Planning the Circumnavigation of Rideau Island Event

(OOECA's Sesquicentennial Project: Saturday, September 9, 2017 (rain day 16th))

Overview: The circumnavigation of Rideau Island is a proposed leisurely one-day paddle up the Rideau Canal, down the Rideau River, along the Ottawa River and back on the Canal to Old Ottawa East. Rideau Island is the name for the triangular landform bounded by the Rideau Canal on the west, the Rideau River on the east and the Ottawa River on the north.

The recreational event will emphasize participation and collaboration so that kayakers, canoeists and their passengers of all ages will be able to complete the 20-kilometer trip and its portages without difficulty. The idea is to celebrate the sesquicentennial and explore the community's - and three of Canada's - historic and beautiful waterways.

While the event may simply attract a small group of OOE paddlers, there is the possibility that others living on or adjacent to Rideau Island (there are 15 such communities) will be interested in participating. It's proposed that each community organize its own group of paddlers and start and end in their home community but meeting with all others at an "after" event.

OOECA applied for City Sesquicentennial funding for this event but, for undisclosed reasons, the application was denied. Perhaps it will be too much fun, too adventurous for the City to sponsor. Nevertheless, we still will welcome the participation of councillors living on or adjacent to Rideau Island.

Organization: Although this is to be a modest event, sound planning / organization is required, including "dry-running" of the route. The following is a preliminary list of work requiring volunteers:

1. Establish Organization Team: Recruit volunteers, determine responsibilities.
2. Draft Plan / Schedule / Budgeting
3. Seek Necessary Approvals / Venues

4. Establish route / portages
5. Publicize / seek participants
6. Prepare for Actual Event and "After" Gathering
7. Run event / "After" Gathering
8. Assess / lessons learned.

Organization Team: Specific responsibilities could include:

1. Determine actual route and portages
2. Support team for actual event (in case assistance is required)
3. Determine the "after" event: where, what, provisions, focus
4. Communicate / publicity
5. Seek / process applicants.

Draft Plan / Schedule (very rough sketchy first draft outline)

January: Get organization and plan finalized

February: Propose route / portages / logistics; rough out "after" event

March: Obtain approvals - where necessary - for portages, lock passages (?)

April: Prepare participant info package / publicity material

May: Seek participants / publicize

June: Process applications

July: Dry-run route / adjust

August: Prepare for event day

September: Run event / "after" event

October: assess / lessons learned

Route

In view of length and current, it's proposed that the easiest direction to circumnavigate is "up" the Canal (no current), down the Rideau River (with an obvious current and considerable length) and up the Ottawa River (has a current but it's a relatively short distance).

The route is easier to do in a canoe than a kayak because the shallowness of stretches of the Rideau River require you to get out of the craft and walk through the most shallow stretches (e.g., upstream of Billing Bridge and by the Adàwe footbridge). Canoes also have the advantage that you can bring passengers and this is essentially a social rather than an athletic event.

A key question is whether all paddlers would start at the same point or whether they'd start in their home communities. My recommendation would be that OOE paddlers start at the Clegg dock, Glebeites start at Patterson Creek, Overbrook paddlers start where is convenient to them, etc. By not having a mass start we'd avoid congestion and chaos. But it could be worthwhile if each community's mini-flotilla moved more or less together so as to promote the social gathering and ensure those needing assistance have people nearby.

Each of the route's three bodies of water has its own set of challenges for paddlers. The Rideau Canal has locks that must be portaged around and the occasional boat that must be avoided but the Canal is essentially flat water with, generally, few waves (although Dow's Lake can get

choppy). There may be merit / interest in being "locked through" at least one of the three lock stations but being locked through generally takes more time than simply portaging.

All but the most hardy or crazy paddlers will require portaging wheels because of the length of the portages. My experience is that with wheels it was easy to do all of the portages (Hartwells to O-Train Bridge; Rideau Falls to Rowing Club and past the flight of locks at the parliament buildings).

The Rideau River poses the greatest challenges. First off, the water below Hogs Back Falls is too fast for all but the most experienced paddler. My sense is that it would be best to portage from Hartwells to below the O-Train bridge - anywhere above is too rocky and fast. So, if there is agreement with this, would the best thing be to portage out at Hartwells, go through Carleton and skip the Hartwells - Hogs Back stretch of the Canal? Or would it be better to paddle to Hogs Back and portage through Vincent Massey Bridge to the O-train bridge?

The other major challenge on the Rideau River is portaging around Rideau Falls. The RCMP / NCC will not allow us to put our craft to the east of 50 Sussex Drive (new Centre for Geography and Exploration - just to the east of the falls). So the options are either the Ottawa Rowing Club or, as suggested by the NCC, maybe Governor Bay - just past 24 Sussex.

The short stretch on the Ottawa is strikingly beautiful except it's difficult to take a craft out at the foot of the flight of locks at the Chateau / Parliament buildings. There is a commercial / tourist water taxi dock that works but it is not convenient and its owners would have to be approached.

Contact: John Dance, 613 236 0650 / john.dance.ottawa@gmail.com