

# White Water Canoe Tripping

Allan Yates

# Overview

- The objectives of this seminar are two fold:
  - Summarise key points to consider when planning a white water canoe trip, specifically the differences compared to flat water canoe tripping.
  - Encourage other groups to take their Venturers white water canoe tripping.
  
- Disclaimers
  - These are just my opinions, take them for what you feel they are worth.
  - As a leader, YOU are responsible for the kids under your care.
  - This is not a complete guide to planning and running a canoe trip.
    - Valley Highlands Area used to offer a canoe tripping course; talk to John Stalker.
    - ORCA offers a canoe tripping course, but it is \$300-\$600/person.
  
- For all their help and advice, many thanks to:
  - Bill Bowman
  - Christiaan Burchill
  - Stephen Smye

# Why White Water Tripping?

- After years of flat water canoe trips, why progress to white water trips?
  - Kids want a new challenge.
  - Kids want to put their new skills (from white water course weekend) to use.
  - After trying white water, kids view flat water canoeing as “boring”.
  - It’s easier than flat water canoeing.
    - Generally fewer portages.
    - River’s current makes paddling less effort.
    - Usually no lakes for large waves to form.
- Kid’s comment: “The best trip of my life”

# White Water Versus Flat Water

- When planning a white water trip, there are a number of key differences in comparison to flat water canoe tripping.
- Ignoring, or not being aware of, these differences can result in everything from lack of comfort to disaster and death.
- Some of the differences we will cover:
  - Training.
  - Travel speed.
  - Personal safety equipment.
  - Group safety equipment.
- White water canoeing is dangerous.
  - We can minimise the risks, but they cannot be eliminated.
  - White water canoeing can never be completely safe.
  - Hydraulics (holes) and strainers are the major safety hazards.

# Training

- While anybody can ride along on a flat water canoe trip, the same is not true for white water.
  - Specific training and experience is required of both the kids and the adults.
- All participants should have Canoe II level skills.
  - Lack of skill will become very evident during the trip; and will not be forgotten by the person's partner.
- At least one, preferably two, participants should have Swift Water Rescue level 1 certification.
  - If a canoe is pinned or somebody is trapped in a strainer, you need to immediately know exactly how to safely recover from the situation.
  - Course providers:
    - Paddler Co-Op (\$175)
    - Esprit Rafting (\$350)
    - Venturer Advisors Forum (\$?)
- At least one, preferably two, participants should have Lifesaving Society Boat Rescue certification.
  - Covers many scenarios of on-water rescue from canoes.
  - Course provider:
    - Valley Highlands Area at Whispering Pines Scout camp (~\$35)
- Wilderness first aid training for 1-2 participants is recommended as you will be at least a day away from professional medical attention.

# Route Planning

- Canoes travel faster on moving water.
  - High water levels will make the river run even faster.
- Venturers paddle and portage faster than Scouts.
- White water canoes are twice the weight of good flat water canoes.
- Rules of Thumb

<u>Item</u>	<u>Flat Water</u>	<u>Moving Water</u>
Paddle 1km	10-15 minutes	5-10 minutes
Portage 500m	20-40 minutes	20-40 minutes

- Plan for 20-40km of river travel per day, depending on the number and length of the portages.
- Mark planned (and backup) campsites and evacuation points on your map.
- Keep maps in waterproof map cases.
- When planning campsites, think what will happen if the river rises overnight.
  - A sandbar may seem like a good idea at first...
    - It's fun, once, but sands gets in everything.
    - Proper sand tent pegs are very beneficial.



# Emergency Preparedness

## ■ Evacuation Points.

- Know the points where you can leave the river and reach civilisation. E.g. Road where traffic can be flagged down.
- Leave a copy of your trip plan with a responsible person.
- Carry a topographic map so you can navigate from the river to the road.

## ■ Communication with the outside world.

- Mobile telephones cannot be depended upon to work.
- SPOT Satellite Messenger (see John Stalker for rental).
- Lack of communication can give the trip a more wilderness feel.

## ■ Don't depend on electronics to survive.

- They can breakdown.
- The batteries can fail.
- They can be lost. (dropped in the river....gone)

## ■ Electronics are beneficial to have, but plan for them not working.

- Map and compass as well, not just a GPS.

## ■ Be Prepared!

- Our swift water rescue instructor was guiding a trip down the Dumoine while we were on the Noire. He had to rescue two other parties who had pinned canoes and did not know what to do. One person couldn't even swim!



# Safety Precautions

- White water helmets worn when running rapids.
- Personal Floatation Device (PFD) when on or near the water.
  - Should be moving water PFDs as these are designed to be strong for rescue situations.
  - Paddling PFDs give you cool tan lines according to the kids.
  - Equip PFDs with rescue knives in case a participant gets entangled in their canoe during a capsize.
  - Trained participants should have quick release belts and pig tails on their PFDs.
- Helmet worn and paddle in hand when scouting rapids, along with at least two throw bags.
  - Very easy to slip on wet rocks and hit your head or fall in the rapids.
  - Other people need to be equipped for an immediate rescue.
- Write a detailed trip plan.
  - Participants skill levels and qualifications.
  - Daily distance to be traveled, portages, campsites.
  - Emergency evacuation points.
  - Menu, food list.
  - Equipment list.
  - Hospital location and map.



# Safety Equipment

- Kit for retrieving pinned canoes (Pin kit).
  - 150' x 3/8" SpectrX static rope.
  - 9 x karabiners.
  - 2 x 30' tubular nylon webbing.
  - 2 x prussic minding pulleys.
  - 2 x 7mm prussic loops.
- Saws.
  - For extracting a person (or a canoe) from a strainer.
  - Two very sharp folding pruning saws.
  - Store in separate canoes, but easily accessible in an emergency.
  - Only use in an emergency so they stay sharp.
- Throw bags.
  - Static versus dynamic rope is debatable.
  - Longer is better; 70' of 1/4" line recommended.
  - Recommend North Water, not cheap ones from Wal-Mart.
- First Aid kits.
  - Ensure they are well equipped.
  - Some suggestions: SAM Splint, Ibuprofen, tensor bandage, second skin, cohesive bandage.
  - Store in separate canoes.
- Canoe repair kit.
  - Seat bolts.
  - Epoxy putty.
  - Duct tape.



# Personal Equipment

## ■ Cameras.

- Store in a waterproof, impact resistant, case. E.g. Pelican
- Need to keep the moisture out of them too.
- Always put camera back in the case after use.
- Case should be secured to the canoe.



## ■ Packs.

- No external frame packs; they don't pack well in the canoe.
- Waterproofing options:
  - Waterproof canoe pack (e.g. Eureka, Seal Line)
  - Regular pack lined with light weight dry sacks (silicon coated nylon).
  - Garbage bags not recommended, as the kids tear them open, generating a lot of trash to burn.



# Common Equipment

- One small heavy duty dry sack per canoe for sun tan lotion, snacks, insect repellent, base ball caps, etc.
  - Polyurethane coated nylon.
  - Don't try and use a light weight dry sack for this, they tear too easily.
- Tents and shelters should be packed in dry sacks too.
  - Wet tents, inside and out, are no fun.
- Painters
  - White water canoes typically come with grab loops, but bring painters along as well for tying canoes up.
  - Don't leave attached as they can come loose and tangle people if the canoe flips in a rapid.
- Biting Insects
  - All types can be found on river trips; at any time of year (except winter!).
  - Mosquitoes, Black flies, Horse flies, Deer flies, Stable flies (biting house flies), Sand Flies (no-see-ums/midges), and biting spiders.
  - A screened shelter is not a bad idea.

# Running Rapids

- Always scout rapids before running!
- It is actually easier to run rapids with a loaded canoe than with an empty one.
  - The weight lowers the centre of gravity, making the canoe less tippy.
  - The drawback is that the canoe is lower in the water and is thus more prone to taking in water over the bow or gunwales.
- Gear will get wet, even if your canoe does not flip.
  - Water tight gear is a necessity.
- All gear must be tied on: Spare paddles, maps, water bottles, packs, barrels, etc. When a canoe flips, any gear that is not tied on is likely to float away and be lost.
  - This is swift water, the gear won't hang around waiting to be picked up.
  - Rope, Fastek buckles, and bungee cords all work.
  - Tie down loops on the bottom of the canoe are beneficial.
  - Other people prefer to leave the gear loose so it does not catch and leaves the canoe free for rescue.
- On a severe rapid, e.g. Class III+, send the strongest paddlers through first to act as a safety boat. If in doubt, walk to the bottom of the rapid and setup downstream safety (with throw bags).
- Pay special attention to large hydraulics; they can be drastically different depending on the water level.

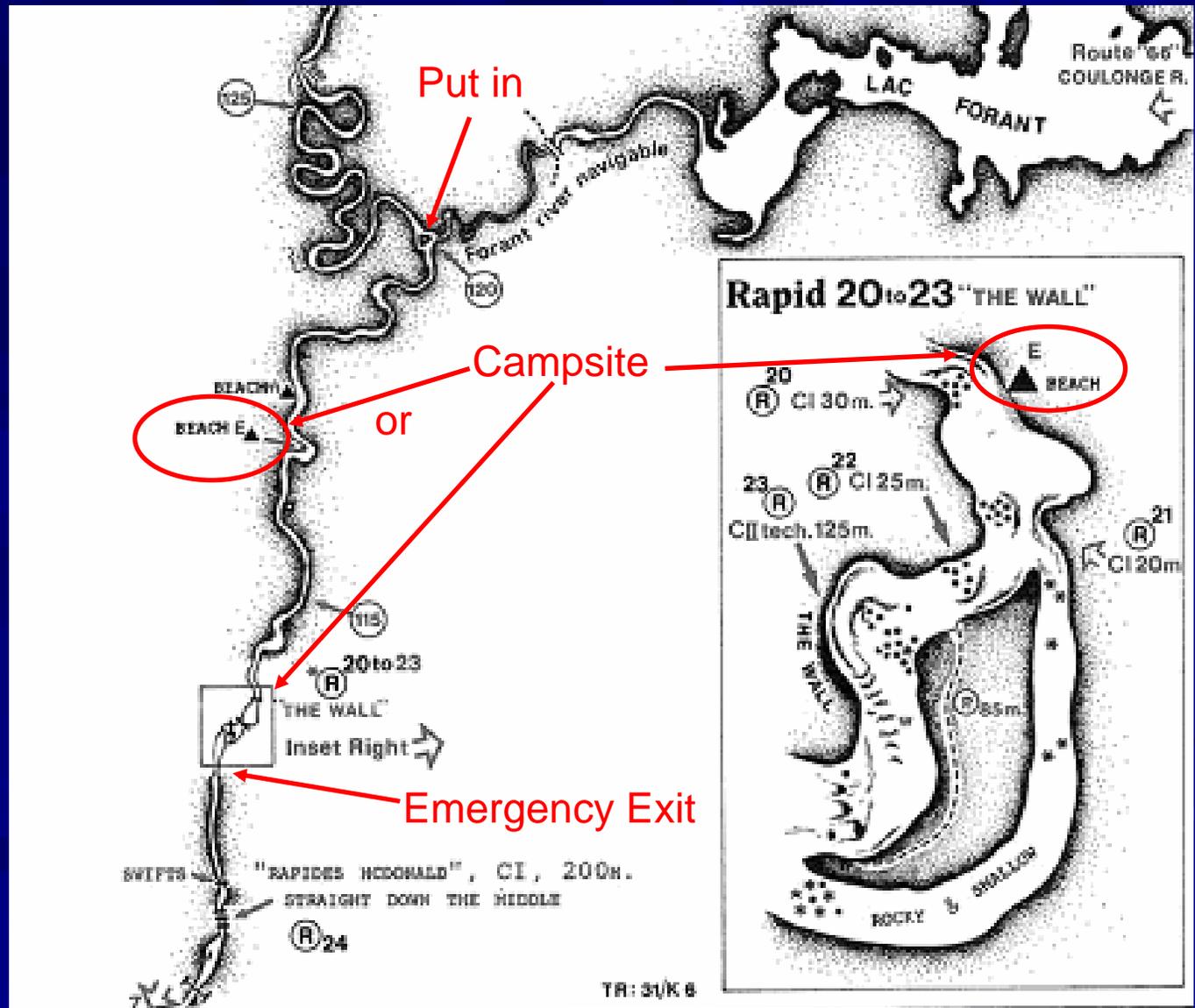
# River Choices

<u>River</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Difficulty</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Noire	Close	Intermediate	Less travelled
Coloungé	Close	Beginner/Intermediate	
Dumoine	Close	Intermediate	Very popular
Madawaska, Lower	Close	Intermediate	
Madawaska, Upper	Close	Expert	Spring only
Temagami, Lake Temagami to River Valley	Close	Beginner	Too many portages, one decent rapid
Petawawa, Brent to Travers	Close	Intermediate	Easy start then long portages
Petawawa, Travers to McManus	Close	Intermediate	Portage Crooked Chute & Rollway
Magnetawan	Close		
Lake Nippissing to Georgian Bay	Close	Beginner	
Picanoc	Close	Beginner	Spring only
Desert	Close	Intermediate	
Bonaventure	Further Away	Intermediate	Beware of strainers at top, no portages
Missinabi	Further Away	Intermediate	Due to long portages and isolation
Spanish	Further Away	Beginner	
French	Further Away	Beginner	
Lievre	Further Away	Intermediate/Expert	
La Verendrye, Chochocouane	Further Away	Intermediate	
Bazin	Further Away	Beginner/Intermediate	
Gens-de-Terre	Further Away	Expert	
Nottawaw, Matagami to Waskaganish			
Harricana			
Mistassibbi NE			
Kesagami			
Kattawagami			
Kipawa			



# Hap Wilson Example Map

Example from Hap Wilson's book. With markup from trip plan.



# Scouts Canada Requirements

## ■ Bylaws, Polices & Procedures

– While there is not much content to the Camping & Outdoor Activity Guide, leaders should be cognisant of the following sections:

### ■ 10000.1 - Activity Categories

– White Water canoeing is a category 3 activity - special skills required & may be longer than three nights away.

■ Thus a parental consent form is required.

### ■ 10007.16 - White Water Canoeing and Kayaking

– No specific training is mandated.

■ Naturally, all other rules and regulations apply.

# Show and Tell - To Bring

- Paddling PFD
- Hap Wilson book
- Presentation (35 copies)
- Pin Kit
- Throw bag (1/4" 50' & 3/8" 70')
- A few DVDs with Noire trip and presentation
- Thick dry sack
- Thin dry sack