

# Friends of Wabakimi Trip Report

May 30 – June 6, 2015

Participants: D. Domeier, J. Homes, D. McTeague Leader: B. Pyle

## Day 1, Sat. May 30:

Depart Thunder Bay for Mattice Lake at 0700. Arrive Mattice Lake Outfitters at 1015 and obtain fishing licenses, satellite phone, chain saw gas and oil, unload canoes and packs, and park vehicle. Meet Clem Quenville at 1100 and load canoes and gear on his truck and trailer. Clem transports us via Caribou Rd. to access point at south end of Little Caribou Lake. Paddle north to campsite on west shore of Little Caribou Lk. southwest of start to south route to Big Lake. Eat lunch, set up campsite, and have safety briefing. Paddle across lake to explore start of south route to Big Lk. Locate short portage, creek left, to access small pond which is formed by a beaver dam. Search for a possible portage on north side of pond, but find nothing. Return to campsite by 1800 for dinner, augmented by Pickerel caught by Holmes from campsite shore.

## Day 2, Sun. May 31:

Return to start of south route to Big Lake with work equipment and lunch. Clear 27m portage from Little Caribou to small pond. Carry work equipment and canoes to small pond and paddle east through small pond to start of small channel through grassy area. The channel is narrow but we were able to paddle and push the canoes without getting out to wade. At lower water levels paddlers might have to get out and push or pull, but the canoes should float ok. We reach a small beaver dam which separates the channel from open water of another small lake. We move canoes over beaver dam and paddle into lake to search for start of long 104c portage to Big Lk. Search east shore for portage but find nothing; except two cut logs and one flagged tree, 40-50m back from the lake shore, in a line that moves through a ravine east toward the previously logged area. A search is made for indications of the portage through the logged area, which has regrowth of pine, birch, and poplar east toward the main north-south road. No portage is found. The main road is located but it is not passable. Alders and small pine trees fill the right of way, which is very evident because of the graded edges and hard packed surface. We return to a point of land that will make a good campsite on the southeast shore of the small pond. After eating a late lunch, we depart for the return trip to base camp.

## Day 3, Mon. June 1:

After breakfast we break camp and paddle north on Little Caribou to find a campsite near the start of the north route to Big Lake. We find the landing of the 169m portage on the east shore that leads to the moose camp at the east end of the portage, but there isn't any place to camp. We paddle across Little Caribou to the west shore and set up camp at a known campsite. After camp is setup, we paddle back to the portage to clear it. The portage is fairly open so it doesn't take long to clean it up and carry the canoes and equipment across. We launch and paddle the small lake, finding one campsite, en route to the east end looking for the 70m portage. We search both sides of the creek looking for evidence of the portage. The south side is very wet but log cuts and flagging are found well back into the woods on higher ground. The flagging leads nearly to the next small lake, but also cuts back into the woods past the route to the landing. This is where the birch bark "funnel or moose call" is found. The north route proves to be much shorter and drier, so we use this for the portage route. We find no evidence of a portage, but it is such a natural route that we are sure it had been used in the past. It is flagged and cut, 79m. We return to base camp after a good day's work.

#### Day 4, Tue. June 2:

Today we travel back across the two portages to look for the 2000m portage which starts out of the second lake and goes east to the pond on the north route to Big Lk. We arrive at the point where the long portage start is depicted on our maps. We find some large rusted metal barrels, a very large blaze, and evidence of activity so we are encouraged that this is the start of the portage. We start to find a few blazes on the higher ground, but they become scarce due to a large blow down. East of the blow down area blazes are again found. They go east in a straight line in the correct direction, but we come to a miner's corner post. We search south of this east-west line looking for evidence of a portage route, but find nothing. We do continue to follow the blazes east to another miner's post and give up this route. The GPS indicates that we are about one half way to the pond, but no road is found. We go back to the start point and search the east lake shore to the south. Many searches are made along the shoreline, but no evidence of the portage is found. The shore is wet and boggy for about 20m from the lake to better ground, so access isn't good. We think that our first search area is still the most likely place and another attempt is made, with no luck! We return to base camp somewhat dejected!

#### Day 5, Wed. June 3:

We had rain during the night, but it had quit by daybreak. Still foggy with a little mist as we decided to break camp and paddle north to Caribou Lk. No wind, so a good day to travel on the big lake! Carried the portage into Caribou Lk. and briefly fished below the river outlet into Caribou Lk., no luck. Traveled north along the east shore looking for campsites, none found. Continued to paddle north to vicinity of start of portage to Michelle Lk. Ate lunch before starting to explore to find start of 50c portage. Divided into two groups, one going to south of hill and one going to north. We met at the creek southeast of the high ground to continue to explore. Only two blazes were found on the south side of the hill and none to the north. We traveled east along the creek looking for signs of a portage, but none were found. Decided to have J. Holmes travel east along creek to west end of small lake to try to locate a landing. He made it to the lake, but found no evidence of a portage landing. Meanwhile, the three of us returned west toward Caribou on the south side of the creek looking for the portage there. We searched south from the bend in the creek along its west side and cut west to search the area between the creek and the east shore of Caribou, but found nothing in the large blow down area. Having spent much energy searching, we returned to canoes to paddle to find campsite at the southwest end of Kellar Island. Searched north end of islands south of Kellar Is. for a campsite. The only one found was occupied by fishermen having a shore lunch. We fished until they left and then returned to set up camp. Upon landing and unloading the canoes to look over the campsite, we discovered that the fisherman had left a couple of fish carcasses and pickerel fillet skins on the ground near the water's edge. Flies were buzzing around the remains, as well as around another large can of left over corn near the fire ring. This campsite has some large pieces of metal both out in the open and back in the woods. There are many pieces of rusted stove pipe and other garbage back in the woods at the edge of the cleared area. There is even an old toilet seat over a five gallon bucket along the north side of the area not far from the lake. The wooden work table and fishing rod structures were handy so we used them. This is obviously the most popular shore lunch site on this part of Caribou Lake, but trashed.

#### Day 6, Thur. June 4:

Packed up and left the campsite to paddle north along east shore of Kellar Island to find a campsite in the vicinity of the start of the 81c portage to Cumaway Lk. Found a campsite on the east shore of Caribou Lake approximately 1 km north of the landing of the portage to Cumaway Lk. Needed to establish the campsite, but it turned out to be very nice. It was a very nice day and a good one to bath and do some laundry!

#### Day 7, Fri. June 5:

Ate breakfast and departed to find and explore the portage to Cumaway Lake. Didn't take the "Dawg" because we weren't very optimistic that the portage would be found. However, we found it right away and it was well marked. Two of us returned immediately to camp to get the chain saw, while the other two explored, flagged, and worked. Upon returning with the Dawg, fast work was made on the first half of the portage by lunch time. The portage was cleared all the way to Cumaway and measured by the end of the afternoon, 1603m. Returned to camp and D. McTeague and D. Domeier supplied Northerns for dinner!

Day 8, Sat. June 6:

After breakfast the equipment and personal gear was prepared for the change of personnel. We had some time to fish and explore the north end of Kellar Island for a possible campsite that we didn't see on the trip north on Thur. We didn't find another campsite, but didn't paddle west to the islands further around the north end of Kellar because a strong south wind began to blow. We needed to return to base camp! Arrived by 1100 and took our group photo, etc. While there, we watched a large animal swimming toward the east shore up the lake at least one quarter of a mile away. We couldn't tell if it was a moose or a caribou. J. Holmes took a picture with his telephoto lens and after downloading the photo decided that it was probably a caribou. A nice ending to our trip up Little and Caribou Lakes! Clem arrived promptly at 1230 with the two new arrivals, K. Wick and D. Rodgers, plus our next week's provisions. We chatted for a while and enjoyed our cool beer before Dan and Dave M. left with Clem for the return boat ride to Mattice Lake. Change-of-command was handed to J. Holmes for the next week!