



# "The Last Voyageurs"

## and the Majesty of the River

### *Amory Adventure Award - First Place*

by the 1st Morinville RCMP/GRC Venturers (Alberta)

Bryson Murphy, Leonard Brinkman, Meghan Kading, Steven Blanchette, Collin McPhearson (Advisors: Laurel Kading, Doug Kading)

**"O**ur RCMP Venturer Company is a very active and well-organized little group that believes nothing is impossible or ever out of reach."

- 1st Morinville Venturers

With the determined slice of their paddles through the waters of the Athabasca River, Alberta's 1st Morinville Venturers seized first place in this year's Amory Adventure Awards competition. Here, in their own words, with an excerpt from each individual's logs, is the story of their adventure.

Our idea came from a weekend canoe trip on Jackson Lake in north-eastern Alberta. We learned many valuable techniques and had to adjust to things we had originally taken for granted on our previous camps. We had so much fun on this particular camp that we decided on a canoe trip as our year-end adventure in the summer of 2003. Our canoe voyage would take us 306 kilometres, through mostly Class II rapids, from Jasper to Whitecourt on the Athabasca River.

#### **Safety Plan**

A voyage like this required us to research the river, and the conditions that came with it during the time slot we had chosen. Fortunately, we had a friend who was aware of the requirements of such a challenge and warned us of hazards to watch out for.

We were required to file a route plan with Scouting and fill out a safety checklist. We had a support vehicle that would follow along our route and wait for us at designated checkpoints where the highway met the river. This vehicle was instructed to contact local RCMP had we been more than two hours late for our approximate arrival time. It also carried supply replacements in the event that something went missing on the river.

We carefully checked all equipment such as canoes, paddles, and lifejackets to ensure their worthiness for the trip. First aid supplies and waterproof matches were a must, and each participant was responsible to bring the proper apparel plus a change of clothes to be placed into the dry-sack. Each day of the trip, before launch, we checked our equipment

Photos courtesy of the 1st Morinville Venturers

and canoes, and arranged the checkpoints with our supply vehicle.

To maintain communication on the river, we had two-way radios. Safety was a major concern in the planning of this trip, and we were aware that you can never plan too much.

### A river of beauty and power

The Athabasca is a very beautiful and powerful river. Our trip commenced in the Rockies where the waters were still fresh and crystal clear. It looked like it was colder than cold; with almost a mystical clarity. It looked so inviting to swim in and have a drink, like a fountain of youth. It was such a relaxing atmosphere and the water was incredibly clear.

### Day One - Brinkman's Log

We arrived at the beginning of our trip, just inside the Rockies. Gazing upon the waters we would be navigating for the next five days, we could only begin to appreciate the clear iciness that would bring us adventure.

By eleven a.m. we finished unloading the canoes from the trailer and preparing them with the gear. We

took a few photos, decided who was in which canoe, and pushed off into the frigid water.

It was a good thing that it was our first day and we were full of energy and anticipation because a long day of hard paddling was ahead. The day went by uneventfully other than the sight of a few elk along the shores. We talked about so many different things, and tested the range of our walkie-talkies since we often wound up on opposite sides of the river after navigating sandbars and fallen trees.

The first day was an omen of the amount of paddling we would have to accomplish on our trip. It turned out we were much faster than originally anticipated. We took many breaks throughout the entire trip. Around six o'clock that first evening, we came to the bridge that would be the location of our first camp. We had to carry our gear up a steep hill to an old clearing with a fire pit. You could feel a bit of tension from the stress that had developed within the group.

By dinnertime this had dissipated, and we decided to stretch our imaginations and paint on war dressings.

## PLAN YOUR AMORY ADVENTURE NOW!

Almost any well-planned multi-day trip (over the course of four days) can qualify. Start planning your Amory Adventure challenge now. It is awarded annually to the company that displays the most initiative in conceiving, planning and executing an outdoor adventure activity.

Your adventure might include almost any challenge your Venturers want to reach for. Some past winners involved hikes and adventures to:

- Mount Everest base camp
- Continental Divide
- Chilkoot Pass
- West Coast Trail
- Cadwalder Mountain range

### Meet the Deadline!

Adventures must take place before October 31 of the award year. Entries must be postmarked no later than two weeks after the date of close. For complete rules, regulations and how to apply, surf to [www.scouts.ca](http://www.scouts.ca).

### For More Information

The Venturer Handbook has all the information you need to register your Amory Adventure, including deadlines and rules. If you have additional questions, address them to your council office or to Ian Mitchell at: Scouts Canada, National Office 1345 Baseline Road, Ottawa, ON K2C 0A7 Phone: (613) 224-5131 E-mail: [imitchell@scouts.ca](mailto:imitchell@scouts.ca)

Who knows how far you'll go with your Amory Adventure Challenge!



## 2003 Amory Adventure Award Competition

The judging of the Amory Adventure Awards for 2003 has now been completed. Creativity, use of Scouting skills, and planning ability were evident in all of the submissions for this year. When promoting the Award, please keep in mind the requirement changes made - most importantly, **the deadline date of October 31st.**

**FIRST PLACE:** 1st Morinville RCMP Venturer Company (Alberta) - The Last Voyageurs

**SECOND PLACE:** 18th Red Deer Venturer Company (Alberta) - West Coast Trail

**THIRD PLACE:** 1st Port Perry Venturer Company (Ontario) - James Bay Trip





Nothing like a bit of fun! At around eleven p.m., we went to bed to be rested for the next morning.

### Day Two – Murphy’s Log

On this day, we journeyed approximately 50 metres from our launch site (Jasper Outlet). Brule Lake was one of the shortest sections to be travelled but because of the rapids, took the longest time. After several hours of intense paddling, we saw a

herd of elk up ahead, swimming across the river. By the time we got to where they had been, they were long gone.

At the end of the day we were really tired and happy to see our landing zone ahead. But once we got there, the beach was shielded by many rocks, so we had to travel a hundred metres down the beach. Not only that; our landing zone had no access for the support vehicle, so we walked another hundred metres upstream to climb a forty-foot hill at a 70 degree angle! This was an adventure in itself.

One of our canoes had been slightly damaged – so we had to spend some time with the repair kit – a very messy job no one wanted to repeat. That night we fell asleep instantly.

### Day Three – McPhearson’s Log

We awoke early and packed all our equipment. Before we left, the boys played a trick on everyone by filling water balloons and burrowing them underground like mines! When we stepped on them, they exploded all over our legs. It was hilarious – and cool, since it was a really hot day.

That was also the first day a canoe tipped over in the water. A lot of dishes were lost, because they weren’t properly tied down.

The water was a bit warmer but not much. I saw two hawks that day, and they were magnificent. When we got off the river, everyone was tired and some of us were sunburnt. That day we had travelled 33 river miles. It was hard to get to sleep that night – you could say it was painful!

## HOW TO LAUNCH A CANOE SAFELY

The person at the front (bow) of the canoe enters from the stern – crouching to keep their weight low. This person holds their paddle and slides it across the sides of the canoe as they make their way to the front of the canoe to sit down. Life jacket is on.

The person at the stern holds the canoe and steadies it between their knees. He or she pushes the canoe into the water. His/her paddle is already in the canoe; he/she gets in and seated while the person at the bow keeps the canoe steady.

Balance is important throughout the canoe experience. Sudden movements and shifts of balance can cause a canoe to tip. The canoe partners must learn to work together and communicate.



Photo courtesy of the 1st Morinville Ventures

*One of our canoes had been slightly damaged – so we had to spend some time with the repair kit – a very messy job no one wanted to repeat.*



give them a future  
we can all smile about  
take david suzuki's nature challenge today!  
sign up at [www.davidsuzuki.org](http://www.davidsuzuki.org)



EDUCATION AND RESEARCH  
SOLUTIONS ARE IN OUR NATURE

**Days Four and Five  
- Kading's Log**

Day Four was the longest day (43.5 river miles). We had another big capsizing, and a storm to reckon with. Earlier in the day we were holding the canoes together and travelling together for a bit. We crossed the biggest rapids just before the bridge where we pulled in to shore. When we capsized, our cameras got wet and we learned that Ziplock™ bags are not watertight! We made a cook table out of our bins. There was a lot of snoring coming from some of the tents that night.

Day Five was our last day on the river. It started raining on us, and there was lightning. We went together to the end and had to paddle hard to get to shore on the McLeod River. We had to paddle off the Athabasca and onto the start of the McLeod to dock at the park in Whitecourt. We changed into fresh clothes, unloaded the canoes, loaded them into the trailer and re-arranged the vans. There was lots of sleeping in the vans on the way home.

**Advisors' Comments**

It was a great trip. We did run into some challenges – which is the motto of the Venturer program. We ran into leaking canoes that we learned to

the canoes. They learned the importance of communicating to their partners as they entered rough water and they worked well as a team to plan each day and reach their destination together.

We have seen a lot of growth and maturity within this group as they pushed themselves out of their comfort levels and met the challenge with enthusiasm. We have also seen them work as a team on this submission, dividing the jobs among themselves and then giving up evenings and days off school to put it all together. It was very interesting to read their logs of the trip and to see each of their perspectives on our challenge.

We are very proud of the achievement of these young people, and we look forward to our next adventure with them – even if it involves wild water, thunderstorms, hiking or insects – Bring It On!!! ^



*Wild water, thunderstorms, hiking and insects.  
Are they ready for their next adventure? You Bet!*

patch, sweepers and capsizing, hot sun and cool winds, a tremendous storm and tired and sore muscles. The members of the Venturer company showed a lot of character as they worked together as a team. Some of them were stronger than others, but they learned to consider their strengths and work around that as they picked their partners for

**DANGERS THAT  
CAN EXIST  
IN WATER**

**R**OCKS – if the water level is high, a canoe can pass over rocks with no problems. But when the level gets low (usually later in summer), rocks can stick out of the water or be hidden just below the surface where they can scrape or damage the canoe.

**LOGS** – see above. Protruding logs might appear to be floating in the water, but if they are solidly anchored, which is sometimes difficult to tell, they can break a hole in a canoe or scrape it.

**Shallow water near islands** – canoeists must be careful near islands, as there is sometimes an area of shallow water or rocks.

**Channels between islands** – canoeists must be careful about choosing channels between islands. These channels can become very narrow, shallow and filled with dangerous sweepers (trees that have fallen into a river or hanging down over the water).



*Growth, maturity, sense of achievement...and oh ya, First place!*

Photo courtesy of the 1st Morinville Venturers