



E.A. EXTREME ALGONQUIN

Second Place 2006 Amory Adventure Award

by the 1st Kanata Venturer Company

It was to be the most extreme canoe trip any of us had ever done, including our advisors, and so we called it Extreme Algonquin, or E.A. (conceived at our very first Venturer meeting after moving up from Scouts). As Scouts, we had often done canoe trips in Algonquin Park. But this trip was to be different. We were going to paddle

across the width of the park, and visit as many historical sites as possible. It would be a two week traverse, over 170 kilometres, with more than 30 km of portages. It involved more planning and logistics than any other trip we'd ever participated in, let alone planned by ourselves. Preparation would be the key to our success.

Each member of our group assumed a specific role:

Doug, the Quartermaster: food planning, gear preparation, log compilation.

Gord, our company President: route planning, campsite reservations, food planning, gear preparation and log compilation.

Thomas: food delivery organization, log compilation.

Tyson, our company Treasurer: finances, paperwork and risk management.

Once jobs were assigned, we then worked toward polishing up our skills.

Members took a six-day Wilderness First Aid course to supplement our Standard First Aid skills. Determined not to make more than one pass at each portage, we decided that we could bring one 30-litre food barrel per canoe, cutting down to 15 litres of food per person. Each canoe would hold two people, two packs and a food barrel. Our single pass system would mean one person took a canoe and a pack, and the other carried a pack with the food barrel on their chest.

When a white water canoeing course we'd planned on taking got cancelled, we organized a "practise

camp" to determine if our gear selection had been appropriate, if we had calculated enough food rations, and to test our new portaging system for the first time. It was here that we discovered that we'd brought two different pots and that the pot grabber only worked on one of them. We found this out *after* spicing the meal with pine needles.

The Start of E.A.

With the paperwork completed, reservations made, gear selected and food dehydrated, we were ready to tackle E.A. Meeting early on

August 7, we traveled to Algonquin, stopping at the Algonquin Park Logging Museum for a visit to familiarize ourselves with the park's history. Among other exhibits, we saw an intact alligator steam tug, soon to be a familiar sight over the weeks to come. A short paddle of 1.5 hours and we were at our campsite on Daisy Lake. Doug and Stephen spent

him, discovering that it didn't float. Was this to be a problem considering our proximity to water every day? Supper was again spiced with pine needles, after Tyson sat on a rickety bench that the rice pot was resting on.

Awakening on Day 3, August 9th, we found that Misty Lake was aptly named. A thick blanket of mist curled off the water. Setting off to our next

Day 4 dawned grey and cloudy. Hurrying, we broke camp and headed off to visit the McLachlin Farm Depot historical site across the lake before paddling further. In logging days, farm depots provided much needed vegetables and meat for the loggers. Back on the water, we pushed through heavy headwinds and high waves to an island on Burntroot Lake where we discovered an alligator tug much like the one in the museum. Most of the machinery and woodwork were still standing. It was really cool. Continuing on through the strong wind and waves, we eventually made it to our site on Burntroot Lake.

Days 5 & 6 weren't long days for paddling. Just before supper on August 11th, we spotted a moose munching his supper at the weedy end of Catfish Lake. Evenings were spent playing with the Frisbee, but that was soon to come to an end. A missed catch, a fallen friend and a steep cliff – fateful circumstances that would result in us losing our trip companion. Peering in vain into the murky depths, there was no sign of ... our Frisbee. Fast and sporty, stylish and faithful, our Frisbee was gone. We held a memorial service by the lake, complete with a three-thunder-box salute. On a lighter note, we were treated to the Perseid meteor shower that night; a beautiful sight.

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the remainder of our day attempting to whittle spoons out of fallen deadwood. Unfortunately, neither of them were master craftsmen....

Tired from our early start the previous day, we were on the water by 9:30 am on August 8th. We paddled on the currently shallow and placid Petawawa River for the first, (but not last) time on the trip, arriving at our site on Misty Lake by 1:00 that afternoon. After lunch, we threw around a Frisbee that Steve had packed with

site, we got a preview of some of the history we would be seeing throughout the park – an old abandoned rusted saw blade from years gone by greeted us at our first portage. That day we meandered through wetland-like terrain before arriving at White Trout Lake, site of an old farm depot in the later years of the log drives in Algonquin Park. Sitting around the campfire that evening, we did our best to remember the lyrics of American Pie – soon to become our trip song.



Photos: The 1st Kanata Venturer Company

Half Way There – Cache Day

August 13th – today was cache day. A day to refill our food barrels. But before we could do that, we had five portages to complete – a total of 3565 metres to carry our gear across. Much to our surprise we fairly flew across them; our new system definitely worked. Meeting up with Tom's mom, we were treated to pizza and chocolate cake. This coupled with additional food products from the store at Brent, made for a regal meal. Soon it was time to say goodbye to Tom and Craig. Other commitments required them to leave us on our own to finish E.A. We headed out once again, taking advantage of the strong winds in our favour to rig up a sail using Colin's hammock.

As we prepared to set off down the Petawawa River on Day 8, we knew that the hardest portages lay ahead. The Petawawa's many fierce rapids are cause for portages a plenty and our food barrels were full once again, adding to the weight. Out of the three portages today, one of them was on an abandoned CNR railway bed. Part of a route from Ottawa to Sudbury, the track was laid in 1916 across the north side of Algonquin Park. Seventy-seven years later, in 1993, the tracks were removed. But the railway bed is still used whenever possible as trails or for portages around rapids. Arriving at Radiant Lake, the wind was still in our favour, allowing us to sail once again. Hey, we could get used to this! Today we carried our gear 2505 metres, our second longest day of portages.

On August 15, Day 9, the wind was still strong, and this time it was against us with whitecaps on the lake. We struggled to reach the mouth of the Petawawa River, where we hoped it would be calmer. Once we reached the river, the waves were no longer a factor, but we faced many portages. Eastern Ontario had previously had some bad storms, knocking down trees and even blowing down buildings in some communities. Large trees lay like pick-up sticks across our trail, turning the portages into a grueling obstacle course requiring efforts of dexterity and strength. We helped each other get canoes and

packs over the largest of the obstacles, regretting the circumstances that had not allowed us to get white water canoe training. It certainly would have made today easier! We also took a short side trip to see Crow River Falls. They were magnificent. That night Gord caught several good sized bass in the oxygenated

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water at the bottom of the rapids near our site. An eager fisherman, Gord had fished without luck throughout the trip. Finally the fish were biting!

Days 10 – 12 passed in a blur of portages and more portages. We were starting to meet more paddlers going the other way, and unfortunately, caught up to one group's very bad camping practices. It was Day 12 and we were half way through a 1500 metre portage around the perilous Crooked Chute. There was a recently abandoned campsite in frightful condition – the fire, still burning, was full of unburnt food, partly melted cans and other garbage. Being good Scouts, we packed out the garbage and extinguished the fire, glad we had come along when we did. Continuing on, we experienced some portages that were practically vertical! Over these last three days, we portaged 10, 840 metres.

When we awoke on Day 13, August 19, the same thought was in our minds. Today was our last full day in the park. One of the biggest portages

loomed in front of us – a 3.4 kilometre pass before we could get to our site. Slowly but surely we made it to the other end, in just over an hour, rewarded with one of the nicest sites we'd had all trip. Once again we played cards on a food barrel before heading to our tents for our last sleep of E.A.

So much for the clear sky the night before. Just after midnight, the heavens let loose with torrential rain and stabbing lightning. The rain didn't let up either – we were going to have to paddle to the put-out in it. We were just thankful that it hadn't rained like this previously. Rafting up, singing our theme song of American Pie, we quickly arrived at our pick-up point.

When we landed the canoes on the beach and unloaded our gear, the reality of what we had done finally hit us: we'd paddled across Algonquin Park, from one side to the other. Although the bleak weather didn't reflect it, we were elated that we'd accomplished our task.

Conclusion

After 170 kilometres, 14 days, thousands of paddle strokes, 6 moose, 3 otters, countless other wildlife, 3 pizzas, 1 chocolate cake, hours and hours of driving for dedicated parents, 4 Venturers, 2 advisors, 1 parent, 2 international guests, 11 months of planning and a lifetime of pride later, E.A. was over. We'd done it – we'd paddled across Algonquin Park.

Now, when someone mentions Algonquin Park, we can pretty much say, "Been there, done that"! This trip, combined with previous trips in Scouts has put us pretty close to seeing most of Algonquin. And we've loved every minute of it. X

The 1st Kanata Venturer Company (1KVC):

Gord Stephen, President
Tyson Loney, Treasurer
Doug Carson, Quartermaster
Thomas Scott, contributing member

Advisors:

Don Stephen
Doug Bancroft

Participating Guests:

Stephen Kellet, Ramsbury, U.K.
Colin Kellet, Ramsbury, U.K.
Craig Scott, parent