and kayaks, a highly unusual approach then, and even more so today. Yet the process of paddling both vessels provided me with the consummate pedagogical opportunity to compare the two craft. The canoe performed so far beyond my expectations that I, years later, in communication with a forceful pioneer in west coast kayaking, came to treasure his poetic image of the canoe:

South of the arctic, centuries of graceful wooden craft were designed and built by the old masters and their classic methods will forever be used to create beautiful and functional designs (Ruuska, 1984, p. 4).

I was largely forced to tuck away such memories of canoe dancing on the Pacific waves until my Margarita transcended my solo life journey. Since 1994 we have paddled large lakes and seas, both in the Nordic countries and in Canada, and almost always in canoes. The canoes have been all sizes, shapes and materials, and they have served us with distinction — deep testimony to the genius of this archetypal design. Have we met others of the canoeing persuasion? Yes, a few in Georgian Bay, and one German couple in the Baltic. Old canoes we sometimes see, sadly on land, by island cottages. And what about meeting kayakers? Yes, of course, but they don't seem to know what to make of us. On occasion their responses have been to view us as heretics! Again, experience meets political ideology.



The Panorama of Paddling Personages

To help make sense of these perplexities, I cast my net out in anthropological fashion to fish out the views of informants selected for their expertise on the topic at hand. I formulated two questions:

What are your perspectives on canoeing vs. kayaking developments in North America/northern Europe over the past ten to 20 years?

What has the status of sea/big lake canoeing (open “Canadian” style) been over these years, and how do you explain this?

Twelve experienced paddlers from Canada, the US and Sweden were drawn as a convenience sample, comprising academics in the outdoor field, pedagogical practitioners of the outdoors, and representatives of outdoor organizations and the paddling industry. To protect their privacy, they have been given fictitious names here.

Reflections on the questions at hand of these experienced individuals of the paddling culture are presented below. The quotes are selected to fairly represent the respondents and are shown in no particular order. My commentary and interpretations follow after each theme.

Question 1

Brian: *I'd say the growth in N.A. has been in “too light” canoes and sea kayaks, over canoes for big open water and open deck or surface deck, or whatever you call them — cottage*

recreational play kayaks that do not travel well at all. Of course the river play boat is huge too. I find much of this counter to good travel principles

Frances: [B]oth kayaking and canoeing have increased in popularity . . . kayaking especially. Both whitewater and ocean/touring have been the focus of some commercial development, with new boat designs, increased formalization of instructional organizations “Sea kayaking” has exploded in popularity over the past ten years, as it seems to appeal to the less athletic sector of the market. It has certainly been sold successfully as “accessible adventure” to the older crowd.

Ted: They are so different and so separate. I would think all are growing, but sea kayaking has grown exponentially — way more than other forms of paddling I’d say these two sports [— sea and white water kayaking —] have experienced growth that has inhibited the growth of canoeing As well, they tend to attract different people looking for different things.

Arthur: Open water canoeing in Western Canada seems to be dying a slow death — being replaced by the sea kayak (both in salt water and on inland lakes and easy rivers) and the white water playboat (especially by younger generation). . . . Main open canoe sales — to young families who desire to take their clan on easy day tours or moderate overnight lake tours. Once the family gets older, the youngsters move into playboating (kayaking) or the family moves into sea kayak touring.

Brad: The interest today for the canoe as tripping craft has diminished to the advantage . . . [of] the sea kayak The lack of good canoes — there were exceptions — the scarcity of courses for canoe paddlers, the kayak’s edge as a solo craft (the double paddle, and often equipped with a rudder makes the kayak easier to learn the basics in) has together with tradition — courses for kayak-paddlers have always existed — and “market value” resulted in the kayak having a far stronger position than the canoe as a watercraft today Today one searches in vain for information on canoe-paddling on the Canoe Federation’s website.

Blake: In my years here [in the Yukon], I have noticed a revival of kayaking. I think the rivers here are really most suited for open canoes and when I first arrived in 1979 that view seemed to be reflected in practice. I think that the advent of small play boats would account for this. Plus a bit of a “river as gymnasium” outlook I think there has been a parallel growth in interest in sea kayaking I think it appeals to folks who are nervous in rivers. I know wind can be a huge problem on lakes and in the ocean — so I doubt that it is less complicated, really, but I suppose you can sit out windy days. The rapids don’t go away.

Daniel: In short, canoeing is on the decline in North America (especially in the US) while kayaking is on the rise. However . . . while recreational kayaks might be outselling recreational canoes nine to one, touring kayaks might only be outselling expedition canoes two to one or less [T]oday . . . the lion’s share of outdoor activities occur within a day of the road This trend, augmented by the increased marketing emphasis on the individual, makes kayaks the watercraft of choice for many people. Why recreational kayaks and not solo canoes? It must be something about that covered hull in combination with the double-bladed paddle. Anyone can get into a solo kayak and do something. It takes a lot more skill to move a solo canoe proficiently. To sum it up, to go canoeing you need a friend who you are willing to cooperate with, or a reasonable degree of skill and good judgment to do a solo. In contrast, just about anyone can go kayaking . . . [B]ut . . . [i]n the Boundary Waters-Quetico-Superior region the canoe is still the watercraft of choice . . . the culture is so steeped in



canoe lore that unless you are on a lake like Lake Superior, it is arguably sacrilegious to paddle a kayak.

Bernard: For the past 20 years the phenomenal rise in kayaking interest has been a puzzlement to us traditional coastal canoers! This growth has been due in part to substantial promotion by the increasing number of kayak manufacturers. Other factors: kayaking quickly becoming an “in”/yuppie/cutting edge sport complete with expensive accessories and sexy clothes; easy entry skill level (alleged); popularity of solo paddling; increase in extended coastal kayak touring stories (see *Kanawa* magazine and books) . . . I have paddled the BC coast for 40 years, always in open wood canvas canoes. They are a lot tougher than people think! I don’t favour spray covers for open canoes. If it is that rough, you should be ashore reading a book . . . Many times I have soloed in waves that would also challenge most kayaks.

Barry: The markets have been flooded with inferior plastic canoes that end up in landfills in only two or three seasons of use . . . [Of] the 800 or more canoes here for the “Fiddles on the Tobique” . . . maybe only 50 of them are wooden! The rest are all plastic, one-third of them are Colemans, which are total junk, one-third of them are Old Town or other makes, and the last third are kayaks.

John: Canoeing takes a fair amount more skill training. Seakayaks have rudders. Everyone wants to be the boss. It’s much easier to go solo in a kayak. Kayaks look sexier. When is the last time you saw a canoe on the rack in an SUV ad? Canoes are more susceptible to wind and have a hard time in breaking surf. This is a case where the public perception of the difficulty of water they may and should be paddling doesn’t even closely match their self image of what they are going to do . . .

Commentary

The “jury” is in broad agreement on the rise of the kayak, which is likened to a veritable tsunami in its volume, both in North America and in northern Europe. This does not only relate to sea paddling (with sea kayaks even commonly venturing

on lakes and easy rivers); the development of new kayak forms, such as play boats, has also had a strong impact on river paddling. Daniel in particular points to a number of contextual factors, presumably driven by commercial interests in conjunction with the impatience of postmodern culture, as explanatory. However, the tandem canoe still appears to hold its own as a tripping vessel in spite of a lack of kayak-style promotion.

Question 2

Frances: If you are talking about canoeing (vs. kayaking), I’m not sure if there is very much of this in terms of ocean travel. I know of one or two camps in the west that use canoes as ocean craft. However, big lake canoeing continues to be part of the camp canoe tripping culture . . .

Ted: Not so sure I understand this question. We don’t speak of big lake canoeing at all . . . In my area we don’t do any sea canoeing. Anyone going out on Lake Superior or on the sea would use a sea kayak, mostly.

Michael: Sea and big lake kayaking is growing. I think it is because it is easier to learn how to paddle a sea kayak than a canoe, especially with the rudder. As well, they are much more stable and go faster.

Bernard: Big water canoeing today: resurgence of interest in history of Canadian fur trade and the Voyageur canoe; West Coast native peoples have rediscovered their seafaring heritage . . . with many intertribal journeys; continued US interest in Lewis and Clark trans-continental expedition of 1805; growth of “adventure” articles in paddling magazines and books. . . . Many long time canoeists can argue the demerits of the kayak: limited load capacity; high cost of boats and equipment; discomfort of cockpit/repetitive arm movement; misplaced confidence in hull stability; difficulty of entry and egress.

Arthur: Sea canoeing on our west coast is almost dead — replaced by the more efficient and safer (especially due to less windage) sea kayak. Advertising and mass marketing by the well-organized sea kayak community have done wonders in making sea kayaking a glamorous,

fun and very safe activity for most age groups (not the teens yet!). I know of no commercial tour operators who offer sea canoeing opportunities! We live right next door to the world famous Broken Islands (a mecca for novice/family paddling groups) and observe very few open canoeists throughout the summer.

John: *We have never stopped doing sea canoeing . . . We have more than 2,000 kids who canoe camp with us every year; of these we have a likely average of six two- to three-night ocean canoe groups . . . Things develop in what is popular. Today in BC we have more than 100 companies doing seakayaking guided wilderness tours. I don't know of any that sell sea canoeing. We do an occasional custom trip for tourists in sea canoeing . . . The RCABC [Recreational Canoeing Association of British Columbia] is the only group I know of in the world that has an ocean canoe instructor certification program. Paddle Canada is planning to use the RCABC program as the national standard . . . There has been a large First Nation canoe movement out here.*

Daniel: *Really big lakes, such as Lake Superior, are seeing at least as many sea kayaks as canoes, and those that do canoe such shores tend to use spray decks . . . (though not all people like spraydecks for a variety of reasons). The friends of mine who have paddled wilder coastlines by canoe, such as the coast of Labrador, use spraydecks. I have traveled by both open and decked canoe on Lake Superior and in the open Gulf Coast of the Everglades and Florida Keys, and people thought I was crazy. I found this odd because canoes were used in both areas for many centuries before I paddled there, and no one used kayaks in these waters historically.*

Brad: *The natives by the Great Lakes and along the Atlantic coast and on the islands beyond all used canoe-models designed for the setting . . . Today the canoe is also used on larger lakes and to a degree at sea, and is still according to mine and many others' opinion*



the most well adapted craft human beings have created . . . We have journeyed both on the larger lakes and along the coasts with our wooden canoes . . . Versatility is lacking in the kayak.

Adrian: *. . . Paddle Canada has very recently established a program in ocean canoeing. . . The RCABC program was developed some 30 years ago. . . RCABC offers three levels of courses in Ocean Canoeing: Basic, Advanced and Instructor. . . I have taught these courses for about ten years, mainly at the Advanced level. . . [I]t is not a common form of canoeing . . . Over the past ten years or so my wife and I, with a variety of companions, have paddled all of the Gulf Islands and most of the waters between Hope Island to the north and Quadra Island to the south, plus a couple of trips to the West Coast of Vancouver Island. In all those trips, we have never come across any other canoeists undertaking such trips . . . I know that some other canoeists do go out on the ocean, but we are a rare species.*

Commentary

In contrast to the relative response harmony to the first theme, the second question generated considerable controversy, especially related to stability, the general amount of sea canoeing done, and to Lake Superior paddling. On the stability issue, the often voiced windage problem of canoes (i.e., Arthur) may be related to old style vessels. More modern tripping canoes have

sleeker profiles. Moreover, many sea kayaks today have strongly windcatching upward curving bow and stern sections. Michael has but modest light to shed on Question 2 while Blake does not offer any thoughts on the issue. Bernard and John, on the other hand, indicate that sea canoeing is alive and well. The remaining eight respondents vary in their perception of the occurrence of sea canoeing, but all indicate that it does exist. Adrian and John outline the RCABC and Paddle Canada activities in sea canoeing, confirming that the value of the activity is recognized at the largest organizational level. Concerning paddling Lake Superior, the diverging views of Ted and Daniel warrants further investigation.

In conclusion, this inquiry suggests that the broadly conceived view of canoes as not sufficiently seaworthy should be challenged. Clearly, some individuals are demonstrating, as First Nation people did for centuries, that the canoe is elegantly able to travel the big waves. Only by personally stroking out your canoe from the shores can this be affirmed.

... I ceased to suspect the sanity of my perceptions and began, instead to suspect the soundness of the maps (Schumacher, 1977, p. 1).

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Activities on the Water

By Kate Humphrys

It's late in the afternoon and you've been paddling for hours. As you turn a bend, the awaiting lake looks huge and camp seems hours away. Passionate paddlers might appreciate such challenges, but such is not always the case with the students or clients we are leading. I have often found myself in situations where an occasional activity or creative solution is needed to help motivate and energize a group on a long paddle.

Of course, leading activities on the water involves various facilitation challenges, and in my opinion, the best activities are simple and informal, with minimal explanations. Below, I offer a few activities that I find trigger suggestions among group members for other favourites or led to interesting discussions. They also help to keep all the boats in a group or within shouting range. Be as competitive as you'd like, giving out prizes or keeping score, as is appropriate with the group. Remember to consider the weather conditions, the dynamics of the group, and other situational factors when choosing an activity.

Canoe Bingo

Give all boats a challenge: e.g., be the first boat to come up with ten tangible/visible things that start with the letter "S." The first group ready yells "bingo" and all other boats listen as they shout out the items. If they stumble, only getting to seven items, you can count down from ten and then allow a "steal" from another boat (who would only need to add three unique things). You can play a series of challenges fairly quickly (seven things that start with "R," five things that start with "W") keeping track of boat points if you desire.

A-Z Lists

Pick a category and have each boat come up with an A-Z list of titles. Categories might include movie titles, songs, animals, people, adjectives to describe a favourite part of the trip. You can share between the boats by yelling "A" and having each group give their answer, then yell "B," and so on. Having each boat try to give their list in its entirety is often too difficult to hear.

Sing-off

Pick a word common to songs (love, sunshine, happy) and give each boat a few minutes to think of as many songs as they can that contain that word. Then rotate with each boat singing the title or a part of the song until you have run out of titles. Try it a few times with different words or try variations, such as one-hit wonders, genres (Disney, campfire songs, movie soundtracks, TV theme songs), and so on.

Classic Riddle or Question Games

Try a quick game of 20 questions, or ask an interesting question to encourage discussion. Would you like to be famous? In what way? Who would like to meet (dead or alive) and have as a dinner guest? What superpower would you like to have and why? If you were guaranteed not to fail, what would you try? If could design a t-shirt to describe the trip, what would it look like?

Kate Humphrys is currently a master's student at Brock University and a member of the COEO Board of Directors. She has worked in numerous outdoor venues, and a few indoor ones. She hopes to spend the summer on her favourite lakes and portages in Algonquin Park and on the waters of the St. Lawrence River.

Going on Camping Trips

By Mary L. Northway (Introduction by Bob Henderson)

This article was originally published in 1960 by the American Camping Association, Inc.

Mary Northway offers us something very special in "Going on Camping Trips." It is warm and friendly. It is intuitive and knowledgeable in the ways of guiding in a way that, I would suggest, no group facilitation model could ever achieve. It is light and airy like that August sky/middle of the lake paddle that Mary evokes with her writing. But her writing can be densely thoughtful in exploring ideas about human nature and humans in nature. It is certainly rich in purpose for canoe camping outdoor educators.

Read this humorous lyrical essay on why we go camping and perhaps you just might wonder no more. You just might have a fix on at least three good "whys." And while the three reasons offered here might not feel like a full list, I've almost missed the end of more than one long portage pondering what is worth adding to these three simple and complex "whys"! Yes, this attempt to define why we go camping might be worth hundreds of research studies on the topic (some of which I've written). It might not change your mind about anything (to do with camping), but it might be all you need to "ease your mind about everything" (Snider, 2008). You can use this little theorizing of Northway's because it is memorable and "rememberable."

Mostly I want to highlight that Mary Northway's writing here is born out of experience from a time when scrambling eggs, creating a spontaneous party, and the contentment felt on the water in a canoe were plenty — all one needed in fact. You don't "measure" it; you do it with passion, as Mary obviously did.

* * * *

Humans are very queer creatures. They can be fully understood only by their dogs and by sophomore students of psychology. Dogs never question man's actions; sophomores question everything, but fortunately appear

to know all the answers. One of the most incomprehensible aspects of behavior is why the human being has the inclination to go on camping trips. I read a great many books on psychology and I am greatly impressed by the erudition and assurance with which these learned scientists can explain why man does as he does, if he does, and why he doesn't if he doesn't, but in none have I ever discovered any scientific hypothesis or schematic interpretation which elucidates the motivation underlying the embarkation on the wilderness journey. It is small wonder!

For what can be more ludicrous than to leave the comfort of our convenient civilization with its amazing transportation, its magnificent communications, its institutions and cultural achievements, its hot baths, and inner spring mattresses, its ice cubes and the lush upholstery of its super deluxe movie palaces, to wander purposelessly and helplessly through the wilderness? What could be more incongruous than civilized man, his genius the product of a hundred centuries of evolutionary development, wrestling at 5:00 A.M. with a horde of brainless mosquitoes and being defeated?

For a camping trip can be definitely uncomfortable. The ground is hard to sleep on; indeed I have ever known it to be damp. All food is lukewarm; the butter is fluid, the water tepid, the bacon after a few days develops its peculiar white mold, and the bread prepares itself to become penicillin. Besides, you have to carry all these things over trails that eternally go up hill, and the berry bushes scratch you, and the sunshine turns you the color of an ancient Egyptian mummy, dehydrated and vitrified. And as a culmination to all these adversities it often rains. And some academic pendant explains camping as "an escape"! Escape from what? I can imagine going to the city to escape sleeping in a leaky tent that has a phobia to high winds and manifests this in a complete nervous collapse at 3:00 A.M., but no one with the least vestige of sanity would attempt

to avoid the pleasures and conveniences of urban society by “escaping” into tempestuous torments of a wilderness journey. To camp is truly to be mad.

We go on camping trips every summer. We go by canoe. A canoe is a very inconvenient kind of conveyance. It is so small that it’s completely unable to look after itself without continual guidance, yet it is large enough that it is extremely awkward to carry over portages. Portages may be defined as “the longest distance between any two given bodies of water.” A canoe has no inner motivation. Its momentum is entirely dependent on the output of kinetic energy released by the action of the deltoid, the biceps, the pronators and supinators of some poor miserable mortal. Of course a canoe has the one advantage that it can be turned upside down to provide shelter for one camper for the night. He will, however, find that no matter how he arranges himself the centre thwart will never fail to dig him in the ribs each time he attempts to better his position (the original derivation, no doubt, of the popular expression “thwarted at every turn”).

Not only do we go on canoe trips; we take groups of adolescent girls with us. This is very foolish. Adolescents giggle a great deal and they’re always comparing snapshots of their respective boyfriends or contrasting the merits of their particular schools. They frequently let the prunes boil dry while writing some peculiar modern poetry—an activity which one well knows they will be certain to regret later. They sing strange songs with no regard for form or order. I have heard them, for instance, render “He Shall Feed His Flock” followed immediately by “One Fish Ball.” Their sense of humor is limited. They will laugh at the same joke for periods of as long as three days. They often make me laugh at it too. And their capacity for food is enormous. They are, in short, nothing but a nuisance.

Besides all this my textbooks tell me that adolescence is a period made up entirely of problems. I take this to mean that either the adolescent is a problem to us—his elders and betters—or that the adolescent envisages life as a great net of perplexities in which he is enmeshed and from which there is

presumably no ordinary means of release. Well, if by any chance an adolescent has no problems a canoe trip provides him with a life-full. For no situation is so problematical as camping. There is the continual worry of whether it’s going to rain or not; there is the perplexity of who put the hatchet where; there are decisions to be made—where the tent is to be pitched, whose turn it is to get the dinner, how much line should be used for fishing, who should paddle stern tomorrow, and whether the portage is to the north or the south, and isn’t the map wrong anyway. My own feeling is that a canoe trip is rather like conversion hysteria. We all know that a person with many anxieties is apt to develop bodily pains. When he once has these to worry about, his vaguer apprehensions tend to disappear and he feels better. It’s much more satisfactory to worry about something than about nothing. A canoe trip perhaps serves the same purpose, for when a person has to worry about how long to hydrate the dehydrated carrots, or how to keep a fire going in a pouring rain he is no longer able to contemplate the basic purpose of the universe or speculate introvertedly on the nature of his mental processes. A canoe trip is similar to a neurosis also because once one becomes addicted to either form of behavior it is very difficult to become free from such addiction.

Of course, even camping has its few pleasurable moments. I recall, for example, one beautiful rainy Sunday morning. We had paddled all the previous day in the sweltering sun and the wind. We had stiffened our muscles on portages and by evening we pitched camp by an old hunting cabin embellished with a porcupine-chewed verandah. We are very democratic on canoe trips. We have even read a book on “Group Work” from which we were extremely glad to learn that by getting the campers to “participate co-operatively in a common cause” (that is, to work) we were not merely using a method to get the jobs done but were giving them the chance to “expand their personalities.” It is certainly satisfactory to know that by having the youngsters, not the leaders, cook the meals, do the dishes, pack the canoes, their personalities are being expanded. Personally, as I sit back and watch them, I don’t much care what is happening to mine—though it must be dreadful.

According to our democratic procedure we had drawn pieces of paper out of a hat to determine who did what tomorrow. This is a fair and just method. You write on bits of paper “Breakfast Cook,” “Dinner Dishes,” and so on, and everyone, including the leaders, draws. This is efficient, as it provides for all the jobs being done and if you happen not to like the task you have been allotted you can always exchange it with someone who didn’t like hers either. Sometimes, however, we vary the method, and the “Breakfast Dishes” is simply assigned to the one who has a birthday in January, or all four grandparents living, or the most false teeth (this is very hard on the counselors and not to be encouraged!).

The duties having been thus carefully assigned, the morning appeared wet and thunderous. The campers were not stirring in their little pup tents. Flora and I, who had slept on the soft wood (how did it ever get the name of soft wood?) of the verandah lately inhabited by porcupines, were stirring considerably. As I looked at the ominous clouds and felt the gentle torrents of rain damping my early morning face I said authoritatively, “I will get the breakfast.” This was very bad democratic practice. I hate to think what will happen to the personalities of those dear children who were supposed to carry through the responsibilities which were legitimately theirs. They simply slept. Flora, being a kindly soul and also suspecting I would ruin the food supplies, suggested that I should attempt only coffee and that we’d have some bread and jam. But I was in a bad temper and insisted that we would follow the complete menu or nothing. Hadn’t I camped for years? No mere rain would deter me! So I started—prunes cooked the night before, oatmeal porridge with Klim, scrambled eggs and toast (not raw bread), and coffee.

It rained; it rained; it rained. The fire was almost as obstinate as I. The campers still slept on, which was a good thing, for when I am arguing with material things I argue in no subvocal terms. At one point I almost gave up. That was when the water from the heavens came into the eggs so quickly that the frying pan overflowed. I was glad to see the fire was less persistent than I. It gave up several times. I was very, very cross indeed—and then suddenly everything began

to cook—beautifully. We woke the sleepy campers and we served them a hot breakfast in their beds and they congratulated us on our amazing achievement. And as I sat on the gnawed verandah drinking my second cup of coffee I began to feel very good indeed and I gave myself a subjective medal for my accomplishment. Then with sudden insight I realized why people go on camping trips. It is simply for that opportunity of scrambling eggs in the rain.

Then there was the time we had the birthday party. This was the day we came back from the canoe trip. Perhaps the real reason for going on trips is to experience the joy of coming home. Everything is so luxurious—the camp beds, meals at a table, ice-cold milk, fresh roasted meat, a week’s accumulation of the most exciting mail—all the things we have found we could do without, now restored to us. It was Dorothy’s birthday—she was an English girl and she was seventeen. It had to be a surprise party, it just had to be. So, with skullduggery and intricate intrigue, plans were projected. Dorothy was taken off to explore the highest range. After seven days of canoe tripping she saw little sense in this and expressed a preference for reading a detective story. But she had to go.

It was a party based essentially on ideas. No corner grocery store, no cake and gift shop, only the forest, the lake shore, the camp store cupboard, and the group’s ingenuity. Blankets were hung on the walls of the cabin. Sheets were used for a tablecloth, place cards were created of clam shells and gifts of birch bark, pipe cleaners, and old tin cans. A rare piece of fudge was made from sugar we had saved and food from chicken to camouflaged sodas provided a banquet reaching the acme of perfection. We toiled like stevedores to create it, and there it was at seven o’clock complete with candles.

And there we were, ten of us in a little cabin, holding a celebration. The jokes were excellent, the singing lovely, the toasts filled with wit and epigram, the food delicious, the surprise complete. I remember that after the “banquet” Jane sang for us. Jane really can sing. Her voice is slightly better in a concert hall with symphony than in our tiny cabin. But sing she did and even though our

philistine Boston bull howled in holy protest for having his slumbers disturbed, never have any of us (excluding dog) enjoyed music more. We agreed it was a most amazing party. And so it was, for it embodied the arts lost by modern civilization—the art of creating enthusiasm out of the commonplace, the art of having fun without becoming self-conscious, and the art of combining spontaneous ideas to achieve a group purpose. Perhaps this is why we go on camping trips.

As I write about canoe trips an oddly persistent memory keeps cropping up like King Charles' head. It is a completely irrelevant memory containing neither humor nor moral. Yet it persists and I suppose I shall now be able to rid myself of it only by a process of catharsis, by letting it be expressed. For from the time when on a crowded street car I began thinking of an article on "going on camping trips" I have had a recurring flashback of an August day.

We were paddling on Redstone Lake. It was about four in the afternoon, and all three canoes were gliding by a high rocky shore. It was brilliantly sunny and there was a soft southwest breeze. And one felt warm and tanned and utterly content. What happened? Nothing at all. I am not sure exactly where we had come from. I know we had a mile portage later on. But more than that I cannot remember; yet for four years in all sorts of odd situations, I have recalled that lazy, sunny moment of an August afternoon. Does this explain the human's incomprehensible behavior in going camping?

So why do human beings go camping? Surely these snapshots of scrambling eggs in the rain, of spontaneously creating a party, of feeling utterly content under an August sky, do not give us the answer. Or do they? For what are the great purposes of human living? Could they simply be the achieving of a goal in spite of adversity, participating in an enterprise that increases gaiety and enjoyment, and experiencing a sense of harmony between the world and oneself that resolves all conflicts and releases new springs of action? The achievement itself is never very great—it may be constructing a new philosophy or it may be scrambling eggs. Both, against the backdrop of the ages, are insignificant and will pass away.

But it is not the achievement that matters but rather the achieving. Too in creating a party of good spirit, the gaiety and enjoyment are temporary. They are sparkles against the drab discontent of a bewildered world, but they are not illusions. They are of the stuff of which reality is made. The content of a sunny afternoon is no self-satisfaction. Rather it is a revelation of what life could be like were we not so anxious to be a-doing, to make an impression, to be a success, conceitedly to imagine that our peculiar ideas are the ones which will give the world its salvation—if the world would only listen. It may indeed be that these camping values are after all both the ends of life and its means; but to find them we must necessarily leave the whirligig of our superimportant busynesses and take time to discover the essentials inherent in the everyday.

But one must not be too serious. Camp people often falsify the values and obscure the delights because we take them all too solemnly. "True humor," says Meredith, "is the ability to laugh at those things one loves, and still love them." Its value is that it allows us to see ourselves freed from self-centeredness. By such a perspective we are divested of our importance and our pomposity. At a glance we discover our insignificance and it is in the realization of insignificance that we find the beginning of true greatness.

But enough of such verbosity. Summer is here, the trees are a-leaving, the flowers a-blossoming, the eggs a-frying. Let's go camping.

References

Snider, Todd. (2008). Ponce of the flaming peace queer. *Peace queer*. Mega Force Records.

Dr. Mary Northway taught psychology at the University of Toronto (1934–1968). Following many years as a camper and staff member at Glen Bernard Camp, Mary went on to found the first girls' canoe tripping camp in Ontario, Windy Pine Point, in the Haliburton Highlands in 1940.

Bob Henderson teaches outdoor education at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. Bob thinks Mary Northway was pretty swell.

Information for Authors and Artists

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Pathways furthers knowledge, enthusiasm and vision for outdoor experiential education in Ontario. Reflecting the interests of outdoor educators, classroom teachers, students and academics, the journal focuses on the practice of outdoor experiential education from elementary to post-secondary levels and from wilderness to urban settings. *Pathways* highlights the value of outdoor experiential education in educating for curriculum, character, well-being and the environment.

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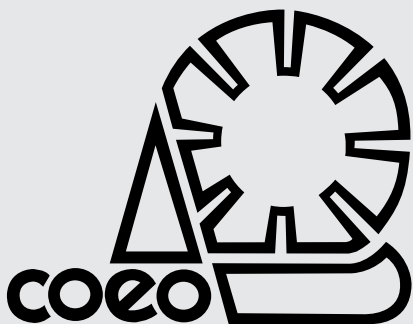
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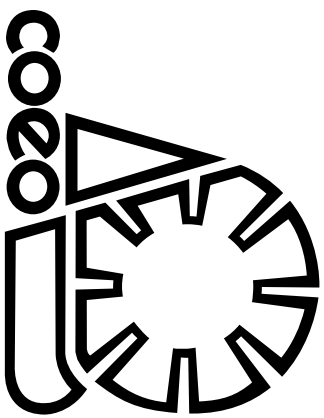
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