

Participants on the Connected by Canoe trip paddle from Kingston to Ottawa to explore the possibilities of canoes for community building.



The CANADIAN CANOE MUSEUM
Le MUSÉE CANADIEN du CANOT

Connected by Canoe

*On a journey to bring Canadians together —
one stroke, one rapid, one portage at a time*

A message from the Canadian Canoe Museum board and staff

The canoe is a cultural, geographical, and historical marker that reminds all Canadians of how we have arrived at where we are in space and time. These crafts, and their stories of significance, also carry detailed clues about where we could go as a nation. Canoes connect us to the land and to each other, and, as

we contemplate our next 150 years, they remind us of the virtues of pulling together in the same, elegantly simple boat.

On behalf of the people of Canada, The Canadian Canoe Museum (CCM) stewards the world's largest collection of canoes, kayaks, and paddled watercraft. This nationally significant cultural asset, which

consists of more than 600 crafts, 2,000 artifacts, archival material, and books, is based in Peterborough, Ontario, a city with a rich heritage and a deep connection to the canoe-manufacturing industry.

But, over the last twenty years, thanks to an array of partners from coast to coast to coast, the museum has become something

more significant than just a collection of objects. The CCM's staff and patrons, and all those across the country who ensure its success believe the canoe's most important work may not yet be done. With the collection as a catalyst, and through educational programming and enriching experiences on land and water, we are inspiring connection, curiosity, and new understanding.

Visit us to explore our interactive exhibits, take part in an artisan workshop, or paddle a voyageur canoe. Meanwhile, learn about our plans for the new museum on one of the country's most celebrated waterways (see page 6). We look forward to meeting you and to becoming even more connected by canoe. ■



How Canada's most iconic craft helps Shelagh Rogers navigate life's choppy waters

By Colleen Fisher Tully

THE MUSEUM BY THE NUMBERS

(2016 statistics)

27,267

visitors

4,564

School and Youth Program visitors

247,121

people reached through on-site, on-water, and online events, travelling exhibits, and projects across the country

133

volunteers, including a Board of Directors with sixteen members

GET INVOLVED

canoemuseum.ca

Shelagh Rogers, OC, is a celebrated broadcast journalist, whose voice is a national favourite on CBC Radio, and the Founding Ambassador-at-Large for The Canadian Canoe Museum. She is always happy to share her passion for Canada's best-loved boat.

Where is your canoeing happy place?

A lake in Quebec's Gatineau Hills. My connection to it goes back to childhood, and to my late father, who first took me out in a canoe.

Why is The Canadian Canoe Museum important to you?

One Sunday morning, in November 2010, I drove to Peterborough to visit an elderly friend at the hospital. But, upon arrival, I learned she had died just ten minutes before.

I felt so sad, so lost. Without thinking, I drove to the ccm. It was closed that morning, but the door was open. At the desk, I explained where I had just come from and they kindly allowed me to wander through.

It wasn't long before I heard running and laughing — the place was crawling with kids carrying foot-long paddles. I later learned

that they had spent the night in the museum (surely every kid's dream!) and carved those paddles the day before.

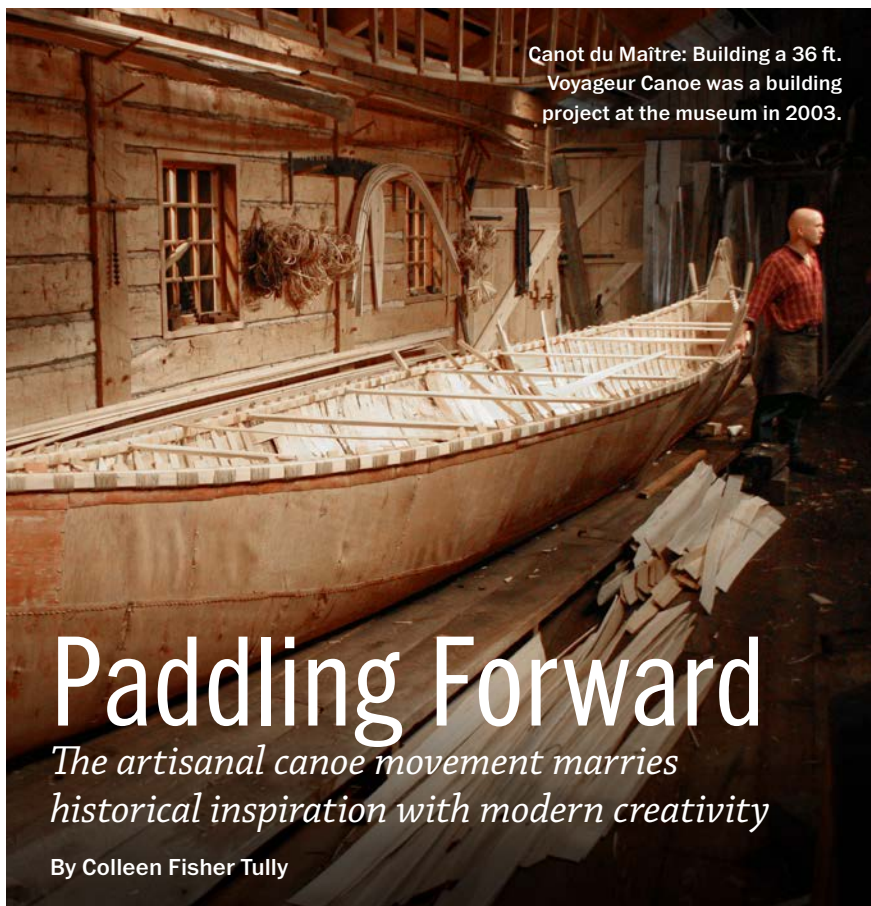
On that "hard portage" morning, I was reminded of the solace that comes from being around canoes, and the kids' unbridled enthusiasm was gravy.

How can people across Canada support canoe education and heritage?

The ccm website is a great resource. You can certainly find canoes in the literature of this country: from the poetry of the late E. Pauline Johnson to newer poems by Melanie Siebert; in the stories of Susanna Moodie, Margaret Atwood, Roch Carrier, Elizabeth Hay, Richard Wagamese, and Alison Pick; in the non-fiction of Bill Mason, James Raffan (the ccm's director of external relations), Sanford Osler, and Shelagh Grant; and so many more.

Why is the canoe such an enduring symbol of Canada?

The canoe is a vessel, beautiful in form and function, that allows us to move on all kinds of water. Our paddles dig in and we pull forward, which is best done together. ■



Canot du Maître: Building a 36 ft. Voyageur Canoe was a building project at the museum in 2003.

Padding Forward

The artisanal canoe movement marries historical inspiration with modern creativity

By Colleen Fisher Tully

Pam Wedd and Chuck Commanda are creative powerhouses in the canoe-building community. Both look to the Canadian Canoe Museum collection as inspiration, says curator Jeremy Ward. “They can assess everything with a mature eye,” he explains, using historical techniques to evolve the craft into a contemporary artform.

As an adolescent, Wedd would pull her own canoe down to the shore and paddle out for moments of solitude “and independence,” she muses. Not much has changed for this artisan canoe builder, who still delights in the serenity of open water. “That’s why a wooden canoe is so special,” she says. “It’s the quietest of all.”

Wedd founded her Bearwood Canoe Company in 1989. There, she teaches canoe building and restoration, and sells her own creations. She’s also an annual guest instructor at the CCM, leading its wood-and-canvas canoe restoration workshop. She says her students come from all walks of life and that, often, multiple generations of a family will find common ground through building a craft of their own.

For Commanda, constructing canoes

as a family is what his Algonquin ancestors have always done “to make the family vehicle,” he explains. As a boy, he learned from his grandmother Mary how to prepare roots and split cedar for traditional birchbark canoes. But it wasn’t until 2010 that he built his own, at the request of his grandfather William, a master canoe builder. After months of work, he showed the almost complete canoe to his grandfather, who reviewed it, caught a mistake and insisted that the entire craft be redone. “He looked over at me and said, ‘You’ll never forget again,’” Commanda recalls.

Since then, he’s made many birchbark canoes for local schools and communities. This past September, Commanda showcased his craft at the CCM, where the work of his grandparents is also on display. But it’s the draw of a brand new project that he always looks forward to most: “Every time we make a canoe, this is what happens: it brings people together, and everybody starts sharing,” he says. “I don’t know how to explain it; you just have to experience it for yourself.” ■



Learning on Land and Water

How the Canadian Canoe Museum’s education programs take teaching to another level

BY SYDNEY LONEY

As education manager at The Canadian Canoe Museum, Karen Taylor encourages kids to discover their own connections to the artifacts in the museum’s collection. She’s also committed to supporting school curricula through the stories behind each craft on display. “We can explore so much through the canoe: art, science, social studies, geography, and, of course, First Nation, Métis and Inuit perspectives,” she says.

The education programs at the ccm are as diverse as its collection, from hands-on explorations of the galleries to building kayaks and carving paddles. Last year, the ccm began offering virtual field trips, using Skype to connect to classes across North America and beyond. “Live video calls from our education staff give students an interactive experience of the museum in their classrooms,” says Taylor.

In its first year, the virtual program reached 1,600 students, the demand underscoring the relevance of the museum’s collection as a source of learning and discovery. “Anywhere you have people and waterways there’s a captivating history of paddled watercraft, whether we’re connecting with a class in Florida, near where ancient dugouts were recently unearthed, or with kids in a Manitoba town that was once a fur-trading post,” notes Taylor.

There are also plenty of opportunities to get kids on the water, including voyageur canoe expeditions—what better way to learn about the fur trade than paddling a 36-foot replica from that period of history? “Our experiential, discovery-oriented approach allows students to shine,” says Taylor. “The museum offers a unique connection between its collection and an active, relevant, and challenging experience for children in a natural environment.” ■



Paddlers on the Connected by Canoe trip glide into Ottawa for the final leg of their ten-day journey.

Rediscovering Canada by Canoe

Four trips that united Canadians and propelled them toward a common goal

By Sydney Loney

Ken Powell learned to paddle as a kid in Ontario's Algonquin Park and has since traversed lakes and rivers throughout Canada. When he heard about Connected by Canoe, the Canadian Canoe Museum journey from Kingston to Ottawa in a Montreal-style craft, he was immediately on board. "The canoe is symbolic of the history of Canada," says the former CCM board chair. The trip, which took place in May 2017, in partnership with Community Foundations of Canada, served as a floating conversation that connected paddlers with one another and with the stories of the nation. The historic vessel taught them to move forward as one, both physically and mentally, which set the tone for deep discussions about the

country's past and future. "It created this amazing opportunity to talk—and to talk freely," says Powell.

The voyage brought together men, women, young, old, First Nation, Inuit, and a new Canadian, 20-year-old Erick Mugisha, who arrived from Kenya last year. "Almost my whole life I've lived in a desert, with no idea of the relationship between a canoe, a paddle, and water—the source of life, beauty, and serenity," says Mugisha. He was struck by how the experience united total strangers. "We started as a group of paddlers, but we became a canoe community. Even the hard work of portaging made me understand that in unity there is strength."

On the water, there were frank conver-

sations about the injustices suffered by Canada's Indigenous people, as well as a sharing of ideas for how best to address lingering inequalities. "We talked about reconciliation," says Powell. "How all of us can pull the country together and provide a positive, even influential example to the rest of the world."

James Raffan, the CCM's director of external relations, hopes the expedition will be the first of many. "Connected by Canoe is an idea that will spread," he says. "In addition to being a canoe trip (with all its attendant joys and challenges), it's also a floating conversation about the future of the country. It's about drawing on our history of self-propelled travel in this nation of rivers



Paddlers from the Métis Nation of Ontario follow the fur-trade routes of their ancestors.



The Pulling Together Canoe Society launches canoes off BC's Sunshine Coast.



Paddlers set out for their ten-day journey.

and exploring the idea of the canoe as a vessel of reconciliation.”

It's this sentiment that informed several other canoe expeditions that set out across the country this summer. In July, the Pulling Together Canoe Society pushed thirty canoes off the shores of British Columbia's Sunshine Coast for a ten-day journey to Vancouver. The 300 paddlers included members of First Nation communities, the West Vancouver Police Department and the Royal Canadian Navy. “It got people out of their comfort zones and put them side by side to accomplish something together,” says Rhiannon Bennett, the society's president. “It was a chance to discover what working together feels like; it helped build

relationships and taught us to have more compassion for one another.”

A canoe is an immediate equalizer for people from diverse backgrounds, says Bennett. No one's better, no one's stronger—it's just paddles working together to guide the craft through water. “It doesn't matter whether you're eleven or sixty, as long as you paddle in sync,” she says. As a member of the Musqueam Band, she's involved in canoe revitalization and encouraging her community to return to the water. “To be in a canoe and paddling in the waters of your ancestors is a really powerful thing.”

Connecting with the past and retracing ancestral roots was the focus of the 2017 Canoe Expedition, organized by the Métis

Nation of Ontario (MNO). For three months this summer, seventeen Métis youth paddled and portaged 2,200 kilometres across the province, following historic fur-trading routes while stopping in communities to share their history and culture. Like the CCM and the Pulling Together Canoe Society journeys, the MNO expedition connected Canadians to their country and to one another.

“Canoeing is a great opportunity for anyone, not just the Métis people, to get out and enjoy Canada,” says 19-year-old Tomas Lucas. A highlight for him was participating in educational events along the way. “I learned a lot about the voyageur way of life, the struggles my people had

to go through, and how they overcame them and endured to this day,” he says. His specialty became explaining furs and trapping (a history he didn’t know much about until he embarked on the journey), but he also got to share other aspects of Métis culture. “I really want all Canadians to know about the *joie de vivre* our people have—we love to jig, sing and play the fiddle,” he says. “It’s really fun to be among our people.”

Sometimes, connecting with people on-shore is the most rewarding experience. For Mike Ranta, who set out from Bella Bella, BC, in April, for his third cross-Canada canoe voyage with his dog, Spitzii, it’s the people he meets that make the journey memorable. “Everywhere we stop, the First Nation communities open their arms to us,” says Ranta. “There’s always someone looking out for us with a plate of food or a cup of coffee. Their welcome gives you a feel for how this nation was built, and we owe them a debt of gratitude.”

Ranta collects driftwood so he can carve miniature canoes for children he encounters en route. Wherever he goes, people are keen to sign his canoe. “Getting in a canoe is an opportunity to test who you are as a person, and I think every Canadian respects the canoe and understands its significance,” he says. “It’s the reason Canada is such a great country—it’s where we started from.”

When the Connected by Canoe paddlers finally pulled their vessel up on the shore of Dow’s Lake in Ottawa, former CCM board chair Bill Morris was struck by the beauty—and fragility—of our outdoors. “It was some of the younger paddlers on the trip who reminded us about the need to better respect our environment,” he says.

Another trip highlight was the way each member of the group worked to make the voyage a success. Even when snow fell or winds kicked up and the waves made paddling tough, everyone pulled together. “It was pretty uplifting,” he says. While celebrating Canada’s sesquicentennial, the group also took time to reflect. “It was both a celebration and a realization that there’s still so much we have to work on as a country,” he says. “Now we just need to find a way to expand the expedition, so people across Canada can share similar experiences.” ■



A rendering of the new Canadian Canoe Museum. The building design honours the curves of nature.

Our New Home on the Water

Discover the Canadian Canoe Museum’s forward-thinking new building, which honours both land and people

By Sydney Loney

The Canadian Canoe Museum is preparing to break ground and begin building its new home on the historic Trent-Severn Waterway. The dynamic and sustainable new space will give prominence to the museum’s collection of 600 paddled watercraft (hundreds of which are currently tucked away in a warehouse) while continuing to preserve these national treasures in the manner they deserve—as the heart of the organization’s high-profile new headquarters.

Chief Phyllis Williams, who has supported the project along with the council of Curve Lake First Nation, says this is one of the most important features of the property. “It will ensure that so many

important pieces of the collection will no longer be stored away, their stories untold,” she says. “We have such a rich culture and history in Canada, and the new space gives us an opportunity to tell more of our story.”

Thanks to a partnership with Parks Canada, the CCM’s new location beside the Peterborough Lift Lock National Historic Site will not only connect Canadians with culturally significant, one-of-a-kind vessels from the past, but also encourage them to get out on the water and experience the beauty and elegance of the canoe firsthand. “I’m a paddler myself, so I see many new opportunities to engage visitors,” says Carolyn Hyslop, general manager of the CCM. “We could, for example, have part of

A rendering of the new Canadian Canoe Museum, which will be located next to two National Historic sites: the Peterborough Lift Lock and the Trent-Severn Waterway.



a heritage fleet on the water, so visitors can experience what it feels like to paddle a traditional birchbark canoe.” The larger location will also feature a dedicated canoe-building studio, expanded artisan workshop spaces for snowshoe weaving, mukluk making, and more, and a green roof complete with outdoor classrooms and a year-round garden.

Then, there’s the beauty of the building itself. “It challenges the conventional approach to right-angled architecture,” says Lisa Rochon, chair of the CCM’s design committee. “Instead, it honours the curves found in nature.” After a two-part international design competition, the project was awarded to Dublin-based Heneghan Peng Architects and Toronto-based Kearns Mancini Architects, who together designed the building to connect cultures, communities, land, and water. The new facility is even built into the land, extending from beneath a drumlin that will naturally protect the collection inside from direct sunlight. The building then forms a serpentine glass wall, from which visitors can look out at the sky and water.

Rochon is eager to see the full scope of

the artifacts displayed in their new space, including one of the oldest documented birchbark canoes, and author Farley Mowat’s sailing canoe. “I’m constantly amazed by the visual impact of the watercraft collection,” she says. “Whether it’s the great dugouts of the First Nation of the Pacific Northwest, or the delicate, exquisitely crafted birchbark canoes, each piece has a story.” Among her favourites is the canoe that a father and son paddled from Canada to the Amazon. Hyslop, meanwhile, is drawn to a dugout canoe carved by Victor Adams, and Chief Williams fondly recalls the canoe that a First Nation community from Newfoundland brought to the museum as a gift, earlier this year. “That canoe is a reminder to me that, as before, here we are again, exchanging our cultures and building relationships across Canada,” she says.

The CCM acknowledges the support of the Government of Canada, the Province of Ontario, the City of Peterborough, Peterborough County, and many leadership donors. The diversity and inclusiveness of participants — Canadians of all backgrounds — is key to the success of

the project. Beginning later this year, a nationwide fundraising campaign will support the construction of the new museum. “The new museum will allow us to do so much more,” says Hyslop. “In the very best way possible we’ll share more of Canada with more of Canada.” ■

GET CONNECTED BY CANOE

Even if you aren’t in the neighbourhood, you can play a role in supporting canoe history and education across Canada. Visit the Canadian Canoe Museum’s website to find information on programming, to support educational and museum programs through a donation, or to shop for a gift for your favourite paddler.

canoemuseum.ca



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It wasn't hockey that defined our country.



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