

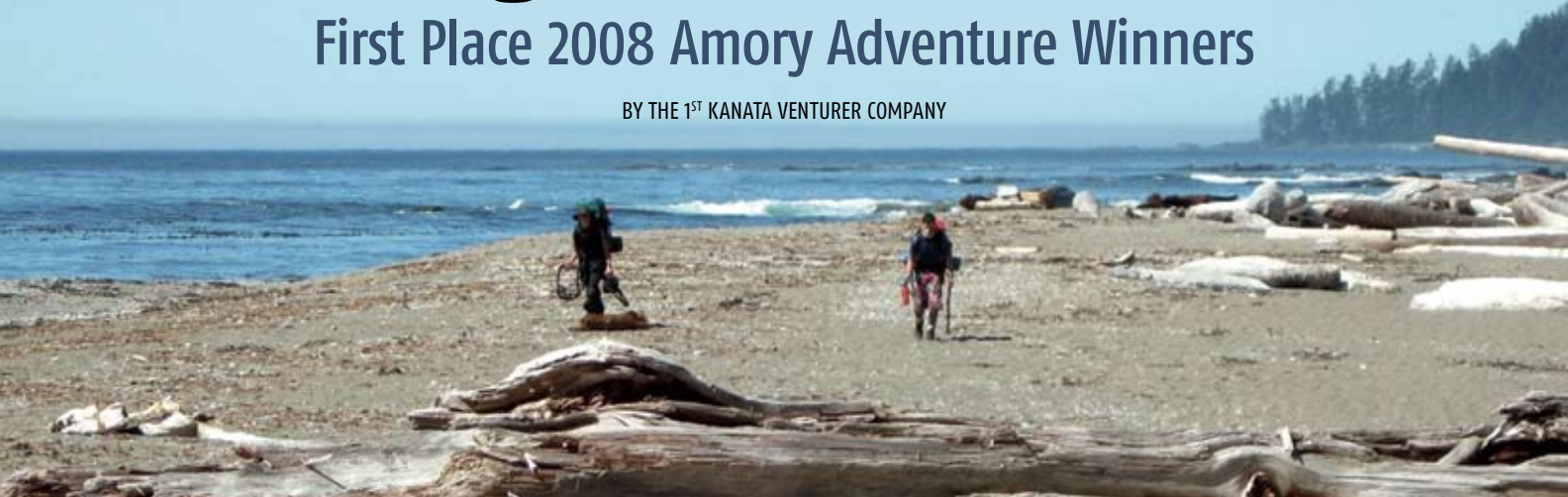
Amory Adventure Challenge

Tracing the Past

– Hiking the West Coast Trail

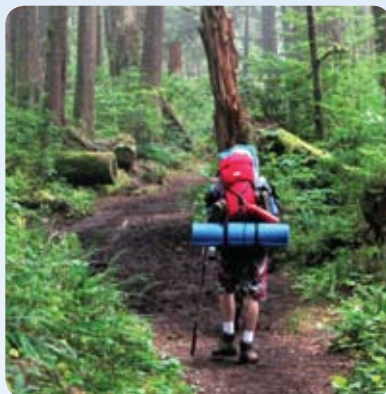
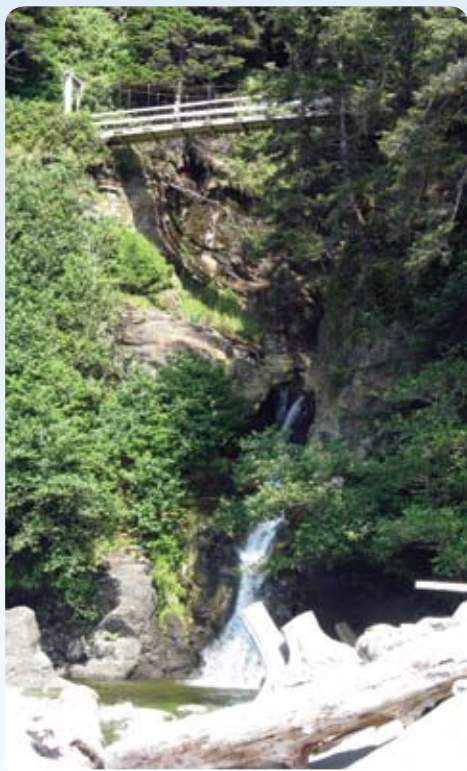
First Place 2008 Amory Adventure Winners

BY THE 1ST KANATA VENTURER COMPANY



An integral part of hiking the West Coast Trail, considered by many to be one of the best hiking trails in the world, is climbing ladders. Sets of wooden ladders stretching 30 stories tall are found throughout the trail. As we started to climb a seemingly never ending sea of steps, my mind drifted back to the beginning of this adventure.

The 1st Kanata Venturer Company is a tight knit group, fortunate enough to have advisors who encouraged our growth into more and more adventurous backpacking trips. In 2007, we received a second place win in the Amory competition by hiking the Sleeping Giant. Striving to select an even more challenging trail, the West Coast Trail was an obvious choice. We would plan for it, fundraise the necessary money, travel 3500 kilometres across Canada, and do it all by ourselves, without advisors. The West Coast Trail (W.C. Trail) provided an opportunity to take in scenery unique to the Pacific Coast, in a province we had never visited before.



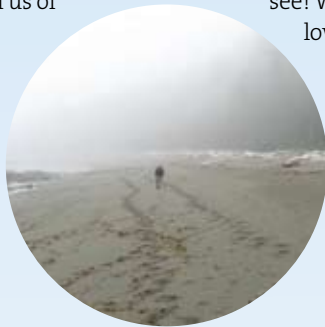
Photos: 1st Kanata Venturer Company



Planning is Key

With only three of us, planning was easily divided. Taylor would be in charge of food planning. Gord handled finances, reservations, gear and logistics. David accepted completing the paperwork and risk management planning. By December 2007, our plans were well underway and the concept approved by the group committee and our parents. They were even receptive to us going without advisors!

Feeling that we had enough experience in backpacking techniques, we focused on other areas to improve upon. A search and rescue technician who had worked on the West Coast Trail came to one meeting to share his experiences and remind us of some of the dangers of the trail. All company members renewed their Standard First Aid; one member already had his Wilderness First Aid. A visit to an Aerial Park and ropes course gave us experience similar to what would be found while hiking the West Coast Trail. Climbing ladders, walking on suspension bridges and crossing rivers in cable cars made us comfortable with the challenges these obstacles could pose. A day hike with full backpacks and a four day hiking trip consolidated our equipment and tested our stamina for the expected hiking on the Trail. We were ready!



Tracing the Past

Welcome to the West Coast Trail Express — a bus that loops around Vancouver Island picking up W.C. Trail hikers. After the mandatory orientation session at Pachena Bay, we hit the trail and the first of many ladders. First stop along the way was the Pachena Point Lighthouse, built in an effort to make the treacherous seas of the area safer for mariners. Actually, the W.C. Trail was not always a path hiked for pleasure. This stretch of Vancouver Island's coast is known as the "Graveyard of the Pacific" for the many shipwrecks that have occurred here. The trail was actually a route for shipwreck survivors to follow to reach safety. Both the Pachena Bay and Carmanah Point Lighthouses were built for this reason. Walking along, equipped with lightweight equipment and proper gear, it's hard to imagine those survivor's struggles. Our first night's camp was just two kilometers past the lighthouse at Michigan Creek. Having hiked twelve kilometers, and our first day behind us, we fell into bed early.

The next day we experienced walking on sand. You'd think it would be easy, nice and flat, but as the sand gave repeatedly under our feet, we began to appreciate walking on rocks and dirt. Reaching our next campsite by lunch we took the opportunity to explore the beach and scenery.

More new experiences awaited us on the third day — climbing ladders, scrambling over blow downs from fierce Pacific storms and always, spectacular views of the ocean. At one such scenic lookout we spotted a pair of Pacific Grey Whales. A common sight in the waters off the coast of Vancouver Island, but not something those from Ontario often see! Walking on a limestone rock shelf exposed by the

low tide, it wasn't long before we arrived at our first cable car at Klanawa River. These cars are established to cross wider bodies of water along the W.C. Trail. Everything went smoothly and we continued on to our campsite on the beach at Tsusiat Falls. Of course, that meant more ladders as we climbed down to sea level. We visited a really cool rock formation known as "Hole in the Wall" before retiring for the night.

And so it went. Each day brought its own unique variety of challenges and sights. Walking in temperate rainforests; looking up, up, up at giant Sitka Spruce trees hundreds of years old; sampling delicious Pacific Salmon provided by local First Nations at a cable car near the Nitinat Narrows; enjoying a wonderful hamburger at Chez Monique's restaurant in the middle of the trail; struggling through mud and slippery tree roots; even two days of rain didn't dampen our spirits. This was what we had worked so hard for — to experience the West Coast Trail and British Columbia's natural beauty.

Too soon it was over. Ten days of hiking the West Coast Trail and we had reached the southern trailhead and return to civilization. In a matter of hours we were back at our host's home, enjoying hot showers and soft beds. The West Coast Trail had challenged us, and we had conquered it — forever enriching our lives from the experience. ✕

— 1st Kanata Venturer Company
Taylor Goldthorp (16)
David Thompson (17)
Gord Stephen (17)

