

Heritage Explosion Nova Scotia Canada 2011



A Leaders View

For me the adventure started way back in October 2010 at the County International Selection weekend. After an extraordinary start to the weekend – putting up tents in the pouring rain, pitch black, girls I did not know and tents that I did not know how they went up – I ended up volunteering to organise and lead a trip to Canada in August 2011.

So with a great team of Margaret and Rosemary to help, the planning got underway. The girls who had been selected were notified by Jenny and the replies came back quickly – yes, yes and yes. My first thing to plan was how we were going to get there and when – Air Canada group bookings was my first phone call – well, after a few weeks I was on first name terms with the team. At this stage I had linked up with Hertfordshire and agreed to book their flights and they would book a youth hostel for 2 nights. In the middle of the booking the flights I was told that another 3 girls would be joining us – these 3 had been unsuccessful in getting a Region trip.

So now we had our final numbers 12 girls and 3 leaders.

Margaret had arranged our first meeting – the girls were all rather quiet in the first hour but chatter gathered speed and volume quickly. A decision on the group badge made and ideas floated for our skit for the Heritage night.

I would spend a considerable amount of time emailing from January though to July as the girls were all over the county and this was the easiest way to communicate. Canada seemed to have a billion forms for us to fill in – these all had to be in Canada prior to our arrival – thank goodness for scanners and email. One big disappointment of the trip was that the UK participants were not allowed to take part in the 'Tidal Bore water rafting'. This was due to insurance as Canada required a Waiver form to be completed that was not acceptable by the UK. The team in Canada worked with the company providing the activity but to no avail – so the UK was advised that we would have an activity planned for us.

When I agreed to run the trip had not realised how much paper work was involved. To be able to run a trip abroad you must be prepared to give up at least an evening a week to do paper work and keep in contact with the girls that you are taking and the leaders who are helping you. Other things to be organised was the selecting of t shirts and sweat shirts, ordering badges for swaps, checking on insurance for all activities, sending out newsletters to keep parents and girls up to-date of how the planning was going + more!!

At the weekend camp discussions on the group skit for Heritage night as leaders you have to guide them through this as you have had the experience at International camps to know what sort of things are done – then having a tutu evening making 15 white tutus to be swans just one of the varied evenings at home!

July came around and Rosemary had organised a get together weekend camp. The weather was very variable from heavy rain lasting 20 minutes to brilliant sunshine (Silverstone weekend – they had tyre problems!). All the girls worked well and made friendship groups. All final questions were answered at the parent meeting and the next time I would meet them would be at the airport.

9th August – Heathrow 8.30am

All though Customs – just with Sophie’s name being spelt wrong on the ticket – ticket re issued and Charlotte having to have extra search of hand luggage – they found a bottle of anti-bac she had forgotten about.

Canada – taxis for 25 from the airport – well Margaret had excellent negotiating skills for discount – used throughout the trip. We stayed in the Youth Hostel for 2 nights and I celebrated my 50th birthday on our second day there. There were 43 guides altogether staying at the hostel!! We went whaling watching – no whales but very rough and windy – some fared better than others followed by a very interesting tour of Pier 21 (immigration centre similar to Ellis Island in NY) shopping and a visit to a fish restaurant. A quick trek up to Citadel Hill just in time for the 12o’clock guns and then off to meet our bus to take us to camp.

Similar to our selection weekend we had to put up tents in the rain that we did not know went up – neither did the Canadians!! An interesting challenge.

The weeks planned activities were varied including crafts, sports challenges, canoeing, International, environmental lesson, fire & wood skills, Scottish dancing, native Indian drumming (Mic Macs) and night manoeuvres with the army. Swimming in the fresh water lake - including the local leeches!! Food – this was excellent and plenty of it. We had had 2 days off sight – instead of the water rafting the UK guides went to Glooscap Indians Culture centre – this was a really good museum with a talk about Indian stories and their history. They had laid on a craft of making Dream catchers with leather and genuine sinew for the web which was excellent. On the same day we went to a glass activity centre where we made our own patterns from glass cuttings onto a circle of glass which was then melted at high temperature – brilliant fun. Also a race around Halifax town on foot finding shops and interesting buildings by road and water.

Whilst at camp – there is time to relax and enjoy all the things that you have been looking forward to over the past 10 months. Even though you are responsible for the girls at all times – all the leaders are there to support each other and to make decisions together when required. The girls having been to selection weekend are aware of what is expected of them and are normally ready to take up any challenge that is given to them. Encouragement and support is required for those who may have not travelled worldwide or in my case never been on a plane!

Meeting other leaders from around the world is a real experience – different cultures, ways in doing guiding traditions, learning new songs and different ways of camping. Also seeing the girls and leaders having a brilliant time, and most of all seeing your own girls taking responsibility, growing in confidence and making new friends.

Would I lead another trip – Yes!