



Our Amory Adventure in Killarney Provincial Park ... and Beyond

Lucy Horne and Philip Da Costa, 4th Trafalgar Venturer Company – August 19, 2016

First Place Amory Adventure Award Winners

Imagine 16 kilometres of steep rock faces ahead of you, while carrying 20 kilograms of gear on your back. Now add in some hot and humid weather, and that is what the 4th Trafalgar Amory Expedition Team faced on the La Cloche Silhouette Trail, a scenic and historic route in Killarney Provincial Park. This trail, named after Group of Seven artist Franklin Carmichael's famous painting, is a four-hour drive north of Oakville, Ontario, where the 4th Trafalgar Venturer Company is based.

If there's one thing that Scouting has taught us, it's to always be prepared. The challenge of such a complex trip, which consists of 80 kilometres on one of the hardest trails in our nation, requires detailed planning, up-to-date first aid training and demanding physical conditioning. After the planning, which began a year prior to our journey, the 4th Trafalgar Amory Expedition Team felt like it was ready for just about anything. We discovered our trip would put us to the test at every opportunity.

Challenge

On the first day of our eight-day adventure, we entered La Cloche Silhouette Trail in Killarney Provincial Park. This is one of the most difficult trails in one of the most beautiful parks in Canada. Little did we know when we set off on our adventure that our final destination would be vastly different from what we had originally planned. Thanks to a series of unforeseen events we were presented with new goals.

On the second day, which was our first full day on the trail, we started early. We hiked along the narrow hill paths for three kilometers. White pine, oak and maple trees provided shade from the sun until our trail combined with the day hike trail to The Crack. Here we navigated a stunning steep-sided crevasse that slices through a quartzite rock cliff with beautiful views of the surrounding lakes and Georgian Bay.

We nicknamed the short day-hike section of the trail leading to the base of the rock face the “HOV lane” because of the width and the flatness of the path. But this temporary lull did not last long. Soon The Crack cast a shadow over the forest. We began to climb the 355 metres of elevation, stopping about a quarter of the way up to have lunch. The second half of the climb was the most challenging, with rocks appearing to be almost vertical and sometimes as big as cars. We were forced to rely solely on ledges and handholds in the rocks to make our progress. We were all a little nervous, but when we finally made it to the top we had the opportunity to look out across the park and witness the pristine harmony of nature all around us. We all took a few minutes to capture the image of this in our minds.

We still had a long way to go to reach our scheduled campsite, so after quickly stopping to collect water at Little Superior Lake, we continued with our journey. But two new challenges were ahead of us.

First, the uneven, polished rock surface and the dark clouds looming over us made us decide to stop early at the campsite before ours (hoping it would be empty). Shortly after making that decision, two ground wasps stung James, our youngest Venturer. Since he had never been stung before, we took a moment to ensure there were no signs of an allergic reaction. When everything seemed to be fine, we set off again, making it to the campsite at 7:30 p.m. The site was already occupied, but the hiker was kind enough to let us stay the night. Rain had already started to come down, and our Scouters, who had been behind us since the Crack, radioed to let us know that the trail had become too slippery and dangerous and they were stopping for the night.

After regrouping with our Scouters the next morning, we set off as early as possible. We needed to make up lost time from the day before because of the rain. Once again, we quickly encountered large hills that seemed geographically impossible. We wondered if we were ever going to climb *down*? Then, about three hours into our hike, after we had climbed one more impossibly steep hill, James suddenly began wheezing. He said he felt faint, and we could see his fingertips had begun turning blue. We quickly realized what was happening: James could not breathe.

Emergency Preparedness

Finding one of our team members in this condition, we quickly put our first aid skills to use by treating him for shock, logging his vital signs and sitting him down in a safe area where he wouldn't fall (by this time we were on top of a very windy ridge between Silver Peak and Ruth Roy Lake). Fortunately, he did not lose consciousness, but we realized he could not go on anymore.

As a group, including our Scouters, we came to the unanimous decision that we would need to get an Ornge emergency helicopter to transport James to a hospital for medical attention. At this elevation, our cell phones worked and we decided to go with a direct call to 911 instead of using our SPOT device. After some location issues with the dispatch team, we were able to speak directly with Marco the helicopter pilot, and give him our coordinates. Within 60 minutes, they located us in the dense wilderness. After we waved it down, Marco ended up landing a kilometre downhill on the shores of a bog that had recently, and luckily, been cleared by a fire-prevention team. Ten minutes later, the paramedic team arrived, assessed James, provided him with oxygen and medication, and began the slow decent, walking with him down the steep ridgeline to the helicopter. It was too steep for them to carry him down the hillside safely.

Flexibility

Now that we had just experienced a very traumatic situation, we realized we needed to exit the park, rejoin with James, end our Amory adventure and transform our hiking expedition into another kind of trip. By this time, it was nearly 6 p.m. We hiked on to the next campsite at Silver Lake where we could regroup and spend the night. There we decided that the best route out would be to make our way to Bell Lake where we could exit the park. After hiking out the next morning, we met our new best friend Kevin from Killarney Outfitters. Kevin shuttled us to the edge of the park in a small boat and helped transform our Killarney hiking expedition into a Northeastern Ontario exploration journey.

For this new stage of our adventure, we set up a base camp at Fairbanks Provincial Park, as James had to remain within an hour of a hospital for 48 hours after his breathing issue. For the rest of our adventure, we visited several natural landmarks including Misery Bay Provincial Park on Manitoulin Island, the Fielding Bird Sanctuary in Sudbury, the Dynamic Earth underground mine museum and a section of the TransCanada Trail that runs through Greater Sudbury.

Conclusion

Not only did we combat a huge challenge, but also we enjoyed the whole process, which is the essence of finding adventure outdoors with your fellow Venturers. The themes of our trip – Challenge, Emergency Preparedness and Flexibility – will also help us to face whatever surprises life may send our way. This trip provided rich experiences to each Expedition Team member, experiences that not only made us stronger as individuals, but also stronger as a group!

Oakville's 4th Trafalgar Venturers Meet the Challenge and Win Amory Adventure Award

on [June 22, 2016](#) By [Service Team](#)

With 50 km winds whipping their gear and threatening to blow them off a 370 m cliff in Ontario's [Killarney Provincial Park](#), Oakville's 4th Trafalgar Venturer Scouts kept their cool and put their emergency plan into action. They had to. Their fellow Venturer's life depended on it.

While this may sound like an outtake from an adventure movie, it was a real life experience last summer for Oakville's 4th Trafalgar Venturer Scouts – Philip Da Costa, Ian Hope, Lucy Horne, Jared Isaacs, Daniel Nelson and James Nelson.



Jared, Philip, Ian, Daniel, Lucy and James enjoy the awe-inspiring views from the top of "The Crack."

These six Venturer Scouts, ages 14 to 17, organized an eight-day hiking trip from August 22 to 29, 2015 along Killarney's [La Cloche Silhouette Trail](#). In the 10 months before the trip, they: planned their route, took remote and wilderness first aid training, dried their own food, and built up their endurance through practice hikes. Their goal was to live the Venturer motto "challenge" and push themselves physically and mentally along the 80 km route.

Oakville's 4th Trafalgar Venturer Scouts achieved their goals and were awarded Scouts Canada's Amory Adventure Award for their ambitious hike. This national award is given

annually to the Venturer expedition team that displays the most initiative in conceiving, planning and executing an outdoor adventure activity.



4th

Trafalgar Venturers receive the Amory Award at the Central Escarpment Council Youth Recognition Ceremony, June 12, 2016. (L to R: Front, Ian Hope and Philip Da Costa; Back, Steve Isaacs, Dave Frederick, James Nelson, Daniel Nelson, Andrew Lewis, Lucy Horne, Jared Isaacs, Brenda Sweeney, Deanna DiVito, John Estrella)

Team leader, Daniel Nelson, summed up their experience, “We never thought we’d win the Amory Award, but it’s an awesome, exciting moment to stand on stage and receive that monster plaque with your friends.”



Heaven Lake, Killarney Provincial

Park

“Unexpected things kept challenging us all along the route,” said Venturer Ian Hope. “At one point, the trail had us hiking nearly 10 m across the ridge line of a beaver dam.”



Hiking along the top of a beaver dam
on Wagon Road Lake.

“Riding in a helicopter also wasn’t on my plans for this trip,” noted Venturer James Nelson. “But, flying 1,000 feet above the park, I could really see how vast Killarney is. I was glad we had prepared so well.”



On the bog near Ruth Roy Lake

“It wasn’t the bears I was worried about,” chimed in Venturer Jared Isaacs. “It was the Crack. Everyone we talked with said it was going to be a tough climb and it was. But the view at the top was spectacular.”



Ian and James conquer "The Crack"

by clambering over boulders the size of small cars.

The Venturers were inspired to take this trip by Canadian artist, [Ed Bartram](#), and his painting of Topaz Lake. They were challenged to plan an Amory adventure by a guest speaker to their Venturer company, Dr. Jim Sweeney, a member of [3rd West Vancouver's Ki-Ups Company](#) 1983 Amory award-winning team.

Venturer Scouters Steve Isaacs and Brenda Sweeney accompanied the Venturers on this backcountry trip while Shaun Hope, Ann Harvey-Hope and Don Nelson provided logistics and emergency support.

The expedition team thanks everyone at 4th Trafalgar who helped them prepare for this challenging and rewarding journey, and look forward to many more Scouting adventures.