



An Amory Adventure in Banff National Park

Jeff Schroeder – June 3, 2016

The 5th St. Albert Venturer Company finished second in the 2015 Amory Adventure Award competition. The Company planned and pursued a variety of adventure activities over the course of a single trip to Banff National Park. Below you can read about their adventurous trip in their own words. To find out more about the Amory Adventure Award, visit [Scouts.ca/amory-adventure-award](https://scouts.ca/amory-adventure-award).

By: Sofia Guest and Jamie Guest

When a Duke of Edinburgh grant opportunity with a tight timeline came into the 5th St. Albert Venturer Company's inbox, we felt our environmental service work along the Sturgeon River (which runs through St. Albert, outside of Edmonton) over the last 8 years or our Scouting careers could meet the grant's criteria. Sofia worked hard to pull an application together – with success!

When we learned that we'd received that precious grant money, the real hard work began for the Company. With this money, we were able to plan some amazing adventure activities that we wouldn't normally be able to afford. Each Venturer had a role to play. For example, the booking of vendors was divided up among the Company's members. Simon booked the via ferrata. Carly booked a whitewater rafting trip. Everyone contributed ideas to the all-important menu, and many of us came up with suggestions for hikes.

We decided to travel to Banff National Park to explore the ecology of rivers and discover how local tree planting, habitat restoration and clean-up initiatives compared to our own work along

the Sturgeon River. In recent years, our Venturer Company has completed many service projects to restore the Sturgeon River by clean-ups, tree planting with the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) and bird habitat placement.

On our trip to Banff, we stayed at the local Scouting Hall and spent three full days hiking, canoeing, cooking outside and learning about the ecology of rivers. Jamie arranged a meeting with a local Parks Canada biologist, Bill Hunt, who was involved with the Minnewanka Lake Dam and the Cascade River restoration project. He taught us about river ecology in the very early morning of our first day there.

Next, we headed out with Jen Platz and Lisa Barzo to Johnson Lake, where we planted willow trees and grass seed. This was actually one of the highlights of the trip for our Company (which, to be honest, was a bit of a surprise). We really enjoyed planting the trees and feeling like we were giving back. We look forward to returning to see the growth in a few years.

After that, we stopped at a picnic shelter and learned how to use WhisperLite backpacking stoves. There were a couple mishaps, but thankfully the food was good.

Later that day, we hiked the Grassi Lakes trail along a river that has experienced the effects of human intervention. It had beautiful scenery, but it was sad to see the parts that man had destroyed.

The next day, we went for a peaceful canoe ride with a fish-eye view of the marine ecosystem. Sofia had talked to the Banff Canoe Club, who generously let us use their canoes. This was really cool, because we were out on the river before the club was open, so there was nobody else on the river. The mist was still out as we paddled, and we were treated to the bugling calls of elk. We paddled up the river a little ways, and sure enough, there were some elk on the bank. This was a really surreal experience, especially for those of us who had never seen an elk before.

Our next hike focused on an untouched river ecosystem. We hiked up Grotto Canyon, which is a trail along the riverbed. Once we got to the end, there was a beautiful waterfall as well as some amazingly preserved pictographs. It was really cool to see the influences of our ancestors that are still here after all this time.

Later in the day, we headed out for whitewater rafting. This was one of the most fun parts of the trip. None of us had ever done whitewater rafting before, so everyone was really excited to try it. We had a lot of fun going over the rapids. When we got to a slow moving part of the river, our guides showed us how to cliff jump. It was scary, but really fun. It sure got the adrenaline pumping! We also got to spin around in a wave, which was super exciting. After carrying the rafts back up to the bus, we got to warm up. Some of us learned that cotton really is rotten and we should always listen closely to the experts.