



THE WILDERNESS CANOEIST

Logo contest details page 6

Volume 2 Number 4

December 1975

Chairman's letter

The Wilderness Canoeist is pleased to present a letter from the chairman of the Wilderness Canoe Association, Gord Fenwick. The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the executive can all be found near the bottom of this page.

Fellow Canoeists,

Best wishes in this Christmas season to you and yours!

A great deal of activity has been going on in the W.C.A. since September, and I would like to review this progress for you.

On September 20, I reported that we had more than a hundred memberships; as of October 25, there were 125 memberships, and you can find a map of the distribution of members on page six.

Late in September, I met with Terri Green of the National and Provincial Parks Association. We discussed the Missinaibi River, and the possible involvement of the W.C.A. in creation of a new national park, Atikaki, on the Ontario-Manitoba border. These matters I will bring up at our next executive meeting on December 12th.

The Missinaibi is still very much an issue, and you can participate by sending letters to the Hon. Leo Bernier, Minister of Natural Resources, and to the Premier, Bill Davis. Show your support for the creation of a wild river park on the Missinaibi, and send copies to our newsletter, so we can voice your concern too.

The W.C.A. still has some copies left of its Bulletin 1, a reprint of two trip reports on the river, one from 1912, and the other more recent. Send \$1.00 to our secretary if you still want a copy. One of our members, Don Revell of St. Catharines, is planning a trip down the Missinaibi this coming summer.

W.C.A. members Charles Rodgers and his family had some sad news for us about the Missinaibi River this past summer. They found a heavy volume of traffic on the river, and there was garbage in piles at some campsites, including beer bottles. It causes me to feel very angry; we must all pass on the message of caring for our environment. We may be there only once, but what about the people who follow us? CARE!

If you are planning any wilderness trip for next summer, write to the newsletter about it, and you may find some more interested paddlers.



Summer canoe trip reports on pages 2 and 3

Inside the newsletter, you will find reports about the Canoe Ontario meetings, with some comment about standards and wilderness ethics. If our postal service comes back, make an effort to write with your ideas or comments to our editor, who wants to keep as much dialogue among the members as possible.

Our membership chairman, Ralph Kitchen, is presently considering ways and means of increasing our membership; we will have extra copies of this newsletter available, so let Ralph know if you have any opportunities to use them. Ralph has also arranged for the W.C.A. to have its own booth at the Sportsmen's Show next spring.

Finally, let me emphasize that our executive wants to serve you, and would welcome your participation or attendance at any meetings (no meetings are closed in the W.C.A.). We are presently setting up a nominating committee to find new blood for the February elections. The most likely date for the general meeting is February 14, and several sites are being considered. If you have a meeting place in mind, contact one of the executive soon. And, if you feel that W.C.A. material has not been reaching you, contact the secretary or one of the other executive, and we will try to rectify the problem for you.

Looking forward to meeting many of you on some of our winter outings!

Gord Fenwick

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Summer Canoe Trips

A successful summer canoe trip in wilderness areas of Canada will require careful planning, and preparations for 1976 trips are already underway. If you are thinking about a trip, perhaps these accounts from W.C.A. members about their 1975 adventures will assist you.

Attawapiskat River

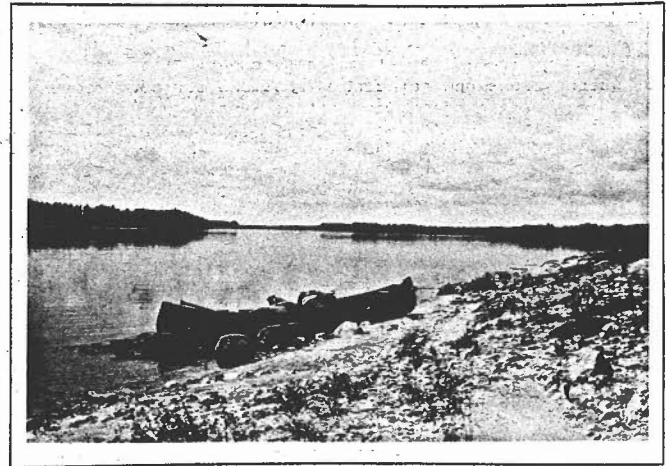
by Cam Salsbury

It was 8.00 a.m. on the morning of July 8 when we pushed off from the bridge over the Otokwin River, about 200 miles north of Lakehead. Two days ago we had been sweltering in a Toronto heat wave. To-day a brisk west wind chilled us with air temperatures around 50°Fr. The contrast helped to emphasize the distance from southern Ontario civilization. We were embarking on a three-week wilderness canoe trip to the Indian village of Attawapiskat on James Bay, 500 miles away.

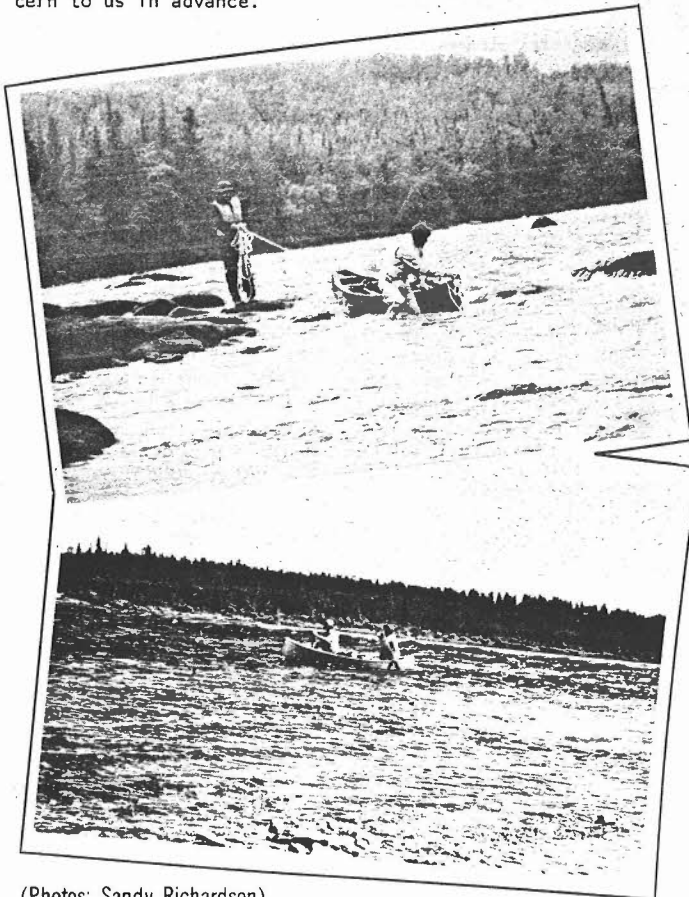
Before stopping for lunch on the first day, we had already encountered our first fellow travellers. Wilderness! What a letdown! Had we come all this distance only to find more tourists? No, it turned out that we met no one else except the natives and local residents for the rest of our journey. We enjoyed a very satisfying wilderness experience for the entire length of the trip.

The trip naturally divided itself into three sections. The Otokwin River led us through relatively hilly country with numerous rapids and exciting fast water. This was our slowest-moving segment because of the many obstructions, but perhaps also the most exciting and scenic.

We then travelled through a chain of lakes eventually leading to Attawapiskat Lake and the Indian village of Lansdowne House. The weather was favourable here with the winds either behind us or non-existent. The possibility of heavy winds on this lake had been a major concern to us in advance.



Above: Tranquil scene on the lower Attawapiskat River



After leaving Lansdowne House, we reached the river we had come to canoe: the Attawapiskat. Any concerns we had felt over our slow progress in the early stages turned out to be unfounded. The river was huge and, although flowing through relatively flat land, it moves at a good pace. We found little trouble covering fifty miles or more each day on this section. Our only difficulty was finding good camp-sites because of the poor drainage of the surrounding area. The last part of the river was the most interesting where the bedrock changes to limestone and the river often splits into many channels, often flowing at high speed.

We did not feel the trip was as difficult as we had thought it might be, since there were only six portages that we found it necessary to make. The legendary black flies of the area were also found to be less of a problem than anticipated, although the cool weather may have helped us here. It was our feeling that making the trip early in the season was beneficial not only in helping us avoid other travellers, but also in providing us with relatively high water levels.

We reached the village of Attawapiskat early on the morning of July 28. Following a flight to Timmins and an all-night bus ride, we found ourselves standing in the bus station in Toronto during the morning rush hour, less than twenty-four hours after leaving the wilderness.

Left: Lining and running rapids below Lansdowne House

(Photos: Sandy Richardson)

Moisie River

by John Fallis

To the impoverished (teachers, students), the Moisie River is a good river to canoe. After reaching Sept-Isles, Quebec, on the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, one may board an Iron Ore Co. of Canada train, and ride slowly but inexpensively to Labrador City. From there, the Moisie is only thirty miles away over a divide. The river then guides you back to the St. Lawrence only fifteen miles from your starting point.

To the river and rapids fanatic, the Moisie is a must. From the headwaters to the sea, a distance of 300 miles, the river drops 1800 feet. This drop includes many stretches of fast water, gravel-bed rapids, 1000-yard rock gardens, and even waterfalls.

To the photographer and nature buff, this section of Quebec opens new horizons. Woodland caribou, moose and beaver are evident, as well as interesting moss and scrub vegetation. The actual river is very beautiful; while the river drops 1800 feet, the surrounding land retains its elevation, so the gorges become deeper and more spectacular downstream, with steep slopes as high as 2000 feet.

To those who don't like sunbanning on a canoe trip, this route is perfect. Clouds of black flies, especially on the upper sections, and a good rainfall on most days, can be expected.

Six of us boarded the train on July 1, and the next day we set out into the Labrador wilderness. At supper, we were bombed by hailstones the size of marbles, and

had to push our food under our bug hats into our eager mouths. However, we weren't out of civilization yet, as we could hear the constant roar of trucks on a nearby road to a new town and ore deposit. Eventually, we hitchhiked down this road to Lake Carheil, and worked upstream for two days until we reached the Pekans River, the west branch of the Moisie.

The next ten days of the trip were superb. Unlimited rapids, and no signs of previous trips (no portages, fireplaces, or garbage) gave us a feeling of remoteness. We enjoyed a slow pace, excellent campsites by beautiful waterfalls, and suppers of trout and pike on two occasions.

The point where the Pekans River tumbles into the Moisie is quite awe-inspiring. The drop is almost 300 feet in less than a mile. It makes for quite a portage, but the trip back to the river and the series of falls is worth it all. The noise is deafening, especially at a spot where the river narrows from 50 yards to about seven, and drops twenty feet.

The lower Moisie is also magnificent, with steep gorges rising through the morning mists, and towering standing waves. Sometimes our ferrying work was a little suspect, but we managed to avoid the killer waves. The final few miles were fairly flat, but we battled a strong head-wind off the Gulf, and ran against the tide.

This is an outstanding river, which we thoroughly enjoyed, but it may become a hydro-electric site soon; so what else is new?

Nestawkanow River

by Gord Fenwick

The Wilderness Canoeist received a very interesting account of a trip down the Nestawkanow River in central Quebec, by Gord Fenwick and Ken Brailsford. Space does not permit us to run the entire article here, although you can get a copy free by writing to the editor. The following is a condensed version of Gord's account.

The Nestawkanow River provides a challenging trip of about two weeks' length, and is within easy access of most W.C.A. members. We drove through Montreal, then north through the St.-Jean valley into the central Quebec forest, to Chibougamau. Past this town, the road becomes gravel, but there are mileage markers. Between Mile 96 and 97, we began our trip at the bridge over the Sepanakosipi River, which flows into Lac Albanel. We worked up this river for two days, eventually reaching a swampy divide between it and the Nestawkanow.

We were lucky enough to find a series of winding streams, and avoided most of the portages we had expected. This high marsh country was teeming with fish and wildlife, and was very beautiful despite its remote qualities. Eventually, we worked down a series of shallow creeks into Nestawkanow Lake.

The Nestawkanow River flows almost due south, and offers a great variety of rapids, some which we had to portage, but many which we shot. On the first two days after leaving the lake, we encountered more than a dozen rapids, some longer than a mile. There were five portages, which averaged about six hundred paces, but these

were quite dangerous, because our feet often broke through the thin moss cover between the boulders below.

The next day, our paddling skills were really tested, as we worked gradually down through a wild set of rapids. Back-paddling, and twisting through numerous boulders; we narrowly missed swamping on several occasions. Then we had ten miles of calm water, before another set of rapids. Once, we came very close to a dunking, as our canoe caught on a rock and we spun around into the current. Fortunately, we eased off this rock in time to avoid capsizing.

Soon afterwards, we came across a party of six men who had come downstream with little camping or paddling experience. They were living off the land, and attempting to fix their badly damaged canoes. Fortunately, their spirits were high, and the fish and berries were plentiful. We promised to alert the air service to rescue them in a few days' time.

The wildest rapids of all came below their campsite. We spent most of one afternoon picking a course down the wild water, after a portage around a waterfall. The river provided many thrilling moments, but our trip was running well behind schedule. After two days of hard work, we reached the Chamouchouane River, and a bridge construction site. Here we decided to end our trip, and as we retrieved our vehicle upstream, we were glad to see our six stranded friends returning by bush plane.



Discounts to WCA Members



Margesson's Sporting Goods

17 Adelaide St. E.

ABC Sports

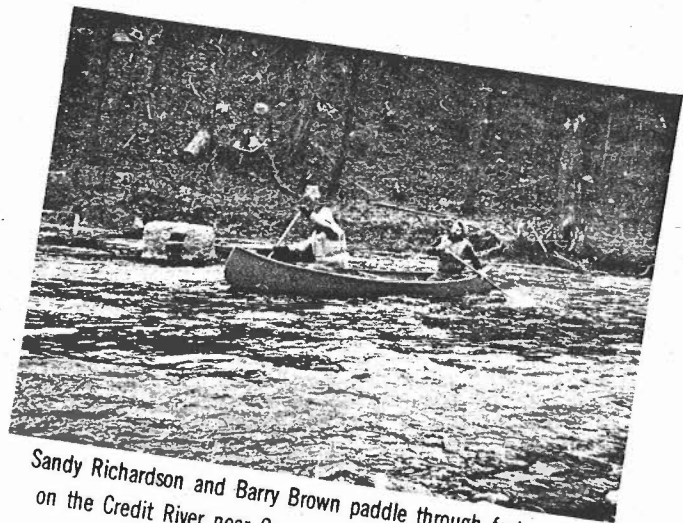
Yonge and Wellesley

Toronto

A 10 percent discount is available on most items on presentation of membership card and identification



Chisholm's Mills on the Moira River between Tweed and Belleville. (photograph by K. Brailsford)



Sandy Richardson and Barry Brown paddle through fast water on the Credit River near Georgetown. (photograph by R. Smith)

WCA Autumn Canoe Trips

by Sandy Richardson

Our new format allows us a bigger and better outings section. Beginning with this issue, we will be including photographs and first-hand stories about many of our trips, written by the leaders or other participants. This should allow more of us to share in the wilderness experiences offered by our outings.

Fall outings continued to be as popular as ever. Briefly, here's what happened:

Unfortunately, the attempt to save money by mailing the last newsletter third-class meant that our first trip came and went before most members heard about it. However, two canoes braved wind, rain and hail to paddle 15 miles of the Saugueen River below Paisley. As so often seems to happen, the sun came out as we finished.

Thirty-two paddlers topped off the September general meeting with a 10-mile run down a shallow Moira River below Tweed. It wasn't as unwieldy as it sounds; we canoed in four small groups.

A full complement of six canoes retraced part of the historic fur-trade route down the Mattawa River. Fine fall colours and beautiful weather were made to order for the trip.

We still do not know what the Crowe River is like. The scheduled scouting trip was called off when many of the paddlers had to drop out.

Four canoes participated in the Long Lake outing. Low water and numerous fallen trees and beaver dams slowed their progress, and they finished the trip with a "pleasant" moonlight paddle down Deer Bay Creek.

Five canoes turned out for an enjoyable week-end trip down the Head and Black Rivers. Finally, three canoes braved November temperatures to finish off our season of canoe outings on the upper Credit River.

Looking back over the whole year, and our first attempt to run an outing programme for W.C.A. members, I think that we call it an unqualified success. From April through November we scheduled 18 outings and only 4 failed to come off. These ranged from easy one-day outings to a 5-day fly-in wilderness experience. The total participation in all the outings was 152. If we exclude from this total those members counted more than once, we had 59 members and 18 non-members participating in at least one trip. With a response like this, we will certainly be continuing the outings programme next year. In fact, we are already lining up trips; if you would like to lead one, please get in touch by February 15.



Cam Salsbury surveys one of the many challenging rapids on the scenic Mattawa River, near North Bay.

(photograph by R. Smith)

WINTER OUTINGS 1975-76



For those who are not only canoeists, but four-season wilderness travellers, we offer a selection of snowshoeing, X-C skiing, and winter camping outings. Generally speaking, all that is needed is your own equipment. Call the trip leader for complete details at least 2 weeks prior to the outing. (The usual waiver forms will be required.)

December 20-23: Algonquin Park

If you have canoed Algonquin in the summer, this 4-day snowshoe-camping trip will provide an opportunity to experience another facet of this beautiful part of Ontario. It will be a fairly strenuous outing for people with some winter camping experience. Max. 6 people.

Leader: Gord Fenwick; Scarborough 431-3343

January 10: Orono Field Centre

A day of cross-country skiing for the entire family at the site of our fall general meeting. The thousand-acre site has numerous trails and about a dozen skis for those who do not have their own.

Leader: King Baker; Bowmanville 987-4608

January 18: Buckhorn Wilderness Centre

A day of cross-country skiing along the many trails of the B W C north of Peterborough. It will be a relatively strenuous family outing - trails averaging about 15 km.

Leaders: Dave and Anneke Auger; Lindsay 324-9359

January 24-25: Dorset-Algonquin Area

A winter camping outing for both snowshoers and skiers. This will be a relatively short trip to allow those with little winter camping experience to taste the joys of wilderness living in the winter. Max. 8-10 people.

Leaders: Cam Salsbury; Don Mills 445-9017
Sandy Richardson; Don Mills 429-3944

January 31: Bruce Trail - Wiarton

A one-day outing suitable for both snowshoers and skiers along the Bruce Trail, overlooking scenic Georgian Bay. Suitable for the whole family, the trip will cover about 8 km.

Leaders: Bob and Susan Bassett; Owen Sound 376-6961

February 6-8: Killarney

A week-end camping trip in ruggedly beautiful Killarney Park for snowshoers and skiers with some winter camping experience. (If we get a holiday week-end in February, this outing might change to that week-end.) Max. 6 people.

Leaders: Finn Hansen and Mary Jo Cullen; Toronto 922-0151

February 21: Burley Falls Area

A one-day cross-country ski outing for experienced skiers covering about 15 km.

Leader: King Baker; Bowmanville 987-4608

March 6: Horseshoe Valley

A one-day cross-country ski outing. A variety of trails makes this area suitable for any level of ability. Average 8-9 kms. Ski rentals available.

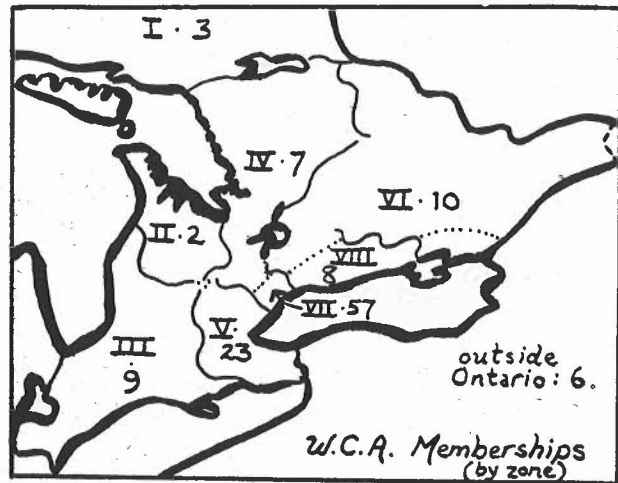
Leaders: Diana Dennis; Toronto 962-2951
Sandy Richardson; Don Mills 429-3944

Where are our members?

Our chairman, Gord Fenwick, has produced a map which shows the distribution of our memberships across Ontario. There were 125 memberships in all on October 25, and since this included 52 family memberships, the total number of people in the W.C.A. comes to more than 200.

The map shows that almost half the memberships come from Metro Toronto, with another 20% from the Hamilton-Niagara region. Other members are scattered through southern, central and eastern Ontario, with 6 additional memberships from outside the province.

One important goal of the association over the coming year should be to increase the membership outside the major urban areas, before the W.C.A. becomes yet another urban-based conservation club. A healthy balance between city and country memberships would be best for the future of the W.C.A.



WCA Logo Contest

The W.C.A. must still choose a logo, which would appear on all correspondence, as well as on the cover of the Wilderness Canoeist. If you have a submission, get it in to the executive by January 20, so that it can be drawn up to appear in the next newsletter. A choice will be made by a general vote of the membership, based on the entries published in the next edition.

Please, no more stylized beavers in cute poses. A logo should be simple, yet distinctive to be most effective. First prize in the logo contest is an escorted paddle down the mighty Don River with our chairman and vice-chairman. Not recommended for the faint-hearted!

Paddle to the Olympics

Some of our members will recall the name Hugh Pepper; Hugh was formerly with Loyalist College in Belleville. Now he is teaching in northern Alberta, at Demarais, where all of his students are Indian or Metis. Hugh writes that he is living in very beautiful, wild country, about 300 miles north-west of Edmonton, around Wabasca Lake.

Next summer, Hugh is planning a cross-Canada canoe trip for some of his students, from Alberta to the Montreal Olympics. The plan would be to paddle most of the distance, with detours around the larger lakes, with about six weeks of travelling.

If this voyage sounds interesting to you, contact the editor for a copy of Hugh's letter, and/or write to Hugh at the following address:

Hugh Pepper,
Demarais, Alberta.

(403) 861-3967.

Good luck on this enterprise, Hugh, and keep us informed on your outdoor education programmes in wildest Alberta!

Canoe Ontario Meetings

Canoe Ontario, if you haven't already guessed, is another government agency, which directs funds and expertise down to the local levels of sport, in this case, recreational canoeing. Last October 17-19, they held a planning week-end, which our fearless leader Gord Fenwick attended. For some raw opinion on this event, check page seven of this newsletter; here, we will report on the results of the meetings.

On the first evening, delegates were introduced to the C.O. staff, and a general meeting followed.

On Saturday, groups of eight met to discuss the 'supergoals' of C.O., such as (i) generating wider participation in canoeing, (ii) leadership, technical development, and water safety, (iii) communications, (iv) fund-raising, (v) preservation of our wilderness, and (vi) historical perspectives.

Then, on Sunday, delegates were presented with typed reports of all these sessions, and all of the suggested programmes were shaped into half a dozen super-goals.

One important change in emphasis came after John McRuer (Algonquin Waterways) had insisted that any increase in canoeing must not lead to undue damage to our natural environment.

The W.C.A. participation had one important result also, as one resolution called for: *the informing of the public about wilderness concerns, and the co-operation with other sympathetic organizations towards the preservation of the wilderness.*

Most members of the W.C.A. have strong reservations about the growth of such organizations as Canoe Ontario. However, as our chairman puts it, we must keep in touch in order to lobby for desirable goals, and to speak out against actions which we feel would not be in the best interests of recreational or wilderness canoeing.

A question of Standards

by Roger Smith

Whether we like it or not, as members of the Wilderness Canoe Association, we are faced with the issue of canoeing standards in Ontario. These standards will be set, whether we want them or not. At our recent general meeting, a resolution reached the floor which underlined the confusion which many of us presently feel on this question. The motion was to the effect that the W.C.A. not concern itself with canoeing standards at all, since the question of personal standards was an individual matter. This motion was presented as an alternative to the adoption of a committee on standards, which would find a consensus in the W.C.A. and report to our next general meeting.

Although only three people voted in favour of the motion, most members wished to express support for the philosophical position which had given it birth. The majority of W.C.A. members (but not all) continue to feel disturbed by the concept of a government agency which formulates and regulates standards for recreational canoeing. And few people can be surprised at this feeling, once they understand that each person's communion with the wilderness is unique and individual, and not gladly shared with some nameless bureaucrats or their million polished directives.

However, as recreational canoeists, and more generally as citizens of Ontario, we're stuck with the aforementioned state of affairs. Most people at our general meeting spoke of a need to be realistic, and to lobby for our position wherever the need arises in the next few years.

The need has, in fact, already arisen. An organization which calls itself Canoe Ontario has been created; already, it claims to speak for all canoeists everywhere. Lost in the jungle of its supergoals and think sessions was the basic notion that perhaps some Ontario canoeists did not ask, or even want, Canoe Ontario to speak for them. When our chairman, Gord Fenwick, approached the group to find out whether or not we had a voice in C.O., he was told fairly briskly that the supreme body did not admit just *anybody* to its meetings. However, Canoe Ontario did not anticipate that Citizen Fenwick was, unlike the computerized Average Canoeist, a Real Person, with a wellknown dislike for self-appointed functionaries.

However, the W.C.A.'s admission to the inner sanctum was not the only obstacle to our participation. Once in the posh Skyline Hotel, our chairman had to exercise some hefty draw strokes just to receive the privilege of being heard (remember when that was considered to be a right?)

It would seem, thankfully, that in the confrontation between Canoe Ontario and Gord Fenwick that Canoe Ontario has emerged in a modified frame of mind. We can be thankful because, like so many other modern agencies, Canoe Ontario acts as though we exist for its benefit, and not (as it should be) the other way round.

Once we have registered our strong dislike for imposed standards, we should be able to explain our own personal standards. After all, as members of the W.C.A., we likely do considerably more canoeing in an average year than some bureaucrats do in a lifetime. Moreover, our safety record is enviable; our greatest risks seem to come while driving to and from the rivers. We are not oriented in a competitive way - although some of our members are highly skilled, many of us would readily admit to being novices or intermediates in technique.

The whole concept of qualifications for canoeing seems grossly unfair. As a sport, canoeing is much more complicated than, say, swimming, where a simple performance criterion can be applied. No two canoeists will handle a stress situation in the same way, but there will be a variety of successful approaches. Also, while a failure may be explained afterwards in terms of faulty technique, it may also be a question of luck. We have all been through rapids in our day where the difference between a dry run and swamping was the depth of some unseen rock, or the splash from some unpredictable wave.

Another difficult question is that of safety. There are some rapids where even the most adventurous among us would wear life-jackets, while there are some calm stretches of river where all but the non-swimmers would remove them. We learn through experience to be very cautious - to scout almost every riffle, to wear life-jackets even where there is minimal danger, and to portage some rapids in remote areas that we feel we could safely shoot. A person with the wilderness canoeist's zest for living is not a likely candidate for acts of dare-devilry.

However, we all hear scare stories about first-timers who blunder down the worst stretches of white water with little or no paddling skill. Worse, we hear about camp 'instructors' who set off on wild rivers with neither the paddling skills nor leadership abilities required for a safe trip. Also, most of us are familiar with those thoughtless people who crash noisily through a wild area, almost as though they were afraid of the silence which would otherwise greet them. If we don't hear them, we will surely see the evidence of their passage, in the form of mountains of garbage or acres of disturbed countryside.

What can we do to prevent these problems in recreational canoeing? It seems to me that the least useful approach is legislation or 'standards' from some nameless agency. We already have the example of highway driving to convince us that if people want to behave irresponsibly, then no body of laws or standards in the world can stop them. It is better for us, as individuals, to think about the root causes of the problems, and to act on these matters as a first priority. What social or emotional factors would prompt a person to go out and misuse his natural heritage in the first place? Where do children first learn either good or bad standards of canoeing, or any other activity?

Think about it for just a little while, and you will realize what our legislators will never comprehend: people who really care about standards are already busy setting them by example in their own lives. Hopefully, this is what the W.C.A. is all about.

Members are invited to respond to this article, or to comment on any other issues which affect canoeists, by writing to Roger Smith, Box 2073, Orillia, Ontario.

Cover photograph: Nahanni River, N.W.T., below Virginia Falls.
(photograph by S. Richardson)

THE WILDERNESS CANOEIST

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The New Wilderness Ethic: Leave no Trace

by Sandy Richardson

As we look to the future, there is every indication that the urban exodus to wilderness areas will continue to increase. Equally apparent is the fact that, as wilderness use increases, so will the environmental impact associated with such heavy use. For those of us who have come to know and appreciate the wilderness experience as one in which we can renew our interrelationships with nature, the future portends a substantial reduction in the quality of this experience, unless we all work to change our ways. We need a new set of *Wilderness Ethics*.

The old pioneer camping ethic, still propounded by many books and organizations, of natural shelters, elaborate fires, rustic furniture, etc. has no place in the fast-diminishing wilderness of to-day. This approach is as destructive to our environment as is the modern "disposable" technology that leaves foil packages, polyethylene sheets, discarded flashlights and lighters, etc. scattered about the forests. Last, but not least, we have our enthusiasm for mass participation, and the large organized trips, which cannot help but overwhelm and leave their destructive mark on the local ecology.

The credo of the new Wilderness Ethic must be LEAVE NO TRACE. We must blend into the environment in every way, not stand out. Both the survival of the wilderness and the quality of our experience in it demand this.

The basis for lessening our individual impact upon the wilderness should be the study of ecology by every person who takes to the wild lands. This study of life systems and the interrelationships of their component parts should enrich the wilderness traveller's own pleasure, by allowing the person to fit into the ecosystems visited as unobtrusively as possible.

To travel unobtrusively means that we must choose means of travel which leave no trace in sight, smell or sound. Thus, we can travel by foot, by hand-paddled canoe, by skis or by snowshoes. The argument against this approach is that many people are not physically able to hike, paddle or ski, and have as much right to enjoy the wilderness as those who are fit. However, wilderness accessible by mechanized travel is, by definition, not wilderness at all. Such a person has no more 'right' to enjoy the wilderness than he or she may have to participate in other sports or activities which require certain levels of skill or conditioning. However, in reality, almost any person can enter the wilderness by unobtrusive means, in some cases despite a physical or mental handicap, with the assistance of sympathetic friends. As for those with no such handicap who claim that wilderness travel is too arduous, we might well conclude that they are too lazy or too comfort-oriented.

To live unobtrusively in the wilderness means that we must carry our own shelter. The days when we could cut bough beds and build natural shelters is long past. We must stay in one place only a short length of time, to avoid creating a lasting impression on the area. Further, we must strictly limit our use of fire. Fire is perhaps one of the most difficult habits to give up; we feel a "need" for a campfire. However, in terms of environmental impact and efficiency, stoves are superior. But if we must cling to fires, then we must learn to keep them small, to use wood already scattered about the site, and finally, to extinguish all traces of our fire. A sodden pile of ashes and discarded foil may be enough to prevent a forest fire, but it leaves an unsightly mess for the next traveller. We must spend as much time learning to remove the traces of a fire as we do in learning to light fires.

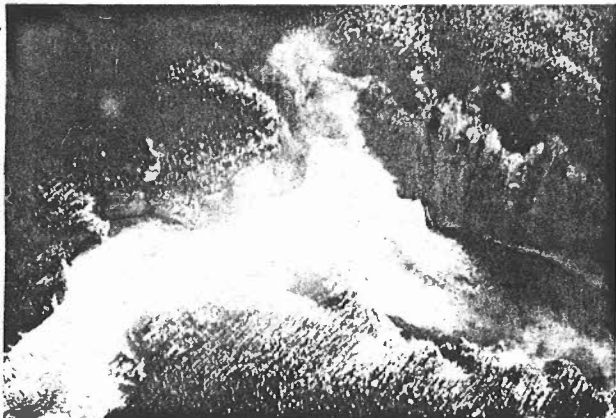
Even in doing all these things, there are many more subtle things that must be considered. We must keep our groups small. Although areas differ in fragility, it is difficult to imagine how more than six or eight people can camp in one area without leaving some lasting sign, no matter how careful they may try to be.

We must be inaudible in our passing through the wilderness, leaving radios, musical instruments, and loud voices at home. By leaving the sounds of civilization in town, we can listen to the sounds of nature, and enjoy her message.

Pets should be left at home. Dogs interfere with the animals of the wilderness and create unnatural noises.

Finally, we should be invisible in our own passing, trying to blend with nature as much as possible. This means leaving nothing that is foreign to the area, even bio-degradable objects like orange peels. Pack it *all* out! Being invisible also means blending in with nature. We should consider the visual impact of our clothes and equipment, and avoid the clash between natural earth tones and bright orange tents or rain-suits. If this does not appeal directly to ourselves, then we should at least consider the other users of the wilderness, who might be more sensitive to the colour interruptions we create.

We have the opportunity to determine the quality of our wilderness experience. We must decide how much a part of the wilderness we want to be, and hence how much we wish to gain from our experience. But we must decide now, or it may be too late.



VIRGINIA FALLS — SOUTH NAHANNI RIVER

Without a strong commitment to the new wilderness ethic, beautiful wild areas like this one in Nahanni National Park will be in constant danger. Already, over-equipped travellers visit the falls by jet boat. The preservation of this and other wildlands depends upon our personal attitudes as much as legislation.

(photograph by the author)

Rivers, Rapids and Currents...Part II

by Gord Fenwick

From reading Part I, you should be aware that, to negotiate a potentially dangerous section of rapids, you must (1) be able to recognize the dangers well in advance, and (2) always be in a position to move your canoe skillfully and quickly.

How do you recognize when the situation is becoming dangerous? First, I would suggest that you join a canoe club and go through white water with experienced paddlers.

Some of the dangers to beware are:

- (i) the current becomes so swift and powerful that you are unable to get to safety before being drawn into heavy waves, under overhanging trees, or around unscouted bends.
- (ii) You are enjoying the excitement of the lively rapids so much that you fail to notice a dropping tree-line ahead. (Waterfalls; look out!)
- (iii) You are puzzled by a slight change in the shade of water ahead, marked by a slight line across the river; (this indicates a short, steep drop).

How do you keep in control at all times?

To be able to steer the canoe, you must paddle either faster or slower than the current. If you are paddling faster, you move very quickly through the rapids, giving you less time to react to danger, and a higher collision speed with any boulders in the stream; serious damage often results, not to mention personal injury or even drowning!

By back-paddling, and holding the canoe at a slight angle to the current, you can move fairly slowly ahead, and even hold yourself stationary at times (unless the current is very strong); also, you can move the canoe laterally across the stream to avoid rocks or heavy waves. This method gives you more time to evaluate your situation, and if a collision does occur, the speed will be much lower, and damage will be slight. Mastering the technique of backpaddling will take you and your partner about a year of normal practice, and you should begin in light, open rapids until you can manoeuvre well.

To be in complete control, one must be in a position to exit from the current quickly at all times. Remember that the current speed varies from one section of the river to another; in bays and eddies, or downstream from large boulders, it may be almost calm.

Entering an eddy, the angle of approach should be about 45° , so that the canoe will spin around into the dead water. The bow enters first, and the canoe spins because the stern is still in the main current. When properly executed, this entry will turn the canoe by 180° so that the stern is pointing downstream. When it comes time to return to the current, the bow should enter at a similar 45° angle with both occupants paddling hard upstream. Then the current will sweep the bow around, while the stern momentarily holds its position. Finally, the canoe will be swept downstream, and the backpaddling technique may be desirable once again. This entry and exit from an eddy in midstream is shown in diagram form, in Figure 1. It must be noted that, while the canoe is swept around, either in entry or exit, caution must be taken to avoid any surface rocks which could tip the canoe in a very vulnerable position (sideways to the current.)

The angle of entering or leaving an eddy has to be just right. If the angle is too small, you will have a lot of difficulty in getting out, and may eventually tip through your exertions. On the other hand, too large an angle may cause you to spin before you're out of the dead water, and once again, you could find yourself swimming.

When paddling downstream, do not attempt to exit by heading to shore at 45° where there is no eddy. This will set up a collision between your canoe and the shore, and if you make a habit of this exit, you will soon damage the canoe. Instead, when you intend to reach shore

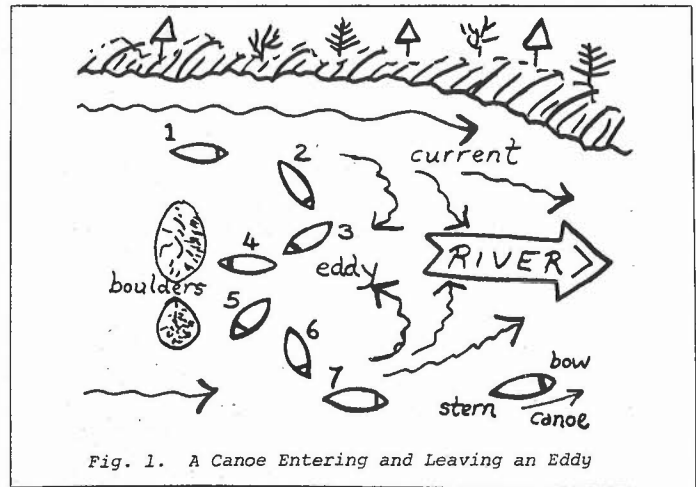


Fig. 1. A Canoe Entering and Leaving an Eddy

against the current, turn the bow upstream, and paddle hard against the current, holding the canoe at a slight angle to the shore (less than 30°) until the bow gently touches the shore; then the bowman can easily get out to secure the canoe.

Once you have mastered the backpaddling technique, though, you can reach shore without turning the canoe around. From midstream, the paddlers in the diagram below (Fig. 2) can reach the shore by a combination of backpaddling and drawing. The stern must be angled in towards the shore, but not too much, or the current will sweep the canoe downstream. Gradually, the canoe will move sideways towards the shore, but this will not be possible without plenty of practice in light rapids, because of the co-ordinated effort that is necessary to bring it off.

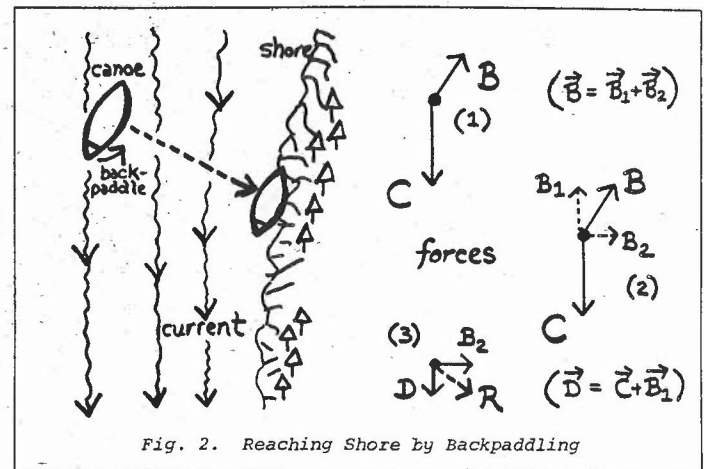


Fig. 2. Reaching Shore by Backpaddling

If you want to see how this is accomplished, study the force vectors in the diagram. The current (C) force is downstream, but the backpaddling force (B) is upstream and slightly towards shore. This can be split into two forces, B1 and B2, which point upstream and towards shore. Forces B1 and C act in opposition, giving a resultant force D (shown as downstream, but if the current is slow, it could be upstream). Finally, the combination ('resultant') of D and B2 give the direction of the canoe (R) under all of these forces. Because the current varies in speed, though, some draw strokes will be necessary to keep the proper angle as the canoe approaches shore.

In moving through rapids, then, you should move from one point of safety to the next. It may not be as exciting as shooting blind down the rapids, but at least you will live longer!

WCA Members:

A letter from the editor of the *Wilderness Canoeist*,
Roger Smith

Dear Reader,

First, let me take this opportunity to thank the membership of the W.C.A. for electing me as the newsletter editor last September. In this first issue, I have received plenty of encouragement and submissions from the executive and other members. Before the mail strike, there were several interesting letters, and I hope that in future issues we will be able to publish even more articles from the members of the W.C.A.

Also, I would like to thank several individuals for their assistance. Gord Fenwick and Sandy Richardson of the executive are both very concerned about the quality of our newsletter, and have shown plenty of support. As you can see, we have a new format, through a printing arrangement with Bayweb Ltd., of Elmvale, a large multi-faceted printing plant. Tony McAuley, editor of the *Orillia Wednesday Nighter*, helped to co-ordinate the layout and design of this issue. Most of the typing was done by Ms. Edna Hillman, of Toronto; photography is credited in each case.

On the subject of photography, I would like to suggest a few guidelines. If you are a trip leader, it would be very helpful to the newsletter if you would arrange for photography on your outing. If you are not in-

This is YOUR Newsletter

clined to take photos yourself, then ask around and find out which members of your trip are photographers. Our printing process will work most effectively with black and white prints, but many of you prefer to take colour slides. I would suggest two possibilities: take your slides and have prints made of the best ones, or else make an exception when you lead a trip and take black and white. Another possibility is to take a second camera along, and take just a few black and white prints for our sake.

However, as the editor, I am planning to join as many outings as possible, in order to report and take pictures. In some cases, I may just pop out of the forest when you're least expecting it, and snap away for posterity. For our many photographers, this will be a chance to preserve some of your best efforts, and to help us maintain a high standard of communication in the *Wilderness Canoeist*.

Finally, let's hear from you about the controversial issues which we will be discussing from time to time. As editor, I plan to speak my mind, and I encourage all members to do the same. Although I am a member of the executive, my views are not necessarily meant to represent theirs, and we may differ as individuals on some issues. However, we are all agreed that the purpose of the newsletter is to provide stimulating reading, and to help our membership communicate.

Equipment:

When you are active outdoors in the winter, you are going to perspire, no matter how cold the air temperature may be. However, you will only feel cold if this moisture evaporates. Conventional clothing and sleeping bags are designed to let the moisture escape; this is known as 'breathability'. However, as Sandy Richardson reports in this article, breathability is more of a drawback to keeping warm, since most of the moisture condenses in the insulating layers. The solution? Keep the sweat on the body surface - if it doesn't evaporate, you won't feel the chill.

What to wear for skiing, snowshoeing, or winter camping can be difficult to decide. The biggest problem comes from perspiration. Clothing quickly becomes damp, and the wearer gets chilled. Is there any way to avoid this problem?

A somewhat radical (though not new) theory backed by measurements and tests, claims that a person can retain much more heat by reducing perspiration by means of a vapour barrier next to the skin.

Sweat glands attempt to keep the skin relatively moist (a relative humidity of 70-100%). When the skin is kept dry, these sweat glands produce more moisture in an attempt to maintain skin humidity. The moisture evaporates, causing chilling. The obvious way to maintain skin humidity is to place a vapour barrier next to the skin. Such a barrier should not produce the floods of condensation which we associate with other vapour barriers, like rain suits. These are worn over clothing, and take their temperature from the outside air, which (if it is colder than the body sweat) will produce quantities of condensation. A vapour barrier placed next to the skin remains near body temperature, and condensation will be much less prolific.

Vapour barriers placed next to the skin maintain skin temperature and humidity, and can reduce perspiration by as much as eight times. This reduction in perspiration keeps one from becoming dehydrated, and virtually eliminates the problem of losing body heat through sweat.

Putting the theory into practice is both easy and inexpensive. One of the most common problems is cold hands and feet, leading to the danger of frostbite. This

New ideas for winter warmth

is probably the easiest to take care of. Put a plastic baggie on each foot (or over a thin nylon sock, if you do not like the feel of plastic), then put on your regular heavy socks and boots. Your feet (and your socks and boots) will stay dry and warm. (As a test, you could apply the baggie to one foot only, and compare the difference.)

Hands can be similarly dealt with. Plastic gloves, which can be purchased by the roll, can be worn under your regular mittens.

Some people wear a plastic garbage bag, or dry-cleaning bag, on their torso, under their clothes. This allows them to wear less clothing, and it helps to keep what they do wear dry.

At night, you can wear a rain-suit, or wrap up in a poncho or 'space blanket' inside your sleeping bag. (Do not put a space blanket outside a sleeping bag.) This will keep you warmer, and your sleeping bag drier. This latter fact is important on long winter camping trips. Tests show that the average porous fabric bag picks up from 1½ to 3 pounds of water from condensation on a typical cold night. This can cause total collapse of the down insulation in a week to ten days of typical winter camping.

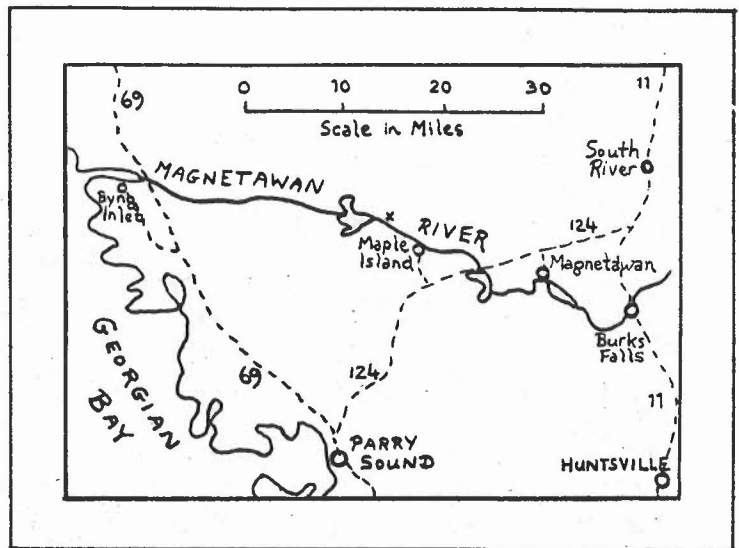
Obviously, things would be easier if one could get equipment that incorporated vapour barriers into their basic designs. Such equipment is available from the man who has done most of the work on the vapour barrier theory, Jack Stephenson. Unfortunately, it is not available in regular camping stores. If you are interested in the equipment, or want more details on the theory, send for Jack's catalogue (really more like a book). It will cost you \$1.00, and is well worth it:

Stephenson's Inc.,
RFD 4, Box 398,
Winnepesaukee Highlands,
Gilford, N.H.,
03246,
U.S.A.

If you try out any of these ideas this winter, write us a letter c/o the newsletter editor, and let us hear about your experiences.

A memorable summer weekend on the Magnetawan River

by Ken Brailsford and Randy Wallace



As the sun was rising, we finally reached our destination - the spot where the Magnetawan River flows under Highway 124. By mid-morning, we had returned from Byng Inlet, where we had left a car at the finish. We set off under perfect weather conditions.

Not more than half a mile down river, we came upon the first signs of wildlife. A blue heron was parading on the river bank. Sandy and Dave managed to get within ten yards of the bird, while trying to get photographs, before it flew away. We would discover as the trip went on that the heron foreshadowed many appearances of wild life on the Magnetawan.

The spot where we camped that night was not exactly the most isolated one in our experience. The view to the east was the town of Maple Island, but we made do since it was about an hour before sunset. Watching the sun disappear from a blue-green sky, we ate our supper, facing the west.

Soon after, we turned in for what we thought would be a peaceful night. Some time during the night, Randy was awakened by one of the forest's little creatures chewing a hole in the side of his tent, and eating part of his food supply. Randy declared that no raccoon had better cross his path again.

The Magnetawan offers a variety of rapids with colourful names, such as Lovesick, Needle Eye, Poverty Bay Chutes, Grave, and so on. Many of these names originated in the days when the Magnetawan was used as a logging route. We found the level of the water quite low, after such a hot, dry summer.

The rapids still offered challenge and excitement. There were narrow chutes, drops over rocky ledges, and rapids which required much rock-dodging and manoeuvring to be run.

One of the portages which made quite an impression was encountered on the third day. We worked up a steep hill and set out across country. Partway along, we came to a deep gully which forced us to move even further from the river. What a relief it was when we came crashing out of the forest back to the river banks.

Also on the third day, we came across one of the most beautiful passages on the river. The Magnetawan forces its way through a narrow granite gorge, with thirty-foot high walls, to form the Canal Rapids.

That night was one of the highlights of the trip. We had paddled fairly late, and finally found a campsite. After a swim and supper, we sat around the campfire and watched the setting sun illuminate the clouds. Some talked, while others were lost deep in thought as the countless stars came out above. It promised to be a fine day tomorrow, but Sandy (ever pessimistic) said that he had learned not to trust clear nights (or weather forecasts, ed. note). Sure enough, halfway through the night, we awoke to the sounds of thunder.

Although the river makes a fairly demanding trip with many rapids, and much lining and portaging, our small group was able to work as a fairly efficient team. To make up for the physical strain, there was mental relaxation, rejuvenation, and the wonderment that comes with being in a wilderness area.



Ken Brailsford and Randy Wallace approach Upper Burnt Chute on the Magnetawan River, located by an x on the map. (photograph by S. Richardson)



Cam and France Salsbury tackle one of the wildest portions of the Skootamatta River on a WCA outing last May. (photograph by R. Smith)

The WCA is a non-profit organization to serve and express the interests of Wilderness Canoeists. We would appreciate your support and participation as a member.

★ Note to present members: For those who joined prior to July 1, 1975, your membership renewal is due January 31, 1976. Please fill in the application below and send it in while the matter is fresh in your mind!

Wilderness Canoe Association

Membership Application:	NEW	_____	RENEWAL	_____
I am enclosing a cheque for	\$4	_____	Student (under 18 yrs.)	
	\$6	_____	Single	
	\$8	_____	Family	

for membership in the WCA, which entitles me to the quarterly issues of "THE WILDERNESS CANOEIST", and gives me the opportunity to participate in the WCA outings and to get involved in the Association

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ TELEPHONE _____

Membership is effective until January 31, 1977

You will receive your membership card shortly and be asked to fill in a more detailed application concerning your interests and experiences in canoeing

SEND TO: P.O. BOX 75, POSTAL STATION U, TORONTO, ONTARIO M8Z 5M4