

Canadian Voyageur Brigade Society

Fall 2019 Proposed Revisions

Big Canoe Instructional Program: Paddler to Program Trainers

Objective:

To create a Canadian Voyageur Brigade Society (CVBS) program to safely, effectively and easily bring more people into big (brigade) canoeing by developing Big Canoe Paddlers, Crew Chiefs, and Program Trainers.

Rationale:

When conceived in 2018, Canadian education programs for the development of Big Canoe paddlers, Canoe Chiefs and Instructors were difficult and expensive (Time & \$s) to access. In addition these programs failed to recognize the paddling and pedagogical skills of participants coming to a course or for folk being able to start at an advanced course level.

Observations from over a two decades of brigade paddling has shown that with reasonable safety awareness and a willingness to direct beginners and on up to senior leaders, people can do day trips, vigorous workouts, races, expeditions, adventures and recreation in our big canoes with safe and enjoyable outcomes. Early voyageurs and coureurs du bois were not certified. Most of them survived, though drowning and injury were common. Today we have much better safety practices, knowledge and foundational swimming skills. With reasonable planning, risk management, educational experiences and thought we can reasonably, quickly, and safely put people on the water in big canoe and have a terrific time.

How:

This program is to be:

1. Workable across all of Canada sea to sea to sea,
2. Easily accessible (equipment & site): possible to deliver with the minimum of site and equipment availability. I.E. still and moving water with as few as two big canoes.
3. Easily accessible, acknowledge of past past skills: Participants often bring paddling and/or pedagogical skills with them to a course. Those skills which are worthy should be recognized. E.G.: Classroom teachers do not need to be taught what teaching is, or if the skills appropriate to a level are easily demonstrated by a candidate... move them along to the next level.
4. Inexpensive: the cost of enforced prior training could be as little as nil. Only two big canoe with the safety gear, lifejackets, paddles and a bouy or two are required. Instructor cost and

compensation is to be worked out between the program sponsoring agency, and the instructor, or program trainer.

5. Directly managed by CVBS so the focus is on getting people safely onto the water to have a rewarding time. The CVBS Education Director is to maintain a record of all course requests, and successful candidate reports at the, Canoe Chief, and Program Trainer levels. Successful Paddler program candidates will be recognized with the awarding of a CVBS Canoe decal, crest or similar memento and report card.
6. This is to be an experiential learning program with facilitated guidance from skilled instructors and program trainers (PT). Many skills can be developed further and need to be practiced after any course. The environment will give you feedback if you are being too goofy by making you swim. Be prudent, preplan and wear your lifejacket.
7. The CVBS Education program primarily “trains” participants to a recognized skill and knowledge standard appropriate for expected paddling conditions. Canoe Chiefs may become “certified” after training, AND after offering a minimum of ten days of paddling instruction that includes at least two nights of overnight canoe camping from a big canoe. Once the minimum instructional and tripping requirements have been met the candidate may request a Program Trainer to attend a over night big canoe trip managed by the candidate.

Courses:

Paddler (6-9 hrs)

- This is a skills development program for novice paddlers to the big canoe. This program is to provide the middle and bow paddler skills for lake and easy river waters or easy tidal waters. This introductory program is best delivered in three sessions: one warm (summer lake, swimming pool) session for rescues, swimming, stroke introduction and theory, one flatwater (lake) session and one stationary river or tidal session.

Crew Chief (6-8 hrs)

- This our core program for the development of Canoe Chiefs with the appropriate Stern and canoe management skills for Big Canoes for lake and grade 1 river waters or easy tidal waters. Crew Chiefs will be the primary instructors for the Paddler program

Prerequisites:

- Paddler skills completed,
- Standard First Aid, or local requirement, and with a wilderness orientation is recommended,
- experience as a middle and bow paddler in various conditions including wind (up to 25 km/hr), waves and current flows. This would normally involve some 5-10 days or some, 30 hours, of paddling experience through big canoe brigades, instructional programs, tripping, competitive training or racing.
- appropriate physical pedagogical skills from prior teaching or coaching.

Program Trainer (PT)

- This is the means to provide PTs in the various regions of Canada
- PT have the primary role in helping new groups and paddlers to get started, and to help Crew Chiefs acquire the necessary skills, knowledge and experiences to offer a safe and enjoyable big canoe program that includes basic instruction and overnight tripping.
- PTs will be the CVBS agents that evaluate and certify Crew Chiefs that have completed the prerequisite training and paddling.
- Initially PTs will be approved by the executive of the CVBS from that pool of experienced big canoe paddling educators who have participated in a number of brigades or training programs of the society. As this program develops PT candidates are expected to come from keen participants within the CVBS program.

Moving Water supplement

- A supplementary program for the additional skills & knowledge required on more difficult rivers and rapids (up to Class II+) for Paddlers and Crew Chiefs.

Tidal Water supplement

- A supplementary program for the additional skills & knowledge required on tidal waters.

Trip / Brigade Planning / Leading supplement

- A supplementary program to look at the larger scale aspects of organizing a group trip up to a multi-canoe extended expedition.

Program Details

Paddler (6-9 hrs)

Overview

- This is a skills development program for novice paddlers to the big canoe. This program is to provide the middle and bow paddler skills for lake and easy river waters or easy tidal waters. This introductory program is best delivered in three sessions: one warm (summer lake, swimming pool) session for rescues, swimming, stroke introduction and theory, one flatwater (lake) session and one stationary river or tidal session.

Detail

- Equipment - normally two big canoes and crews with appropriate gear for 10 to 16 paddlers. Bent paddles preferred, but not required... normal paddles should be short!.
- Water - will require flat water and easy river (Class 1), or tidal water sessions (3 in total). A flat water site with bouys and docks, and a river or tidal site with some but modest currents is needed.
- Students:

- 12 yrs old and up with basic swimming skills while wearing a life-jacket
- 1 less than seats in the canoe. Possibly double seating on interior seats.
- Pre-Launch understandings:
 - What the plan for learning/ demonstration is on the water
 - Safety equipment:
 - Personal: Life jacket fitting, whistles, reflective tape
 - Boat: bailers, painters, throw bags, reboarding loops, lights, reflective tape,
 - safety on water:
 - Hazards (cold, current, trapped between bridge and canoe, foot entrapment, wind)
 - Reentry plan: who is in charge, who gets back in first, what others do
 - Entry into, exits from and moving about the boat,
 - Paddling: paddle (bend fwd), being in stroke (who to watch),
 - Dryland, dock/pool side drills (i.e. Smith Line Dance) for stroke introduction should be included prior to launching canoes
- Strokes in the water / moving the boat / staying right side up:
 - Forward, back paddle, draw, draw at many angles from fwd to bk, pry, ruddering as a form of pry, sculling draws, canoe side slipping
 - The effective places to stroke for steering, turning, braking and moving ahead. The various responsibilities of the seats 1 through 6 or more for forward paddling,
 - learning to and maintaining regular “switches” from side to side,
 - how seats 2 through 5 in assisting with turns, side slipping, landings and docking.
 - Low brace, cross-bow draw for bow paddlers
 - changing places, leaning/tilting or not to assist in turns.
 - Water exercises: power ahead, stop, backward, stationary moving: pin wheel, side slip, Moving turns (fig. 8s), docking,.....
 - Upsetting the canoe, bailing it out, and reentry.
 - Note: The emergency tip/reboard/rescue learning opportunities shall normally be done on easy lake water or still tidal water or in a swimming pool session.
 - “T” Rescue on another upset canoe
 - Basic river maneuvers in easy current: eddy turns, ferrying and back ferrying
- Other stuff for land talking:
 - Understanding where steering strokes have the most effect:
 - The physics of being off center.
 - Throw bag practice,
 - loading / unloading canoes from trailers or trucks, short portages
 - Personal safety equipment for tripping, managing personal equipment in the canoe: fire, knife, rain gear, first aid,

Crew Chief (6-8 hrs)

Overview

- This our core program for the development of Canoe Chiefs with the appropriate Stern and canoe management skills for Big Canoes for lake and grade 1 river waters or easy tidal waters. Crew Chiefs will be the primary instructors for the Paddler program

Prerequisites:

- Paddler skills completed,
- Standard First Aid, or local requirement, and with a wilderness orientation is recommended, experience as a middle and bow paddler in various conditions including wind (up to 25 km/hr) waves and current flows. This would normally involve some 5-10 days, 30 hours, of paddling experience through big canoe brigades, big canoe tripping, or big canoe training or racing.
- appropriate physical pedagogical skills from prior teaching or coaching. Authorization: Crew Chief may: participate on CVBS canoe brigades with a canoe crew. Where two or more Crew Chiefs (with appropriate pedagogical and wilderness living skills) are involved they may teach and lead programs on locally known waters (Class 1+ rivers, or easy tidal), and overnight canoe trips.

Detail

- Equipment: – must be able to assist new paddlers in selection of lifejacket, paddle and appropriate clothing for a variety of weather conditions. Normally a minimum of two canoes and crews (10 paddlers including staff) shall participate in this course.
- Water – normally this course requires both a flat water and river, or tidal water training sessions.
- Students – normally 18 years of age or older
- Pre session knowledge
 - Management of a canoe crew, balancing the canoe for weight, skill and strength.
 - Management of the crew for safety, comfort, & nourishment
 - Risk and Program management and planning
- Skills & Knowledge
 - Stern Steering skills: ruddering, standing draws, forward sweeps, “J” stroke
 - Appropriate calls for assistance from the other paddlers in the canoe.
 - Taking leadership in self rescue, and “T” and towing rescue of other canoes.
 - River Towing rescue (may be done with a swamped tandem canoe, or a big canoe)
 - Management of a canoe crew for day and/or overnight tripping. Including gear selection, packing and loading the canoe.
 - Maps, GPS, charts – one of – see appendix
- Evaluation: by an program trainer of steering abilities under various appropriate (easy) conditions, observation of canoe management over the course of a day’s program. This normally ends in a “debrief” of the Crew Chief candidates.

Program Trainer (PT)

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- PTs will be the CVBS agents that evaluate and certify Crew Chiefs that have completed the perquisite training and paddling.

Initially PTs will be approved by the executive of the CVBS from that pool of experienced big canoe paddling educators who have participated in a number of brigades or training programs of the society. As this program develops PT candidates are expected to come from keen participants within the CVBS program. Detail – to be developed

Moving Water supplement

Overview

- A supplementary program for the skills & knowledge required on rivers for Paddlers and Crew Chiefs.
- Primary emphasis will be on reading and running modest rapids up to Class II+ with an emphasis on safety, ferrying, eddy turns, back ferrying, and managing a canoe in large wave trains.
- Doing long portaging
- Going upstream, Lining, polling, and paddling upstream

Detail

- TBD

Tidal Water supplement

Overview

- A supplementary program for the skills & knowledge required on tidal waters.
- With an appropriate tidal water site, the whole of the “paddler” instruction can be taught on the same water. Do the initial still water and rescue work at slack or very low current and then work the moving water skills when the tide is running.

Detail

- Navigational aids and marine charts
- Paddling steering with both waves, and swell.
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Trip / Brigade Planning / Leading supplement

Overview

- A supplementary program to look at the larger scale aspects of organizing a group trip up to a multi-canoe extended expedition.

Detail - TBD

Supplementary Materials

Definitions & Examples

Easy Lake Water – sheltered body of water with a fetch of less than 1 km, but more importantly for the teaching session winds of less than 10 km/hr, and waves of less than 15 cm. No breaking waves.

Easy River Water – stream at normal (25-75%) summer flows, rapids Class 1 or less, current of 5 km/hr., wind less than 15 km/hr Eg.: North Saskatchewan River below Genesee Bridge,

Easy Tidal Water – sheltered body of water with a fetch of less than 1 km, but more importantly for the teaching session winds of less than 10 km/hr, waves of less than 15 cm or swells of less than 30 cm and current less than 2 kn (4 km/h). No breaking waves.

Supplementary Materials – unique to Big Canoes

- All of the common paddling skills and knowledge are to be “referenced” to recently published paddling manuals... ideally no more than three.

Boat Management for Canoe Chiefs:

- Pre-start safety and trip review,
- If you are the boat Chief **Talk Loud** if you want people to hear your instructions and follow them. It is a long way to the front of the boat and there may be quite a bit of wave, people, environmental noise to be heard over. Use your “teacher” voice.
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Changing/Switching Sides:

- Look at [Tracing the Columbia Time: 00:51](#) This is the Red Rogues at Hood River in a windstorm doing an excellent change.
- Why change sides?
 - It will reduce the chance of repetitive stress injuries. If you paddle a long period of time on one side, especially in cold wet weather, you risk having an acute, chronic or permanent stress injury to your body. So switch sides and give the other side a rest. 😊
 - Paddling long periods on one side you only used half your body. Those muscles become progressively more tired and less effective. So switch sides and have more power to move ahead, play or respond to emergency situations.
 - This is a truly important skill if you are paddling a distance. If all you are doing is floating around a lake for ½ an hour it does not really matter. This skill is seldom

taught due to fear of tipping. However it turns out that almost all crews learn this in less than 10 minutes and will then demand frequent changes.

- What a terrific switch looks like: See the trailer for “Tracing the Columbia”
- How to change sides (assuming 6 people and 6 seats):
 - Seat 5, the caller, (second from the back) in a loud clear voice calling in time with the paddling of the bow person calls: “Ready” on stroke 1, “Set” on stroke 2, and seats 2, 3, 4, 5 all flow across to the other side on the the unspoken third stroke.
 - Seat 2 person moves across smoothly and predictably
 - Seat 3 person moves at a rate that counterbalances Seat 2
 - Seat 4 person moves at a rate that counterbalances Seats 2 & 3
 - Seat 5 person moves at a rate that counterbalances Seats 2 & 3 & 4
 - Seat 1 would normally switch paddling sides on that same unspoken third stroke and keep going without missing a stroke. However Seat 1 might be busy steering or doing something else and would often be sitting centered enough that their sideways body movement would have little impact on lateral balance.
 - All try Seats work to miss as few strokes as possible. It is possible for everyone to miss no strokes. That is to slide across and get in the next (fourth stroke) on time. In order to do that the whole team must have mutual confidence and move quickly.
 - Stern person changes sides any time they want to optimize steering. The stern if there is concerning water coming up may tell the caller not to switch.
 - How often to change:
 - Recreational: usually every 1 to 3 minutes is a good period. Once a team has paddled with switching for an hour or so, they will get grumpy if the calls are less frequent than 3 minutes.
 - Racing: On truly long marathon races of 8 or more hours 2.5 minutes works well. On races of 20 min to 2 hours, 45 sec to 1 minute is better. Changing sides in a 500 M race is not useful.
- Teaching/coaching learning to change sides:
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Loading, Keeping in stroke, Stroke coaching a Big Canoe:

- When you are the canoe chief:
 - Balancing the crew: Very often, for the first few hours with new crew you will have to repeatedly have to tell them where and how to sit. Get them to move even as little as 2 cm left or right to level the boat.
 - Being in stroke: Lookat [Tracing the Columbia Time 00:19](#)
 - If the whole boat is “in stroke” with each other, the boat will not wobble from side to side (saves energy), not rock front to back less (saves energy), allow people to focus on padding forward

Dump and self-rescuing:

- PUT IN URL to previous written material: Safety plan? Web site CVBS resources?
- Resource: [HowToRollBoonaThe29FootVoyageur.pdf](#)
- Topics:
 - Do it in a lake, do it on a river, do it tidal
 -

Demonstration of reading River Current, Lake water:

- Can you predict:
 - Where the current will be turning to at the furthest point ahead you can see?
 - What the ripple and wave patterns on the water surface is telling you about water depth, current direction and hazards.
 - Can you cross that eddy line, play in that wave or turn behind the upcoming rock or bridge pier safely?
 - What the vegetation on the shores tells you about current, depth and dangers for each 100 to 200 m section for the next km?
 - What geology shows and what the geology or topography of the shore tells you about dangers, current and water depth into the distance.
 - Where the deepest, safest water is for the visible upcoming bends in the water.
 - How the map you have relates to where you are on the water and where to go to for emergencies at escalating levels of severity.
 - Where to land for lunch or a bio-break easily and without getting excessively muddy?

Demonstration of reading the Tides/Current:

- Can you predict:
 - Where the current will be taking you?
 - Are you on a collision course with the oncoming traffic. Hint: if the back ground behind the oncoming craft does not move or change you are on a collision course unless it is going away. :(
 - What the wave and swell patterns telling you about water depth, beach steepness, current direction and hazards.
 - Can you cross that eddy line, play in that wave or turn behind the upcoming rock or pier safely?
 - What the vegetation on the shores tells you about current, depth and dangers for each 100 to 200 m section for the next km?
 - What geology shows and what the geology or topography of the shore tells you about dangers, current and water depth into the distance.
 - Where the most sheltered shore iis for the visible upcoming water.
 - How the map you have relates to where you are on the water and where to go to for emergencies at escalating levels of severity.

- How long will it take you to cross the channel, how long will the weather hold and can the how paddling group stick together safely?

How to do a “wiggly gate”:

- The wiggly gate is 11 maneuvering pattern that thoroughly exercises a canoe team’s ability to steer forward and backward.
- Doing part of all of the wiggly gate can be a valuable exercise and evaluation tool.
- Diagram of patterns 1, 2, 3,4 goes here [Get PDF from Mark Lund](#)

Big Canoe Stroke- - requirements, errors

Stroke & Skills	Must be demonstrated	Errors to avoid
Forward Stroke		
Brake / Back Paddling		
Basic Draw		
Forward Sweep		
Reverse Sweep		
Low Brace		
Pry		
Cross Draw		
Stern Rudder		
Sculling Draw		
Changing Sides		
Reading current flows, predicting hazards		

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**Crew Chief: Safety and Navigation requirements &
Management of Crew for safety & comfort**

At CVBS planning is our initial step in managing for safety and comfort. For this we ask our Crew Chief Candidates to complete:

1. An *Outtrip Planning Form* for a overnight big canoe trip
2. *Route Cards* for each day of the trip
3. An *Emergency Contact* form for a proposed class (a few dummy entries is adequate)

Once a trip is underway Crew Leader Candidates will be expected to monitor participant behaviours, the weather, and upcoming conditions that could impact safety and comfort.

Map, Chart & GPS reading & use for local conditions (at least one of)

Completing the above forms is this first step on evaluating candidate map reading skills. Once an evaluation trip is underway candidates will be expected to demonstrate:

1. ability to orient a map by one of: map reading, compass, or GPS.
2. determine location to approximately 200m on a 1:50,000 sheet, from a map or GPS.
3. from a map describe likely upcoming environmental (river, lake, ocean) hazards, and how these may be mitigated.
4. provide a rough estimate of distance, and compass direction to upcoming locations by map or GPS.
5. propose an evacuation plan from the river, lake or ocean beach: distance, direction and to an appropriate destination (road, farmhouse, etc.).

* Google Earth, or similar satellite images may be substituted for a map by those using GPS units.

** Both map readers and GPS users will be required to determine and plot UTM coordinates, as this is one of the best way to describe location to search and rescue crews.

Prepared Fall 2019
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Originally prepared by M. Lund & T Bentley, July, 2018

Revisions proposed & reviewed by Ed committee, October, 2019