

Local OPP officer holds fishing trip to mark 9-11

By Bill Rea

Some local police and their guests are hoping the fish are biting this week in Lake Temiscaming (between North Bay and Kirkland Lake).

Since the infamous Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York, Caledon OPP Constable Dale Smewing has invited officers from the New York Police Department (NYPD) who were involved in the tragedy on annual fishing trips to some location in Ontario.

Two of those officers, Detective Sergeant Cornelius Douglas and Detective Terrence McAllister, arrived in the area Friday, and the plan is they are to spend this week with their lines in the waters to the north.

Wellington OPP Constable Kirk MacDonald is also on the trip, as are two other people.

The trips have been something of a cultural experience for those taking part.

"I saw my first moose," Douglas said, adding he's also seen milk sold in a bag for the first time.

McAllister added the trips have allowed him to take in "some of the most beautiful sunsets I've ever seen."

While neither man was scheduled to be on duty that day in 2001, they both quickly found themselves at Ground Zero. Both responded from home after the second aircraft crashed into the tower.

"You didn't need to be called in," Douglas observed.

"Everybody came together really quickly," McAllister added. "Push came to shove, and everybody got there. It was just something you never plan for and could never plan for."

Rebuilding has been going on, and Douglas said a memorial is now open at Ground Zero.

There have been other events to commemorate the day. MacDonald said he was in New York for the first St. Patrick's Day after 9-11.

"That was really an honour, but it was also really moving," he recalled. "You're feeling extremely proud to do what you do."

He also remembered seeing a little boy holding a picture of a firefighter, and figured the child lost his father that day.

"That's the thing that really got to me," he said. "It brought it all home."

There was likely to be a brief commemoration yesterday (Wednesday), the 12th anniversary of the attacks. Douglas said there would be "a toast to fallen comrades" at about 9:30 a.m.; the approximate time of the attacks.

The two representatives from NYPD regularly make the trip, although McAllister said he had to give it a miss one year.

"I was very angry that I couldn't make it up," he remarked. "Unfortunately, New York City's always got something that needs the police."

The group always has a good time, even if the fish aren't plentiful.

"I don't have to catch fish," Douglas commented. "I can drown worms for a week and be very happy."

"It doesn't matter what patch you're wearing," Smewing observed. "We all have basically the same interests."

It's also been an opportunity for the visitors from New York to learn something of Canada, and spread the word when they get home.

Some people are a little surprised at the weather they encounter, and are taken aback when they go home with tans. McAllister said the first time he made the trip, he was told to expect 30-degree temperatures, so he packed clothes accordingly. The problem was he thought that meant 30 F.

And even if the fishing hasn't always been great, Smewing said they've come out ahead.

"We've had more good fishing years than bad years," he said.

Not that it matters much.

McAllister said it's "our friends in the great white North here" who issue the invitations.

"As long as they keep inviting us, we'll keep coming," he said.



Detective Sergeant Cornelius Douglas, Caledon OPP Constable Dale Smewing, Detective Terrence McAllister and Wellington OPP Constable Kirk MacDonald are among a group currently marking the anniversary of 9-11 fishing in Lake Temiscaming. Photo by Bill Rea