



Victoria Canoe and Kayak Club

Newsletter

June 2020

Victoria Canoe & Kayak Club 355 Gorge Road West Victoria, B.C. V9A 1M9
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To comply with recommendations to reduce the spread of COVID-19, VCKC has suspended all activities associated with the Club's building, compound, dock, equipment, lessons, courses and paddling activities until further notice.

Be sure to check the website for information on when courses and activities will resume !!!

President's Message

Hello to you all,

I trust you still can recall what the acronym "vckc" stands for. As the Province and particularly Vancouver Island is doing well at containing the spread of this Coronavirus, our community is opening up a little and feeling our way into the "New Normal". Your executive has been meeting and Program Directors have been planning how to reinstate some paddling at VCKC. Under the direction of the Provincial government and Health Authority our plans will be following the three tenets of:

- 1) Physical Distancing
- 2) Hand Washing and associated cleaning/disinfecting
- 3) Self-isolating when required

Even though currently, the Island area appears benign, COVID-19 is still contagious and without a vaccine. I encourage each member to assess their personal risk levels and make the best decisions for themselves and their circle of contacts.

By following the three tenets to minimize the risk of infection, we hope our planned progressive start will enable many to resume some paddling. If a few weeks go by with continued success in containing the Covid virus it is hoped we will be able to provide more paddling opportunities. As there is no Newsletter in July, any changes to our current status will be made through a club wide email.

At the time of this writing, Saanich still has not opened their recreation sites and we will not be opening the clubhouse ahead of their instructions. Though the most recent communication from Saanich has not given an opening date, I get the feeling it will not be long in coming. VCKC's executive has one more meeting to go over details of our restart. I am expecting to send out these details with Saanich's blessing, in a couple of weeks.

I know some of you were hoping for better news in a bigger hurry. We hear ya. We also want to demonstrate whatever we do we can do it with respect for everyone's well-being.

Happy Paddling (Soon)

Cheers

~ Tim Marks, President

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Self-isolating on the deck

Big Canoe News

A short trip to remember in a Big Canoe on the Peace River

In the late summer of 2015, Tim and I paddled a big canoe on the Peace River with three of our four grown children, from Hudson's Hope to Taylor BC. In Hudson's Hope, we met people in the Visitor Centre who were quite concerned about building plans for a possible BC Hydro dam in "Site C" on the Peace River. This would change the course of the river with flooding of this area for the last intact stretch of the Peace River in British Columbia and affect future trips on this section of the river. That was the main reason we were there. The work on "Site C" started a few years ago amidst much angst for river enthusiasts all over but especially those who live in the north.



The Peace River originates in the Rocky Mountains of northern BC and flows to the northeast through northern Alberta and is a part of the MacKenzie River watershed. The section we paddled was a large seemingly slow moving waterway. The toughest part of our day was lugging all the gear and the canoe up the riverbank at the end of the day (A common big canoe experience that I have come to appreciate for not needing a gym membership for my strength training!). We were able to find rough camping areas along the river where we could take much needed shelter from the various conditions of late summer weather. It included snow on September 2!

After our shuttle between Hudson's Hope and Taylor's Landing, we paddled through a narrow section of river called, "The Gates", a narrow passage with high bluffs, then on to our first camp. We had a comfortable set up with our three tents and tarps, which was good because inclement weather the first night gave us reason to stay put and stay warm by our campfire the following day amidst freezing rain and snow. We had a few days of camping and family time on the river, including a reading of, "The 100-Year-Old-Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared", by Jonas Jonasson, around the campfire every evening. This short trip of straight forward paddling and fairly easy camping, in the community of a big canoe, was a great introduction to big canoe paddling and tripping. We came into Taylor's Landing a few days later with several paddle strokes taking us through the scenic Peace River valley. With several tandem canoe trips before this, the Peace River was a great introduction of many big canoe trips for me.



~ Mary Ellen Marks, Director Big Canoe

GULF ISLAND PUB TOUR July 19-23

Sadly, we will have to cancel this year's Big Canoe tour of the Gulf Islands. We had more than one boatload signed up. I appreciate all the optimism from everyone who signed up that the trip would be able to go ahead, and that the public health restrictions would be behind us. Apart from the social distancing risks that go with living together in a Big Canoe, BC Parks and the pubs will not be able to greet us.

Feel free to send your ideas for the ideal Big Canoe vacation tour for 2021. The San Juan Islands? The Broken Group? Something to start looking forward to now.

Have a safe summer!

~ Joe Boyd and Mark Sondhiem

Canoe Program

Canoe construction has been an inherent part of Canada's history for thousands of years. With vast networks of water routes from east to west and north to south, canoes were the principal means of transportation by First Nations who used building materials ranging from massive Western red cedar trees that were skillfully carved into large, whale-hunting and war canoes, to eastern white birch bark canoes that could withstand the rigours of wilderness travel yet were light enough to portage as the need arose. More recently, from the Maritimes to the Pacific to the Mackenzie River Delta, there are canoes built large and small, each made of local materials by local builders to meet local needs. But of all the possible building materials, who would consider using concrete?

2020 was the third year that University of Victoria's Engineering Students entered the Canadian National Concrete Canoe Competition. The competition challenges engineering students from across Canada to apply theories and concepts to design and build a canoe out of low-density concrete. The teams are evaluated not just on their design specifications, as outlined in a written report and an oral presentation, but on the



finished product itself. The canoe must ultimately pass the flotation test: to float when



filled with water. Successful teams are then invited to compete nationally in a series of races scheduled in May at Western University in London, Ontario.

The UVic Team started working on the project in September 2019. They created their concrete mix design, tested the compressive and tensile strength, designed the hull shape, molded the canoe, and most importantly, learned to paddle. Emma Wehner, an engineering student on the UVic Team, also a certified RCABC canoe instructor and VCKC member, started regular training sessions in the Gorge to build her team into a unified, paddling machine. Much to the great disappointment of all the Concrete Canoe Teams across Canada, the competition was cancelled due to Covid-19. Let's hope the 2021 edition of the competition brings great success to our very own UVic

Concrete Canoe Team – we'll be cheering for you!

Meanwhile, anyone who wants to learn to canoe will have the opportunity in June when VCKC officially reopens. Instructors are volunteering to meet the heavier than normal demand for courses. We aim to offer several Lakewater 1 Basic Tandem courses for all those new members who have been waiting patiently over the last 3 months and a Lakewater 2 Basic Solo course for those who want to further improve their skills. Check the website for updates in the next few weeks or contact me. Until then, stay safe!

~ Louise de Montigny, Canoe Program Director

Dragon Boat

As we await the opportunity to resume dragon boat paddling once again, we enjoy the memories of being Gold Medal Winners at last year's 2019 Gorge Super Sprints!



2019 Gorge Sprint

Stay safe everyone, see you on the water soon!

~ Jana Savage, Director, VCKC Dragon Boat Program

Marathon Update

Last month I focused on the competitive dimension of marathon canoeing and there's a lot to be said for having the opportunity to test your skill and stamina against others. This month, I'd like to focus a bit on the recreational dimension of marathon canoeing.

The Gorge Waterway is the place where marathon canoers spend most of their time, although there have been times in the past when the Victoria Waterways Loop, as profiled by Shelby was completed. Most times – Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings, year-round, marathoners are out, choosing partners and boats to match their mood, skill level or training regime.

I definitely tend toward the recreational end of the activity spectrum, although recreational paddling in a marathon canoe isn't necessarily a casual affair. After all, the faster you travel, the more stable the boat. Every outing is a new

chance to explore a new dimension of paddling, whether it's trying to perfect the "catch" portion of your stroke, riding a wake, or turning your boat at the edge of an eddy under the Tillicum bridge.



Over time the Gorge Waterway, and in particular Portage Islet becomes very familiar. Rocks, tree stumps and hidden branches all become part of the continuous monitoring of water and tide conditions. Intriguing shiny objects on the surface of the water are often discarded beer cans that make it into the canoe. All part of taking good care the of Gorge waterway, which is also the Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary, as signs along the waterfront remind us.

While we become familiar with the waterway, there are many ways the waterway gets familiar with us. Canada geese are particularly nonchalant about our presence, moving a few centimeters if a boat is moving in their direction, but otherwise going about their business of eating eel grass. The resident herons are also pretty tolerant of human incursions into their territory, particularly when they have fish to find.



River otters, like the common merganser and mallard ducks are much more skittish, but will give you a good look, particularly from the shore. Seals are common in the winter months and may or may not give you a lazy glance with one eye before going back to sleep in their resident resting log in a secluded part of Portage Islet.



The ebb and flow of the seasons can be marked in a variety of ways, but from the perspective of a year-round marathon canoer, the water itself and the wide variety of waterfowl and marine mammals it hosts is the best barometer of life on the Gorge.

~ Peter Elson, Marathon Director

SUP Update

Victoria Waterways Loop by SUP (or an easy spring Sunday morning paddle)

On May 3, myself and three other paddlers set out in the mid-morning sun to complete the Victoria Waterways Loop. We enjoyed three and a half leisurely hours while paddling 14.5 km and taking in a good portion of all the best that the Victoria area has to offer to paddlers. The conditions were sunny, with light winds from the south and a very gentle flood tide. We launched from the VCKC 'beach' launch and headed down to Tillicum Narrows to complete the loop in a clockwise direction. This was the first time I have completed this paddle and didn't know it at the time but now realize that the conditions were ideal, I was very fortunate.



Map From Matt Evans

I consider myself to be an experienced and competent paddler, I have been paddling seriously (basically as much as I can) for the past few years. Before I moved to Victoria in late-2018 I was proud of the paddling mileage I had logged but have to admit that most of my experience at this point was limited to enclosed / protected waters and tidal rivers. My experience was almost exclusively on flatwater. Since I have moved here I have been doing my best to explore all the SUP opportunities the South Island has to offer. This has meant that I have been spending a lot of time trying to stay on my paddleboard in surf and whitewater environments in addition to the flatwater, distance paddling I love and always try to sneak in. The idea to do the Victoria Waterways Loop came from wanting to get outside and enjoy the water while staying close to home and maintaining physical distancing. If there was swell to surf it was sure to be crowded and the river levels were dropping after the spring melt/rain. If the conditions cooperated then this was an opportunity to paddle the morning away in a relatively controlled environment with no shuttling or carpooling required, while staying close to home.

The other paddlers that I departed with consisted of a couple guys with good experience (both as watermen and with previous experience paddling this route) and another competent and able paddler, but not the same extensive paddling background as the others. I was on my raceboard, but the other three had inflatable paddleboards. These ranged from a racing profile (long and fast but less stability) to a very stable (wide) board. This was just an easy Sunday morning paddle, so no one was expecting to set a record time or take it too seriously. We had all brought the required equipment and light supplies in our drybags, we had a plan, contingencies, and knew where all our potential exit points were should they be necessary. We geared up and hit the water!

This was my first time going through Tillicum Narrows from the gorge side. It was an easy paddle against a very gentle flood tide. Quite a different scene from when I was playing around on a nine knot ebb current a few days before. I tried my best to spot 'the rock' that I had scraped with my paddle previously, but the water was too deep. The water was like glass as we got closer to the inner harbour and the Johnson Street Bridge was even raised for us! We started to feel a bit of wind and minor chop as we got to the outer harbour, this was the only point on our paddle when we actually noticed other water users. It was nice to have the water to ourselves and just some other OC paddlers. As we exited the harbour and started out along the waterfront for Esquimalt Harbour we had a bit of wind chop and swell to deal with, but nothing too crazy. Nobody went for a swim and every time we felt like we could use a break it was not difficult to find some refuge behind a rock or an island. I think it was around Harrison Island that we snuck behind the rocks and surprised a bunch of seals. I think they were annoyed to have to leave the rocks but were also curious as normal about what we were doing once they were in the water. It's funny how along the waterfront Fisgard Lighthouse never seems to get any bigger, no matter how close you get.

The paddle through Esquimalt lagoon was good, we had some wind at our backs to start and this died off the further north we went. Of course, just as we were considering finding a place to stop and have a water/snack break the rain started. We decided to push on to Portage Park and once we landed on the beach the sun came back out! The portage over to the launch behind Shoreline Middle School was fine. Two of us had kayak carts and the others carried their gear. No one had any trouble, but the carts definitely made the traverse easier (but I'm not sure I would want to carry one with me on the water). HOT TIP: don't swing your board around sideways on a busy Sunday morning bike path! We finished up back at the club just in time to lament how there wasn't anywhere to go and get a burger and cold drink together. We packed up and headed home satisfied after a morning well spent paddling our local waterway. This is a journey I expect I will be doing again and again and would encourage all competent paddlers out there to consider. There are definitely substantial risks to be considered on this route, but with appropriate ability and adequate planning it can be a world class paddle route literally in the middle of the city where we are lucky enough to reside.

~ courtesy Jame Roorda

~ Shelby Hart, Director SUP Program

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