Wooden Canoe Heritage Association

NORTHWEST CHAPTER

Northwest Chapter WCHA
Winter Newsletter 2026



Chris Eden, in his new Morris canoe, and Dwight Jacobsen in his Old Town Molitor enjoy a fall morning Dawn Patrol at Lightning Lakes. Livdahl photo.

The Northwest Chapter gathered at Lightning Lakes, Manning Park, BC, September 18–21, 2026, for the fall Meet. An enthusiastic group enjoyed beautiful fall weather, with sunny days and crisp nights, loons calling on the lakes, good food, and many lovely boats. It's difficult to imagine a more perfect location for camping with our friends and boats than the Lone Duck 2 campground. With no burn ban, even a wood campfire warmed the evenings.

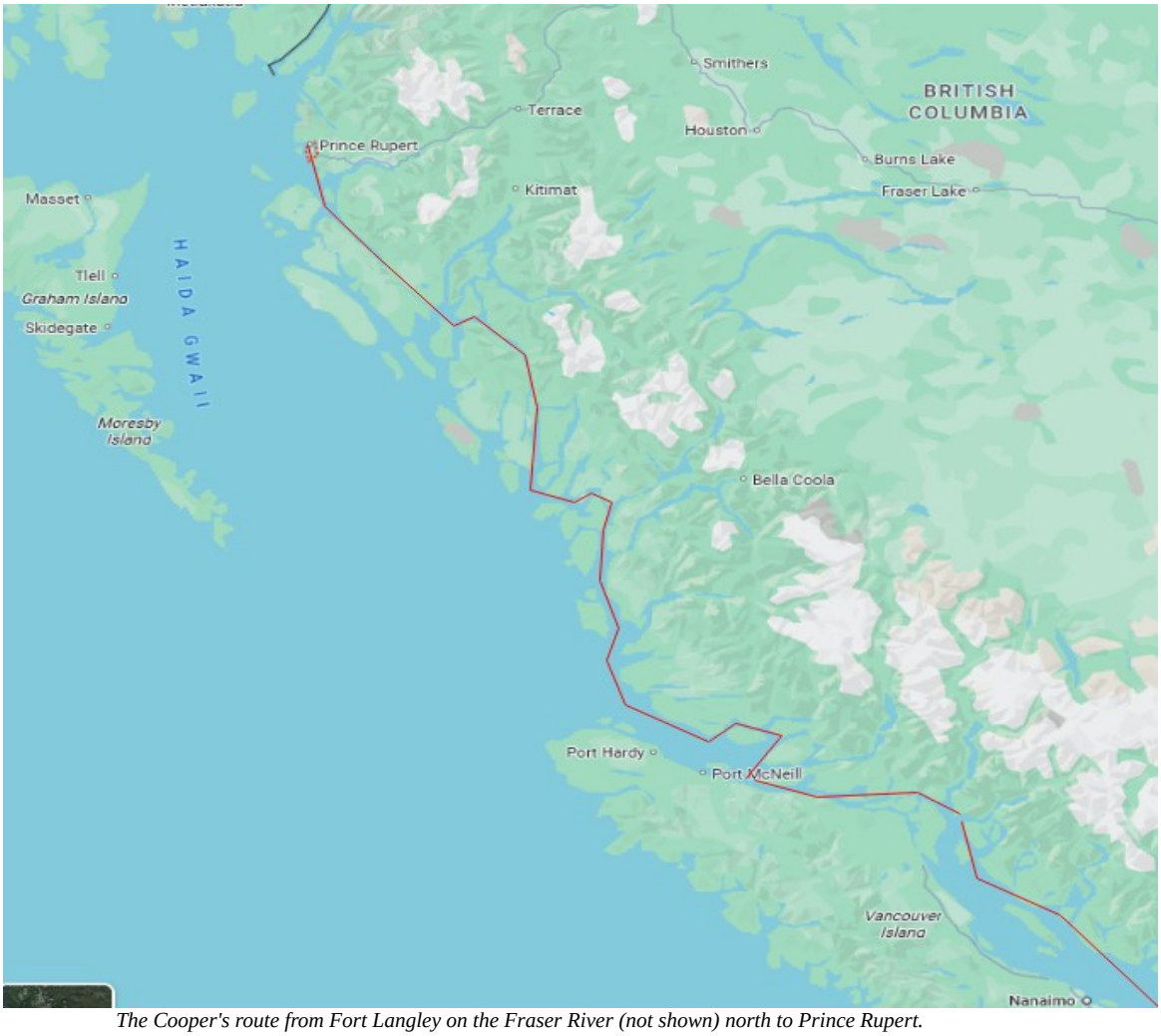
This Friday—Monday Meet focused many activities on Saturday, and allowed a very relaxing day on Sunday, a schedule that many appreciated. Thank you to President Mike Livdahl for organizing the Meet, and securing our favorite campground. Special thanks to speakers Chris Eden and Chris Cooper, and to Jim Ekins for sharing his mobile lab and microscopes for detailed lake viewing! Thank you also to Dwight Jacobsen for conducting a successful auction, and to Joan Ellsworth, managing our finances. It was a wonderful Meet! Mark your calendars for the **Spring Meet at Camp Bishop, May 14,15,16, 2027** and plan be to back at **Manning next fall, September 17–20, 2027.**

Canoeing the Inland Passage: talk by Chris Cooper



Friday evening, canoeist, mountaineer and adventurer Chris Cooper told the group about the 2014 ninety day canoe adventure he and wife Barb took, traveling north from the Kwantlen First Nation on the Fraser River on the Inland Passage, to Prince Rupert, BC. The 1200 km trip was designed to educate about environmental concerns, highlight the fragility of the BC coastline, and raise awareness of the Northern Gateway oil pipeline. It also raised funds for the Surrey Youth Education Center, and the Albion Ferry Dock Revitalization project.

The "Spirit of the Coast" 42' canoe was paddled by the Coopers, Kwantlen artist Brandon Gabriel and a core group, joined by others at 10 day intervals, including First Nations youth and young people from other Cooper canoe expeditions. The canoeists stopped at many First Nations villages along the way, where they were welcomed and often hosted for layover days. The route took the paddlers through



The Cooper's route from Fort Langley on the Fraser River (not shown) north to Prince Rupert.

some of the most beautiful and remote areas of the British Columbia coast. From a first stop at Sechelt, the canoe visited Redonda Bay, Big Bay on Stuart Island, Echo Bay on Gifford Island in the Broughten Archipelago Marine Provincial Park plus the Fox Group Islands and Minstrel Island. While making the part of the Inland Passage between northern Vancouver Island and the southern tip of Haida Gwaii--

open to the Pacific Ocean-- they especially enjoyed a Cooper favorite place, Burnett Bay— so beautiful and unique that it inspired Burnett the dog's name. It was again special—they were joined by a family of gray whales!

Going further north, the canoe utilized truly inland passages. At Namu, they visited the rusting wreckage of an abandoned fish cannery falling into the water on failed docks. Calling attention to contaminating sites like this, that urgently need reclamation, was one of the purposes of their trip. The contrast between the remote and pristine islands, and the industrial polluting wreckage was profound. The canoeists joined a tribal canoe journey celebration at the Heiltsuk First Nation, and visited Lady Douglas Island. At Klemtu, the group stayed with the Kitasoo Xai'xais Nation, a community of two allied groups within the Great Bear Rainforest. The two tribal groups are working to revitalize both of their separate heritage languages, and work to manage their land sustainably with fishing, forestry and their jointly owned Spirit Bear Lodge. The lodge offers wildlife viewing tours with the possibility of seeing the rare white "spirit bears".

After Hartley Bay, the canoe entered the very narrow and long Grenville channel, leading north towards Prince Rupert. The canoe voyage ended at Prince Rupert, the group almost reaching southern Alaska after three months of paddling through areas most of us will never see. Thank you, Chris and Barb, for sharing this epic adventure with us!



Chris Cooper has adventured with large canoes in Canada and the British Islands for 42 years!



Barb Cooper admires the beautiful sandy beach; is this Burnett Bay?

The Coopers also showed slides of “Burnett’s Adventure”— six months spent during the past year with their Border Collie x Australian Shepherd, Burnett, hiking and traveling in Great Britain. The trip focused on hiking England’s Southwest Coast Trail. From Sennan Cove near Land’s End at the southern tip of Cornwall, hikes covering 500 km took them to the northernmost tip of the Shetland Islands, where years ago, they had navigated with their large canoe, Spirit Dancer. The trip involved logistics and planning to rival their coastal and Arctic adventures, but made many new friends.

Burnett, a certified service and therapy dog, attracted attention wherever they went, visiting senior care homes in Orkney and Shetland, and riding busses and visiting pubs. Before the hike, they trained daily on a “mini-Everest” steep hill near St Ives. England’s amazing circum-coastal trail route sometimes involved long flights of stone stairs, or went very near steep cliffs that required Burnett to be leashed for safety. At Aberdeen, a ferry took them to the Shetland Islands, to continue hiking to the northern island tip’s lighthouse. Seeing wild puffins was a trip bonus. What an adventure for all!



Barbara and Burnett looking at the route north along the coast from Cornwall. Cooper photo



Chris, Barb and Burnett in the Shetland Islands. Cooper photo

A Brand New Modern-Day Morris Canoe! Talk by builder Chris Eden



On Saturday, Chris Eden showed his latest canoe project, a beautiful new B.N.Morris canoe, shining in the lakeside sun.

The B.N. Morris canoe company, of Veazie, Maine, produced wood/canvas canoes of high quality from 1891 to 1919, when a fire destroyed their shop. Bert Morris and his older brother Charles were contemporaries of E.H. Gerrish, E.M. White, and Guy Carlton, all building distinctive canoes. The Morris brothers began in a shop behind their Veazie family home, with a different aspect of construction on each of the four floors. When this became too small it was replaced by a factory of nine buildings, with each space doing a separate part of construction.

The canoes were initially offered in three grades, depending on woods used, and were offered through dealerships. By the early 20th century, the canoes were available in one grade, often with all mahogany trim, and the company offered several models varying in length and beam. In addition, an affiliated company, the Veazie Canoe Company, offered less expensive canoes straight from the factory, with less expensive trim. The Morris canoes were known for their beauty, stylish looks and performance.

Following the catastrophic fire in 1919, the factory was not rebuilt. Some workers were hired by the Kennebec factory, resulting in some similar features in their canoes. Some unfinished Morris canoes were finished at the Old Town factory. The Morris canoes also became models for other builders, including late Ely builder Joe Seliga. Rollin Thurlow offers two Morris models now. Charles Morris died in 1928, and B.N. Morris in 1940.

The story of Chris's canoe began in the 1980's, when Rollin Thurlow took the lines from a 1908 B.N. Morris 17' canoe, and created plans. Later, Pat Chapman built a form from those plans, but never built the canoe, and eventually sold the form to Chris. By then the form was in bad shape, plus Chris has 16.5' of shop space, so needed to build a 16' canoe, not a 17' canoe. Chris spent 4 months fixing up the form, and shortening it to build a 16' canoe. Although Chris has had years of fine woodworking experience on classic and antique motor boats, he found puzzling out some of the intricacies of this canoe almost "above his pay grade!"

The canoe has ribs and stems of white cedar, and almost all parts of the canoe have an elegant taper. The stems taper from 2" to 7/8", and the ribs are similarly tapered and slotted into the inwales. Morris built both open and closed gunwale models, and this canoe has complex open gunwales, with outwales starting at 1" and ending in 5/8" squares bow and stern. These were tapered by plane prior to bending on a form. The mid-section of the outwales are also routed out, in an inside curved shape. The sheer planks are milled to 1/32" at the top. The gunwales are all fastened from the inside to the outside.

The canoe is planked with clear red cedar obtained from the Willits shop stock, sanded and sealed prior to installation. Mahogany thwarts were placed by referring to the Morris catalog.

The original Type A canoe had 24” decks, although customers could customize details such as decks. As is characteristic of Morris canoes, Chris installed a narrow kingplank on each deck, and laminated 1/32” strips of mahogany to create the graceful deck coamings. The raised central point and taper of the coamings are also Morris trademarks.

Chris filled the canvas with two coats of Ecofil, then a “milkshake” of fill and enamel, then enamel alone. Both Morris and Old Town built many two-tone canoe paint patterns. Chris established this canoe’s “waterline” using masking tape, by eye, and painted using Marshall paints. The wood was finished with nine coats of varnish, ending in two matt coats. Chris had a custom brass cloverleaf casting created for the canoe’s painter rope, and plans a small brass plaque and flagpole mount in the future. The canoe is a beautiful craft!

Part of the enjoyment of watching this canoe on the water included the two-tone paint‘s interaction with water and light. Sometimes the whole canoe looked the color of the lake. Sometimes, the blue disappeared into the water, and the paddlers appeared suspended only on the white topsides. Other times, the canoe looked a uniform blue to match the mountains. Seeing it in different lights was a delight. What an amazing project! Congratulations, and thank you to Chris for sharing it with us!



Left, Chris Eden enjoys the Morris canoe, on the water at last. Below left, Trish and Chris Eden photograph loons on Dawn Patrol in the Morris. Livdahl photos. Below right, Des Winterbottom admires the workmanship in the Morris canoe. Norton photo.





Meet the Canoes!

A variety of interesting crafts graced the shore of Lightning Lakes, from the brand new Morris canoe, to several century-plus canoes.



A study in bow shapes: Kennebec, EM White/Stelmok, Morris Elliot, Old Town Molitor. Livdahl photo

The Moore family brought two of their Morely collection: the slim lovely custom strip kayak created as a surprise for Patra's birthday, personalized with her name and inlaid mountain and bear motif. Bob also brought his Morely 16', 63 pound canoe-- looking brand new-- and now 20 years old. The canoe is also customized with inlaid leaping fish, and flying duck designs. Bob noted that the Morely shop is still building boats, now in its second generation of builders.

Mary Norton brought their 16' 1947 perhaps Peterborough raffle canoe, found in the Boundary Waters by the previous owners. They traced and purchased the canoe, and then eventually donated it to the NW chapter for a fundraiser after a well-used life and many travels with that family. It has been a pleasure to use for us, its (at least) third family.

Jim Ekins' 17" Old Town OTCA is now a Centenary canoe—built in 1924-5, and originally shipped to a Lake George, New York buyer. Jim's dad purchased it from a summer camp in 1960, and Jim essentially grew up in the canoe. The family did a lot of camping, and traveling in the 1970's, including trips to Okefenokee swamp. Eventually the canoe needed restoration, which Jim's dad did in Ohio, after joining the WCHA.

Mike Livdahl and Nancy Douglas brought a 16' Old Town "Guide" which Mike had recently recovered. Unfortunately, shortly after completing the new urethane covering, he was told that it was suspected to be a "bad batch of resin", and that there were numerous complaints about the resin not setting up. Yes, the canoe had areas that were still tacky, and during use, it was found to leak—a lot of work now needing to be re-done.

Dwight Jacobson showed off an Old Town "Molitor" model sailing canoe he had recently purchased—a fairly rare model, with only around 200 canoes made. The canoe had unusual damage when Dwight bought it—apparently something heavy had been dropped into the boat, breaking two planks with the splinters going down into the canvas. Dwight detailed the clever, nearly invisible repairs he made, cutting out a section of the canvas, cutting the planking tacks with a multi tool and replacing the planks from the back. He then repaired the canvas, gluing strips of light canvas with feathered edges with an adhesive. He repainted the canoe using Old Town pattern #9, with Kirby custom color paints. The

repairs would not have been noticed, had Dwight not explained what he had done. Enough wind rippled the lake in the afternoon, so that sailing trials could be made.



Dwight Jacobson and Nancy Douglas try out the Molitor sailing canoe. Livdahl photo



Mike Livdahl introduces Lou Marlowe's Morris Elliott canoe, now donated to the chapter. Ellsworth photo

Chris and Barb Cooper brought their first wooden canoe, a strip planked white canoe purchased from Marketplace. Friends of Haida artist Bill Reid were given permission to use his work for original art on each side of the bow—a salmon on one side, and an otter with sea urchin design on the other. Paddles were custom made by the Suquamish First Nation.

Mike Livdahl introduced the chapter's Morris Elliott faux-birchbark canoe, built for original member Lou Marlowe, who painted the canoe herself, on her dining room table. After Lou's death, her son Erich Neubert donated the canoe to the chapter, to find an appreciative home and as a fundraiser. The light, quick canoe impresses all who try it with its nimble feel, yet comfortable secondary stability. Ideally, a chapter member will decide to buy it; if not, it will be advertised more widely. The canoe currently is cared for by the Ellsworths.

Scott and Phyllis Christianson brought their 16' "Maine Guide" model, which Scott built in Jerry Stelmok's shop. The design was modified by Jerry to add freeboard to the E.M. White "Guide" model, and is finished without a keel, with a shellacked bottom.

Kurt and Laura Schmidt showed their Kennebec, which Kurt's dad bought while in college in the late 1940's, when the canoe first needed restoration. He began restoration on the family farm in Wisconsin, but life intervened. Kurt eventually inherited the canoe and the tools, and moved the project from Kansas to Washington. The finished canoe was launched in 2015, featuring maple seat frames from wood from the family farm, plus wood from Kurt and Laura's Whidbey yard. Interestingly, the Kennebec has Morris-style flared stems, and capped gunwales bow and stern only, hinting at the full-length closed gunwales of many early canoes.



Dwight Jacobson's Molitor, the Cooper's strip canoe with Bill Reid art, and the two Clipper canoes in the foreground. Livdahl photo

Two non-wooden canoes came with Rob Ashbeck-Brusse, Regula Vickery and Sue Mills, fresh from a 750 km trip down the Yukon river. Both Clipper canoes were built by the Abbotsford, BC Clipper canoe company, and prepared for tripping, with mounts for spray skirts and external handlines. The golden canoe is their lightweight version, lacking a gelcoat, so that the canoe is the natural honey-color of the Kevlar.





Above: Kurt and Laura Schmidt in their Kennebec canoe. Livdahl photo. Right: Suquamish paddles in the Cooper's canoe. Norton photo.



Auctioneer Dwight Jacobson entertains the afternoon crowd while auctioning an eclectic collection of items. Norton photo

Chapter Auction

Saturday afternoon, the chapter gathered for the fundraising auction of donated items brought by the group. Auctioneer Dwight Jacobson led the spirited bidding and netted the chapter $520. The table of goods included, among other items, gourmet chocolates, a clever antique folding canoe seat with back and rawhide lacing, honey, a picnic basket, a sleek windbreaker jacket, and a Haida art hoodie. The top selling item, donated by Chris Cooper, was a Kwantlen First Nations woven cedar hat, finally won by Mike Livdahl. As an adjunct to the auction, Dwight donated a box of relevant canoeing and tripping books to the group which were for sale on a donation basis. Thank you, Dwight, and all who donated and/or purchased!



Mike Livdahl models the auction-topping woven First Nations cedar hat. Ellsworth photo

Finally, Music Again!

Following a lavish potluck, the group gathered around an actual wood fire (no burn ban this year!) to sing! Dylan Johnson played guitar, and the group enjoyed songs everyone knew. Meanwhile, Nancy Douglas surprised the group with toasting sticks and all the ingredients for s'mores! Singing went on in the clear night til the stars came out. How long has it been since you had a s'more?



Livdahl photo

Sunday: Lunch at the End of the Lakes

Sunday was an unscheduled and relaxing day. Many of the chapter elected to paddle to the end of the chain of lakes for lunch, while others relaxed at camp or took short paddles nearby.



The group paddles down the lake, watching for loons and the beaver lodge on shore. Livdahl photo



Canoes must be walked through the shallow connection between lakes. Livdahl photo



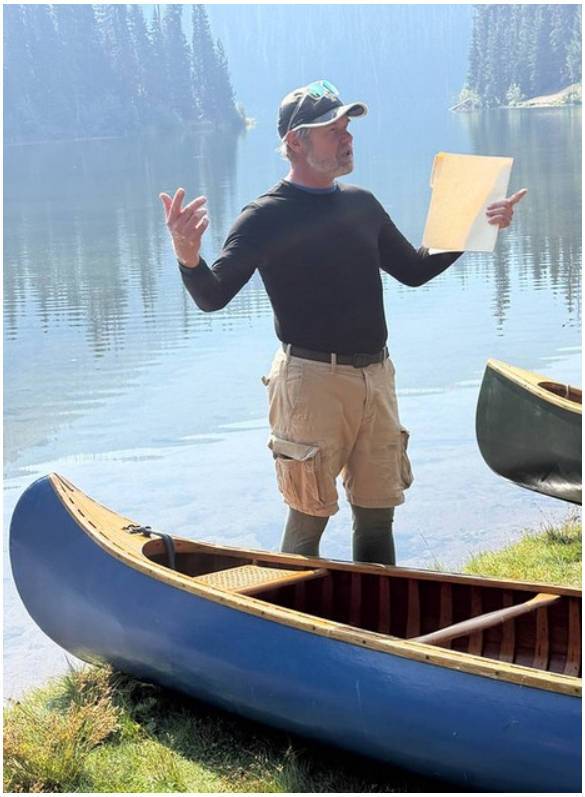
Burnett, Chris and Barb Cooper, Nancy Douglas and Susan Mills enjoy picnic lunch. Livdahl photo



Chris Cooper, and Rob Ashbeck Brusse visit with Bob and Carol Podesta with Monty. Livdahl photo



Scott and Phyllis Christianson and Steve Ellsworth, with Scott's Maine Guide canoe. Livdahl photo



Jim Ekins discusses his childhood in this family OT Otca. Did growing up with family camping and canoeing lead to his career in limnology research? Livdahl photo



Custom grizzly and mountain inlay on the deck of Patra Moore's Morley kayak. Livdahl photo



The two youngest attendees meet (and are almost exactly the same age at 17 months: Monty Podesta and Arthur Johnson, with Bob Podesta (left, and Annie McElroy(right). Livdahl photo

Canoes for Sale



A Beautiful Willits canoe. Miller photo

Willits Canoe in Remarkable Condition

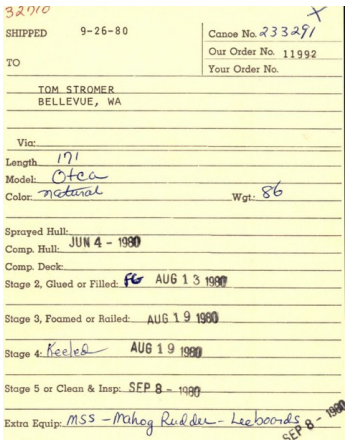
This canoe was originally sold to a resort in the Black Diamond area and a brochure from the resort is available. At one point it was in a Sporting goods store in California, then purchased by an orchardist in Chelan, and eventually an owner on Whidbey Island. Phil Miller purchased it in 2013. He stripped and revarnished it with 6 coats of varnish. The canoe is in remarkable shape and looks essentially new. $5,000 Contact Phil Miller at <seeeeds@comcast.net>

Old Town Otca Sailing Canoe, Very Good Condition

(Chris Eden messages for his neighbor.) This is a very nice original 1980's 17' Old Town, all original, and was the pride and joy of the owner's husband who has passed away. It is one of the last all-wood OT's of the era, fiberglass-covered as was done to make "bright" canoes of the time. It was ordered and purchased by Gary Boats in 1981, and delivered in Bellvue. It's in great shape. No sailing rig, but the canoe is fitted with sailing seats, mast step, etc.. It has always been stored out of the weather. Located in Anacortes. The owner is moving, and would like to sell the canoe quickly. With advice from Benson Gray, the canoe is priced at $700. Contact Pam Roats 425 328 0495 cell/text.






32910

SHIPPED 9-26-80 Canoe No. 233291

TO Our Order No. 11992

Your Order No.

TOM STROMER
BELLEVUE, WA

Via:

Length 171

Model: Otca

Color: natural Wgt: 86

Sprayed Hull:

Comp. Hull: JUN 4 - 1980

Comp. Deck:

Stage 2, Glued or Filled: FG AUG 13 1980

Stage 3, Foamed or Railed: AUG 19 1980

Stage 4: Keeled AUG 19 1980

Stage 5 or Clean & Insp: SEP 8 - 1980

Extra Equip: MSS - Mahog Rudder - Leeboards SEP 8 - 1980





Northwest Chapter September 2026*: front row: Nancy Douglas, Phyllis Christianson, Mary Norton with Duff, Des Winterbottom (seated) Joan Ellsworth, Barb Cooper with Burnett, Laura Schmidt, ??? , Trish Eden, Regula Vickery, Carol Podesta. Back row: Mike Livdahl, Scott Christianson, Bob Moore, Rob Ashbeck Brusse, Dwight Jacobson, Kurt Schmidt, Steve Ellsworth, Jim Ekins, Chris Cooper, Chris Eden, Bob Podesta with Monty. Missing from photo: Patra Moore, Mikel Moore, Rocco ??, Sue Mills, Annie McElroy, Dylan Johnson, Arthur Johnson. Canoe is the Lou Marlowe Morris Elliott faux birchbark canoe donated by her son Erich Neubert.*

Spring Meet: May 14, 15, 16, 2027 Lost Lake, Camp Bishop, Shelton, WA

(Note! Not Mother's Day Weekend)

Fall Meet: September 17, 18, 19, 20, 2027 Lightning Lakes, Manning Park, BC



Let's go canoeing! Arthur Johnson enjoys Manning. Norton photo