

ISSUE

1

# Voyageur Trail Association Newsletter

## Spring 2020











## LETTER FROM *THE EDITOR*

Welcome to the 2020 Hiking Season! We hope you are enjoying our new format, and that the newsletter is proving to be a meaningful way for you to connect with the Trail. Perhaps you tried one of the winter trail activities highlighted in the previous edition, maybe snowshoeing or fat biking, or attending the Group of Seven Lake Superior Trail's Gala event in Marathon.

In this edition of the VTA Newsletter, we bring you an article on Plogging the Swedish trend that merges running with picking up litter, as well as two trip reports from recent Club outings, including a fall paddle to Batchewana Island, and a winter snowshoe at Trout Lake. Be sure to check out the announcement about new trailhead signage being installed in partnership with Tourism Northern Northern Ontario, and the updates on Winter Trail maintenance as well as infrastructure improvements and trail re-routing in Lake Superior Provincial Park.

This edition's Trail Feature comes from the Saulteaux Section, and provides an exciting update and insights into a three-year project that recently upgraded the Robinson Cliff's Trail.

If you're a current university student, returning to your studies in the fall, and interested in working in trails, be sure to check out the job posting on page 28!

As we move into the Spring Hiking season, please be sure to follow us on social media (Instagram and Facebook) at @voyageurtrailassociation for updates on trail conditions and trail crew work parties.

Happy Trails,

**Kelsey Johansen**



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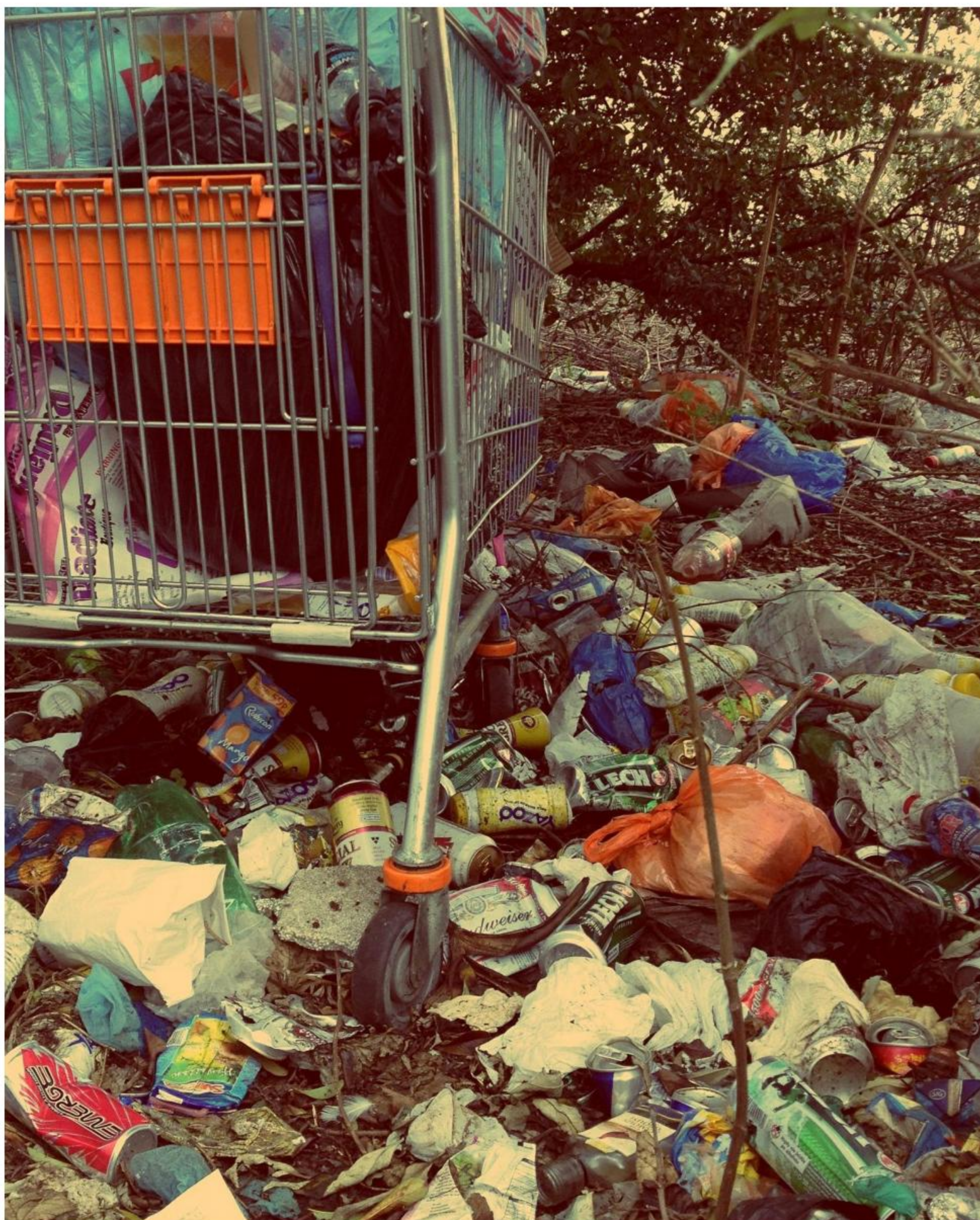
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**COVER IMAGE  
PIXABAY**









# Plogging for the Planet

*The Swedish trend that turns your trail activities into an eco-adventure*

Kelsey Johansen

With various Scandinavian trends taking the world by storm, including the search for cozy winter contentment (*hygge*) and setting time aside for a coffee and pastry (*fikka*) why not embrace this new eco-friendly activity: *plogging*. Plogging is a portmanteau of jogging and the Swedish phrase 'plocka upp' meaning to pick up.

With the spring melt comes opportunities to beautify the trail while contributing to an elimination of plastic pollution that is both dangerous to wildlife and an eyesore along our remote wilderness trail.

As a workout, plogging provides variation in body movements not typical for trail running or hiking by adding bending, twisting, squatting and stretching to the main actions of running, hiking, or walking. As an added benefit, packing out the trash you collect adds an upper body workout and an element of weighted function fitness. You'll burn an average of 60 calories per hour more plogging compared to running.

Plogging started in Stockholm, Sweden when Erik Ahlström moved there from Åre ski resort in 2016. He created the Plogga website to organize the activity and encourage volunteers ([www.plogga.se/](http://www.plogga.se/)). Since 2018, it has spread around the world with various groups picking up the mantle.

If you are planning to go Plogging, we recommend that you check the weather report for the week. Bad weather, like rain, can turn paper and other litter into a slippery mess, as can melting snow. So, it's best to Plogg following a long stretch of warm weather, or to take a litter picker with you.

Always designate a leader to keep track of volunteers and clean-up details. Provide at least one adult supervisor for every group of six young people under eighteen years of age; this will minimize horse-play and ensure safety. Wear long pants, a long sleeve shirt, socks and sturdy boots or shoes, avoiding open toed footwear. This is especially important as we move into tick season and also minimizes the risk of exposure to poisonous weeds like poison ivy or oak, sumac and dog straggling vine - which can cause nasty skin irritations.

Be sure to apply sunscreen and insect repellent as needed, not just before you depart.

Always wear sturdy work or garden gloves during a clean-up and wash your hands afterwards. See our helpful list of Plogging Essentials below for recommendations on what to bring on your next plogging adventure.

When cleaning near rivers, streams or open bodies of water, always work in pairs and check local flooding reports. Do not wade into the water to retrieve items.

Ensure group safety by wearing high-visibility clothing or vests when working near traffic, including roadways and parking lots.

If picking up broken glass be sure to wrap it in newsprint before double bagging it and putting it in your trash bag. Avoid dangerous and unsafe litter.

*“Plogging is a portmanteau of jogging and the Swedish phrase ‘plocka upp’, meaning to pick up”*



Dangerous or unsafe litter includes razor blades, syringes, hazardous household products, dead animals, condoms, and all unlabeled jugs, bottles and drums.

If you encounter these types of litter, please contact your local Voyageur Trail Association Club, Provincial or National Park Office, or other organizational authority (e.g. Conservation Authority, Municipality, etc.) and report the location and nature of the found item(s). Be sure that you have a cell phone or GPS with you so that you can mark your location with an app like Google Maps for accurate location reporting.

To arrange your own plogging challenge, simply get a group of hikers, walkers or trail runners together, get some bin bags and protective gloves and set out on the trail, picking up rubbish as you go. With Earth Day quickly approaching (April 22nd, 2020) and Lake Superior Day following after (July 19th 2020), as well as World Clean Up Day (September 19th 2020), why not gather a group of local trail enthusiasts in your area and coordinate a Plogging Day!



## PLOGGING ESSENTIALS

1. Blue Recycling Bags and Black Trash Bags
2. Newspaper to Wrap Sharp Objects / Broken Glass in for Safe Disposal
3. Screw top plastic jar for bottle caps / cigarette butts
4. Non-Latex Rubber Gloves and Work Gloves
5. A Small Hand Trowel or Litter Picker
6. Sturdy Shoes
7. Water and a Snack (Lunch as needed)
8. First-Aid Kit
9. Sun protection
10. Hand Sanitizer or Camp Soap and a Squirt Bottle of Water







# TROUT LAKE SNOWSHOE

Marks Crofts (Photos Valerie Walker)



We usually think of the Voyageur Trail as being made up of three trail categories, but there are actually four. We have the “main trail” blazed white, the “side trails” blazed blue and the “loop trails” blazed yellow. In winter we have the “bon-ka-nah” - no blazes required.

**Bon-ka-nah** is an Anishinaabe word meaning winter trail or route. The wonderful thing about the bon-ka-nah is that they can be wherever you want them to be. They might be direct and purposeful, say to a pond where the fishing is good or the bon-ka-nah may be whimsical and wandering, say to a high point that has intrigued you by the possibility of a wonderful view.

January 19th 2020 dawned cold, but bright. Nineteen hearty souls: VTA members, Sault Naturalists, and friends took to the bon-ka-nah that trends north from the end of Connor Road, crosses wetlands, a small lake, a few ravines and cedar swales and delivers us to Trout Lake about 5 kilometers one way.

Cheryl and I have an abiding interest in the ancient trails. More on that in future scribbles. We are inspired by the efforts of generations of First Nations people who have travelled the area for millennia, making a network of trails (**Nastawgan**). A fellow named Craig Macdonald has made a map of the ancient trails of the Temagami area. A similar map could be made in our area. **Chi-müigwech** to all of them.

By ancient trails I don't mean lost or disappeared, for the trails are out there, you just have to find them. Some of the Nastawgan are now roads. No doubt parts of the Voyageur Trail are ancient Nastawgan.

The specialized winter trails (bon-ka-nah) get you places that you most likely would never get to in any other season. Thanks to the good work of the beaver there are countless combinations of level, open, frozen pathways to anywhere and everywhere.

And so, it was the bon-ka-nah that we followed on our Trout Lake sojourn. Part of the route is across wetlands. Just inside bush, on the east margin of one of these wetlands we found an old cast iron wood stove. It has been there for a long time. There is no evidence of a cabin. I wonder if the stove stayed there year-round, but in winter a tent was draped around it offering the occupants a cozy refuge from the winter winds.

The most difficult portion of our route is a wet tangle of alders which was the “old Trout Lake Road”. Alan Comfort, a long time VTA member recalls driving a car down the very same route. Why was the old Trout Lake Road built there though? I wonder if this old road was built on top of a Nastawgan, as many roads in the north are.

On the Field Naturalists side of things, we had a quiet day. A red squirrel was the only mammal and chickadees, a red-breasted nuthatch and a raven were the only birds seen. Most creatures were still lying low from the big snow/blow we had the day before.





Both the Voyageurs and the Naturalists have other outings scheduled that will travel the bon-ka-nah, you are welcome to join us. In the meantime, don your skis or snowshoes and get out there...or look at any large-scale map and make your own **bon-ka-nah**. If you are interested in the ancient trails of the Temagami area produced by Craig MacDonald, please visit: <http://www.ottertooth.com/Temagami/Maps/nastawgan/nastaw-index.htm>







### The Voyageur Trail Association

The Voyageur Trail Association (VTA) was founded in 1973 with a vision to work with volunteers and partner organizations to build a continuous wilderness-style hiking trail from Sudbury through Sault Ste. Marie to Thunder Bay, a distance of some 1,100 km paralleling the rugged Northern Ontario shores of Lake Huron and Lake Superior.

The Voyageur Trail is a true wilderness trail, some remote or little used sections may be difficult due to fallen trees or regrowth. Use at your own risk.

The Voyageur Trail Association is a non-profit, charitable organization. REG. #119261923RR0001.

The Voyageur Trail Association is comprised of a Coordinating Council with elected members representing the Association's membership at regional and national stakeholder levels through organizations like Hike Ontario.

### The Coordinating Council

The Coordinating Council of the Voyageur Trails Association is comprised of the Executive, Members-at-Large, and the Directors. At the 2019 AGM the following positions were filled:

President: Vacant  
 Vice President - East: Vacant  
 Vice President - Central: Mark Crofts  
 Vice President - West: Matt Borutski  
 Treasurer: Kees van Frankenhuyzen  
 Secretary: Jenn Smith  
 Publicity Director: Vacant  
 Social Media Coordinator: Kelsey Johansen  
 Newsletter Editor: Kelsey Johansen  
 Trails Master: Harvey Lemelin  
 Trails Data Manager: Heath Bishop  
 Webmaster: Sandra Turgeon  
 Insurance Coordinator: Larry Gringorten  
 Membership Coordinator: Chris Kuntz  
 Guidebook Chair: Steve Dominy  
 Hike Ontario Rep: Harvey Lemelin

If you are interested in fulfilling one of these roles, please email us at: [info@voyageurtrail.ca](mailto:info@voyageurtrail.ca).

### Clubs

The Saulteaux VTA Club was the first Voyageur Trail Club established in 1974. Headquartered in Sault Ste. Marie this Club champions the Saulteaux, Desbarats, Thessalon and Echo Ridge sections of the Trails.

The 44 km Penewobikong section of the Voyageur Trail was developed by original member Norm Ledielt who maintained the trail from 1973 to 1995. Today this section from Granary to Iron Bridge is maintained by a small dedicated team of three who make up the Penewobikong Hiking Club.

The Coureurs de Bois VTA Club is headquartered in Elliot Lake, Ontario, Canada and stewards the Coureurs de Bois section of the Trail.

The Marathon VTA Club, which is comprised of the newly established Group of Seven Trail as well as the Picnic Table Lookout trail, Hawks Ridge Trail and Lunam Lake Lookout Trail is comprised of regional stakeholders including Pic River First Nation, Parks Canada and the Marathon Economic Development Corporation.

Spanning Terrace Bay to Rossport, the Casque Isles VTA Club derives its name from John Bigsby's 1823 appraisal of Superior's north shore from the top of Pic Island. This Club manages the Casque Isles Trail in conjunction with regional partners like Ontario Parks.

On September 1st, 2012 the Voyageur Trail Association welcomed its first new Club in over 30 years. The Nor'wester Voyageur Trail Club spans from the Casque Isles Trail VTA Club north through the communities of Nipigon, Red Rock, Dorion, Hurkett, Shuniah, Thunder Bay and Neebing to the Ontario / Minnesota border at Pigeon River.

## Become a Member Today!

Purchasing a VTA membership demonstrates your support for the vision and work of the Voyageur Trail Association. As a not-for-profit organization, the VTA depends on donations, volunteers, and membership revenue to support its operations. Members are eligible for exclusive discounts at participating businesses along the trail route and enjoy voting privileges at annual meetings. Most importantly, purchasing a membership means you have played an important part in the development of a 1,100 km hiking trail through some of Ontario's most splendid wilderness. A paid membership supports trail maintenance, insurance for our guided hikes and other outings, like work parties, as well as production of the VT Newsletter and Guidebook.

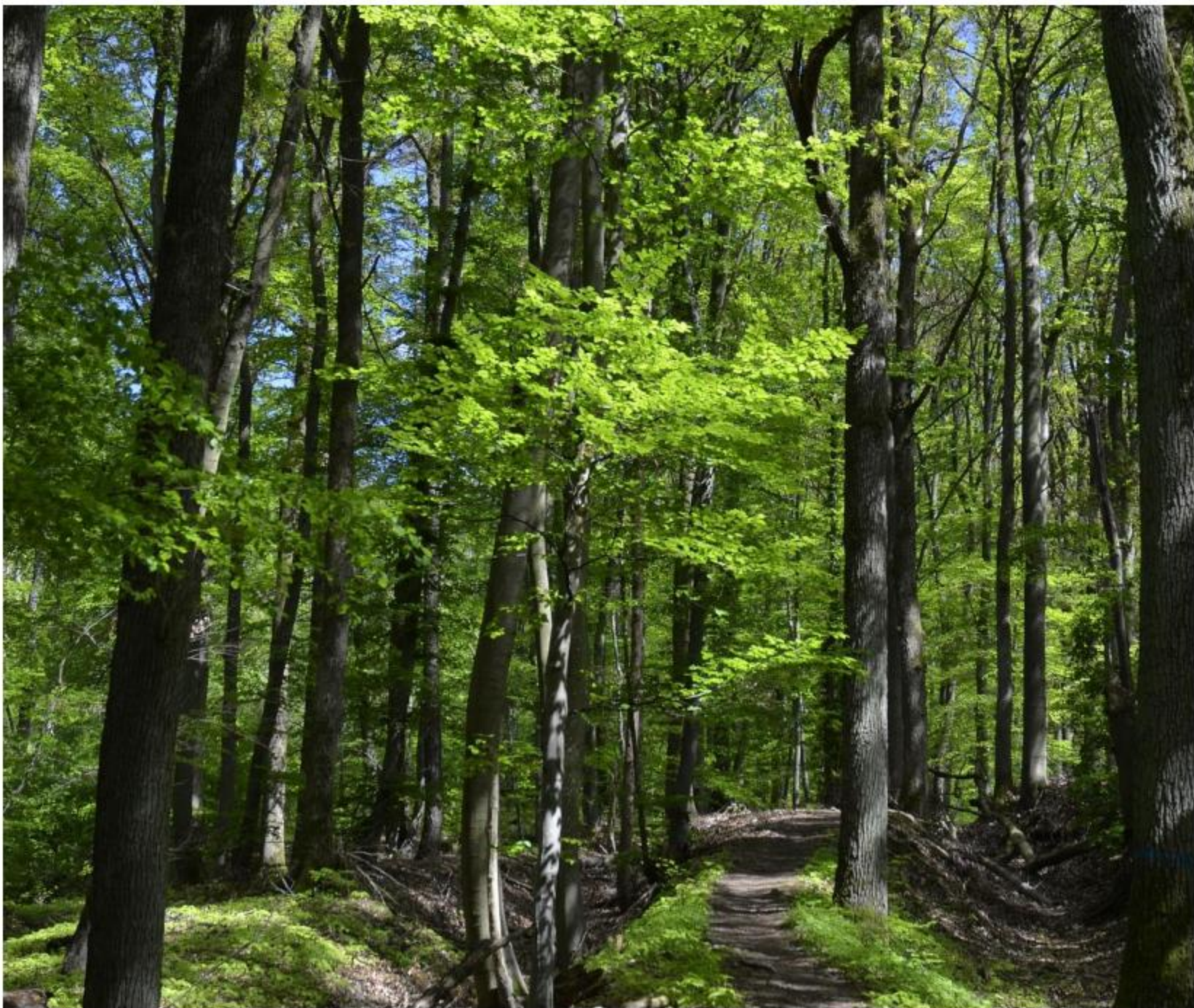
Memberships can be purchased for either a one- or three-year duration, and include Individual and Family (all individuals residing at the same address) memberships. Discounted Student memberships are also available (for 1- or 3-year durations).

Memberships can be purchased on our website at <https://www.voyageurtrail.ca/memberships/> or visit our online store to purchase the official Voyageur Trail Association Guidebook, or trail guides. You can also purchase advertising space in our Newsletter, Guidebook or on our Website, or make a charitable donation to the Association at <https://www.voyageurtrail.ca/shop/>.



**Thank you to all our amazing Community  
Partners, Land Owners, Trail Adopters,  
Clubs, Volunteers and Members.**

**We couldn't do it without you!**







## NEW TRAIL SIGNAGE

Carole Blaquiere

In 2018, the Voyageur Trail Association Coordinating Council undertook several new Strategic Planning Initiatives.

With funds from Tourism Northern Ontario, new trailhead signs were designed and purchased for seventeen locations along the Voyageur Hiking Trail.

These signs were to replace the outdated trailhead signs at various locations along the trail.

Look for new trailhead signs being installed all along the trail. Thanks to our dedicated volunteers, we have been installing them over the previous two hiking seasons.

Above is the latest to be installed on Dec 20, 2019 at Cataract Falls near Blind River.





# BIG CANOE TO BATCHEWANA ISLAND

Mark Crofts

In September 2019, members of the Saulteaux Voyageur Trail Club headed out on Lake Superior to paddle to Batchawana Island in a Voyageur Canoe. The day was filled with paddling, a picnic lunch and environmental stewardship, including rubbish collection. One of the objectives of this outing was to rid our dear and mighty Lake Superior of some of the detritus that our society dumps into her. Plastic along the shoreline, a beer can or two lying on the bottom...and myriad of small bits of plastic and foam adorning the beaches.

As members learned, paddling such a large watercraft requires the coordination and synchronicity of all hands-on board.

These canoes are sleek and seaworthy, but they are somewhat akin to the Titanic in terms of their maneuverability.... unless the crew acts as one. Capturing a fragment of a plastic fertilizer bag afloat just off the bottom, four feet under the surface requires finesse and total focus similar to a ballet. Some crew "pry", some "draw" and two bring their paddle tips together underwater in a pincer like movement to capture the evil plastic sheet which is slithering like a greased manta ray. Success! And on to the next offending bit of garbage. In this way the "Titanic" transformed into a jet ski.

Our journey took us from the mouth of the Batchewana River, across to the Island at Sand Point and then down the lee side of the Island...and return by the same route.

Towards the end of the trip we were rewarded for our efforts when Mother Nature offered up a total spa treatment. The wind came up and jostled us to jello, the rain came down in torrents and soaked us thoroughly. Nevertheless, a good time was had by all.

Thanks to Dennis for organizing the outing, to Renee for the picture and to Cheryl, Val and Laurie Ann for their ballet skills. Do get in touch if you are interested in joining us on our next paddling adventure!





# ON THE CHALLENGES OF WINTER TRAIL MAINTENANCE

Steve Dominy



Over the Winter multi-sport trail season, Steve Dominy led many winter trail maintenance initiatives, including several to the Hiawatha Highlands Area which he reflects on here. Winter trail maintenance is essential for safety on popular trails having lots of trail users.



Those yearning to explore the great outdoors on foot in Sault Ste. Marie are blessed with a plethora of great trails to explore. There is the city's own Hub Trail, a 22 km multi-use loop, with connecting 'spokes' being planned. There is a network of walking trails on Whitefish Island in the St. Mary's River, adjacent to the recreational canal and the International Bridge.

There are hike/ski/snowshoe trails in and around golf courses, a municipal park, and the university. The Sault Ste. Marie Region Conversation Authority has five Conservation Areas in and around the city, all abounding with trails. However, none of these compares to the concentration of trails in the northeast part of the city.

The linear east-bound Saulteaux Section of the Voyageur Trail has passed along Sixth Line and Connor Road, ending at Mabel Lake since opening in the mid-1970's. The Trail traverses private and public lands with the grace of the landowners.

The largest such landholder is the Sault Ste. Marie Region Conversation Authority, which manages Hiawatha Highlands Conservation Area, a magnet for those seeking outdoor recreation activities. On virtually any day of the year one can find a multitude of outdoor enthusiasts here including hikers, cross-country skiers, cyclists, snowshoers, dog-walkers, trail runners, photographers, bird watchers, fat bikers and snowmobilers.

This area is home to the highest density of hiking trails in our network (see Map 24 in Edition 4.1 of the Voyageur Hiking Trail Guidebook).

The Saulteaux Voyageur Trail Club has developed and looks after over 20 km of hiking trails in a 15 km<sup>2</sup> area between Highway 17 and Mabel Lake. In addition to the main trail, there are four loop trails (Odena, Beaver, Hiawatha, and Mabel Lake) and side trails to Crystal Lake, Farmer Lake, and other points of interest. Notable highlights include the impressive Crystal Falls, the Crystal Creek flats and a scenic lookout over the central and eastern parts of the city.

In winter the trails are used extensively by snowshoers, with the occasional back country skier and fat biker venturing along them. The extensive and complementary network of trails offers a seemingly endless range of options for loop or out-and-back outings. Hiawatha Highlands (a division of Soo Finnish Nordic Ski Club) has erected maps (see photo below) to help orient winter trail users in the Crystal Creek-Mabel Lake portion.







This group maintains a network (not all shown on the map) of over 50 km of groomed cross-country ski trails and 14 km of packed snowshoe trails (pass required). The Sault Cycling Club has established some 40 km of mountain biking trails in the area, with more under development. Winter fat biking is the newest activity being enjoyed on many of these ski, biking, snowshoe and hiking trails. Snowmobilers also have a staging area on Conner Road, from where they can head east or north out of the city. Keeping our trails in shape requires countless volunteer hours every year. Individuals have adopted some trails, usually amounting to 4-8 km per person or couple.

Other trails are scouted by members and other users who report conditions to the Saulteaux Club for action. As the trails are heavily used by the public, minor trail clearing (e.g., branches or small trees on the trail) is frequently done by these walkers. Work parties are organized as required, sometimes including high school or college students. When the need for chainsaw work is identified, club members who are certified chainsaw operators are brought in.

Signs and trail markers also must be constantly monitored and replaced. The winter of 2019-20 has been a particularly challenging one for trail volunteers. The area experienced several wet snow events between early November and late January. In addition, a severe ice storm in late December further bent over or snapped off hundreds of large and small trees on the trails (see below).

While this damage occurred over much of the section, Saulteaux Club volunteers have been concentrating efforts in and around the Hiawatha Highlands area owing to the trails' high winter use by snowshoers and other trail users. Winter is not the ideal time of year for trail maintenance, but given the extreme circumstances it was deemed critical. Furthermore, spring work crews are expected to have their hands full this year cleaning up to the trails (see Spring Trail Maintenance article, by Kelsey Johansen, page 19 for details on how you can volunteer for Spring Trail Crews).

Showshoe-clad volunteers with loppers and hand saws have been making the trails passable, often cutting through nearly-impenetrable masses of snow-covered, bent and broken trees. Large chunks of frozen snow often must be shaken or knocked from limbs before the actual clearing can be accomplished. The task is further complicated by the fact that tops of many small trees are buried in the deep snow. When these tops are cut off the stems often spring up as the tension is released, requiring added caution. Some tree tops can be freed from the snow without cutting, allowing certain species to partially right themselves. Overhead hazards from broken, hung-up branches and tree tops must also be heeded. New signs are being placed at trailheads warning users of these dangers (see image on the left), and blue, biodegradable flagging tape along the trail marks these risks.

Whether you live in the Soo area or are just visiting, be sure to make this trails' mecca one of your destinations for some 'forest bathing' and four seasons fun!

If you would like to join a work party or adopt a trail to improve your Section, please contact your local club or send an email to [info@voyageurtrail.ca](mailto:info@voyageurtrail.ca).







# SPRING BRINGS MORE TRAIL MAINTENANCE

Kelsey Johansen

As we embark on the first Spring Hikes of 2020, chances are you will notice areas of the trail in need of some post-winter TLC (see Winter Trail Maintenance Article, by Steve Dominy, page 16). Whether it's new spring runoff causing slippery conditions, fallen trees, or areas needing re-blazing, please ensure you report them to your local Club. Contact information for all local Clubs can be found on our website, at: <https://www.voyageurtrail.ca/clubs/> or, if you cannot determine your local Club, please email us at [info@voyageurtrail.ca](mailto:info@voyageurtrail.ca).

As a volunteer-lead organization, we depend on our amazing members, volunteers and community partners to not only build, but maintain our trails. Consider giving back to the trails you love to hike, bike, ski and snowshoe this spring by volunteering during a local Trail Maintenance Blitz.

It's a new way to get out on the trail, and aside from helping to maintain it for your own use, spending a part of your weekend outside volunteering is good for the body, soul and community – we guarantee that there's a job for every skill level whether you want a great workout moving fallen branches and rocks, shoveling dirt and clearing out overgrowth or prefer to assist by logging damage, picking up litter, and nailing in new blazes, we welcome hikers of all ages and abilities to give back to the Trail. Besides, fresh air from being outside in the wilderness combined with the camaraderie of working alongside other trail users is bound to cure any residual cabin fever! You'll end your day with a great sense of satisfaction from contributing to your local Club trails, and hopefully meet likeminded hiking buddies.

You'll need to bring comfortable outdoor clothes you don't mind getting sweaty in, as well as sturdy shoes like work boots or multi-season hikers and work gloves; we also recommend long sleeves to help avoid scratches from clearing spring growth. Tools and equipment are provided, and only experienced volunteers are permitted to use chainsaws. If you have equipment you are particularly adept at using, you're welcome to bring your own.

Don't forget to bring plenty of water, snacks and a lunch. Look for updates on our event calendar for Spring and Summer Trail Blitz announcements near you.





## Saulteaux Voyageur Trail Club Annual Dinner

Friday, April 24, 2020  
Grand Gardens North

Meet & Greet 6pm, Dinner 6:30pm

After dinner presentation:

**Basil Arif**

*Traversing the bottom of the world;  
Patagonian pursuits*



Tickets \$30/person Contact Gail [jonesgail@shaw.ca](mailto:jonesgail@shaw.ca) or Mark [mcrofts@shaw.ca](mailto:mcrofts@shaw.ca) 254-2356





# CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS SUMMER 2020 ISSUE

If you are interested in contributing to our Summer 2020 Issue, please contact Kelsey Johansen (Newsletter Editor) at [KelseyMJohansen@gmail.com](mailto:KelseyMJohansen@gmail.com). Each issue contains a regional trail feature, highlighting an area of the trail, so if there is a trail that your Club maintains please be in touch. We also accept contributions highlight recent outings, upcoming events and trail user information updates. Deadline for submissions for the Summer 2020 Issue is May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020.





# BRIDGE UPGRADE AND TRAIL REROUTE AT NOISY BAY

Andy Stevens

The Michipicoten Trail section of the Voyageur Trail runs 30km south of Wawa, and includes the Noisy Bay Hiking Trail. The trail is in Superior Lake Park and is maintained by the Ministry of Natural Resources. If departing from Wawa, the trailhead is about 20 kilometres south of the town. After passing the Visitor Centre, the trail crosses Highway 17 and follows the Magpie River south along the coast to Bridget Lake, passing High Falls, Silver Falls and Mission Falls to the village of Michipicoten. South of Fort Friendship, the trail follows the coast of Lake Superior to Noisy Bay (see photo below).

There have been a few upgrades to the trail in recent years. A few years ago, the start of the trail with the Provincial Park was relocated and now begins across from the access to the Fenton/Treeby Parking area. The trail within the park is now more clearly marked, addressing previous issues that made it difficult to locate.

They have also rerouted the trail where the Noisy River outflows from Fenton Lake. Previously, the crossing was over a pile up of logs that formed a makeshift crossing. The logs shifted in recent years due to high water levels. At times the crossing was difficult and at other times too risky to cross.

In the winter months the snow helped form a snow-bridge across the creek and the trail was accessible. Last fall, through the joint effort of Park personnel and the Friends of Lake Superior, a safe bridge was constructed over the creek (see top photo opposite). The hike along the trail leads to Noisy Bay on Lake Superior about a 45-minute hike.

The trail is a moderate level of difficulty, as there are no large hills to challenge the traveller

The trail approaching Noisy Lake has been modified slightly to provide easier access (a short foot bridge) across a small creek that feeds into the east end of the lake (see bottom photo opposite).

The Noisy Bay Trail is a very popular hiking destination for Wawa groups. The groups responsible for the upgrades are to be congratulated for the improvements. Note - although the Guidebook indicates that the Noisy Bay trail heads north towards Smokey Point and then continues further north towards Wawa, hikers should be aware that this section of the trail has not been well maintained in recent years. Access points are located at: Agawa Bay, Sinclair Cove, Katherine Cove, Coldwater River, Orphan Lake Trail and Gargantua Road. The Park Map and the Voyageur Trail Association Guidebook are recommended for those hiking the coast.













# VTA TRAIL FEATURE:

## *The Robertson Cliffs Trail*

Kees van Frankenhuyzen

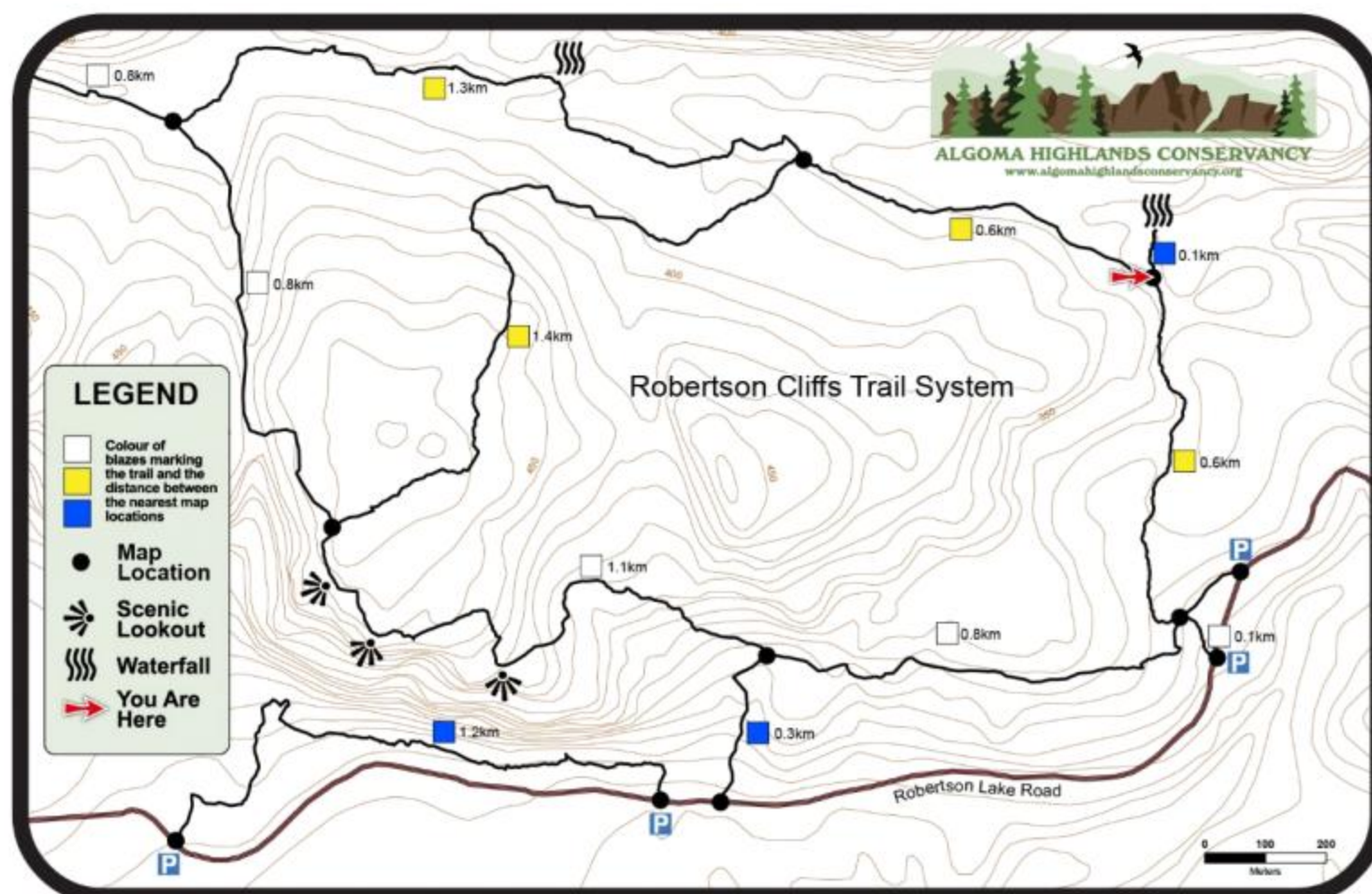
By far the most popular hiking trail in the Sault Ste. Marie area is the Robertson Cliffs section of the Voyageur Trail, just north of the city. The trail was built in the early-1990'S on property purchased by the Algoma Highlands Conservancy (AHC). Building the trail was a collaborative effort in 1993: members of the AHC and the Saulteaux Club were assisted by members of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, who traveled across the Atlantic, and the Bruce Trail Association. They all stayed at Stokely Creek Lodge, courtesy of then-owner Chuck Peterson. The trail continues to bring together a variety of organizations and groups to do maintenance and make improvements. In January 2017 the AHC paid the last installment on a loan for the purchase of King Mountain. Since then the AHC has focused on trail systems improvements. The Robertson Cliffs Trail is a popular hiking destination: trail cameras deployed in Fall 2017 revealed 3700 hikers used the trail in September and October alone!

On a nice day in October the trail is used by 400 people to enjoy the view and spectacular fall colours. Unfortunately, with so many feet on the trail, problem areas such as wet and muddy creek crossings and eroded steep sections popped up. In 2018, the AHC and VTA struck a joint committee to address those problems.

Additional access points were created to reduce pressure on the single trailhead by distributing hiking pressure along the 2 km frontage of the property. Parking space for 30 vehicles was created at the midpoint and a spur trail was built connecting to the Voyageur Trail. A new 1.5 km trail along the base of the cliffs connects the new parking space with the third and most westerly parking lot.

In 2019, we relocated the trail to a gentler approach following the land's contours and built a 0.5 km section before the first cliffs to bypass creek crossings (top right). The project was completed by installing new trail maps at trail starts and intersections (image below), and signs to direct parking and traffic from snowmobile trail in the winter (page 27).

This three-year project was possible because of volunteers from both AHC and VTA who did the planning and layout work and students from Sault College's Natural Environment and Outdoor Studies Program who built the trail (bottom right) with Brian Anstess. It was amazing to see how much they accomplished! It provided the students with valuable trail building experience and the community with a new and improved trail system that is great snowshoe destination in the winter (photo page 24) and spectacular hiking in spring, summer and fall.













# JOBS ON THE TRAIL: GROUP OF SEVEN LAKE SUPERIOR TRAIL AIMS TO HIRE SUMMER 2020 TRAIL CREW!

Kirsten Spence

The Group of Seven Lake Superior Trail Association is a tourism development project connecting the Group of Seven painting sites with a hiking trail from Pukaskwa National Park to Neys Provincial Park.

The Group of Seven made annual trips to the Marathon area from 1921-1928.

This trail is a partnership project between the Biigtigong Nishnaabeg (formerly Ojibway's of the Pic River First Nation) and the Town of Marathon. The Group of Seven Trail is the primary economic project of Marathon's growing tourism and ecotourism priority sectors.

The Town of Marathon is a small community (3,000 population) on the north shore of Lake Superior, just north of Pukaskwa National Park. The town boasts many amenities like a grocery store, shopping mall, library, hospital and many more all while being surrounded by breathtaking scenery.

You can learn more about the Group of Seven Lake Superior Trail in the Winter 2019 Newsletter's TRAIL FEATURE: Group of Seven Trail article.

In collaboration with the Project Coordinator, the Trail Crew staff will oversee building new trails and maintaining existing trails in the Marathon area.

Preference may be given to candidates with the following experience but is not required:

- Trail maintenance experience
- Experience with landscaping or trail construction
- Chainsaw certification
- Studying Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Recreation, Tourism or related field
- Those with experience in outdoor guiding and interpreting
- Travelling in wilderness settings
- Trails Certification Program



## WE'RE HIRING!

### Trail Crew

Group of Seven  
Lake Superior Trail

For more information visit us at [www.groupofseventrail.com](http://www.groupofseventrail.com)

## Additional Information.

- Candidates must be between 16-30 and returning to school in the fall
- This position requires working outdoors in a variety of weather conditions
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) must be owned and properly used
- Personal vehicle an asset
- Assistance in finding local accommodation or travel into town can be provided

There are 3 positions to be filled - 1 Trail Crew Leader, 2 Trail Crew.

## How to Apply:

For more information on the project, visit [www.groupofseventrail.com](http://www.groupofseventrail.com). Applicants should send a resume and cover letter outlining how they meet the specific requirements to: Kirsten Spence, Project Coordinator [g7trail@gmail.com](mailto:g7trail@gmail.com) by April 1st, 2020.



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# THE VOYAGEUR TRAIL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

