

Lower Missinaibi and Moose River



Participants: Janice and Bill. Distance: 322Km. with 4765m in 4 Portages.

Friday July 5, 2002. *Janice:* We have finally left Bayfield at 7:15 PM.

Bill: We were in Bracebridge at 11:15 and had a nice visit with Uncle Ken and Louise. We had good cookies and strong coffee to keep us going through the night. Janice and I took turns driving and sleeping.

Saturday July 6, 2002. We got to Cochrane at 7:15 AM. and checked out the train station and had breakfast till

8:30, then off to Mattice. Arrived at 10:15 AM. and went to the park by the Missinaibi River. Took pictures at the statue of the voyageur portaging a canoe. Saw a group of girls come in from the south. They were on the river for a week and were continuing on to Moosonee. They said the river was going down all week, but it is still good to run. We went to Missinaibi Outfitters on Shallow Lake and made camp. Put on bug repellent because they just wouldn't leave us alone, and had a nice snooze in the shade. The sun was on us when we woke up. We went to Mattice and then to Hearst where we went for supper at 4:30 in the little restaurant across from MacDonalds. Went back to camp and found out the hydro will be off from 6 AM. to 10 AM. in the morning so we'll shower tonight. We are relaxing at our camp site.

Sunday July 7, 2002. We were up at 7 AM, packed and were at the office at 8 AM. We paid for our shuttle and the 8 nights we figured we would be in the provincial park on the Missinaibi River. We had breakfast which was made on the barbeque because the hydro was out. We unloaded our stuff at our put-in at Mattice and I drove the van back to Missinaibi Outfitters for them to shuttle. Got a ride back by Denyse and said good-bye. Janice had talked to a guide from Mattice and he said he was going to help some people make a show for Discovery channel next week. Then she was talking to someone who was looking for a phone and had just finished canoeing from Missinaibi Lake to here. That is the trip we want to do next year. They said the water level is just right for this time of year. We were on the water at 10:30 AM. There is a fair bit of current in the water. Janice saw a bald eagle soaring in the sky. When we got to Rock Island Rapids we went to the island to check it out. We planned our route pretty much down the the middle trying to avoid the big haystack at the start. We backferried to where we wanted to start and then let it go. The current sucked us right into that first haystack even though we tried to side slip to the left. With all that gear in the canoe it was pretty sluggish compared to what we are used to. We took on some water but we made it through no problem. We went to the back side of the island and emptied the water. It was 12 o'clock so we had lunch. We had planned to camp at the camp site but since it was so early we decided to go to Black Feather Rapids. We saw a moose standing at the edge of the water at Murphy Island. We looked at it through the binoculars and then went way to the right to avoid it. It stood there and stared at us all the time we went by. There was a nice breeze that came up but it was against us. It felt good in the 30 degree weather. We planned our route through Black Feather Rapids and instead of trying to sideslip we did back ferries and eddy turns. That worked good except for the rock garden at the end. Wherever you went there was another rock in the way. We only bumped over one rock so it was a good run. We landed at the camp sign and walked back to another site that had good shade on it. It was 2:30 PM. and we were making camp. There were pink roses and orange lilies at the edge of the river. The trees are alive with caterpillars. They are everywhere. Janice says Yuck! We had to have a fire to burn the rest of the food and bacon grease that was around the fire pit and in the sand, left by the previous people. We relaxed and Janice made a delicious curry rice meal for supper and had a chocolate mousse for an appetizer. We waded around in the water and rinsed some clothes. Everything is cleaned up and we are ready to go into the tent at 9:30 PM.

Monday July 8, 2002. *Janice:* We slept well. We woke around 6:30 and moved at 7:00 AM. After a good breakfast and decaterpillaring everything, we left at about 9:30 AM. It's another hot day. We did the swifts and the C1 rock garden. We noticed that on the island that is supposed to be a campsite, someone has put a portage sign there. We rounded the corner and did the next set of C1s. Large boulders stick out of the water along the way. We were surprised with that, because we weren't expecting so many boulders. Right about this time we saw our second moose. He watched us for a while and sauntered up the hill into the bush. We scouted out Beam Rapids and then ran them straight through. We are camped at Kettle Falls. We carried our stuff to our site and then had lunch down on the rocks by the river at 12:00 noon. We've had a great afternoon. Our laundry is drying on the rocks and we've had a nice whirlpool in the falls. Bill is fishing and I'm sunning. 'Tis great!

Bill: Well I had a couple strikes but they spit it out. Janice is pretty white where her bathing suit was and pretty red where it wasn't. I told her how she could have avoided those white lines but she didn't go for it. We had chili and tortillas for supper and it sure was good. We had dried fruit as an appetizer. It started to rain and as soon as I put up the tarp it quit and cleared up. We are done early tonight and are watching the river and clouds go by.

Tuesday July 9, 2002. *Janice:* We had a strange wind come in from the north last night and it blew in gusts and bursts. It was a welcome coolness it brought with it and it was much easier to sleep. We had breakfast and packed. It was nice not to have to fight with sooo many caterpillars everywhere. We did the carry over to the put in and were on the water at 8:30 AM. We did the swifts and found out it was much harder to ferry with such a head wind. The rapids appear a lot different with waves coming back upstream. I spent the day bouncing into the waves wiped up by the wind. We spooked a bald eagle and he flew right past us and up above the tree line. We took the east side of Skunk Island. We stopped at the Isabel Island camp site and had a gorp break. It is a nice site and if you follow the moose tracks and the daisy trail, it will lead you to a thunder box. We left and went through the bouldery swifts on the east side. We canoed the 2 sets of rapids and fought big wind. There was a gravel bar almost across the whole river by the second little island 3/4's of the way down Alice Island. We decided to have lunch at the 2nd camp site after Alice Island. The wind seemed to die down but started again as soon as we left. We carried on up to Bare Rock Point. We saw another bald eagle and a heron along the way. We noticed an eagle nest high in the top of a tree. There are lots of rocks starting to pop out of the water. Bill put a marker on the shore the last two nights and the river goes down about 1" a night, so that's about 2" every day. We did the rapids and the numerous swifts along the way. We saw the guide's tent on the west side of the river. He had told me we would see it. We did see one other cabin along the way as well. We opted out for take out 'B' at Thunderhouse Falls, thinking we could probably go to 'C', but we wanted to be safe rather than sorry with no one else around. We started our portage at 4:30 PM. We did a 2 carry because we are traveling heavier than normal. We decided on the camp site at the Squeeze. We checked out the site overlooking Conjuring House Rock. A loud sounding hammering let us know a large woodpecker was near. We set up camp and it tried to rain. At 8:30 PM. we met our neighbour. We had been expecting him. We had read his discussion on the Canadian Canoe Routes and we figured they might be in more of a hurry than we were. He got a chuckle out of the fact that we were expecting him. We are in bed late and I have spent much time writing. It is now 10:00 PM.

Wednesday July 10, 2002. *Bill:* I woke up and told Janice it was 7:30 AM. Got up and made a fire for pancakes and put the water on for coffee. What a beautiful day! A nice wind to keep the bugs away. It is a good thing we are not canoeing or it would be against us. We took a picture of Conjuring House Rock from Eran and Jenn's site and said good-bye. They should be a day ahead of us on the same route. We took pictures by the falls and then made banish for lunch and tomorrow's lunch. We had a couple leaders walk in from a group of 10 and ask if we were staying and we told them the next site was open. They were from a camp on Georgian Bay. I saw a porcupine on our trail to this site so I got Janice and the camera. When we got too close it headed toward us and we knew we should leave. After lunch we explored some more. What a beautiful place. We went along the falls and by the eddy after the Eliminator. This is where we got our water from and the water went up and down in surges. We were by the Squeeze and went down into Box Canyon to view the Strainer and Conjuring House Rock from

closer up. Janice had a chance to wash her hair which makes her very content to be on these trips. We went fishing after that and met Bob and Glen from a group of 12. They were from an Algonquin Camp. They had to stay on a small site so we let them put a couple of tents on our site for the night. We didn't catch any fish and I lost another lure. We had a delicious cabbage roll meal with vanilla pudding for an appetizer. I asked Janice if she wanted a vanilla coffee with her supper and so I made a regular coffee in her vanilla pudding mug. She was disappointed because she expected the real thing, so we had that next. With supper cleaned up we hiked the trail from end to end looking for a grave site but didn't see it. We stopped and visited both groups. They are both staying tomorrow and then moving on to Moosonee. We are leaving tomorrow and should get to Moosonee about the same time they do. The mosquitoes are out so we are in the tent and it is now 10 PM.

Thursday July 11, 2002. Got up at 6:15 and were on the water at 8 AM. after portaging our gear from the camp site. The other group was just getting up. We canoed to the 875m Stone Rapids Portage did it and had a gorp break afterwards at 10:15 AM. We canoed the 1.5 Km to the Hells Gate Canyon portage and saw a bald eagle along the way. We did the 2,350m portage and finished at 1:35 PM. The hills are quite large and steep going up and down from the river. We did part of the trail to the falls and decided it was too wet and buggy. We checked out the camp site and looked at the canyon. Nice view. We had a late lunch and pumped some badly needed water. Janice said it was 30 degrees, but with the humidity and portage factor factored in, it was very hot with no wind on the trail. We left the put in about 2:30 and after rounding the last bend before Bell's Bay we saw a moose with twin calves. We checked out the first camp site and went for the second on Bell's Bay but we missed it. We were about to stay on a gravel bar when we decided to go back and look for it. We found it and we are glad we went back. It is a nice site but it isn't marked. We saw a garter snake here. We set up camp and had a swim and rinsed our clothes. Janice made a great turkey meal with carrots and mashed potatoes. We had a small fire and found some dead branches to make a sail from. There is a red sunset tonight so it should be a nice day tomorrow. It is 10 PM. and we are in the tent.

July 12, 2002. *Janice:* We woke early, but were lazy and didn't move until later. We didn't get out of the tent until 8 AM. and then I packed and got breakie while Bill built a sail. We are slow moving and left at 11:45 and ate lunch in the canoe. We had such a wonderful wind this morning and now it is playing games. When it blows we sure move, but it only blew about 1/3 of the time and the rest of the time there was a head wind or no wind at all. The bugs are worse today, black flies, deer flies, mosquitoes, no see ems and some other monster flies. We keep tabs on where we are on the river, but we couldn't see the cabin from the river and we had trouble picking out where the camp sites might be. We saw several bald eagles today. Bill pointed out a moose to me that was standing in the river. As we approached he crossed the river and clambered up the steep bank. They are such a nice colour, tan faces with dark chocolate brown bodies. We got to the site we wanted at Pivabiskau River but it was occupied by the group from the Algonquin camp. We hunted high and low for the site across the river at the creek and could not find anything but a rocky river bed. We had supper and left after checking out the historic fur trade post which was all grown over with scrub brush. We are now camped at about the 218 Km. mark on Hap's map. It is a sandy grassy bank with roses on it. It has served us well. Bill rebuilt the sail and we are in bed late. It's now 11:00 PM. It stays light very late here, till 10:30 PM.

Saturday July 13, 2002. We woke at 6:30 AM. and as we were packing and cooking breakfast the crew of 12 paddled past our site. They were three in each canoe and the boys were really putting on the power for us when they hit some shallows. We said hello to their leader and finished our packing. We were thankful for this site but were happy to leave all those bugs behind. Tons of black flies. There was no wind or we had a head wind so we didn't use our sail today. Maybe tomorrow. We had an enjoyable trip but it was hot. The temperature was 35 degrees pushing 40 degrees in the canoe. We saw osprey and kites and herons or cranes.

Bill: We had a gorp break at the gravel bar camp site at the 200 Km. mark in Hap's book. The fish are flying out of the water along here and splashing down (sturgeon). Saw a beaver on the side of the river. We had pepperettes and triscuits for lunch in the canoe as we lazily went down the river. A few swifts along the way and you had to watch out for the gravel bars. We never hit anything today. We checked

out the 2 camp sites on the island and picked the furthest one at the 195 Km. mark. We were here at 1:00 PM. We saw a couple eagles soaring high in the sky. We made camp and made banish on the fire for our lunches. As we were making biscuits to have with our supper and tomorrow's lunch the group of 10 from the Georgian Bay Camp came by. We told them there was a site at the other end of the island, but you had to bushwhack to it. We had sloppy joes for supper with strawberry mouse as an appetizer. We did dishes and Janice had a chance to wash her hair. I tried fishing, but nothing bit, so I decided to clean myself up too. We hit the bed early at 8:00 PM.

Sunday July 14, 2002. It rained off and on through the night and the bush was just buzzing with mosquitoes. We were up at 5:15 AM. and couldn't sleep so we got up and packed and had granola for breakfast. The group from Georgian Bay went by at 7 and we were on the water at 7:30 AM. We used the sail when we had a breeze and made good time. We passed the group when they stopped for breakfast. The wind got better and better. The fish were flying into the air again today. We saw a couple of bald eagles together and a Canada goose. We ate lunch in the canoe and after that the wind got really hard. We flew down the river and through the rapids till our mast broke at about the 158 Km. mark. It took us an hour and 15 minutes to take apart the old one and make a new one and rig it back up. The group passed us and they had fashioned some sails too. We got going again at 1:45 PM. The wind was so strong and gusty we almost tipped over several times. It came in gusts from different angles and made it very hard to keep our balance. We also had to deal with a lot of rocks and rock shelves at the time. Janice heard it start to rumble first, and then came the dark gray clouds. We pulled over to shore and took the sail apart and made it back into a rain fly. We sat under it for a half an hour while the storm went by and then there was blue sky again while the storm moved off to the southeast. We left about 4 PM. but the wind had turned right around and was against us twice as hard. There were whitecaps on the river coming toward us. At 5 PM. we weren't getting anywhere fast so we stopped for supper at about the 148 Km. mark. We had a noodle meal for supper with a piece of chocolate as an appetizer. I took down the rigging for the sail while Janice cooked. With dishes and teeth done, we decided to go across the river to a large gravel bar and make camp for the night. The wind is still against us. We are in the tent at 9:30 PM. and ready for a much better day tomorrow.

Monday July 15, 2002. *Janice:* We woke up at 5:15 AM and Bill asked me if I wanted to stay in the warm sleeping bag. It was cold out, almost could have sworn frosty. It's strange to go to bed hot and wake up so cold. Bill packed up the tent and I cooked breakie out on the rocky bar. We were on the water at 7:20 AM. It was cold and the sun was so bright on the water, we had trouble seeing the rocks. We stopped at the island at the 140 Km. mark after an hour and a half paddling. We checked out the site and noticed that the red canoe group (Algonquin Camp) had used the south side site (which has a thunder box). It takes forever to travel this river as we are spending all our time zooming from side to side following the current. There are many swifts. We did the 2 sets of rapids. Hap has all of these rapids wrote up well in his book. He is pretty much right on the money with them. The river is long and wide until Portage Island and it gets a little deeper and narrower for parts. We used the top map and checked out the contour lines and counted the creeks so we knew where we were. We looked for a site before Portage Island because we knew we had those 2 large groups ahead of us. Both banks were unsuitable and we were close enough to see the one group on the bar in front of the island. It looked like there would be room for us so we carried on, said hello and were told that there was a site on the south corner of the island and that is where we are. It is someones project and they have taken a chain saw to the bush and made a huge frame for a tarp. There is only room for one possibly two tents. Not a pretty site but it was what we needed. We kept our kitchen on the clay and rock bank and slept up top. The joining of 3 rivers, the Missinaibi and Mattagami into the Moose, pretty view. The Mattagami looks bouldery and sounds loud. I saw a bald eagle soaring here. We didn't see much animal life today, ravens, an egret and sandpipers. In bed at 10:30 PM.

Tuesday July 16, 2002. *Bill:* Up at 6:30 AM. and had cream of wheat for breakfast. Got a picture of the joining of the 3 rivers and left at 9:00 AM. We checked out the swifts that weren't there on the north side of the island (not enough water flow). We looked at the other camp site and it had lots of room and a nice fire place. We grabbed a couple of sticks on the beach that we could use for a sail. We saw a couple

of bald eagles and some arctic terns. When we got around the island, we had some pretty big hay stacks to go through. The river is much bigger now and the rocks are still sticking out all over the place. There is less zig zagging required. There was another large set of hay stacks that wasn't on the map along the way. The rest was pretty easy stuff. We got to the train bridge at 12:00. As we were approaching the bridge, the Polar Bear Express was just going over it. We quickly got a picture of it. After we got through the swifts under the bridge, we had lunch in the canoe and checked out the gypsum caves. It is a really soft and crumbly rock. We got some wind then and we rigged up a sail with the two sticks and Janice held them and told me which way to go because it blocked my view. We raced over the shallows before Louisa Island. We checked out the little island camp site at the 62 Km. mark and decided it was a little too exposed to the elements for our liking. We went a little too fast and didn't notice that we were getting stuck in a shallows and missed the opening to the deeper water. For the first time on this trip we had to walk our canoe through the riffles at about the 56 Km. mark. After that the air changed to hot and humid as we canoed past Big Asp Island and we lost our wind. We checked out the next two islands and decided to stay at the one with the camp site marked on it but we are at the far end tucked in a corner. It took a while to convince Janice that the tide would not come up as high as our tent would be. We were here at 5 PM. at the 44 Km. mark. We set up camp with one eye on the sky because of the grey thunderstormy clouds that were coming from the northwest. We started the trip with a new filter and changed it today because it was getting pretty tough to pump and we don't want to force it. The mosquitoes aren't too bad here and there are lots of cliff swallows. We watched the tide come in and cover the sand bar. We had a delicious shepherds pie type meal and lots of snacks for an appetizer. We got everything cleaned up and Janice washed her hair and I shaved as the thunder and lightning was starting to roll in at 9:00 PM. We jumped in the tent when the storm hit and then all hell broke loose. The wind was so hard that the pegs pulled out of ground and our front vestibule was against us in the tent. We went out there and held it down over our stuff from the inside. We were probably there for a half an hour before it was done enough to go outside. I had almost lost my life jacket, but it was on the ground beside the tent. It wasn't the worst thunder storm we were ever in but it was probably the worst wind storm and everything we have has been blasted with sand. We pegged the tent back down and put large rocks on all the pegs in case we get another storm coming through. I got my hair washed and then went to bed. It is now 11:20 PM. and time to sleep for an early start tomorrow to hit the tide right to go to Moosonee.

Wednesday July 17, 2002. *Janice:* We are up at 4:30 AM. We packed up, had coffee and hot granola for breakfast and left at 6:00 AM. There is sand in everything from that nasty storm. We noticed that the tide was coming in again when we left. It wasn't even an hour after we were on the water when we were hit with terrific head winds. As we paddled past the big island at the 40 Km. mark we faced white caps and black clouds with such a wild wind that we had to stop and change and put on rain gear. I was soaked and it wasn't raining. We carried on to Wikikanishi Island where we noticed that both groups were camped. Only one person was up and moving at 7 AM. We slipped to the right of the island to avoid that blustery wind. We paddled past the start of the delta of the Abitibi River and then slipped above Baby Island to the opposite shore. We got hung up on a gravel bar there trying desperately to find refuge from the wind and waves. As we approached Neskochiyashi Bay a fog rolled in on us and hung over the river. It's so cold today, 15 degrees C. It was so strange with the temperature in the wind. Hot and cold mixed, so warm it would fog up my glasses. We stopped at Negobau Island for a gorp break and put on extra clothes. We did the Kwetabohigan Rapids on the left shore. Wow! We had lunch on the shore of Arrow Island. We still faced those awful winds so we decided to do the route Hap's way, not the MNR's way. We skirted the left shore and did the swifts and rapids, however the tide was on it's way out so we had trouble in some spots, pretty shallow. It was a nice scenery change (more like a small river) and the wind was much calmer. We had a close up look at several bald eagles. Once we hit Minahik Point things started to widen out and our wind began to blow harder once again. It took a lot of power and a good test of endurance to fight that terrific wind that met us out in the open. We crossed and dug in and paddled up to slide in behind South Charles Island and then up the front of Charles Island. Eleven hours on the water and when we came in the tide was at it's lowest. We are on site # 5 and

Eran and Jenn are on site # 1. A couple of fellows who paddled from Moose Crossing are on # 3. They had to wait til evening for the waves and wind to settle down before the taxi took them out to the James Bay. A pleasant evening and we are in the tent and Bill is sleeping at 11:00 PM. We are on land and still rolling on the waves.

Thursday July 18, 2002. *Bill:* Up at 8:00 AM. and had apple cranapple dumplings for breakfast. We did the tourist thing in Moosonee. The water taxi cost us \$4.00 each to get a ride anywhere. Ate grease for lunch. Saw the group from Algonquin in Moosonee this afternoon. Went back to camp and saw the other group from Georgian Bay there. In the evening there was a group that came in from James Bay who were from a Temagami Camp. They had quite a story on how they had to deal with the wind and the waves and the tide out in the bay.

Friday July 19, 2002. We did the tour of James Bay and Moose Factory on the Polar Princess from Two Bay Tours. Everyone is very friendly up here.

Saturday July 20, 2002. Up early and canoed to Moosonee and portaged to the train. Had a great time talking to the people from all three groups who were also on the train. As we crossed Moose Crossing we noticed that the river has dropped quit a bit since we canoed though. 2 PM our van was waiting for us right by the train cars carrying our canoe and gear. The people from Mattice Outfitters stayed to make sure everything was OK. We left Cochrane at 2:30 PM. and were back home at 12:50 AM Sunday morning.

Janice: The people of the north have a different life than us, but they sure have time for you. Nice people. Good Trip.