

Quetico Trip – Spring 2014

McIntyre Lake

May 20th – May 30th 2014

Day 1: Tuesday, May 20th, 2014 The Drive up

The Crew: GeoFisher, GadgetMan, FlukeMeister, SteveB, CarpMan_X and Hound

As with most of my trips, this trip started Tuesday night, with a long drive to Ely. This trip would be a little different though, since we needed to pick up Andy aka “Hound” and Craig aka “CarpMan_X”. Hound lives just north of Indianapolis, in Lebanon, and CarpMan_X lives just north of Chicago. I should also state that CarpMan_X and Hound have never been to the Boundary Waters or Quetico. This would be their first trip. Hopefully it is not their last ☺ .

The drive to Indy was uneventful and we picked Hound up around 10:00pm or so. After picking him up, we headed up to Chicago. In Chicago, we picked up CarpMan_X.

Driving through the night, we arrived in Duluth around 9:00am and headed to Perkins for breakfast.....a tradition for the past 10 or 15 years. After a quick breakfast, we went into town, and visited the Frost River storefront. Man, what a neat place. A few years ago, I purchased a pack for my daughter, and to this day, she still gets questions about where she got it.

After hitting the standard stops in Duluth.....namely Starbucks at the top of 53, we headed down the road, stopping in Virginia at F and D meats for meat sticks, jerky, and the smoked polish sausages. All these food items have been a standard food items since my good friend Dave B introduced me to them a few years ago.

Day 2: Wednesday, May 21st, 2014 Voyageur North Outfitters

We Arrived in Ely around 1:00pm, and checked into Voyageur North Outfitters shortly after that. I had requested a bunkhouse with an oven because CarpMan_X was planning on making a prime rib dinner before we went in the next day.

John and Lynn worked with me to figure out our “creative” permitting for this trip. We had initially planned on picking up our permit a day early from Prairie Portage, but since they were not open, that was not an option. Since that was not an option, John and I discussed self-permitting. That is what we chose. We had already secured a self permit envelope, so the permit was not a question. Getting the permit to Prairie Portage was an issue though. Voyageur North Outfitters said they would figure something out, and that is just what they did. Permits for this trip included a day use pass for the Boundary Waters, a Thursday self permit for Quetico, and a re-entry permit into the Boundary Waters from Quetico. I didn't even know a re- entry permit existed.

After checking in and unloading all of our gear into the bunkhouse, CarpMan_X started working on the prime rib. Let me tell you, that man can cook a mean prime rib. While I stayed back in the room to watch over the oven, all the other guys went into town to do some pre trip shopping.

The prime rib dinner was fantastic. While in town, SteveB went to the store and brought back a decent selection of brews. Prime Rib, Beer, peas and corn.....just what the doctor ordered.

After dinner, and a couple more beers, everyone was bushed, so we all hit the rack. The next few days would be brutal portage/paddle days, and we all knew it.

Day 3: Thursday, May 22nd, 2014 Mudro Entry to McIntyre Lake

Day 3 started with a quick breakfast at Britons, and then the 40 minute van ride to the Mudro Entry point. We got a fantastic early start and were at Mudro by 6:30am. This was exactly what we needed if we stood a chance of making McIntyre in a day. The initial plan was to play it by ear and see if we could make it. Lots of parameters could determine if we would push onto McIntyre or break the push to McIntyre into two days.

Portages from Mudro into Sandpit and Tin Can Mike and then into Horse Lake, and finally along the Horse River were pretty uneventful. I was the only person in my group wet footing, and I could definitely tell the water was cold, but not painfully cold.

We made excellent time, arriving at Lower Basswood Falls around 1:30pm. We lunched for 30 minutes on an island directly beneath the falls. After lunch, we decided that we should pass the pictographs on Crooked, and push on into Robinson Lake, and if possible to McIntyre in one day. By making this long push, we could add a full day of additional fishing on McIntyre if we wanted. Everyone agreed this was a good idea.

By the time we hit the Tuck River before Robinson, pretty much everyone was bushed. Most everyone was taxed and tired. Paddling up the rapids on the Tuck was no joke. It took lots of energy, but everyone managed to make it.

From Robinson Lake, we chose to do the Dart, Cecil, and Deer Lake portages into McIntyre. Those portages were not too long, but any portage after 10 hours of paddling and portaging is a long portage....Did I mention that CarpMan_X and Hound were rookies? Neither of the rookies complained too much.

After 13 hrs of paddling and portaging, we finally arrived at our McIntyre island campsite around 8:00pm. There was 1 group camped at the far south campsite. Other than that, we had McIntyre Lake entirely to ourselves. In fact, after leaving the Boundary Waters, we didn't see but 2 other groups the entire week. This was a good thing, since we had already ran into numerous rude and obnoxious groups on portages along the route to Lower Basswood Falls.

The island campsite on the North of the Island on McIntyre is highly rated, but personally, I think it is over rated. All the tent pads are tightly coupled together, the landing for canoes is horrible, and the site this time of year is extremely buggy. I did like the pine needle coverage on the campsite, and the fire pit is awesome. Other than that, this campsite is slightly above average, if you ask me. It did tend to grow on me though.

Since I knew the push into McIntyre would be crazy hard if we actually made it to McIntyre Lake in one day, we chose to do a simple dinner of smoked polish sausage and mac and cheese. I also secretly packed some hotdog buns and some chipotle smoked pepper mustard, which went great with the sausages.

After dinner, everyone hit the sack pretty early.....We were all dead tired from the long hard day.

Day 4: Friday, May 23rd, 2014 Fishing McIntyre Lake

Day 4 started out with a big pancake breakfast. I generally plan pancakes for 2-3 days when on these trips. Since the previous day was a crazy hard push, a slow start to the day was just what the doctor ordered. Pancakes and bacon.....Is there any better way to start the day?

After breakfast, all 3 canoes went their own separate ways to fish McIntyre Lake. Gadget and CarpMan_X went south to the "bowl", FlukeMeister and SteveB went east to some fishy looking areas, and Hound and I went north, along the western finger.

Fishing was tough. While we managed fish, it was immediately apparent that this lake was a deep, cold lake, and the water was simply too cold for the smallies to start moving up. We did manage to catch fish, and Hound taught me an interesting way to rig a tube jig. He had showed me the technique before, but like normal, I'm mule headed and didn't really watch. Well, I watched as he handed it to me. I think I caught 1 or 2 fish, while he went on to catch half a dozen. Along with that half dozen fish, Hound managed to catch a solid 12lb + northern. It was probably bigger, but we will never know. My scale was not acting quite right, and I ended up changing batteries later in the trip. The fish later in the trip all weighed a little "heavier" than similar fish earlier in the trip.

Since day 2 is generally monster steak night, I told Hound we needed to be back to camp by 5:00pm or 6:00pm so I could get things started. I needed to make sure the 20oz steaks I brought were thoroughly thawed and that I had time to season them, and get the veggies wrapped and prepared.

At camp, I started seeing lakers surface feeding about 60ft from the site. I grabbed my bait caster and zinged a ½ oz big hammer swim bait in their direction. After a couple casts, boom, I managed to catch a 4lb laker. I initially put him on a stringer, but since this was steak night, and we had a crazy amount of food, I chose to let him go. After a few more casts, I caught another, and then another. I managed to catch 3 lakers in 30 minutes from our campsite. This was the first time I've ever caught lakers that shallow from a campsite. It was cool.

GadgetMan and CarpMan_X struggled in the bowl, and FlukeMeister and SteveB didn't do much better. Hound and I had the best total for the day, and it wasn't very good. Both other groups did manage to catch lakers shallow, but lake trout is not what we were here to fish.....It was apparent we needed to find warmer water and find it quickly.

Earlier in the week, I had heard about a meteor shower that was supposed to show up between 2:00am and 4:00am Saturday Morning. The entire camp set alarms and awoke to check out the meteor shower. Either we missed it, or I managed to get the dates wrong. Either way, it was significantly less than spectacular.

Total Fish: 6 or 7 smallies, 2 lakers and 2 northern pike.

Day 5: Saturday, May 24th, 2014 Attempted trip to Paulene Lake

The group decided the night before that we needed to find a shallow, warmer lake. Paulene had been a go to lake on past trips, and we decided that we needed to check it out. Everyone was up and ready to go by 7:00am. Once I was up and going, I fired up the two afterburning primus omnifuel stoves. One was used to boil water for the group for hot cereal or Mountain House eggs, and the other to perk coffee using a 12 cup percolator, and multiple hotel type coffee filters.

After a quick breakfast and coffee, we all headed out. Everyone in my group seemed to have a good idea where the portage to Paulene was located. Everyone was wrong. We looked for 2 hours and never managed to find it. The other two groups disappeared, so I assumed they found it. Hound and I eventually did find the correct portage, but since the other groups were nowhere to be found, we left it, looking for the others. Actually Hound found the portage. This is how he received his nickname. Andy always seemed able to locate portages, even though he had never been to the area before.

To anyone looking, the Paulene portage is clearly marked incorrectly on every source I have looked at. I looked again at all the maps and the online maps. There is a very small island that is

directly in front of the portage. I believe the McKenzie and Fisher maps both mark an old portage that is no longer in use. If you go up those incorrectly marked portages, you will make it about 100 yards and they look like portages, with logs cut out of the way, etc. etc.....BUT, they are not the correct portages. If you are coming south around the big Island, simply hug the east shoreline until you pass the McIntyre Creek coming into McIntyre Lake. From there the real portage is about 300 yards north.

We eventually found the others in our group near the portages into Brent Lake. I had been told the lake between McIntyre and Brent held monster smallies, so we chose to portage over and fish.

On the no name lake, we didn't even get a bite. Hound and I decided to portage back into McIntyre and try our luck in some of the shallow bays on that lake.

McIntyre is a fantastic looking fishery, we just arrived a little too early for the smallmouth bass to be moving up. Hound and I found a ton of excellent looking areas that definitely hold smallmouth. We managed to catch 17 smallmouth and a couple northern while fishing our way back to our campsite.

This again, was a learning experience for me. Hound was simply pounding me using a technique that he regularly uses on his home lake. He was using a weed less rigged tube jig. By rigging it weed less, he was able to fish the tube jig under the gigantic downed trees. Those downed trees were holding serious smallmouth bass. He managed to catch 4-5 off every tree, while I managed to catch 1 or 2. He was out fishing me probably 4 to 1. I finally asked him to show me his rigging technique, which he did. For the rest of the week, Hound and I fished pretty consistently.

Since it was a fish night, Hound and I harvested a couple eater smallmouth bass. Back in camp all other groups also harvested a couple smallmouth bass. FlukeMeister and I headed to a small island and cleaned the fish, and the deep sixed the carcasses. With the park changing the rules every year, I really don't have any idea what to do with the fish remains. Sometimes I deep six them, sometimes I leave them on rocks.

GadgetMan brought the fixings to make fish tacos. The same fish tacos that his wife made a few years earlier. It is pretty easy. Marinade the fish in sundried pesto and olive oil for 20 minutes. Bake the fish over the fire, then make the tacos. The tacos consist of tortilla wrap, fish, pickled onions (packaged by Kristen), cabbage, and a shot of lime juice. Man, talk about good.....those things were off the hook. For a side, GadgetMan made spicy couscous. It was pretty good too.

For dessert, I made banana nut bread. There is nothing like fresh baked bread in Quetico.

After dinner, lies were told, cigars were smoked and RUM was consumed. Yep, life is good.

Total Fish: 17 smallies, 2 northern pike

Day 6: Sunday, May 25th, 2014 Daytrip to Paulene Lake

I have always heard about how spectacular Paulene Lake could be. Since the reports I have been hearing were from folks I personally know, and FlukeMeister had been to the lake in the past, we decided to try again.

Indeed, Hound had found the portage to Paulene Lake the previous day. FlukeMeister, SteveB, Hound and I decided to venture to Paulene and try our luck at the bass that are "legendary" to that lake. CarpMan_X and GadgetMan decided to daytrip to Sarah.....I snickered ☺. I don't believe they ever made it to Sarah Lake. GadgetMan was wearing sandals, and CarpMan_X had

sprained his ankle along one of the Horse River portages. From my understanding the Sarah portage from McIntyre is a monster.

The portage to Paulene was exactly where Hound had found it earlier the previous day. We chose to double portage since we still were not "exactly" sure it was the actual portage, carrying daypacks first, then doubling back for fishing poles, paddles and the canoes. The portage was rocky, full of roots, and covered with leaves. I don't think too many folks had been on it this year.

FlukeMeister and SteveB took the right side, and Hound and I took the left side. Fishing started out slow. We caught a few smallies along the main lake, and a few largemouth in the first cove past the portage. The water was about 5 degrees warmer, but the fish still were not as active as we thought they should be.....so we thought.

After fishing for a few hours, Hound and I came to the largest bay on the lake. The first finger of that bay produced a few fish. The next finger, we found the largemouth stacked up under the buck brush that was flooded. In one spot, we hammered 20 largemouth with tubes, flukes, and swim baits. Hound's weed less tube was the answer. Every piece of wood that was close to rock held a few fish. We continued fishing this area, landing an additional 30 largemouth bass. By noon, we had 55 fish. Every fish was bigger than average, with the largest being 3lbs 12 oz, and the smallest being around 2lbs.

Hound and I took 30 minutes for lunch and then headed to the far end of the lake to fish the very narrow north end finger.

In the north end finger, we found a few fish while headed to the back bay. Once in the back bay, we literally destroyed the largemouth bass that were holding on the wood and rock in the 65 degree water. These fish were looking for an area to spawn. I don't believe they were on the nest, but they were definitely close.

We left that back bay after catching another 45 fish. While fishing out, we met the other boat moving in. We told them about the bay, and they went back into it and caught an additional 30-40 largemouth bass. Talk about a fantastic day of fishing, and it wasn't over yet.

Hound and I headed back to the original first bay and continued the slugfest with mister largemouth. Hound tied on a buzz bait, and proceeded to crush them on it. Never in my world would I have thought the bass would be ready for a buzz bait this trip. Again, I was wrong.

Dinner was planned for 7:00pm, so Hound and I, and FlukeMeister and SteveB all agreed to meet up at the portage at 6:00pm to ensure we had time to get back to camp by 7:00pm.

Dinner was the rest of the smoked polish sausage, red beans and rice, and cornbread. Most of it was actually pretty good, but for the first time ever, I managed to tip over my Omnia oven, spilling all the cornbread batter on the campsite. There would be no cornbread for dinner. Oh well.

We also baked up a lake trout that CarpMan_X caught out of Deer while fishing with GadgetMan. The laker was baked using olive oil and lemon pepper.

After destroying the cornbread, I asked FlukeMeister if he'd make the Oreo Cheesecake for dessert. He agreed, and we had red beans and rice, smoked sausage, Oreo Cheesecake, and Baked Laker.

Spiced cider with a very liberal amount of Captain Morgan's finished off the night.....

Total Fish: 109 largemouth/smallmouth, no northern, no walleye, no lakers.

Day 7: Monday, May 26th, 2014 Back to Paulene Lake

After such a great day the previous day and since GadgetMan and CarpMan_X didn't get a chance to fish Paulene, the group decided to make another trip there to pound the largemouth again. We also decided to mix the group up a little, and fish with different partners. SteveB and Hound went together, CarpMan_X and I went together, and GadgetMan and FlukeMeister went together. This was done to allow GadgetMan and FlukeMeister to make a monster daytrip loop to Susanette, through the Darky River, and then back down through Brent. FlukeMeister loves Susanette Lake and wanted to visit again, so this allowed him to do just that.

It also allowed the group to mix up a little and share fishing techniques.

Since there were only 4 in camp for breakfast, I made pancakes and bacon again. Man, were they good.....

CarpMan_X and I headed directly to the North finger that produced so many fish the previous day. Once we reached it, we found GadgetMan and FlukeMeister pounding the largemouth bass. We talked to them and discovered they caught about 30 there. They were still headed to Susanette and Brent, and beyond, but they wanted to get their "fish on" before making the monster trip.

CarpMan_X and I stayed there, and proceeded to catch 30 largemouth bass there in about 3 hours. The fishing was slower than the previous day, but it was still fun. The bass were not stacked up...they were scattered and holding on wood about half way back into the bay. Still, it was fun.

After fishing the finger, CarpMan_X and I headed to the first big bay and met up with SteveB and Hound. They too were pounding the largemouth bass. They managed to catch 39 fish for the day.

We met up at the Island campsite to come up with a game plan for the rest of the day. Everyone was hot, and we were in our 3rd day of stable high pressure. Fishing was still good, but the heat was simply sapping all energy. We decided to harvest a few fish for dinner, and head back to camp.

Back at camp, even though the water was 55 degrees or so, we all took a quick dip in the water to cool off and clean up.

After cooling off, and waiting an hour or so, CarpMan_X and I headed over the island to quickly process the fish for dinner. GadgetMan was again providing a fish meal for this dinner. He had tried the Bear Creek fish chowder at home and determined it was quick and easy enough to do in the woods, so he put together a meal around the fish chowder.

While processing the fish the bugs were crazy. After a quick filet and skin, I asked CarpMan_X to paddle me out into the middle of the lake, and I'd finish processing the fish out there. Even in the middle of the lake, the bugs were miserable. All the thick portions of meat were cut into 1 inch cubes, while the thinner portions were cut into fry sized strips.

Once GadgetMan and FlukeMeister arrived back at camp, we started dinner. The Bear Creek fish chowder is simply the bomb. Two clam chowder packages and 6 decent sized fish is really too much food. I think in the future, I will repackage the two packages of Bear Creek into 1 and ½ packages, which should be just about right. I also blackened a little fish. GadgetMan also brought along oyster crackers, which went quite well with the fish chowder.

This will definitely be an added meal in the future.

Total Fish: 39 largemouth/smallmouth, no northern, no walleye.

Day 8: Tuesday, May 27th, 2014 Headed to Robinson Lake

The group had always planned on spending a day or two on Robinson Lake, but we had planned on spending time on it on the way in, not on the way out. No matter, we decided to leave McIntyre Lake 1 day early and head to Robinson Lake.

It took us way too long to break camp, so we didn't get a good start to Robinson Lake like we wanted. We finally left the campsite around 10:00am.

The plan was to fish out, and that is just what we did. CarpMan_X and GadgetMan left first, and headed to Deer Lake. FlukeMeister, SteveB, Hound and I all headed to the "bowl" to fish. In the bowl, we managed a few fish, but nothing spectacular. We did manage about half a dozen fish, before we decided to head to the McIntyre message cache.

I had general information where the message cache was located, but nothing exact. It took us about an hour to finally locate it. We spent about an hour taking some pictures, and reading the notes. I found a really cool note from QPASSAGE from 10 years ago. I also found a great note from famed outdoor writer Kevin Callan. Those were pretty cool to read.

After reading some notes, our group individually added our own. My note was centered on my favorite canoe partner, my daughter Natalie. Writing it was tough, since this was the first year that she was not going to be able to make a trip to the Boundary Waters or Quetico since she started going 7 years ago. Maybe she will be able to next year.....I sure hope so.

We wrote our notes, fought off killer bugs, and carefully put the cache back as we found it.

Back on the lake, we fished through Deer and Cecil, on our way to Robinson Lake. On Dart Lake (No Name between Cecil and Robinson), we ran into GadgetMan and CarpMan_X on the Tuck Lake portage. They "acted" like they meant to head to Tuck Lake, but they were clearly on the wrong portage, and would have been forever lost had they taken it. In reality, they would have figured it out, but it would have lead to a long, hard day, and maybe them spending the night overnight since they had no idea which Robinson campsite we would take. Initially we had talked about our top 3, but those were not set in stone, and the campsites were on complete opposite ends of the lake. It was a very good thing that we ran into them, and avoided the potential mess.

We normally don't plan fish on travel days, but this was an unplanned travel day, so I told everyone to bring back a couple fish. We all started harvesting after we hit Robinson Lake.

Robinson Lake seems to be a very good smallmouth lake. We managed to quickly catch enough fish for dinner. After harvesting what was needed, we all headed to the Island Campsite to prep the fish and get ready for dinner.

Since the Island is a pretty big place, we chose a spot well away from camp to process the fish, throwing the guts into the water and leaving 1 carcass for the gulls and eagles.

Fish tonight would be blackened and fried, with stove top stuffing and mashed potatoes for sides.

I also asked FlukeMeister to make a cherry cheesecake. We've been making these no bake desserts for years now, and I usually bring 2 or 3 on every trip.

After dinner, liberal amounts of Captain Morgan and hot cocoa were consumed.

Total Fish: Smallmouth Bass 20, No northern, No Walleye.

Day 9: Wednesday, May 28th, 2014 Fishing Robinson Lake

With only 1 day to fish Robinson Lake, we decided to break up into 3 different groups and pound different parts of the lake. GadgetMan and CarpMan_X headed South, SteveB and FlukeMeister headed north, and Hound and I headed further north.

In the furthest northeast corner of the lake there is a small finger that leads due south. On the map this area looks very promising. In reality, the area is void of any fish. We managed to catch one small hammer handle northern, and a 2lb largemouth. 2 Hours wasted. On the way out of the barren wasteland, we passed by SteveB and FlukeMeister. They had pounded the smallies on a small flat past the last northern island on Robinson Lake. Hound and I had a different idea about how to fish this area. He really wanted to find a spot and stick it, but I wanted to try to figure out where the fish should be. We ended up compromising a little and fished the key spots in specific bays pretty hard. The shallow northwest bays on Robinson are crazy good, and I will definitely be visiting this lake again in the future. We also re fished the area that SteveB and FlukeMeister fished earlier.

In the bay due west of our campsite, I managed to catch my first walleye of the trip. By 2:00pm it was simply too hot to sit in a canoe, chasing fish. Hound and I decided to head back to camp, and clean up a little. We had 3 fish on the stringer consisting of 2 smallies and a solid walleye.

Back in camp, we found a great little bowl near the campsite. This bowl was perfect for taking a swim. The water was finally warm enough to spend more than a minute or two in it. It was definitely refreshing.

When everyone else arrived back at camp, we quickly determined that everyone had a great day fishing and catching. GadgetMan and CarpMan_X brought in a 6lb laker. FlukeMeister and SteveB caught 2 solid walleye and 2 eater smallies. We had a total of 8 fish, which was way too much. Two of the 4 smallies harvested were in great condition, so they were let go.

Since the fish chowder went over so well, and we had another package of it, we chose to take all the walleye and process it for fish chowder. The smaller pieces of walleye were processed to be fried or blackened. All the smallies were also processed to be fried or blackened or baked.

The laker was processed whole, and setup to be baked. I wish I would have filleted the laker, because it took way too long to get the thicker portions baked over the coals. I now have a new rule. Any laker over 4 or 5lbs will be filleted and baked skin on instead of baked whole. I think they will cook much better that way.

Dinner was crazy. We had fish prepared 5 different ways. We had fish chowder. We had fried fish. We had blackened fish. We had baked fish. We had baked laker.

Life is good. Life is so good, we managed to put an end to the rest of the Captain Morgan's that night on Robinson Lake.

Total Fish: 55 smallmouth/largemouth bass, 1 walleye, 1 northern

Day 10: Thursday, May 29th, 2014 Headed to Horse Lake

It was decided the night before that we should all get up crazy early, skip breakfast and fish until 9:30am, then come back to camp, have breakfast and then break camp and head for Horse Lake for our final night.

Everyone got up early and headed to their fishing spots. Everyone except for GadgetMan and CarpMan_X, that is. I don't know if they decided their fishing hotspots were too far away or they were simply spent, but they didn't go out and ended up staying in camp, breaking down their tent and sleeping bags.

Hound and I went to the northern flats, and FlukeMeister and SteveB went to some areas just past the northern flats. Hound and I managed to catch 15 fish in the morning before heading back to camp to start breaking down and heading out.

Back at camp, I managed to find enough pancake mix to make a few more pancakes. The carbs would be much appreciated. I asked GadgetMan and CarpMan_X if they wanted cakes, but they both had already eaten. No matter, that left more for me and Hound. I made 3 pancakes each and still had some left over. When FlukeMeister and SteveB arrived, I told SteveB there was enough mix for 6 or so pancakes if they wanted to make them. They did 😊😊.

After breakfast, we started seriously breaking down the camp. It took us about 1.5 hrs to break camp this time. This was much better than a few days earlier on McIntyre, but still too long.

GadgetMan and CarpMan_X were chomping at the bit to get in some fishing, so after we broke down the kitchen, I gave them the OK to load their canoe and head out. I asked them to stay on Robinson Lake so we didn't get too far apart.

After breaking camp the rest of us headed down towards the Tuck River. GadgetMan and CarpMan_X were fishing along a southern area that looks simply PERFECT for smallie action. I cannot wait to get back there. I cannot wait.

Padding and portaging down the Tuck River, we saw thousands of white suckers. I've never seen them before. They are definitely cool.

The Tuck River was running pretty good, but nothing that was not manageable. Below every set of rapids we managed to catch a couple smallmouth bass. Below the final portage into Moose Bay, we managed to catch quite a few smallmouth bass. Hound and I managed to catch 30 smallmouth for the day, which is not too bad for a travel day.

Once we hit the Horse River, things were different. The wind was whipping around quite a bit where the Horse River enters Basswood. It was whipping so much that we actually saw and took video of a waterspout on the lake. I've seen them at home, and have heard stories of them, swamping canoes. WE were pretty close to it, but not within any danger....

The 3 or 4 portages along the Horse River were not too bad, but the rapids that you had to line or paddle were simply crazy to manage. You had to paddle like hell and keep paddling, otherwise you risked the possibility of getting sideways and swamped. Saying it was tough would be an understatement.

We arrived at Horse Lake well after 7:00pm. None of the easy campsites were available. I pulled out my binoculars and determined that the far northern campsite on the island was available. Still, I was not completely convinced it was open so we sent SteveB and FlukeMeister on a scouting mission to confirm that it was open or not. Fortunately, it was open.

For dinner, I saved one of my favorite meals for last. A few years ago, QPassage told me about Cheesy Enchilada Chicken Helper. I've been taking it ever since. This year though, I could not find it. I determined that it is no longer manufactured. Since it is no longer made, and I really like it, I decided to try to create my own version. It turned out better than the original, and takes less time to make.

After Dinner, Hound had about 3 ounces of scotch left, which we all used to toast the trip. This was a fantastic trip.

Day 11: Friday, May 30th, 2014 Going Home

Wow...time to go home. For the second time ever, I actually didn't want to go home. For the second time ever, I had not broken down my fishing equipment the day before. Maybe it was due to the slow smallie fishing, maybe it was something else. All I know is this.....This trip was a fantastic trip. Not only did it go well, and not only did we have great weather and eat like kings, but this was one of the only trips where there were no group issues.

This was in fact one of my best and favorite trips.

Everyone broke camp pretty quickly. We needed to break camp quickly too, because we were going to be pressed to make our pickup in the 3 hrs we allocated to get from our Horse Lake campsite to the Mudro entry point.

We had to bust can to get out, and we probably would have made it had we not stopped to help a co-ed group that was clearly over loaded and single portaging. This group was made up of 4 girls and 4 guys. The guys took the aluminum canoes over the portage and the 4 girls took the gigantic, overloaded packs. Two of the girls fell, and one of the girls could not even lift the pack. When I bent over to help her, the pack was easily over 80lbs. I was pretty honked off at the group leader for sacrificing safety for speed. Sure, single portaging helps save time, but if someone breaks a leg carrying an 80 or 90lb pack, all you did was SHORTEN your trip. Oh well. They were headed to Crooked Lake and I can guarantee you they didn't make it.

FlukeMeister and SteveB were the fastest of our group, so they pushed to Mudro, arriving about 20-30 minutes before the rest of our group. Even then, we were still 30 minutes late to our pickup.

Final Thoughts:

Man, what a great trip. There were not too many issues on this trip.

Fishing was pretty good, but slow on McIntyre. The stories and camp life was way, way cool. I simply love sharing this area with others and new folks.

This group was one of the best groups I've ever tripped with. Everyone got along and everyone chipped in to help with camp life.

I also learned quite a few things from this trip. I learned a few new fishing techniques, and I definitely added some additional meals. The fish chowder will definitely be added, especially for colder weather trips. The fish tacos were also a hit and will be added.

While I don't know when, I would love to do another trip with Andy or Craig. Both are fantastic folks be around.

I cannot wait until next year.