

Lupo

West Wind Brigade 2017

By Anja Sersch

I hate water – not any more!

My name is Lupo and I am a dog. Not any dog but The Dog With The Blog from Germany. You might wonder how I ended up being part of the West Wind Brigade in 2017. Everything was a coincidence or as some people might call it – The Power Of The Canoe.

Last year my humans and I were traveling the USA and Canada (without a vehicle). We were staying in a campground in Vancouver and that's where we met Brooke. What was most amazing about her, besides her nice personality, was the big North Canoe she pulled with her truck. Neither my humans nor I had ever seen a big canoe like that. You could not miss Boona, the bright yellow canoe, 29 ft. long.

After a couple of days Brooke left with Boona to participate in a Brigade on the Sunshine Coast. Before she left she told my humans that she would be back after about 10 days and if we would still be at the campsite, she could take us with her because she was heading towards Mattawa for another Voyageur Brigade. My humans did not know what a Voyageur Brigade was. My humans looked it up and tried to explain it to me. Voyageur Brigades had something to do with the fur trade back in the 1800's. The Voyageurs transported the furs via canoe across Canada.

When Brooke returned from her trip, she picked us up to go towards Mattawa. This was a 4000 km drive and Brooke was glad she had additional drivers. We camped in the Rocky Mountains, Brooke showed us Lake Louise, we picked up Dale in Regina and finally arrived in North Bay four days later. Brooke and Dale suggested that they could take my humans and me with them to meet the Brigade crew and ask if they might need a road crew. Sounded like a plan to me, although I wasn't sure what that meant.

The people on the Brigade were happy to have my humans as road crew as they had eight cars to haul and very few drivers. Again, you could call it coincidence or The Power Of The Canoe.

Next morning the Brigade left Mattawa to paddle to Deux Rivières. As we learned the prior evening, the Brigade would paddle to Ottawa and arrive there on Canada Day 150. Canada Day is something like 4th of July in the USA. It celebrates the anniversary of the July 1, 1867, the effective date of the Constitution Act, which united the three separate colonies of the Province of Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick into a single Dominion within the British Empire. The Beginning of Canada so to say.

Enough of that history stuff and back to my story.

The paddlers arrived late in the afternoon. They all were busy setting up the tents, preparing dinner (ok, the Canadians call it supper) and later the kids on the campground were invited to paddle with Joyce in one of the canoes. My mistress was invited to paddle with them and she decided to give it a try. She gets seasick very easily and wasn't sure if it would work for her. When she came back she was happy because she actually enjoyed it and said she could get used to it.

I personally don't like water, not at all. It doesn't matter if the water comes from above or below – I just hate it. Being in a canoe was not an option for me. After staying in a lodge in Rapides de Joachims (Swisha), the next night we arrived in Pembroke. Tim, the brigade chief reserved spots at Riverside Campground in Pembroke for that night, but as it was raining most of the paddlers decided to rent a room in a hotel because setting up a tent in the dark while it is raining is no fun – so they said. Dave and Dwight, two of the paddlers invited my humans and me to spend the night in the hotel.

The next afternoon we all arrived at River Run and my mistress prepared a German Abendessen (supper) for them – Schnitzel and potato salad. My humans taught some of the paddlers how to make a balloon dog and they watched movies about canoeing. How boring.

The following day was much more exiting for me. Some of the paddlers were picked up for the wild water rafting trip and some others, including me, went to visit Father Marc's camp in Fort-Coulogne. Around 50-70 kids spent that day at the camp and the humans paddled with them on the river. Later my humans made a balloon workshop with the kids. They had a lot of fun and I was allowed to run around with the camp dog. Finally after being on the leash for days I was allowed to run and play!

Next morning the humans were launching the canoes early and we met them again in Arnprior. The paddlers were wet to the bones when they arrived! We had permission to camp at the Robert Simpson Park. Everybody but one couple headed to a motel. Again Dwight invited us to share a room with him. A guy at the reception wanted to see in writing, that I was a service dog. How rude was that! Couldn't he see I was a service dog? How well I behaved made it obvious, wasn't it?

My mistress kind of tried to tell me that I would be in the canoe on the last day of the brigade. WHAT???? Are you serious? No, that's not going to happen! I would try to convince her not to take me in the canoe.

The next day was a paddle free day. Everybody drove to Black Rapids to spend the night there.

In the evening they launched one of the canoes and made me jump into it. That wasn't fair. My mistress was sitting in the canoe. What was I supposed to do – I was a service dog and my duty was to be with my mistress. They tricked me. We

had a very short trip in the canoe, only like five minutes and it wasn't too bad. It wasn't raining any more and the canoe was dry from the inside, well – almost. They ordered pizza for supper and my mistress allowed me to have the crust. To me that was kind of an excuse to having made me jump into that canoe. That following day was the BIG DAY – CANADA DAY 150. Someone should have told the person that was responsible for the weather, that this was an important day and would need NO rain. Instead it was raining cats and dogs. All drivers brought their cars to the spot where we would arrive in the afternoon and the trailers were left there too. My master drove one of the vehicles while my mistress stayed with me.

We waited for them to return so they could start paddling. It seemed like my mistress was serious about the idea putting me in that canoe – there was no vehicle left. Are you kidding me? The canoe was completely wet from the inside and it was raining like crazy from above which meant I would really be soaked. These humans have raincoats and everything but I have nothing like that. We waited for about two hours and finally somebody decided to call Tim, the Brigade Chief. He told us that we should start paddling and pick them up at another lock station on the way into Ottawa.

The paddlers got ready and my mistress sat in the canoe and I couldn't do anything but follow her and join in. I tried not to sit down, but they made me. My butt was sitting in the cold water. That didn't make much of a difference, as I was completely soaked anyways. After paddling a while and saluting a couple of times to all the people ashore and other boats, the canoes approached the lock where we had to pick up the other paddlers. My master said he didn't want to paddle as it was raining and he just got warmed up in the car. My mistress convinced him to come because if he would not come, he would miss being on Victoria Island with all the First Nation's Peoples. She told him about the atmosphere we were experiencing as we paddled to that lock. Everybody we met ashore was shouting and waiving and proud to be Canadians. My mistress had never experienced anything like that in Germany, as it is not part of the German culture to show that you are proud of your country. She told me, that this had something to do with what had happened more than 70 years ago. The rain had almost stopped and my master finally agreed to be in the canoe with my mistress and me.

While the rain stopped and the sun came out to dry my fur, I started enjoying being in the canoe. I could just lie in the canoe, rest my head on the edge and watch what was going on while the humans paddled. Normally I have to do the work to make my mistress relax and this time it was the opposite. I kind of like that. They paddled the Rideau Canal into Ottawa to the big Lock Station. There we all had to get out of the canoes and the humans transported the canoes down the hill. The locks would have taken too long because it was eight locks long. Everywhere were people shouting "Happy Canada Day", and waiving their little flags.

On shore of the Ottawa River we met the other canoes that came from all over the country - The Four Winds Brigades.

We had to wait a while before the canoes were launched in the Ottawa River to paddle to Victoria Island because there were too many canoes. The brigades were invited by the First Nation's Peoples to celebrate with them. First Nations, who are they? Are they special somehow? My mistress explained that to me. These were the people that originally lived in Northern America and were expelled from their land and had to live in certain areas called reserves where they could not live their original life any more.

That sounded interesting and I was really looking forward to meeting them. To get there I had to be in the canoe again with my humans. The sun was shining and it was warm and I was completely relaxed in the canoe, although there was a strong current in the Ottawa River. The humans paddled along the shore of Parliament Hill and crossed the river to arrive at Victoria Island. Around 30 canoes were on shore already lined up. On Victoria Island we were welcomed and the humans got something to drink and eat. What about me, don't I get something to eat or drink? My mistress took care of me and got me some water but nothing to eat.

She attended some ceremonies later, the fire ceremony and the water ceremony. I was not allowed to be at the ceremonies because I was a dog. They even took a picture of all the paddlers on the island - I was allowed to be in that picture! While we were on the island more canoes arrived and there was no room for more of them.

In the later afternoon we left with the canoe and the humans paddled towards the parking lot where the cars were waiting for them to return home. One more canoe ride for me, and I enjoyed that very much. What an amazing trip, what an unexpected experience and what a gift to meet so many nice people. The best thing of all - I am not afraid of water any more, I actually enjoy it.