

More things I've learned in the Woods

by Mike Bingley

A couple of years ago I wrote a brief list of things that I had learned in the woods and sent it off to Dave Greenlee for inclusion on the alumni website. Well, that was more than two years ago and I'm now deep and involved in the development of a High Adventure base with Scouts Canada. I can tell you that my short list of things that I wrote down weren't the only things that I learned. With that in mind I present to you Bing's list of more things I learned in the woods (the 2003 version):

- Take care of your crews - you never know when you might need a pick me up over email and a sounding board for a marketing plan.
- Gourmet coffee houses make good coffee but it doesn't hold a candle to the taste of the worst coffee made at the side of a lake in the Northcountry.
- If you hang a picture of any of the canoe bases in your office somebody will eventually come in and say "isn't that the canoe base?" It will lead to many stories being told.
- People who haven't been a Charlie Guide will tire of canoeing stories eventually. I suspect it's because they don't believe them.
- No matter how hard you try - voyageur clothing rarely passes as clothing for the office.
- That being said - if you keep your trail clothes in the bottom of a file drawer in your office you can have an instant "take me back to the north country" fix.
- Mark your maps - and mark them with more than portages - write stories on them. They look good framed on your apartment wall.
- Keep a journal - when the ground is frozen and you're feeling lonely for the north you can go back instantly with just a short read.
- Take a camera and take lots of pictures. If you have a lightweight video camera - take that too and videotape other Charlie Guides. What was funny while you were working is even funnier when you're back in civilization.
- Be Prepared for culture shock when you get back from even a short stay at any of the bases. I flew home for my graduation half way through staff training in my second year at the base and being in a university robe just didn't seem right after a month at the base (though I did make a point of wearing a shirt recently off the trail under my robe - yes, I washed it).
- There is no person more important than the kids in your crew - remember that and act accordingly
- In the eyes of your crew there is no person stronger, faster or cooler than their guide - remember that too
- The kids who drive you nuts while you're on the trail will send you a Christmas Card two years later if you treat them with the same respect as everyone else.
- Finally - You will bump into Charlie Guides in the oddest of places at awkward times and it will turn you back into a Charlie Guide instantly. Last fall I bumped into fellow guide Denny Poulin in a Perkins in Medicine Hat while I was having a business dinner. The best way to handle this situation is to excuse yourself politely from your party and tell as many stories as you can in five minutes a comfortable distance away from your party.