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M.H.S. Students Complete Challenging Pukaskwa River

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Under the direction of teachers, Gerry Beerkens and Dave Bulford, six Michipicoten High School students have completed an eight day canoe trip, running from Saturday, June 14th to Saturday, June 21st. Canoeing from White River to Michipicoten River were students Tom Watson, Denis Savoie, Tom Nelson, Larry Roy, Doug Peterson, and Shawn Hogean. The trip was a highlight of the high school's outdoor education program. This credit course teaches such skills as compass and map reading, camp and wood craft, survival techniques and conservation. All the canoes used on the trip have been built at the high school by former students. Denis Savoie and Tom Watson completed the trip in a canoe that they had themselves built for the school.

The challenge was Pukaskwa National Park, 725 square miles of coniferous clothed wilderness, studded with gleaming quartz and granite outcroppings. Declared a wilderness area on July 13, 1971, the region preserves excavations of the "Old Copper Indian Culture," dating back some 5,000 years. From the headwaters of the Park, the Pukaskwa drops a plunging and foaming 750 feet to Lake Superior in a series of gorges and spectacular rapids. Although frequently wet from heavy rains, the river was negotiated without mishap, in five days. Excellent speckled trout fishing kept everyone fed, and a surprise cake was produced to celebrate Tom Watson's birthday. Denis Savoie also managed to land an eight pound pike.

At the mouth of the Pukaskwa River, the group explored the mouldering log remains of the Pukasaw Depot, a formerly active lumber camp of the 1920's. From this point lay the rugged north-eastern Superior coastline, with its craggy points, numerous bays, beaches and rocky islands. Sudden, violent storms and large waves as well as fogs have frequently made shoreline canoeing hazardous. Fortunately the paddle was uneventful with camps being made at Pilot and Dog Harbour. At Dog Harbour, a quiet sheltered sandy bay, about twenty miles from the Mission, the group's achievements were added to the long list of names and dates carved in the age darkened wood of a small emergency shelter.

Through such outdoor adventures, M.H.S. students emerge into the world trained not only academically but also as well adjusted, socialized and self-confident individuals. Such a trip demonstrates the course's success.



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