



The little people of Rainbow Playgroup at St. Alban's church hall, Glen Williams, had a happy time getting ready for Christmas. Left to right are Jamie Velton, Matthew Velton, Laura Morton, Erica Lewin, Tim Metcalfe, Stephanie Rowe, Matthew Haines, Ryan Gray, Bryan Llotsma, Kevin Gorski, Ryan Beauchesne, Mark Southworth, Katrina Alton, Daron and Stephanie Cousins and teacher Lynn Ruggle. Not shown is Margaret Tannock.

Paddling through mid-life crisis

When I agreed to organize a weekend canoe trip for three old school chums and myself a few weeks back, I felt more like a hired guide service rather than a canoe companion. You see, through the years the friendship between Scott, Mike, Doug and I has altered itself from annual outdoor adventures to the odd weekend camp-out at a provincial park. Out of all my school mates I am the only one to choose an escape from the strain of a city business position and to continue to venture north with paddle in hand. I guess one of the main reasons for me to embark on so many solo trips into the wilderness is that simply there was no one else left to go with.

Lately, however, my friends, after getting married and fathering children, have once again felt the urge to venture north. Call it the beginning of a middle-life crisis if you want, but I think I have felt the change in life more deeply than my long-lost pals.

Coping with the adjustment to canoeing with a group once again required a new level of compromise. I had paddled alone for so many years, awash in silence, intimate to extremes, self-sufficient, in lust with peace and solitude. Abruptly, I was once again introduced to companionship.

Being the guide I felt nervous as hell. In the past, if something went wrong, I only had to worry about myself. Now, with three extra bodies along, I felt as if I was in charge of their own destiny. Being so late in the year didn't help matters. The moment we headed out the morning sun was cloaked by grey skies. As I watched the sky to the west become a dark roisterous mass of cloud, I caught a glimpse of my companions' eyes wandering west toward the oncoming blackness.

By the time my canoe partner, Scott, and I lashed the tarp over our packs, sheets of water beat on the lake's smooth surface like hail.

"I hate starting a trip wet!" Mike growled in the other



Nature's Way
By
KEVIN CALLAN

canoe. I just grunted at my unhappy clients, pretending not to hear their complaints, encapsulated in my rain hood, pelted by the storm.

By noon the rain had tapered off, only to be replaced by a cool wind. Hands were gloved and heads were crowned with wool toques. Then came the elongated 1500 metre portage. Everything about this carry was burdensome. Instead of my regular technique I had to share the responsibility with my partner, who insisted the canoe was lighter if we both carried the weight. I, in return, argued the invention of the yoke. Because the rain threatened continuously, we worked inside cloying rain suits. Wet mud caked heavily on our boots. Two hours later we had reached our objective, with tensions high and the argument of the yoke unsolved.

Once in camp my attention gravitated to the group discussions about work, family life and the pressures that came along with them, instead of sensing the usual vast quiet engulfing me. Scott, a clean-freak, constantly questioned my dinner preparation, making sure I didn't add extra spices, such as wood ash and pine needles, to the simmering pot.

It wasn't until we gathered around the warmth of the evening fire to play a game of cards and joke about the day's

events that my skepticism of group tripping weakened. I found that my greenhorn companions had welcomed themselves to my love of the wild.

The next morning had brought a warming sunrise to our camp and a clear conscious to my mind. Back on the water I thought over our re-kindled friendship. Minor irritants within the group undergoing physical and environmental stress are inevitable. I'd been on group expeditions where severe problems arose, making the trip turn sour. Our group exhibited nothing remotely close to that. Conflicts, such as when we stopped for lunch or how quickly we got going in the morning, which I escaped from while travelling solo, never came about. Mostly, we found acceptable middle ground. In fact, as their guide, everyone seemed to trust my every judgment - something I've never even done while canoeing alone.

Paddling with the group was neither better nor worse than the times of my isolation, simply different. There were even benefits thrown in. We all capitalized on the outside friendships we had sorely missed. I was sharing the land with people who appreciated it as much as I. We all watched with awe as an otter investigated our canoes; our paddles slowed each time a loon wailed out; our portaging techniques became fine-tuned and we paddled in unthinking sync.

Most of all, arguments over yokes and complaints of cold rain changed into jokes of our crazy exploits and questions of next year's wilderness adventure.

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SPROUTING THROUGH THE WINTER

Now that your garden has finished supplying the kitchen with fresh greens, you may be longing for some nutritious vegetables. Well, you can, in your kitchen. Throughout the winter you can have a steady supply of sprouts for salads, soups, sandwiches and other dishes. Virtually any edible vegetable or grain seed can be easily sprouted. For safety reasons only use untreated seeds or seeds that you have collected yourself. Some seeds are treated with pesticides.

To speed up germination, soak seeds in a little saucer of water before preparing them in container for sprouting. Small seeds like Alfalfa, cress, and Mung Beans only need a couple of hours of soaking. Whereas larger seeds and beans can be left to soak overnight.

Place seeds in a jar, and instead of screwing its top on place a piece of cheesecloth or other porous material over mouth of jar and secure in place with an elastic band. Turn the jar upside down on a plate or saucer, and keep jar in a warm, dark location. A couple of times each day the seeds should be rinsed with water to keep them fresh.

When the seeds have sprouted, place the jar in a well-lit window to allow them to turn green and increase in nutritional value. Most seeds sprout in 2 to 6 days. The sprouts can be eaten when they are green and leftovers can be stored in the refrigerator.

Each week Christine Cole of Tuitman's Garden Centre and Landscaping, Highway 25, 1 mile south of Acton, 853-2480, will be presenting helpful tips and information to assist you in creating your garden showplace!

Credit Counselling...

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budgeting assistance, others may need the counsellor's help to negotiate a solution with creditors. When the client and counsellor agree a debt-payment program is needed, creditors are contacted and their co-operation sought to support the plan.

"Most creditors will accept a revision of payment if it is recommended by our counsellors as part of an overall plan," Hastings says. Clients then pay an agreed-upon amount to their local counselling service office on a per pay-day basis. The service disburses cheques as required, without charge.



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