
CVBS Winter 2024 Newsletter

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Canadian Voyageur Brigade Society

Winter 2024 Newsletter

Photo above is from the 2024 Trent Severn Waterway Brigade.

Welcome

After a quite fall, and recently some very cold weather, it appears that “things” are starting to warm-up for this next paddling season. Below are two announcements for our 2024 brigades: one in Alberta, and one on Cape Breton Island... the most easterly brigade in Canada that CVBS has supported! Also below are reports from our very successful 2023 brigades. I am pleased to report that our CVBS had a successful AGM this January, and we have some new directors on board. Brian Smith continues as our Chair, Mike Murphy has moved to Treasurer, we welcome new director Annely Thorstad as our secretary, and Dan Moore as our new Alberta director. I think we can all look forward to a fine paddling season, out west we will just need more snow and some rain!!! Pray!

I look forward to seeing many of you on the water this season,

Mark

Upcoming 2024 Brigades

Please note that both these brigade committees are hard at work finalizing details, and our expectation is that by later in February or early March we will be posting more complete information, and the initial crew registration forms on our CVBS website. Then final registration forms will be opened in late May or early June.

**PEACE RIVER
2024 VOYAGEUR CANOE
BRIGADE:
FOR YOUTH AND THE YOUNG
AT HEART**

July 14-20

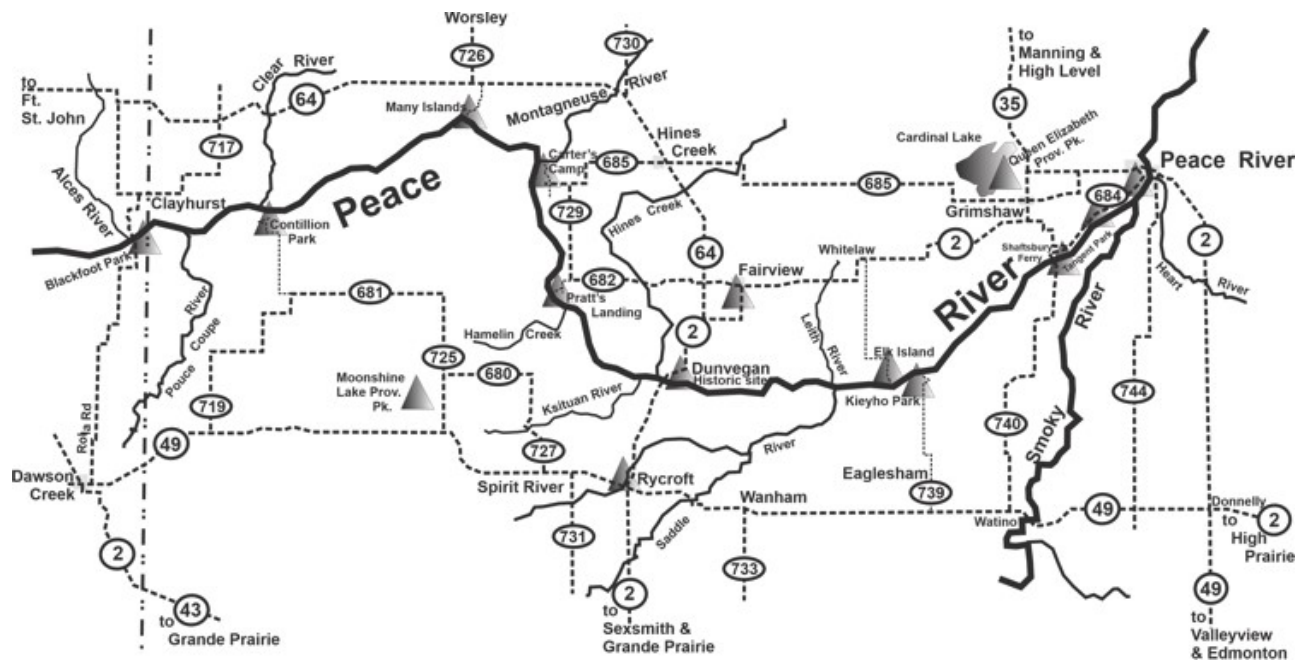
*Canoes celebrating the
power of community...*

Youth ages 15-22 who register with the Change Health Alberta Summer School are eligible for up to 9 high school credits through Alberta Education.

<https://voyageurbrigade.org/>

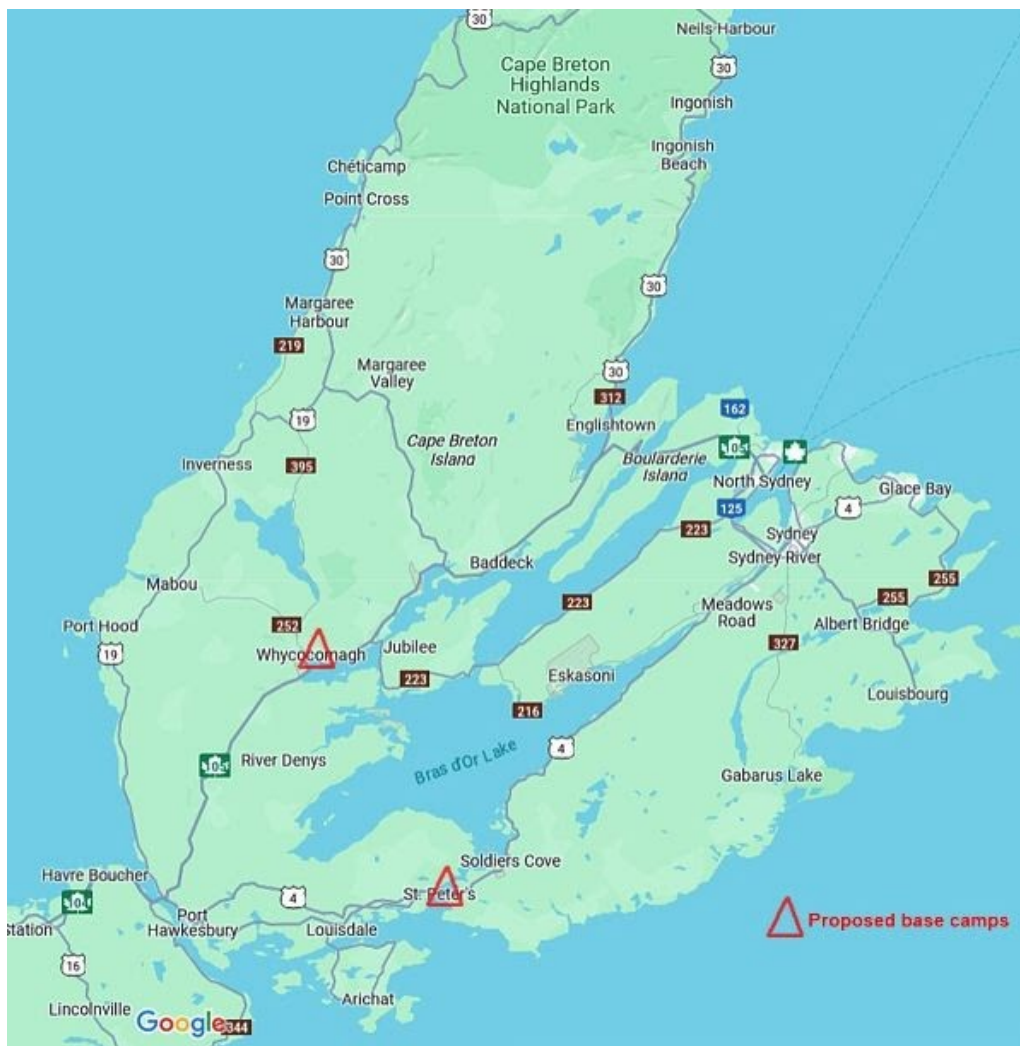


Cotillion Park, British Columbia
to Peace River, Alberta



Contact for Peace River Brigade for further info': Felicia Ochs <felicia.ochs@gmail.com>

Bras d'Or Lake/Pitu'paq Big Canoe Brigade 2024: Map & General Plan



1. *Waterways to be used for the brigade*

The Atlantic/Pitupaq Brigade will take place on the Bras D'Or lake UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and outside the lake on Atlantic ocean connections. The lake is tidal but also has various freshwater rivers and stream inflows.

2. *Target dates/ number of days for the brigade*

The Brigade will be held August 11 – 19 th .

Day 1 will be a participant arrival and captains meeting to discuss the brigade events and review safety plans.

Days 2,3,4 will include paddles along three different routes from the National Historic St. Peters Lock area. Participants will remain camped in one location for all 3 days. On the first paddle day participants will spend the morning learning or reviewing Big Canoe rescue, followed by an afternoon paddle.

Days 5, will be a travel and setup day to a new location on the lake (the Whycocomagh Provincial Campground). Participants will remain camped in one location for 4 days.

Days 6,7,8 will follow a similar format and include paddles along three different routes from Whycocomagh near the Historic town of Baddeck.

Day 9 will be a cleanup, pack-up end of brigade day with an optional weather and tide dependent paddle to Glooscap caves along Point Aconi near the ocean port of Sydney

3. *Historical significance*

Historically the lands and waters of Cape Breton are unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq peoples who lived and travelled along the land and paddled the waters. The Mi'kmaq peoples were known as expert bark boat builders of both small canoes and larger ocean-going canoes.

In the 1630s French merchants built a fur trading post where present-day St. Peters Lock is located as it was on a Mi'kmaq portage route between the lake and ocean. Soon both France and Britain established forts and settlement as control of the area exchanged hands between the European countries.

The waters of the lake were and continue to be used for both commercial and recreational purposes.

Located along the lake, the town of Baddeck is at the beginning and end of Cape Breton Islands world famous Cabot trail. It has a history stretching back to early Mi'kmaq, French and British Settlement as well as being the one-time home of the inventor Alexander Graham Bell. Sydney is the largest city on Cape Breton and a nearby ferry terminal for those traveling to Newfoundland.

4. *Target participants*

Participants of all ages are invited to paddle in the brigade. First nations, Scouts/Guides, Educators in Nova Scotia, CKNS and CVBS members have/will be informed about the Brigade opportunity.

Contact for further info: Brian Smith <bksmith660@gmail.com>

2023 Brigade Reports

Fort Assiniboine Bicentennial Voyageur Canoe Brigade



FABVCB arrival at Fort Assiniboine marina

The very successful *Fort Assiniboine Bicentennial Voyageur Canoe Brigade*, July 7 to 13, included 15 Big Canoe crews and roughly 160 participants. The brigade committee [has provided a complete series of reports including a wrap-up slide presentation, and an “after action report” on this link.](#) The financial success of this brigade has gone to the purchase of Voyageur Canoe for the Fort Assiniboine community and to support future youth paddling.

Trent Severn Waterway Brigade 2023 – Passing the Paddle

July 27 to August 6, 2023 Georgian Bay to Rice Lake

The Trent Severn Waterway Brigade 2023 was a terrific success!

This was not a retracement of a Fur Trade or Voyageur route- this predates that part of history... Rather, over 130

paddlers from: BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Yukon, South Carolina and England, paddled through central Ontario's cottage country following a route travelled by First Nations for millennia. And first documented in European history by Samuel Champlain in 1615.

We traveled through Park Canada's Trent Severn Waterway of connected locks and canals from Waubesa on Georgian Bay to Peterborough, home of the new Canoe Museum, and finally Rice Lake.



TSW - Marine Railway

Among the highlights were:

- The Brigade assembly and camping at the historic Naval establishment at Discovery Harbour;
- riding the Big Chute Marine railway;
- our welcome and lunch in Fenelon Falls;
- playwright and author Drew Hayden Taylor regaling us with tales of growing up in Curve Lake First Nation and rice harvesting in Pigeon Lake;
- riding both the worlds highest and the second highest lift locks!
- arrival in Peterborough and welcome by the executive of the Canadian Canoe Museum; and
- the paddle to Rice Lake and the incredible welcome -and meal- by the Hiawatha First Nation!

The Brigade was financially successful too, thanks in large part to the sponsorship and the generosity of Parks Canada, whose smiling and helpful staff were a delight in each and every lock. A significant donation will be made to CVBS to "Pass the Paddle" while majority of monies are earmarked to fund a project of Hiawatha and Canadian Canoe Museum to build a birchbark canoe in Hiawatha for local paddlers.

The one missing piece that was part of the initial plan was visiting the new Canadian Canoe Museum. Delays set the opening date back to May 2024 and the state of the construction site precluded even a limited site visit. This was however more than made up by the welcome and presentation by the Executive Director, Curators and Program Director. We saw what it will look like- we need to paddle back to visit it in person!

By the Numbers:

1. 9 days in length
2. Distance paddled: 285km
3. Number of locks: 24 locks, 1 marine railway, 2 lift locks- the highest(Peterborough Lift Lock) and 2 nd

highest (Kirkfield) in the world!

4. 136 registered paddlers (about 20 paddlers did both!)
5. 12 crews initially registered , 11 participating crews
6. 50% were first time Brigaders!!!!
7. 81 female; 55 male
8. Oldest paddler 84 years old
9. Youngest paddler 9 years old
10. Average age: 58 years old

Learnings:

-Planning Committee: need for both Experience and new Energy in planning Brigades

-Zone 4 can be complicated to navigate for Registration- ensure you have a dedicated Registrar who is both Patient and

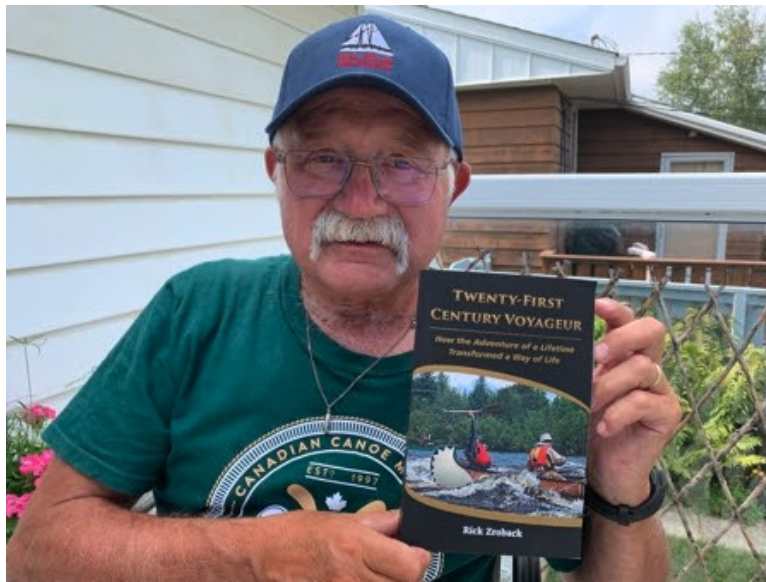
Kind: Thank you Bruce Milne!

-a Day off in the middle of a 9day Brigade is a Must!!



Day 1 - Self Rescue Review - TSW

Other



**Rick Zroback (2023) *Twenty-First Century Voyageur:*
*how the adventure of a lifetime transformed a way of life.***

Rick Zroback, a former Director of the CVBS and avid Brigader has written a narrative on his experiences as a participant in the 2008 David Thompson Brigade in which Rick and 300 other paddlers followed much of David's epic 1810 journey starting in Rocky Mountain House Alberta and ending at Old Fort William in Northwestern Ontario. Rick covers the highlights, hardships and the historical importance of the Brigade as it travelled eastward on western Canada's scenic rivers and mighty lakes.

That adventure had a profound impact on Rick which led him to pursue a life over the past fifteen years of voyageur canoeing throughout Alberta and has taken him from Oregon to Ontario, and from British Columbia to the Northwest Territories. Besides Rick's participation in this first Brigade, Rick also covers some of his experiences in other Brigades and initiatives he became involved in and around Hinton Alberta as a Twenty - First Century Voyageur.

Contact Rick at rickzro@gmail.com if you are interested in purchasing a copy of his story told from the iconic voyageur canoe.



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