

Margaret Lorton - Nova Scotia Heritage Explosion - August 2011



I was fortunate to be selected as assistant guider to be part of a team of 3 taking a group of 12 Guides from our County selection, to a centenary camp in Nova Scotia Canada in August 2011. In total there were about 285 participants from other parts of Canada, England and a small group from New Zealand.

Our group decided to travel to Halifax, Nova Scotia two days before the camp began, so we arrived on Tuesday 9th August. We stayed in a hostel in the centre of city. By coincidence two other groups of Guides from England were also staying there.

One of the things our group had decided to do whilst in Halifax, was to go on a boat trip, so in advance we had booked a whale watching boat trip for the day after we arrived. Sadly we didn't



see any whales, but we had hands-on experience of lobsters - which are a well known delicacy in Halifax. The sea was quite rough whilst we were on the boat, but the girls enjoyed being at the front of the boat and getting splashed!



Everywhere we went in Halifax, people frequently stopped us and asked where we were from and where we did our Guiding.

The camp site was in a remote area about 1.5 hours from Halifax. It was a vast area of unspoilt forests and woods and several lakes.

At night, you could hear the coyotes howling - fortunately we didn't see them - or the bears! Both of which we had been warned about and given instruction of what to do if we did see any. There were two bald eagles which were regularly seen flying overhead, circling the woods and lakes.



On one particular day, the activities were located in the woods. It was a very hot sunny day, so the shade of the trees was very welcome. In the morning, we took part in a simulated archaeology dig, then an environmental session analysing the water properties and looking at the wildlife in the lake. In the afternoon, the girls were shown how to light a fire using very basic equipment, how to tie knots and then how to build a rope bridge. It was good to see how confident they were with their bridges - six girls managing to all stand on the bridge, without it collapsing! Another day, we visited a local native Indian centre where we heard about their



culture and made dream catchers; we then visited a cove where the highest recorded tide had been; and then travelled to a glass studio where we made beautiful glass decorations.



Each evening there were activities. The Opening ceremony was very moving, starting with a lone bagpiper bringing us all together then a group of native Canadian Indians (Mi'Kmaq) performed music with their ceremonial drum. They offered girls the chance to join in with the drumming. At the end of the ceremony, a group of modern drummers and pipers (called Squid) got us clapping and dancing. A great way to end the evening!

As is usual, one evening's entertainment involved each group performing something from their country or province. As one of emblems of Buckinghamshire is the Swan, we decided to perform our version of Swan Lake! We had made tutus before we left the UK and the girls had painted a swan poster on material. It was a great success and we also got everyone to sing with us.



Over the 10 days we were at camp we did so much - we tried our hands at archery, made



crafts, discussed environmental issues, had an overview of native Canadian indian practices, took part in an archaeology dig and a treasure hunt round Halifax; did canoeing and swimming in the lake, built our own obstacle course, had a go at Scottish country dancing, as well as the obligatory camp fire singing! The spirit of the camp was amazing - everyone was happy - and we were very well fed by the core team. The

sun shone each day and it only rained at night - it was if it was planned for us.



I can honestly say that it was an unforgettable trip and I was so pleased and proud to have been asked to go as assistant leader. It was a wonderful experience to go with a great group of girls (and leaders). It was good to be able to give the girls the opportunity to travel with Guiding - and from their comments, this won't be the last time they go!

To those who are reading this and can't decide whether to put themselves forward for international selection - I would say "Go for it!"

To those who helped me with funding - thank you so much, it was very much appreciated.

