



The MacKenzie expedition voyageurs left the mouth of the Aguasabon River in their 36 foot trade canoes Sunday morning at dawn on their way to Rosspport

Company of voyageurs braves Lake Superior to visit Northshore communities

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by compass.

"We went along the shore the rest of the day, in and out of the fog, as far as Pancake Bay," Smithers said.

He described coming up on land out of a dense fog and seeing this looming thing in front of you as a rather eerie feeling.

"You see a lot of things [in the fog] that you think are something that isn't."

However, the expedition has good marine navigation and topographical maps and can cross bays and navigate in the fog using a compass.

There was a very strong southwest wind on the second day out of Sault Ste. Marie and the voyageurs used it to full advantage, covering almost 30 miles under sail.

Smithers said the danger in sailing is leaving the sail up too long. The wind moves the canoe right along and the paddlers don't realize the wind, depending on its direction, tends to make them drift out a bit.

The expedition did wander about 400 yards further offshore than it would have liked while sailing that day.

Canada Sea-to-Sea Bicentennial Expeditions, to commemorate MacKenzie's search for a route to the Pacific Ocean.

This voyage is retracing the route of the voyageur fur traders - a 3,500 kilometre journey from Montreal to Grand Portage and eventually Winnipeg.

In both Terrace Bay and Rosspport, as in many other community stopovers, the voyageurs set up a camp and presented a full dress historical drama based on MacKenzie and the fur trade.

The voyageurs told tall tales,

"Alexander MacKenzie returned to School after his first trip to the Arctic Ocean," Smithers said.

He explained that MacKenzie wasn't really lost, he knew where he was. It just wasn't where he wanted to be.

MacKenzie knew that in order to get to the Pacific Ocean he had to have better navigation skills so he returned to school in England.

"The connection we make," Smithers said, "is if education was important for Canada's greatest explorer, modern day students should consider education to be important."

Young students, he continued, have responded very favourably to this message.

"It may be they have reacted more to the role model presented by the 36 modern day voyageurs," he added.

The modern day voyageurs consist of 32 Lakehead University students and four French speaking students from the University of Ottawa.

A few of these students took part in the first stage of the Expeditions in 1989 - a voyage by canoe from Fort McMurray, Alberta to the mouth of the MacKenzie River on the Arctic Ocean.

Smithers said six to 10 students will repeat the experience for next year's trip from Winnipeg to Peace River, Alberta.

"It would be convenient to keep everybody for all of the expeditions but then only a limited number of students could take part in it," he explained.

The expedition will arrive in Bella Coola, British Columbia from Peace River, Alberta, in 1993, 200 hundred years after MacKenzie's arrival.



Potential voyageurs learn about the adventure and hardships of working for Alexander MacKenzie in a discussion with an experienced member of the company during the stopover in Terrace Bay.

While travelling in fog, these modern voyageurs must be careful not to lose track of each other.

"We've had to stay close but it has never been so bad that we have had to tie the canoes together," Smithers said.

The most dangerous thing the expedition does is sail the canoes.

"It got really rough all of a sudden. We took the sails down and really had to work hard to get to shore," Smithers said.

The expedition paddled another 35 miles making a total of 65 miles its second day on the lake.

This expedition is the second stage of a five year project, The Sir Alexander MacKenzie

played games, sang songs and danced for their audience, all with a view to celebrating the part the voyageurs and MacKenzie played in Canadian history.

A major portion of the expedition's historical shows is dedicated "Stay-in-School", an initiative of the Minister of State for Youth.



Expedition leader Alexander MacKenzie takes some time out to receive a shave