

Sept 30 - We portaged all our stuff today!

I walked the $1\frac{3}{4}$ mile trail 9 times, carrying 4 loads weighing 50-80 pounds and covering almost 16 miles. My shoulders, legs, and feet were aching deeply by the end of the day, but we got all of our stuff carried across. Bless those smooth, well-mowed State Park trails!

Oct 1st - We are staying put today, checking our beaver traps, making applesauce, and picking dandelion greens. We are all a bit sad and pensive because this morning Sara announced that she is leaving our group. She has been one of the core organizers of this trip, but it has always been her partner Scogin's lifelong dream, not hers. She's realized that she wants to return to Minneapolis and resume her budding career as a counselor, while ~~providing~~ ^{playing} a supportive role for our expedition from a distance and visiting regularly. We are sad to see her go and will sorely miss her skills as a facilitator, excellent wild foods cook, empathetic listener, and upholder of queer feminist values on our trip. We love you Sara!

Oct 2 - Delicious breakfast of Canada Goose pot-roasted in our 12-quart dutch oven overnight on the campfire coals. The park ranger gave us special permission to shoot this goose in the park because it was already wounded. So tasty.

We had a sweet gratitude circle for Sara, and she loaned me her warm boots for the duration of our canoe trip so my toes can be warm. They are great!

As we paddled away from her I got really depressed about the state of queer feminism in our group, about our lack of cohesiveness as a community, and about the way I don't feel like my greatest strengths are valued or welcome here. As we slogged down a miles-long drainage ditch filled with log jams and beaver dams, I stewed in my homesickness and my grief for what I hoped this experience would be versus what it actually is. As we harvested 20 gallons of highbush cranberries, I just wanted to go home. Grey skies above, grey skies within.

Oct 3 - Warner today. We got out of camp at 9:30 am, paddled downstream for 8 hours, but our pace was a crawl because we had to negotiate over 25 log jams, beaver dams, low bridges, and similar obstacles that required stepping out of the canoe, dragging it over stuff, moving heavy logs, chopping branches with an ax, and - in 2 cases - portaging around the obstacle entirely. All but two of us fell in the water at some point (gross muddy bog water) and I think everyone got water in their boots. In the afternoon, it started raining. It has rained every day that we've been on the water so far. I alternately chatted with Andy about fantasy literature and plotted my escape in my head. This morning I could barely get out of bed, my level of motivation was so low. By midday I had an elaborate "Plan B" all worked out, which involves running off to the Boundary Waters with a friend and a Kevlar canoe to do some reasonable paddling and hunt deer for a month until Whitefish Camp. That might give me some time and perspective about

whether to commit to more of the trip after that. ⁽²⁾
Right now the social dynamic on the trip is so tense that it's impossible to conceive of doing this far a year, but it's possible that could still shift.

Having a backup plan raised my spirits considerably, and the difficulty of navigating this god-forsaken river became so farcical in its magnitude that my internal resentment boiled off and turned into something like mirth. Really, our social stalemate has reached a level just as farcical as the number of log jams on this ridiculous river. We all know it's not working, but all proposals to do things differently get shot out of the water pretty fast. One person's bonding activity is another person's Kryptonite. Meetings where all voices can be heard are despised by a vocal group. Half of us want ~~more~~ a formal expedition culture and half of us just want to be "friends camping in the woods" - yet I don't have any new friends yet, just the ones I came with. The divides are vast, the days are exhausting, the weather is crap, and we push on.

We talked about all this a bit tonight, and people did listen with sympathy to my distress. Why are there such walls between us that we only talk like this when I break down crying? It makes no sense to me.

I'm basically having a crisis of meaning. ③
All the reasons I came on this trip seem impossible to achieve, so why am I here? Why am I in this group that deeply fears intentional inclusive community culture, allows me exactly zero time for bowhunting, and is consistently behind schedule in a way that creates so much urgency that there's no space for learning new skills in a supportive way? Where we don't have a cohesive culture of gratitude and relationship with our amazing food sources and I've retreated to trying to maintain that posture of relationship and connection alone in my own head?

~~Tonight's~~ tonight's meeting gave me enough hope to continue over the endless log jams for another day. Tomorrow we should finally reach the large regional river that we will be paddling up for the next week, and post office near the waterway where I can mail this. I want to close with some gratitude for my two friends on this trip who regularly remind me how much my communities in Vermont and Maine love and appreciate me - you help me not feel completely insane! And I have gratitude

to our group as a whole for finally agreeing ④
to adopt a formal evening chore rotation, which
has sped up our evening efficiency hugely and
gives me a little time for self-care and reflection
when chores are done. Also thank you to all
the people who pulled me over log jams so
I wouldn't have to step in the deep cold
bog. And most of all, thanks to the rice,
the apples, and the sea salt that will be
my breakfast and lunch tomorrow, carrying
me through another day. May these winds
that are whipping our wall tent tonight be winds
of change that help me find my meaning here
on this journey that I've left my home and
loved ones to make. May I remember to
call on my tools and allies in the unseen
world when I don't know how to continue, and
also remember that I am choosing to be here
and I can make other choices if I am not
being nourished by this one. There are other people
back home I could learn all these skills from, more
slowly and not in such a gradiose way... but I
still want this bold vision to work!