



L to R: Paddling can be a great group activity; Enjoying a chance to paddle on open water

# PADDLING IN LEEDS-GRENVILLE

By Lorraine Payette

There's a certain magic to canoeing and kayaking, something that just can't be found in any other activity. Whether slipping silently down an inland stream, watching the sunlight dapple the water as it plays among the leaves of overhanging trees, or yelling and racing with friends on a river, boldly crossing a lake or rocking gently near the shore, there's no other feeling in the world like the one you get from paddling.

"It's healthy, it's good for the environment, and it's good for tourism in the area. Maybe people will go out and buy some boats. It's a good way for a family to spend some time together in the out of doors," said Don MacKay, formerly with Parks Canada, when leading a group in 2012. "You can drive down the road and see the Rideau Canal, but it gives you a much different picture when you're going down in a boat or a canoe. In a power boat you have certain constraints, but with a canoe, as long as you have enough water to raise the keel, you can go anywhere you want."

Canoeing and kayaking in our region can be an excellent opportunity for photographers to exercise their art, for explorers to see the area from a different perspective, and for everyone to get fit while having a good time.

"Ontario is home to more than 250,000 lakes, numerous rivers, canoe routes, and the largest wilderness canoe park in the

world; canoe ownership per capita in Ontario is greater than anywhere else on the planet," says the Ontario Recreational Canoeing and Kayaking Association (ORCKA). "With over 270 provincial and 7 national parks, where canoe or kayak would be the preferred mode of travel, Ontario is perhaps the paddling capital of the world."

Canoeing and kayaking need not be restricted to a few hours on a sunny afternoon. There are also many opportunities to hike and camp on a canoe trip, turning it into several days of pleasure and adventure.

In Leeds-Grenville, many areas are open to the sport. These include more than 90 km of trails, as well as excellent locations for canoeing, kayaking, backpacking and camping. Look for Quiddity Trail, Sandstone Island Trail, Shoreline Centennial Trail and Westside Trail in Lansdowne; the Mac Johnson Wildlife Area in Brockville; the Thousand Islands Water Trails, Bateau Channel Trail, Admiralty Islands Water Trail, Lake Fleet Islands, Navy Islands Water Trail, Grenadier Island Trail, Mallorytown Landing Water Trail and Brock Isles Trail, in and near Gananoque. Some are in Provincial Parks, some in National Parks, and still others are privately owned.

Be sure to check the regulations in the area you choose before going out, and make sure you have the proper equipment. Whether you own your boat or choose

to rent, always be sure to know what you are doing, where you are going, and leave a plan with someone as to the time you will be gone and when to expect you back. Safety is always the most important factor. A wonderful trip can be ruined very quickly if someone becomes ill or injured. Always travel with a buddy, and be prepared to be amazed. **LH**



Checking equipment in advance saves problems later