

# Canoe Trip Down the Spanish River, Ontario Canada July 2015



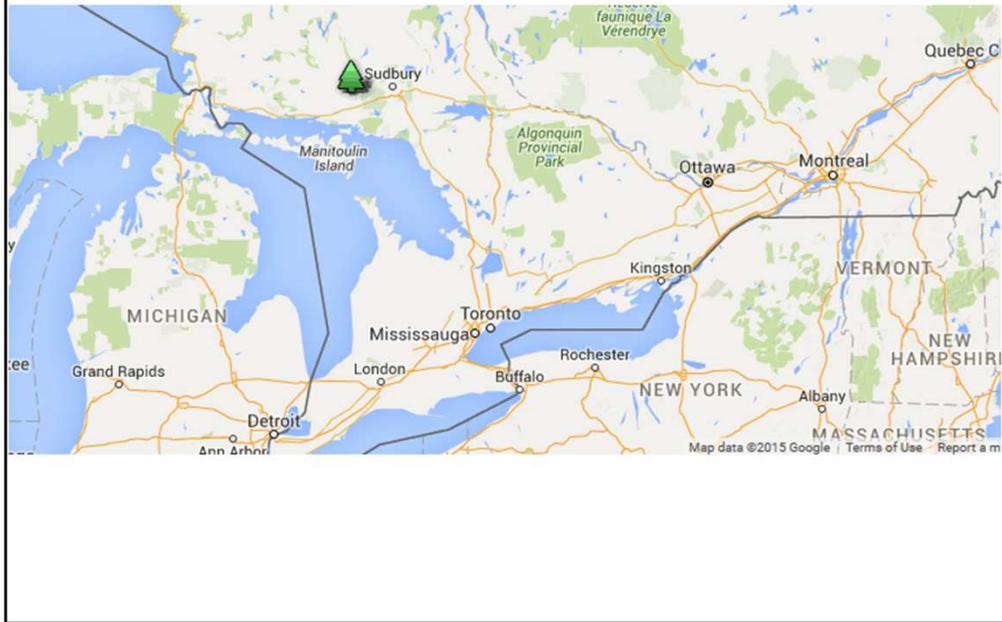
The 1<sup>st</sup> fur trappers and Jesuit priest encountered several 1<sup>st</sup> Nation people speaking Spanish as a result of a Spanish woman who had been taken hostage on a raid far to the south. Hence, the map-makers named the river – The Spanish River.

12 years ago my friend Skip, his Brother-in-law Steve and another friend canoed the Spanish River, in 2015 we made a return trip.

## Agenda

- Trip Description
- Organizing
- Trip Logistics
- Background of Paddlers & Adjustments
- Assessments
- Not many pictures during white water as we were busy

# Where is Spanish River?



## Spanish River Provincial Park

- The river is mainly used for recreational canoeing and has been protected as a waterway provincial park in 2009.
- World's largest red and white pine wilderness.
- Spanish River Provincial Park has 83 backcountry sites. There are no car camping sites offered.
- All campsites are equipped with a fire pit and box privy.
- Everyone camping within the park has to get a permit.

### Historical Significance.

Spanish River has been used as a transportation corridor for thousands of years, first by First Nations and later in the 19th century by fur traders.

During the late 19th and mid 20th centuries, it was used to transport timber from logging camps to Georgian Bay, where they were towed by tugs to sawmills on the Great Lakes

## Spanish River ON Canoe Trip Prospectus

- **WHAT:** Canoe the Spanish River which offers paddling for canoeists of intermediate skill level, with Class I and II rapids, lots of swifts and moving water. The Spanish River is one of the most pristine and diverse canoe routes in Northern Ontario.
- **WHERE:** Sudbury District in Northwestern Ontario, Canada (<https://goo.gl/maps/cUZSP>); 46° 31' 42" N, 81° 52' 32" W
- **WHEN:** During July 25 – August 2
- **HOW:** Carpool 10 hours to [Agnew Lake Lodge](#), shuttle to the put-in, 6 days canoeing down river (1 planned off day), 1 day return drive
- **WHO:** We would like 2-4 canoes on this trip. Current participants include Skip Shoemaker, Steve Ingraham, and Jim Muller.
- **WHY:** We desire additional participants who:
  - Are reliable and won't cancel the last minute.
  - Know which end of the paddle to hold. This is not a trip requiring extensive canoeing skills, but it will require paddling teamwork.
  - Possess a positive attitude; a willingness to help with camp chores, a fun person, that contributes to the overall trip experience.
- **SHARING COSTS:** This is not an expensive trip; we will share costs for gas and tolls, shuttle to the put-in and food for the group.

During a camping trip to Essex Chain of Lakes in July 2014 Skip, Steve and I committed to making a Spanish River.

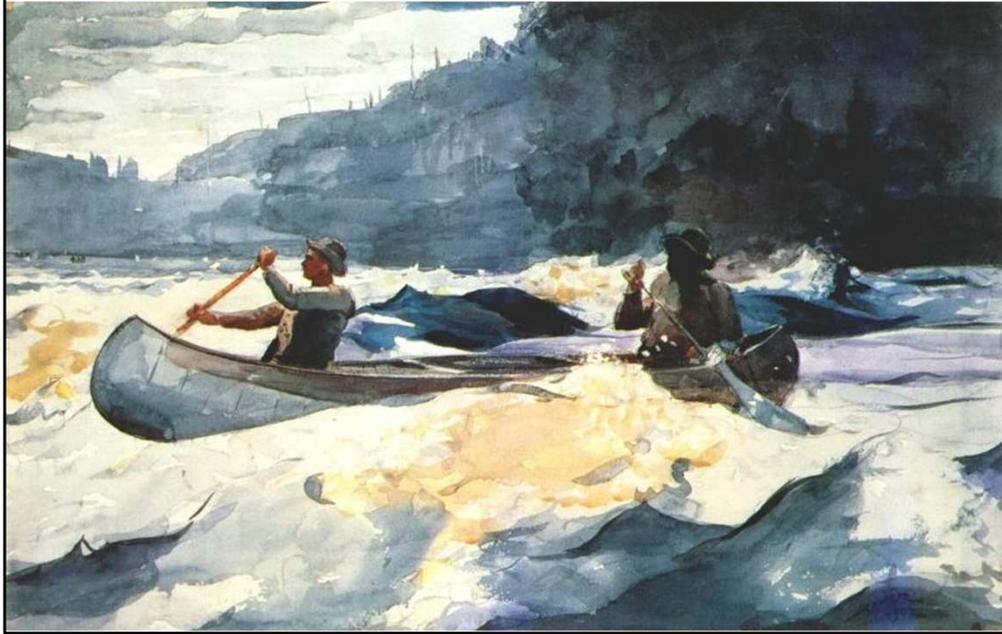
Skip and I assumed the roles of trip leaders and we wrote up a 'prospectus' to inform potential participants so they would know what they were getting into.....

## Brief Trip Description

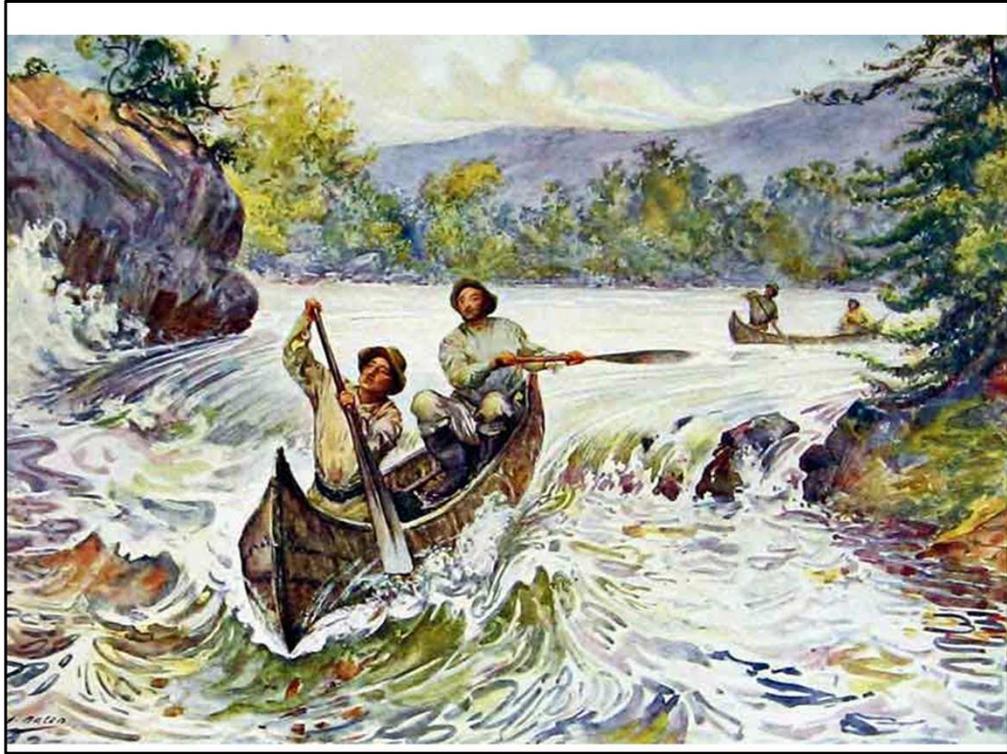
- We will canoe the East Branch starting at Duke Lake and go downstream to Agnew Lake.
- The morning of day 1 will start with a shuttle to Duke Lake to begin paddling mid-day.
- We will paddle a chain of lakes divided by small stretches with swifts. We will look for aboriginal pictographs on 9th lake.
- After the lakes we come to the forks, where the East-and the West Branch join. From this point on we will experience flowing water with various swifts and rapids.
- After The Elbow we run into a few bigger rapids (Graveyard, Agnes- and Cedar Rapids) which we will portage. All rapids have well marked and maintained portages.
- Cedar Rapids is the last serious rapids, from that point on there is 20 km of fast flowing water; sit back, navigate and enjoy the scenery.
- Length of this trip is 145 km / 90 miles, 5-7 days.

Start off on nine interconnected lakes, then flowing water with swifts and rapids.

## Recruiting Potential Participants



We wanted to get additional paddlers so I would send emails trying to get participants interested in canoeing with us.



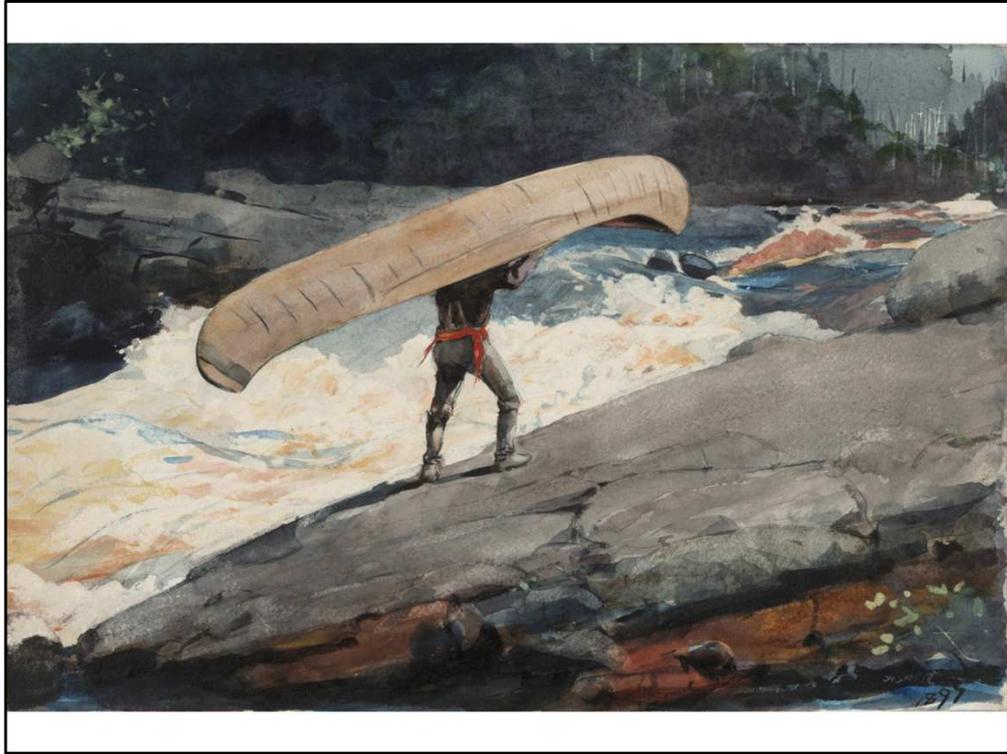
Exploring new territory



adventure



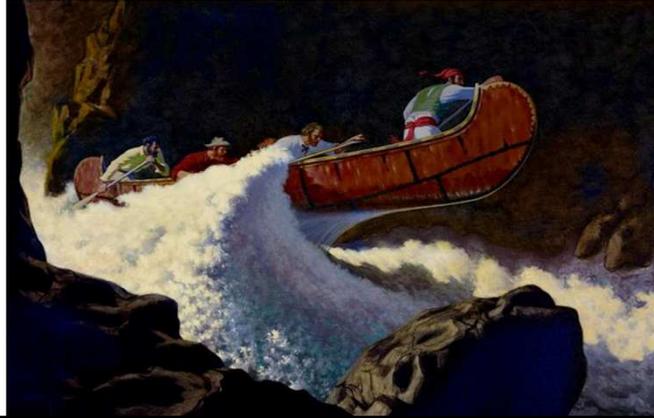
Nice campsites and comradery



Hopefully not a lot of this.

## Paddlers

- Jim Muller, Skip Shoemaker, Steve Ingraham
- Steve Ingraham II (SKI) – youngest, canoer
- Tim Reed – backpacker, kayaker
- Jack Bell - kayaker



|                                   |                                |   |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>Boat</b>                       | Wicking T-shirt                | Chapstick   |
| Canoe                             | Windbreaker or nylon shirt     | Dry bag(s)  |
| Paddles (2) plus a spare          | Wool socks                     | Fire starter / lighter  |
| PFDs (2)                          | <b>Camp Clothes</b>            | Glasses guard   |
| Bailing device                    | Bandana                        | Hair brush or comb  |
| Sponge                            | Extra socks                    | Bug Head net  |
| Bungee cords / tie downs          | Extra underwear                | Headlamp / flashlight   |
| Bow lines / lining ropes          | Gloves                         | Pocket knife  |
| Bow / thwart bags                 | Light hiking boots             | Prescriptions   |
| <b>Shelter</b>                    | Long sleeve shirt              | Sunglasses &/or extra glasses   |
| Tent, fly, poles and stakes       | Long underwear tops & bottoms  | Sunscreen   |
| Ground cloth                      | Camp shoes (optional)          | Toilet paper & trowel   |
| Rope and cordage for tarp         | Nylon, wool or polyester pants | Toiletries: biodegradable soap, razor, hand cream, toothbrush, floss, dry shampoo |
| Tarp(s)                           | Warm hat                       | Towel   |
| Adjustable tent poles             | Warm jacket                    | Water bottle  |
| <b>Sleeping System</b>            | Wicking shirt                  | Whistle   |
| Mattress pad                      | <b>Navigation</b>              | <b>Personal Dinnerware</b>  |
| Pillow (optional)                 | Maps                           | Bowl &/or plate   |
| Sleeping bag                      | Trail guides                   | Mug   |
| Sleeping bag liner                | Compass                        | Spoon, knife, fork  |
| <b>Day Clothes</b>                | Imagery                        | <b>Group Cooking Supplies</b>   |
| Hat                               | 2-way radios                   | Aluminum foil   |
| Light fleece or wool jacket       | <b>Personal</b>                | Propane stove I ( 2 burner)   |
| Non-cotton underwear              | Binoculars                     | Propane stove II (  |
| Nylon pants                       | Book(s)                        | Extra propane fuel  |
| Paddling gloves                   | Bug repellent                  | Coffee pot  |
| Rain jacket, rain pants, rain hat | Camera                         |   |
| Sandals or water shoes            | Camp chair                     |   |

As trip leaders Skip & I sent a gear list. Coordinating got down via email. This enabled us to loan equipment like dry bags and ensure we only brought one 1<sup>st</sup> aid kit, one ax and one saw.....

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Collapsible water bucket  | nuts, pepperoni, beef stick, pretzel sticks, sardines, olives, veggies & dip, etc. |
| Drink Cooler  |  |
| Food Cooler   |  |
| Cutlery: large knife, spatula, can opener, serving spoons         | <b>Miscellaneous Group Items</b>   |
| Dishing washing kit (soap, scrubbers, chlorine sponge, etc.)      | First aid kit  |
| Fire starting kit(s)  | Lantern (optional)   |
| Frying pan  | Playing cards / small game(s)  |
| Garbage bags (heavy duty)   | Radio with weather band  |
| Grill   | Repair kit: duct tape, wire wraps, small wire, superglue, multi-tool               |
| Paper towels (heavy duty)   | Rope   |
| Pot holder  | Saw  |
| Pot(s)  | Small hand axe   |
| Water filter2 (2)   | <b>Back at the vehicle</b>   |
| Water jug(s)  | Cell phone   |
| <b>Cooking supplies</b>   | Duffel bag with complete set of dry clothes, shoes & socks                         |
| Coffee, tea, hot chocolate  | Extra cash / credit card   |
| Coffee creamer & sugar (optional)                                 | Baseball hat   |
| Condiments as required  |  |
| Lemonade or water flavoring                                       |  |
| Olive oil   |  |
| Salt & pepper   |  |
| Spices & / or all spice   |  |
| Tub butter or margarine   |  |
| Snacks: cheese, crackers, durable fresh fruit to be cut up, mixed |  |



We mailed lists and signed up for shared gear: tarps, saws, kitchen items as well as help with personal items.

## Canoes & Gear

- Royalex Canoes
  - Wenonah Cascade 17.5". 74 lbs. 15" depth. Shallow arch. Sides flare out continuously to the gunwale giving tremendous stability laterally. 2" rocker.
  - Old Town Camper 16'. 59 lbs. 13" depth. Flat bottom. Moderate rocker.
  - Mad River Explorer 16'. 72 lbs. 14.5" depth. Symmetrical; shallow-V hull; moderate rocker
- Each canoe outfitted
  - 25' lines on bow & stern for lining around rapids
  - Plastic jug bailer secured with parachute cord
- One throw bag



Variation in canoes and depth of the canoes, which becomes important later on.

## Meals

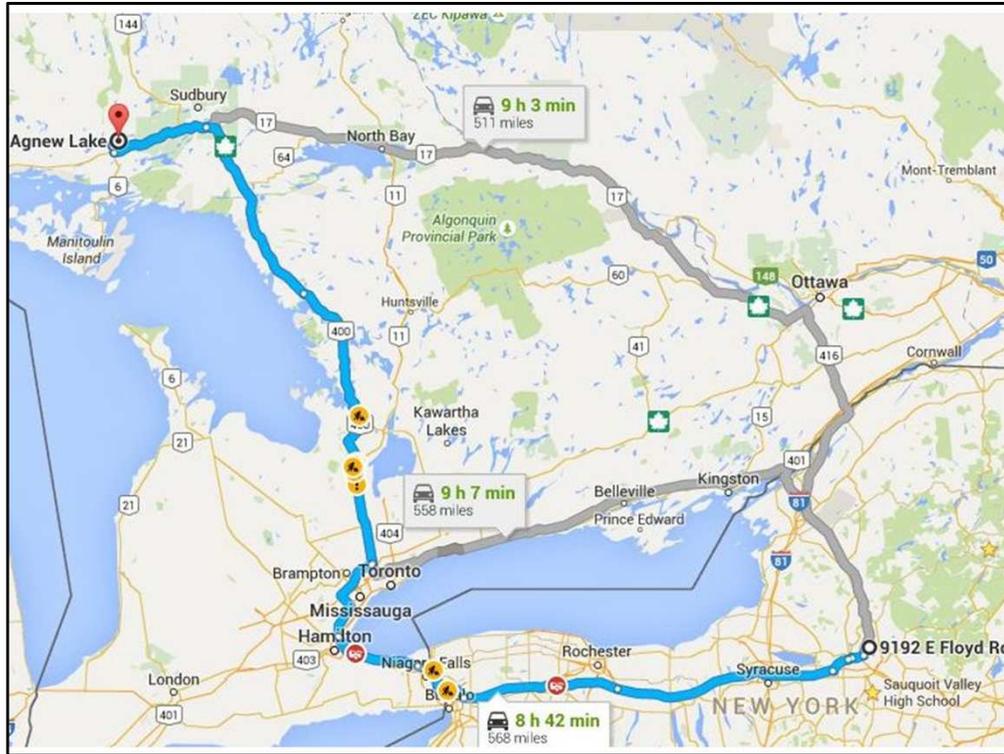
- Typically on our trips we make each person responsible for their own breakfast & lunch and we cook and share a common dinner meal.
  - Previous trips the “cook cooked”; others cut firewood, pitched tents, washed dishes, etc.
- “Afternoon Tea” 3-5 pm
  - Munchies
- Shared Dinners
  - Turkey burritos
  - Steak, potatoes, squash
  - Spanish rice
  - Hot dogs and beans
  - Vegetables and rice





Friday before departure Eric and I assembled the Yakima racks for my truck; a vex some process. Yakima DryDock hitch mount canoe rack with 78" cross bar

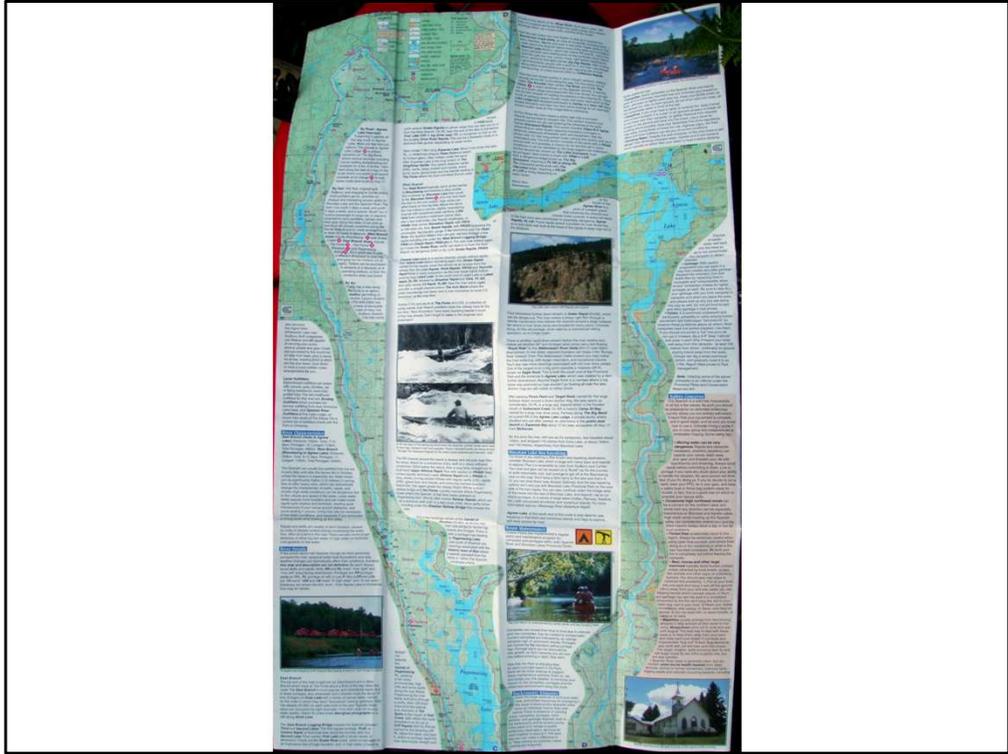
It enabled us to carry most of the gear, two canoes (Wenonah Cascade & Old Town Camper) and three passengers. Tim drove his Jeep with his gear, Steve's Mad River canoe and three passengers.



We met at my house at 7am and were on the road by 7:30am – headed to Buffalo, Toronto and NW to Agnew Lake Lodge. Toronto was hosting the Pan American games and traffic was unbelievable. We lost 1 hour in heavy stop and go traffic and almost got rear ended. We stopped in Perry Sound (home of Bobby Hull) due to a traffic accident that killed 2 and left 4 others injured. We call Agnew Lake Lodge and informed them we would arrive the next morning instead. We rented a campsite and turned in at 9pm. We arose Sunday at 5:30am, packed up and drove to Agnew Lake Lodge.

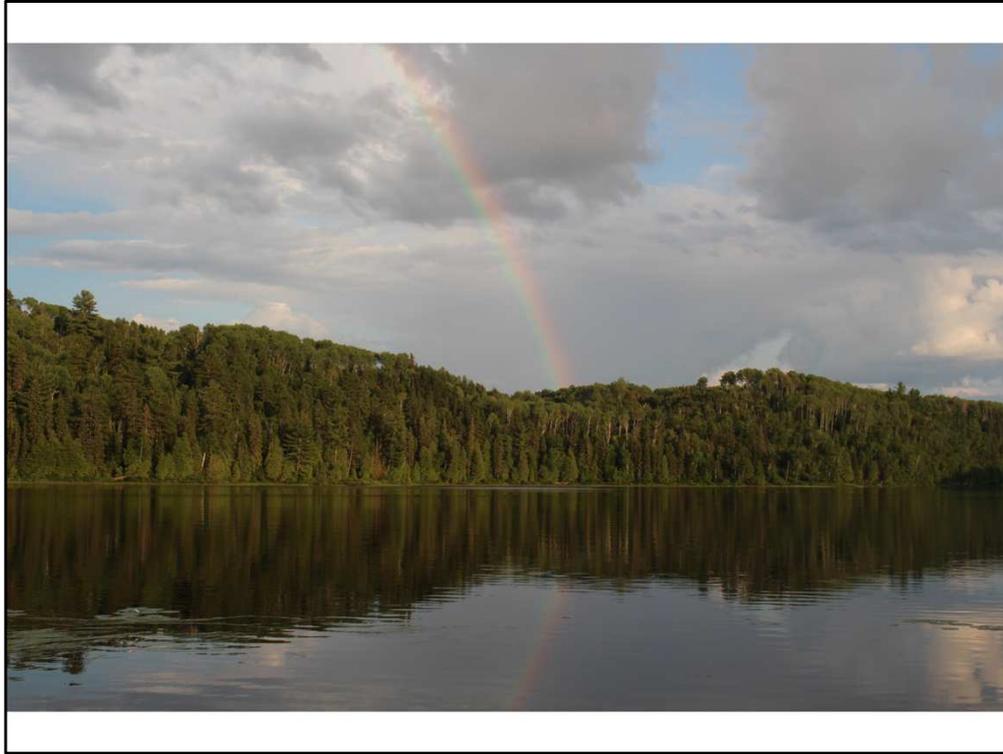


At Agnew Lake Lodge we got our shuttle drivers, fishing licenses, camping and parking permits and headed to Duke Lake – a three hour drive. We did a quick “Intro to Paddling” to teach switching sides and draw strokes and then we were off. We were on the water at 1:30pm and headed out looking for an early campsite.





We camped on a sandy point after paddling on 9th Lake for a little over 2 hours. We were hopeful the exposure on the sand spit would provide a breeze and keep the bugs away. It did, occasionally. We had some mosquitoes, but mainly biting flies – stable flies / ankle biters. We all took a quick swim to clean up but didn't stay in long due to the leeches. We agreed that each of us would be responsible for our own breakfast and lunch but we took turns making dinner. For the 1st night Steve made turkey meat burritos for dinner.



Our weather was fantastic. No rain. If anything it was a little hot.

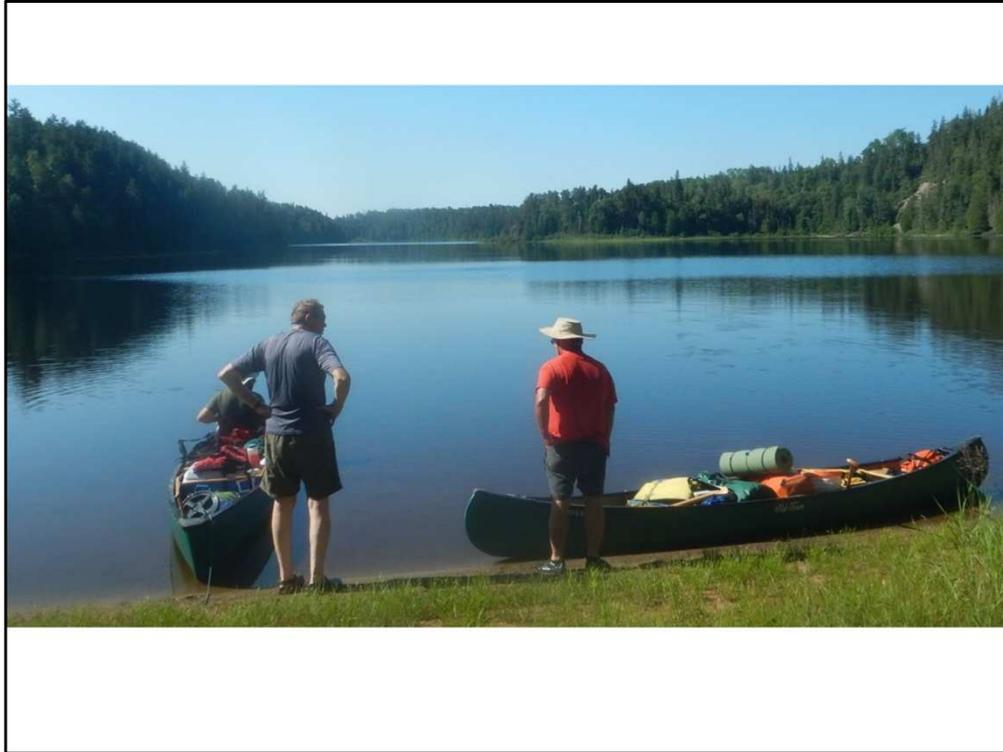




Our routine was to paddle for 60-90 minutes and then stop for a drink and snack. Skip's plan was to get us to the head of Agnew Lake on Thursday night so the paddle across the lake could be done early Friday morning while the lake was calm. To achieve this he set paddling goals of 10km on Sunday and 30km (18.5 miles) every day thereafter.



We paddled from 8am – 3pm – all lake paddling with a couple of little swifts in between. Leaving 1st Lake we followed a series of swifts and easy rapids.



The lakes were small and wind & waves were not an issue.

## Ninth Lake Pictographs



## Paddling Adjustments

- Torso rotation - the difference between paddling a canoe and paddling a kayak.
- Wide eyes on 1<sup>st</sup> rapids
- Put paddle in the water and brace
- Ruddering doesn't work without forward motion





If you make a mistake while canoeing this is your worst enemy.

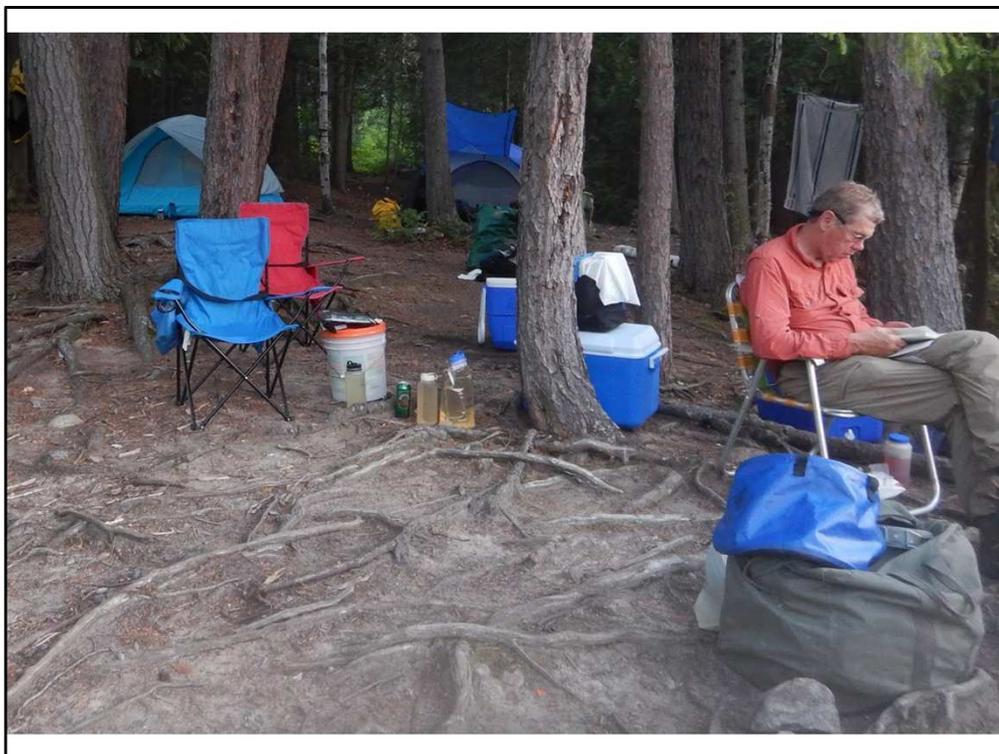


Tim and I went 1st through the first rapids we encountered. Skip and Jack went next; followed by Steve and Ski. There was a large rock towards the bottom of the rapids. Skip and Jack tried to cross to the right side of the stream and broadsided the rock and dumped.



Tim and I saved the beer and chocolate which escaped their canoe.

They used the home made bailer I issued to each canoe to empty the water from their boat – it would be used again.



We fell just short of Skip's goal for the day when we decided to stay on a point in Expansia Lake.

While Spanish River doesn't have a lot of camp sites those that exist meet the definition of a sacrifice site.

Skip and Jack made dinner: steaks, potatoes and fried squash.



Our 3rd day was a marathon day of paddling from 8:30am – 6:30 pm with a one hour break to portage around Upper Albion Rapids. We ran the Lower Albion Rapids, Railroad Rapids, Bridge Rapids and Cliff Rapids.

About 3pm we stopped at an old campsite and Jack, Tim and I went for a swim to cool off. I felt like I was overheating and needed to cool down.

We were going to stay at Cliff Rapids but the 1st site was too muddy and dark. We ran the rapids (past the nude sunbather) and found the lower two sites were taken.

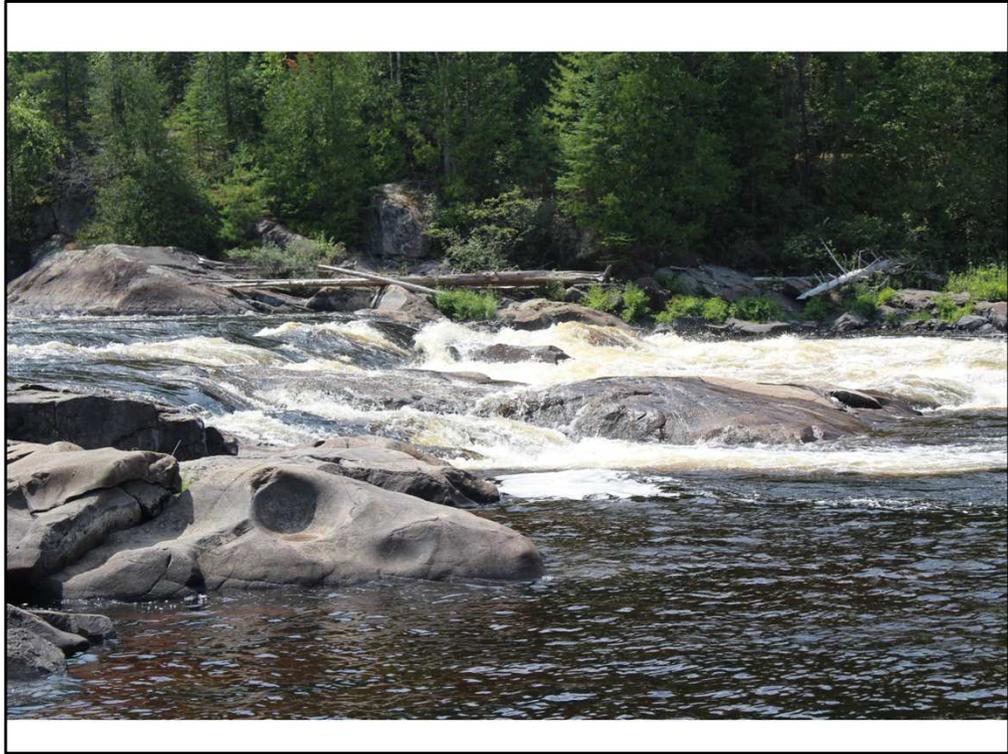


About 4km below Cliff Rapids we found an island campsite where we stayed for the night. It was buggy, but home for the night. Tim and I made carrot sticks and celery sticks stuffed with peanut butter or cheese spread as our snack and cooked hot dogs and beans for our dinner.

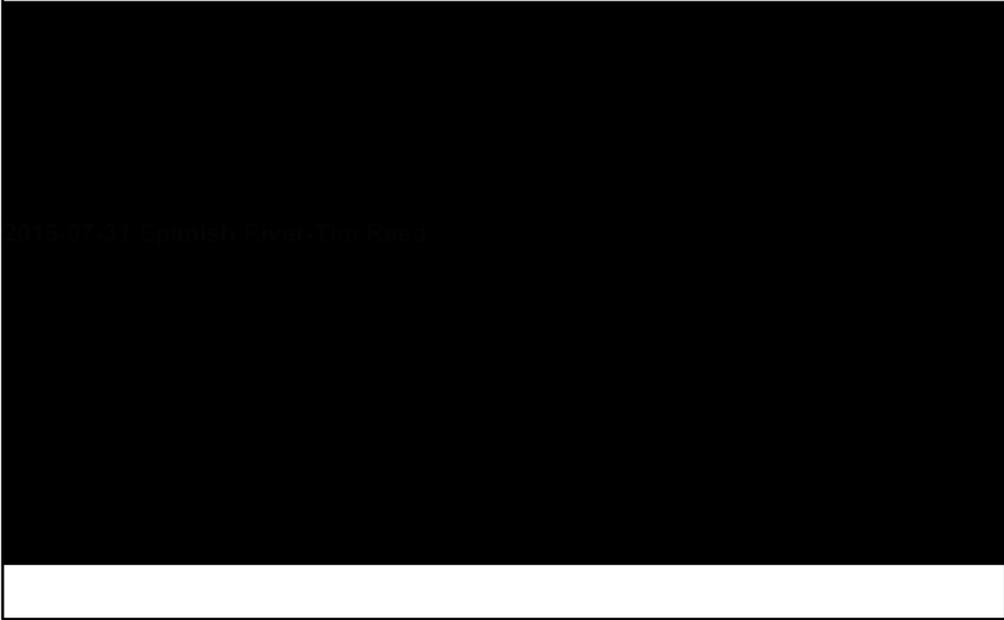
Jack & I took a swim off a nearby sand bar after dinner but the hordes of large horse flies were a menace and kept us from being out long.

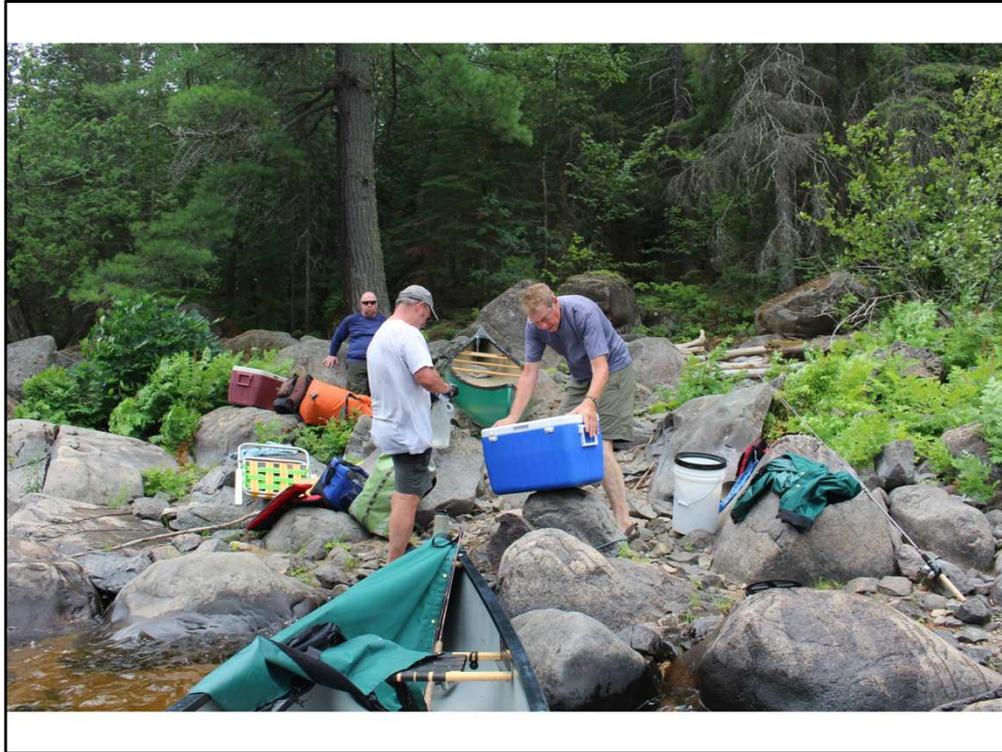


Scouting rapids we would try and get a good vantage point and identify obstacles and likely routes.

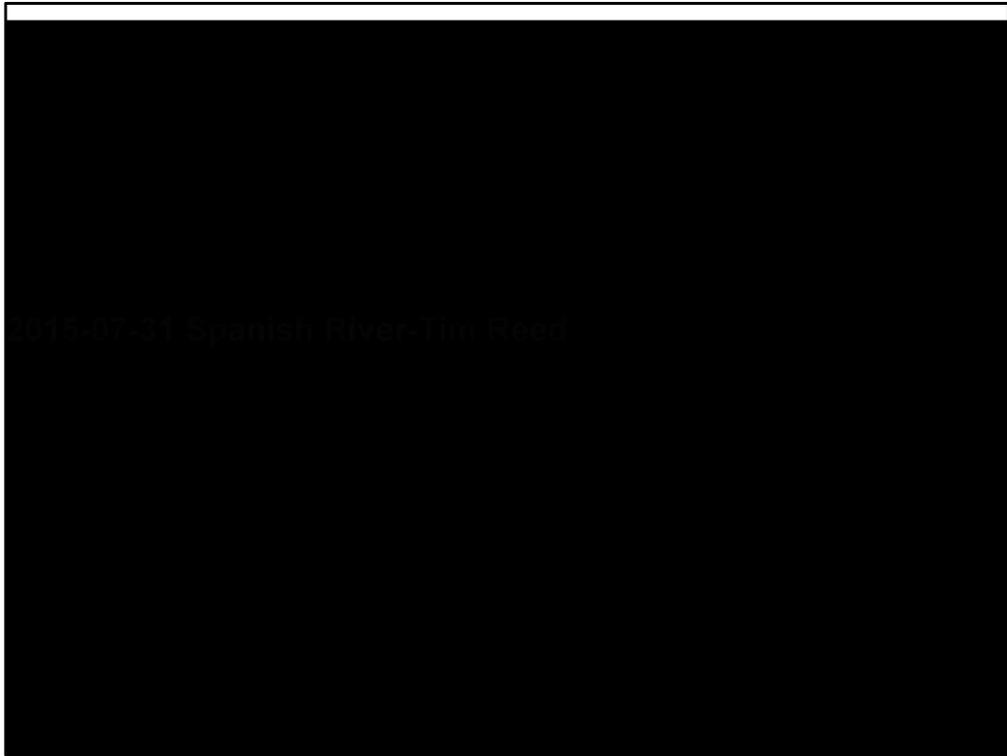


## White Water Family Shooting Rapids





Some rapids we ran, some we lined and some we portaged. In fact, on one rapid we each did



2015-07-31 Spanish River-Tim Reed



Bored by 6pm we turned in early at night. We were once again blessed with a full moon at night.



We got up early, had coffee and granola bars and packed up for our paddle across Agnew Lake. The lake was dead calm to start, but we ended up paddling into waves on our return.

## Trip Assessment

- The Spanish River was a good choice for our mix of skill levels (experienced and intermediate). The Class II & III rapids were challenging but not threatening.
- The group, gained more confidence in running rapids and maneuvering the canoes around obstacles as the trip progressed.
- Traveling with 6 people / 3 canoes was ideal. The group fit the available campsites and we all traveled at a similar pace.

## Trip Assessment – 2

- Despite planning a 6 day trip the group decided to try and return on Saturday. We spent 1/2 day on the water Sunday; Monday-Thursday as full days on the water and 1/2 day out on Friday. (5 days total time)
- While a little more “down time” would have been appreciated on a couple of the long days paddling when given the extra time on the last day we got bored.

## Trip Assessment – 3

- The next trip should have a 'transportation officer' responsible for road maps and alternative routing to/from our destination. We relied too heavily on our GPS which routed us through Toronto and heavy traffic. The drive to/from Agnew Lake Lodge was excessive.
- Our meals worked out great and we had an abundance of food and snacks. The two burner propane stove worked out well.
- The cooks shouldn't also be responsible for washing dishes.



We used a Katalyn BaseCamp water filter. Our water filter issues were troublesome. Our water filter got clogged despite our pre-filtering of the lake water. It has gradually slowed down to the past few days we have had to back flush every 16-32 oz. We finally got enough water by letting it drip all night long into the big collapsible water bucket. We did multi-layered pre-filtering of our water, but probably should have let our water settle in the camp bucket for 10-15 minutes before pre-filtering. We had another Basecamp filter and a small emergency Sawyer water filter if needed.



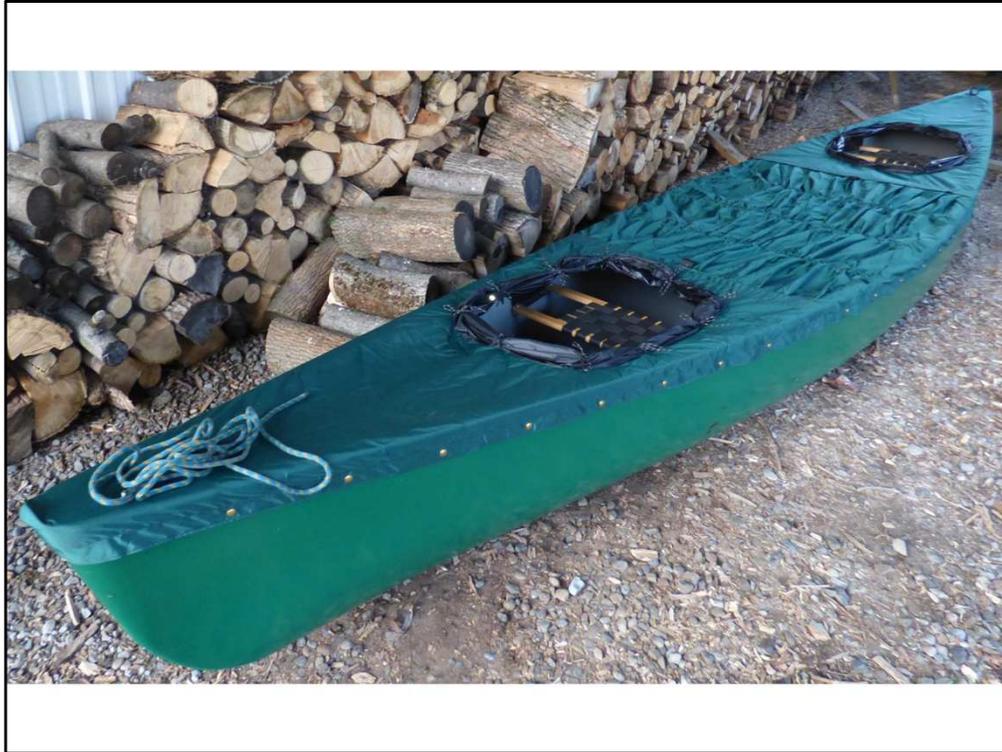
We should have squeezed from 4 coolers down to 3; one per canoe. Sometimes there is a tendency to take items because you have them. One cooler was packing food/snacks that didn't have to be refrigerated.  
Cumbersome, communication issue



The Mad River and Wenonah Cascade canoes were well suited for the trip. The canoe cover was a nice feature.

The 16' Old Town Camper canoe lacked a little freeboard in the middle and that's where Skip & Jack shipped most of their water.

Bailers for each canoe were useful.



Tim got a chestful of water, but little made it's way into the canoe. The canoe cover worked well. It was easy to access the snaps stayed on and it shaded our lower legs and feet. It saved us on at least two occasions from getting serious water in the canoe.



Spanish River contains Walleye, Northern Pike, Lake and Brook Trout.

I have come to the conclusion that you are either taking a canoe trip or a fishing trip – they don't mix. Once the paddlers are in the water they tend to paddle, while the fishermen want to explore promising locations. Four of our group bought fishing permits: Steve and Ski fished the most, Tim some and I never used my fishing equipment. In the morning we tended to have coffee, breakfast and get paddling to beat the heat. In the evenings we went swimming, ate dinner, and rested.

Despite planning to fish the group didn't invest as much time in fishing as perhaps planned. Steve and Ski did the most fishing, but much of that was trolling while paddling.

## WypALL Reusable Wipes

- Strong, absorbent, reusable wipes with no adhesives leaving no residue
- Stronger than paper towels, re-usable
- L30 size are 13"x13"



## Bucket with Screw Top Lid

- Waterproof, not bear proof
- Handle for portaging
- Easy access for snacks
- Sit on





Aluminum arm chairs. Light weight. \$5 at a garage sale – if you are lucky. If you are sure about your gear staying dry you place these on the bottom of your canoe and stack your bags on top.

## Summary

- We thoroughly enjoyed this trip on the Spanish River, covering 90 miles of river in less than five full days of canoeing
- Questions?

Every year about this time we plan a canoeing trip,  
bringing all our canoeing buddies the group is led by Skip.  
Heading north to Spanish River, there are sights to see,  
paddling down those Spanish rapids, classes II and III.

The Spanish landscape is beautiful and a wondrous sight,  
we saw ducks, ospreys, moose and the full moon at night.  
But the lure of the river was running down those waves,  
we ran all the rapids except those named as graves.

*Now we're paddling the Spanish River going fast splash,  
splash;  
if we dump at this one it will be our last.  
Paddling Spanish rapids, classes II and III;  
help me keep this canoe straight through these rapids if you  
please.*

Paddling down Spanish River for all of five days  
Skip consulted all the maps we thought he knew the way.  
Lakes and swifs and rapids, the water ran downstream  
We paddled 30 kilometers every day 'cause Skip was mean.

Bouncing off the rocks and boulders paddle Steve and Ski,  
Following right behind them paddle Tim and me.  
Jack is ruddering, Skip is prying, trying to keep them  
straight.

At the bottom of the rapids we will quietly wait.

*Now we're paddling the Spanish River going fast splash,  
splash;  
if we dump at this one it will be our last.  
Paddling Spanish rapids, classes II and III;  
help me keep this canoe straight through these rapids if you  
please.*

Now it's looking dire for our boys and their sideways canoe,  
They are floating towards the rocks and we don't know  
what they'll do.

Watching beers and chocolates floating down the waves.  
Leaving Jack and Skip alone, it's snacks and beers we'll  
save.