



Here We Go Again

Ryan Mark, 5th Unionville Venturer Company – May 23, 2019

2nd Place – 2018 Amory Adventure Award Competition

Introduction

Every year, our Venturer Company goes on an adventure during the summer. In the past, we have gone on backpacking trips and canoe-and-portage trips. The challenges we faced and the memories made during these trips keep us motivated to go every year.

Our annual summer camp is typically the most challenging of the year, requiring at least six months of advance planning and preparation. In 2018, we planned to go to [French River Provincial Park](#) for a canoe trip and explore the Georgian Bay coast. In early February, we booked six canoes from the Hartley Bay Marina, and we began planning our trip.

A few weeks before the trip, we scheduled two training days to improve our outdoor skills and get feedback from our knowledgeable and experienced Scouters. We had a knot and emergency shelter training day at Lincoln Park, and a paddling and stove training day at [Earl Rowe Provincial Park](#).

On July 21, 2018, the Parry Sound 33 Wildfire increased in size, which prompted an emergency evacuation of the surrounding area. Because of the unforeseen situation, we had to make a quick decision to book our trip somewhere else. We decided to go to the Canoe Lake area in [Algonquin Provincial Park](#). We were fortunate that we could still book our canoes and campsites just weeks before our camp.

With a group of four Scouts, nine Venturers, and four Scouters, we embarked on a fun and meaningful adventure from July 31 to August 3, 2018.

Rise and Paddle

As always, we started our trip bright and early. The weather we had during the day was surprisingly nice; we had clear skies during our drive and while we paddled our canoes. After paddling for about two kilometres, we arrived at our first portage. Afterwards, we paddled briskly to Tom Thomson Lake.

The Beaver Dam

As we approached Tom Thomson Lake, we saw a beaver dam. We had to cross the beaver dam to get to the other side of the lake, but there was no opening. To get over the dam, we looked for a part of that was lower than the other parts.

We paddled fast over the lower section and went over the dam. We began to look for campsites. In fifteen minutes, we found a suitable one. We got the canoes to shore and set up our campsite. Afterwards, we cooked dinner and prepared for night.

Hanging the Bear Bag

It was hard to find suitable trees to hang the bear bag. We were looking for living, large trees with a thick branch that we could hang the bag from. There were only a couple of large trees which had many small branches. We continued to inspect the area for a tree that met the criteria, and we eventually found a suitable tree. Hanging the bear bag was very important. If we didn't do it, animals could come out and pose a danger to us.

Day 2

Early Morning Rain

In the early morning, the rain started to come down. We headed to Lost Joe Lake. As we paddled towards Lost Joe Lake, there were many small bays that would lead us to dead-ends – translating to wasted time. We had to carefully navigate the route and refer frequently to the map.

In addition, we kept in mind the weather forecast we received prior to the trip – a risk of thunderstorms during the day. If there was a thunderstorm while we were paddling, we would need to paddle closer to the shore.

The shallow water to get to Lost Joe Lake had large rocks covering the river floor. The river was windy and required careful steering. We paddled slowly and were able to get through. Near the shore, we had to walk the canoes.

At night, we hung around the shelter and played some games.

Day 3

Sailing Day

On our third day, we stayed at Lost Joe Lake again and explored the surrounding area. We decided to canoe the south end of Little Joe Lake, where we made a sail from our tarp and enjoyed sailing across the lake.

We were close to land, so we opened the tarp and took out the rope. We tied the tarp to the paddles on the side, so we would be able to expand the tarp to create a sail. The more surface area we created, the farther the wind could blow us. In addition, we connected the five canoes together and let the wind blow us back to where we started. We did this for over an hour.

As we left Lost Joe Lake and paddled toward Little Joe Lake, we checked our phones for Wi-Fi. Since we were close to the Arowhon Pines lodge, we received a cellular signal. As a result, we were able to check the weather forecast on our phones and let our parents know about our status. The weather forecast indicated that there would likely be a storm that would start at 11 a.m. the next day.

In anticipation of the coming storm, we agreed on a time to wake up the next day. We decided to leave at 6 a.m. so we would hopefully avoid the storm.

Day 4

Escape from the Storm

We woke up early and quickly paddled to the Canoe Lake Access Point.

On our way to the portage, we saw a moose and a heron. Curious, we approached the moose (while keeping a considerable distance for safety reasons). We paddled lightly and constantly checked the map to make sure we did not go into any bays. In about an hour and a half, we arrived at the portage.

After we completed the portage, we had a canoe race similar to our previous canoe trips. We planned to stop for ice cream on our drive home, and the top three canoes would receive successively more ice cream.

It took about one hour, but we finally reached the shore and unloaded our bags and group equipment. We stopped at Algonquin Outfitters to return the paddles, and then we went to Kawartha Ice Cream in Huntsville for our reward. At the end of the day, we were all winners!

Conclusion

Our trip was a lot of fun, and we even saw a moose! This summer, we are planning on going to French River Provincial Park for another fun adventure!

Special thanks to our Scouters who join us on our adventures and provide invaluable guidance with the many challenges that we face on our trips.