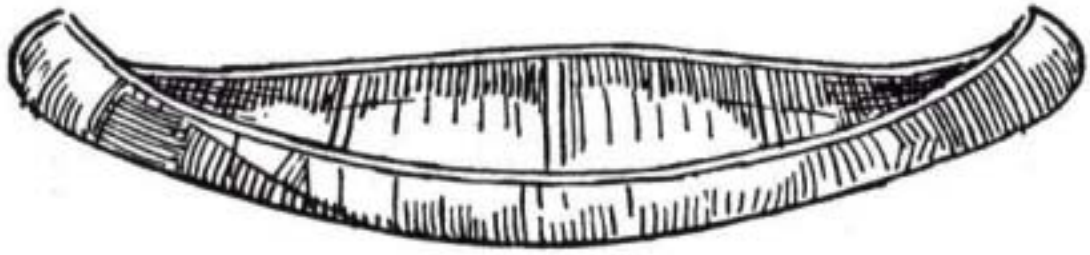
Week 5
Travel

Paddle, Portage, Paddle. Swim, Swim, Swim

We all travel. We're always going from place to place to do certain things. When you got in the car, or bus, or on your bike to come to school today, you were traveling. You travel from your desk to the pencil sharpener. And the neat thing is that you're not alone. Everything moves. Mosquitos travel onto Dave and Eric's nose at night. Loons travel to Mexico during the winter. Even plants can move by spreading their seeds with the help of the wind. The list goes on and on. Think about where you've gone in the past hour. Think about where you'd like to travel in the future.

Being out in the wilderness requires doing just about everything that one would do at home, but doing all the chores of the day in a little different way. For instance, how many of you had to start a fire to cook your breakfast? How many took a canoe to class? Dave and Eric travel using all their own power. They walk, they paddle, they walk in snowshoes, and they ski to get to where they need to go.

For thousands of years, people who've lived in the northern woods, or boreal forest, have traveled the same ways that Dave and Eric travel. The Ojibwe were the first inhabitants of northern Minnesota, Ontario, and Manitoba. They had to rely on the forest to supply them with all of their food, all of their shelter and clothing, and everything else they needed for daily life. The Ojibwe used the forest very well. They knew how to find food, but sometimes they had to go looking for food. And when you live in an area with so many lakes, and so many trees, getting around becomes a problem. But the Ojibwe and other groups, like the Assiniboine and Cree, came up with a great way to get through the lakes and long stretches of forest that connect the lakes to one another. They used canoes, their feet, and snowshoes.



No one is quite sure when the first canoe was made. However, canoes are thought to have been around for a long, long time. And so far, the canoe's shape hasn't changed all that much.

When the first French-Canadians came west from Montreal, they ran into the same problem with travel as the native people had years ago. And even better, the native people had a solution. Voyageurs and independent fur trappers relied on the canoe to carry all of the pelts back to Montreal. It has been said that Canada's existence and formation can be a direct result of the canoe.

The first canoes were probably made of a wood frame with animal skins to keep the water out. But these canoes would probably have been much too heavy to carry any great distance. The answer to their problem sat right in the forest. The bark of a birch tree is like paper. It's also waterproof, which is always a big part of making a boat! The birch bark was attached to a

wooden frame. The joints of the canoes were held together by the root of spruce trees and then made waterproof by applying hot pine or spruce resin. There were different types of canoes for different purposes. The size of the canoe varied according to its use. Some canoes could hold more than ten people, and loads of up 2,000 pounds. And even better, the birch bark canoes could easily be carried.

As the fur trade grew larger with the Northwest Company, Hudson Bay Fur Company, and independent trappers in the early 1700s, the need for canoes went up. The fur trade became so large, in fact, that the French set up the world's first known canoe factory at Trois-Rivieres, Quebec, around the year 1750. After the materials were gathered from the forest, the factory workers, could make a canoe in a day. Algonquins were usually the canoe builders at Trois-Rivieres, because they were the best. A good canoe, when treated properly, could last for life. However, traveling down rivers with whitewater rapids could quickly shorten a canoe's life.

The voyageurs loved their canoes, and they were great at being able to repair a canoe in the wilderness. In fact, Alexander MacKenzie wrote about a time that the canoe he had been traveling in got smashed on rocks, and the men he was traveling with built an entirely new canoe. After all, all of the materials needed to build a canoe were found in the woods. If their canoe sprung a leak, they would be able to make waterproof glue out of the pine-sap from the trees. The forest was a great resource then, and it is still now.

Until the car, canoes were the preferred mode of travel in these areas. And if you ask Dave or Eric, they will still say that they'd rather paddle a canoe than drive a car. Dave and Eric's canoe is very similar to the birch bark canoe, except its made out of Kevlar and aluminum. It weighs less than a birch bark canoe, and doesn't regularly need patching. We still need to be very careful with it though, because it can break. Our canoe is 18 feet long and can carry over 1,000 lbs.

We usually paddle for 8 hours a day. The person sitting in the back of the canoe, or stern, steers the canoe. The person in the front, or bow of the canoe, provides the power and helps to keep the canoe on track.

We have to take special precautions to make sure that we "leave no trace" of ourselves while we travel. Everything that Dave and Eric do will impact the forest. If we decide to leave our garbage at our campsite, a bird may get tangled in it, a bear might eat something it shouldn't, or the next people to stay at our campsite might not appreciate coming into a messy camp. We also need to be considerate of the other users of the forest. As with anything, Dave and Eric know to only take what they need. It's usually less work to build a smaller fire, because it takes less wood. We share the trees with animals that depend on them for protection or food, and we wouldn't want to make any animals mad at us, right?

When we pull up to the end of the lake, we have to carry our canoe and all of our gear down a path that leads to the next lake. These paths are called *portages*, a French word meaning "carrying places." Portages are all different lengths and go over all sorts of terrain. Some portages are very short. The Grand Portage, the longest portage Dave and Eric will do, is over nine miles long! All of our gear is packed in backpacks, and the canoe is carried on the shoulders of one person. It's actually pretty comfortable to carry. Portages are also great because they let you get out of the canoe, stretch your legs, and take a nice walk in the woods.

We need to be careful on portages too. Making the trail too wide, by walking on the outside of it will affect the vegetation that surrounds the trail. We also need to make sure to walk quietly and carefully to not scare away any animals that might share the trail with us. The more quiet we are, the better chance we have of seeing wildlife.

Dave and Eric are not the only things in the woods that need transportation, though. Animals, fish, and birds all have their own way of going from place to place. Some animals live on land, and some animals can only live in the water. Can you think of two animals that make the land and water their home? Hint: they made the money for the fur companies.

So how do animals travel? Where do they need to go? Usually animals move to find food. They have to walk or swim to the plants or chase the animals they want to eat. Of course, some animals just wait for their food to come to them. Large mammals, like deer, bear, and moose can cover vast stretches of forest. They can wander for days. Some animals travel great distances, but eventually end up at home. Loons, geese, and many other birds travel, or migrate, to warmer temperatures for the winter. Some birds can travel all the way to South America! But, eventually they all end up back in the boreal forest. There are even some birds that come back to the same exact spot every year.

Activities for the Classroom

We need you to make a map of the distance you've traveled today. Try to calculate distance using other maps, odometers, pedometers, and approximation. We also want to know how you traveled. Did you walk to school today? You didn't take the school bus to the grocery store. For each different mode of transportation (bike, foot, car, bus, train, canoe, etc.) use a different colored line. Make sure to mark interesting places you've visited or traveled past. If we were to re-trace your footsteps, would we be able to figure out where to go? If you can, try to make the map to scale? How far is school from home? How do you fit it all onto one page? Remember to remain consistent in your scale.

SCALE

Now, look at where Dave and Eric traveled yesterday. How many miles did they go? Did they take the easiest route? Is the easiest route always the shortest route? What obstacles might they have to avoid? What might make the route shorter (besides a highway!)? What type of weather would make for easy traveling?

What do you think is the most efficient way of traveling? What's the fastest? If you could pick one way to travel how would you move? Would you fly? Would you walk? Would you take an airplane? Talk about your different options. Would these options have been available to the voyageurs? Make a table showing all the travel options with one benefit and one negative reason to use this form of travel.

Plan a Trip for Yesterday and Today!
Help to get across the Great Lakes during the fur trade and today.

Objectives: Students will gain a greater understanding about the methods of transportation during the fur trade, and find out how they would travel today.

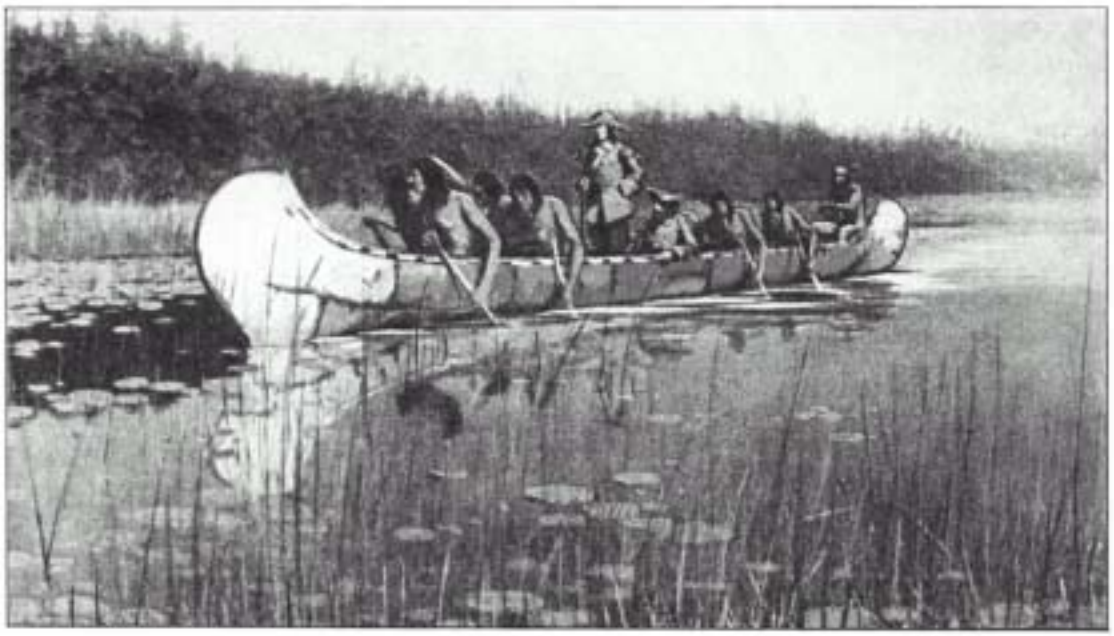
Skills Used: Prediction, estimation, computation of distances, critical thinking skills, research skills to understand historical information,

Materials: Resources to research Voyageur life (See Internet Resources, Written Resources), a political map of North America, Road Atlas.

Procedure:

Pretend its 1795, and you've just gotten a job with the Northwest Company. You need to get from Montreal to Fort William near Thunder Bay in no more than six weeks. The company has granted you a budget of $10,000. For the journey, you will need assistance from engages, or company employees who have already traveled into the Canadian Interior. I wouldn't want to paddle Lake Superior by myself! And remember, the more people you have paddling, the quicker you can arrive at Fort William.

Think about what you would need to bring. What would you have to eat? Who's going to show you how to get there? How many people would accompany you? How much do you think it will all cost? Use the chart below to plan your trip



TYPE OF CANOE	CANOE LENGTH	CARGO ROOM	COST (today)	Estimated Travel Time to Thunder Bay
Montrealer	36’	4,000 lbs/ 12 people	$6,000	5 weeks
Interior	25’	2,500 lbs/ 8 people	$4,500	5 ½ weeks
Express	16’	1,000 lbs/ 3 people	$2,200	6 weeks

ENGAGES

RANK	SALARY	WHY YOU NEED THEM	WHY YOU DON’T NEED THEM
Scout	$1,500	They hardly need maps to get across the Great Lakes. These men worked their way up the ranks by traveling and memorizing the route. If you’re not in the mood to get lost, you should have one along.	They’re expensive, and they wear funny looking hats
Steersman	$1,000	They can navigate a canoe through the most difficult rapids, and make it look easy. They can also fix a canoe if it breaks. They know all the songs that Voyageurs would sing, and keep group morale up.	With a little practice, some of the other people in the group might become comfortable steering the canoe. But, if it breaks…
Bowman	$750	They set the pace for paddling, and have lots of canoeing experience. They work together with the steersman to make sure the canoe is heading the right way.	They cost more than a simple engage.
Engage	$200	They’re very strong. In fact they will probably carry you on their back so your feet never get wet. These men will paddle and portage all day without complaint.	They eat soup out of their hats, and they tend to smell after a few days.

For every person traveling with you, you should plan on bringing 70 lbs. of food. Each pound of food you bring will cost you $1.25. Don’t forget that you have to eat along the way too!

_____ X _____ = _____
(number of people) (lbs. of food per person) (total lbs. of food)

_____ X _____ = _____
(total lbs. of food) (food cost per lb.) (total food expense)

What type of canoe are you bringing?
Who are you bringing with you?
How long will it take you to get to Fort William?
What’s the total cost of the expedition into the Interior?

Week 5 Chatroom Session

Where and When: **October 15, 2002 10AM to 11 AM CST, from Baudette, MN**

Topic: **Getting from here to there. How do we travel? Why do we travel? How have others traveled before us?**

Special Guest: **Joe Rivers from Quebec, a birchbark canoe builder**

QUESTIONS FOR THE CHATROOM

Why do we have to travel?

What do you think the best way to travel is? Why?

What makes a canoe a mode of transportation?

How did the Native Americans make birchbark canoes?

Do people still make birchbark canoes?

How do the birchbark canoes made today differ from the original ones?

What kinds of birchbark canoes have been made?

Does taking the birchbark kill the trees?

What other types of canoes do people paddle?

Why did you chose to paddle the Kevlar canoe?

How do people carry birchbark canoes? Can you put them on the roof of your car?

Are birchbark canoes strong? How long do they last?

What do you have to do to take care of birchbark canoes?

How long does it take to make a canoe?

What's the best canoe you've ever paddled?

Where is the best place to paddle a canoe?

How long have canoes been around? Were canoes only used in North America?

Any questions you can think of about the difficulties or beauty of paddling a canoe?