

4-Her's spotted in Algonquin Park. ?Canoe? believe it?

By Allison French

This summer, seven Peel 4-H members were out on the water trying their hand at canoeing to complete our Silver Duke of Edinburgh Award.

With one expert out of the seven of us 4-H members, it was fit for Robert Matson to be the junior leader of our Adventurous Journey Club.

The Duke of Edinburgh Award is an international program available to all 14 to 24 year olds. For the Silver Award, there are four sections and participants must demonstrate consistent commitment in service, skill and physical recreation for a minimum of six months. Then they have to complete an adventurous journey that is three days and two nights. It is a requirement for members to complete a pre-trip of two days and one night before embarking on their adventurous journey.

We decided to do our journey Aug. 12 to 14 at Algonquin Provincial Park on North Tea Lake.

The members of the club were, Nicole and Kayla Emmerton, Colin, Julie, Nicole and Allison French, Robert Matson as the junior leader, Karen Matson, Mary Emmerton, Thomas Hautot and Brain Emmerton as our leaders. Scouter Steve Vickers and Scout Ethan Mumford joined us.

After countless hours spent on Island Lake in Orangeville, we were finally ready for our pre-trip. We decided to do that at Guelph Lake. Everyone loaded up two cars Aug. 5 and headed off to the lake. We had tons of fun paddling against the wind the whole first day. When we arrived back at the campsite, we set up the tents and the rest of the site. Following this, we discussed aspects of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and prepared a menu and a packing list for the adventurous journey.

With everyone surviving the pre-trip, the preparations for our trip started to take place. After a group trip to the grocery store and spending what felt like hours at the meat counter, trying to get the best deals, we prepped all of our meals for the trip. We had a team barbecue the night before to go over a few last things and pack all of our stuff into barrels and thumps.

We left for our adventure at 6 a.m. Aug. 12 in the two cars with everyone ready and excited to start.

Arriving at just outside of Algonquin Park, we started our journey canoeing across Kawawaymog Lake and then through a small winding river, completing two portages successfully. One was 135 metres and the other was 255 metres. We ended up at the mouth of North Tea Lake.

We then went looking for a campsite, and after finding our home for the night, we all broke off and started collecting firewood, pitching tents, pumping water, starting to cook dinner and many other small jobs.

While we were trying to hang our bear bags, one of the group members started reading us the ?fun facts? about black bears and what to do if we encountered one. This in turn motivated us to throw our bear bag onto a higher branch.

After going on a night swim and lazy canoe around an island, we played a card game and called it a night, making sure that we brought a paddle to sit outside our tent door (no explanation needed after our black bear ?fun facts?).

When morning arrived, we made breakfast and packed all of our stuff up to move to our next campsite.

We hit the water when it was glass-like and went ?real-estate shopping? as our leaders put it. This meant that we stayed along the shoreline and looked at all the different campsites and talked about the pros and cons of each of them. Our ?ideal campsite? was simple; it had a beach.

We kept canoeing on North Tea Lake and ended up finding our ideal campsite on an island. With the island to ourselves we unpacked everything and then went back out onto the water on a leisure canoe to a beach. After swimming for a bit, we came back and started dinner and some had some s'mores afterwards.

After laughing around the campfire, we went to bed with a 5:30 wakeup call the next morning.

The next morning, after having breakfast and packing up all our things, we hit the water by 7 and headed back across North Tea Lake. We were all in great spirits and high energy, because we all knew that there was ice cream at the end of the day's canoe trip. On our way back, we had some great vocals lead by Kayla and Nicole French. and then the rest of the group joined in. We spotted a loon and a great blue heron, as well as (according to Julie) a red squirrel that was swimming. We didn't take long to get to the first portage and quickly traversed both portages with ease. After being in the winding river forever we final saw the end in sight when we reached Kawawaymog Lake.

Despite reaching the final lake, it was not going to be an easy canoe back, due to the wind that was blowing across the water.

We all made it back alive without having to use any of our emergency maneuvers rescues (meaning we didn't flip any of our canoes once). To end off our trip, we headed into Huntsville and got pizza and of course some Kawartha Dairy ice cream.

This was an incredible opportunity that a lot of us would not do normally, and it took a lot of people out of their comfort zones, but

it was an amazing journey that we will never forget.



Ethan Mumford, Steve Vickers, Colin French, Nicole French, Kayla Emmerton, Nicole Emmerton, Allison French, Thomas Hautot, Julie French, Robert Maston and Karen Maston were on the recent Adventurous Journey.