

Sept 17 - We broke a camp record and danced 33 pits today! PJ, our #1 camp helper, is leaving tomorrow and wanted to go out with a bang, so he danced 11 pits himself (totally unheard of!) and his enthusiasm inspired those around him to rise to new heights of achievement too. We'll see if people can still walk tomorrow...

Sept 18 - I danced 6 pits of rice today. We are down to about 4 people who can dance rice, some of whom are operating at half capacity due to overwork. I am pushing myself super hard to make up for the attrition, and I'm just about at the end of my rope. After my 6th pit I was dead tired and I went and cried in the woods alone, feeling heartbroken about how many times I've tried to suggest practices of cooperative, connective, emotionally safe community to this group, only to have them rejected every time. I've been here for almost three weeks and I generally don't feel liked, loved, ~~or~~ valued, or connected in any significant way. I know all the tools for creating safe, connected spaces, it's the main thing I've done in my career for the last 13 years, but all that is anathema here.

I talked to my two most trusted people about it, and then brought my feelings (and more tears) to the

group after dinner. Perhaps it ~~was~~ took those ² tears for them to actually hear me, but I think they did hear me this time, and we had a good discussion. There are other people who are feeling disconnected and confused like I am, and the folks who have been most resistant to the group culture I keep proposing were able to share more articulately what they fear about it. We decided to institute a daily check-in time after dinner.

I arrived here full of trust and enthusiasm and hope. Most of that is gone now, as I've worked myself to the bone while feeling overlooked and unmet here despite advocating actively for the things that ~~we~~ would create safety and connection. Today I finally stepped into the deep vulnerability of saying "I NEED THIS FROM YOU!" rather than "I think it would be a good practice for the group if we had check-ins..." It was scary and emotionally exhausting.

But now I am willing to try dancing another 6 pits of rice tomorrow. If I hadn't spoken up and felt somewhat heard, ~~there~~ there's a good chance I'd be hitchhiking to Minneapolis tomorrow. I am so absolutely down for the hardships and adversity and brutal physical work this expedition offers... but only if I feel love, connection, and trust. Otherwise it's just masochism.

Sept 18 - Today was much better than yesterday! In the morning I got lots of hugs and thank-yous and I-feel-that-way-too's for my big feelings scare last night. Our morning logistics meeting felt like it was really prioritizing everyone's needs, and the updates from our non-rice harvests are great - we are on track to have ~~4~~ 4 buckets of dried fruit (plums, chokecherries, apples, and hawthorn paste), a bucket of acorns (not leached to remove tannins and dry-roasted with salt), two buckets of ~~nuts~~ ^{butternuts} (similar to ~~walnuts~~ walnuts), and a bucket of ~~walnuts~~ wild hazelnuts.

Gerrid, Tessa, and I danced 7 pits each, for a daily total of 21 pits! At this rate we only have one day of parching and jiggling left! Yesterday was a triple whammy to morale, with PJ's departure, running out of coffee, and no way to play music without PJ's iPod. We can't get PJ back, but we fixed the other two needs - Sara left camp and got coffee for everyone who wanted it (and hot cocoa for me!) and charged Robin's phone so we could play music on Spotify. We put on an ~~EDM~~ ^{EDM} workout playlist and danced our caffeine- and sugar-fueled pits of rice with smiles on for the rest of the day. I felt like a pampered professional athlete, with people bringing us hot drinks and wild apple snacks.

I felt very well taken care of and appreciated. My² careful pacing of 3 or 4 pits per day for the first week has paid off, and my legs feel very strong. I was basically jogging in place for 6 hours, with only very short breaks between batches of rice, and that is a pretty big athletic achievement. Also, I'm really proud of my knees! Dancing rice involves a lot of twisting, which is generally hell on people's knees. At 36 I am the oldest person on this team, and yet I have one of the strongest pairs of knees so far - probably tied with Jack, who is our youngest person at 24. Thank you Mom and Dad for the good knee genes! And thank you to years of backpacking, hiking, and hunting in the mountains that have kept my body this strong.

Our time pressure to finish the rice has relaxed, since Joe (the owner of this land) happily granted us an extension on our stay. He and his wife Naomi got a tour of our camp last night and even took our picture! So we are planning one more day of rice processing, a rest day, and two days of packing up camp, loading the canoes, and making sure to leave this land just as we found it. We will probably begin our 250-mile paddle trip North on the 24th of September.

I have been thinking that those following this ³ adventure from afar might like to see the group values statement that we created for our expedition back in February. Here it is:

Group Values

- ① One of our highest priorities is to take care of each other (physically + emotionally) so that we can complete the trip as a queer feminist community that nourishes all.
 - ② Assume Competence: Everyone gets a chance to learn every skill that they want to learn.
 - ③ This is an experiment: Success or Failure are not our framework. We are exploring what is possible with curiosity.
 - ④ Equity of labor + works: From each according to their ability, to each according to their need. We value all forms of labor + self care.
 - ⑤ Respect for the land and resources that will sustain us.
 - ⑥ Only wild food
 - ⑦ Travel by human-powered means
 - ⑧ We value consent (which is revokable at any time) in regards to documentation, physical touch, sexuality, sharing space, etc.
- * #6 and #7 start when the canoe trip begins. Right now we are on about a 70% wild diet.

Sept 20 - Rainy rest day. Hung out in the big wall tent (an octagonal creation that we call the Circus Tent, sewed by Jack), crafting and creating Dungeons and Dragons characters. I got four lashing straps sewn onto the top of my canvas portage pack (also made by Jack) and finished building my new D+D character: Trevnar Greyfall, a half-elf bard who is a charismatic young spy with too many lovers and a fondness for explosives. Andy has created a fantasy wild-west post-apocalyptic version of Northeastern Minnesota as the setting for our campaign. It has seemed a dim hope that we'd actually find the time to play amidst all the work of rice harvest, but this rainy day has given me hope. My legs sure appreciated the rest after my 7-pit day!

Sept 21 - We finished dancing the rice today!!! I jigged another 7 pits and now we are done parching and dancing. Three people winnowed all day in the post-rainstorm breeze, and got a lot done. If the breeze holds through tomorrow we should be able to finish winnowing and shift our focus to packing up. I'm so relieved to be done dancing!

Sept 22 - We finished winnowing all the Rice. We produced 48 buckets total, including the bucket we donated to the Enbridge Line 3 pipeline resistance camp, and two buckets which are Haulon's personal rice. That puts us at about 45 buckets for the year, just slightly under our goal. Scogin canoed a bunch of buckets to our stash spot in a friend's basement. We will ~~will~~ pick up the rest of our rice there in February with our toboggans when we circle back to this area.

We made Equinox soup with the last of the non-wild veggies and grains in camp. Haulon led a special equinox sharing circle after our evening check-ins, and we ended the night by singing some seasonal songs together in rounds. We are a strong singing group!

The weather has turned much colder. It feels like we went straight from mid-August weather to late October weather. I don't think it got above 60° all day.

Sept 23 - Very high winds all day, and continued cold. We waited all day for Scogin to return - we expected him around 11am but the winds delayed him until 3pm. We pattered around packing our

personal things, dismantling parts of our camp, ② and peeling the husks off the hazelnuts we harvested a month ago. It was a hurry-up-and-wait kind of day, and emotional tensions seem to be rising a bit in anticipation of our big packing conversation (now delayed until tomorrow) when our wilderness values are bound to clash. At least one person is expected to be very attached to carrying as much of our gear as possible in the canoes, as well as all the buckets of rice we need between now and February. Many of us would rather paddle light, making the boats easier to handle and reducing the burden on our long portages (up to 6 miles per portage), by sending more of our gear and rice up to Whitefish Camp in a pickup truck. This represents yet another clash between our group values of "taking care of each other" and "wild food/human powered transportation only". The people on this trip have very different challenge points with both wild food and wilderness travel, and what makes the trip exciting and meaningful for one can make it intimidating and inaccessible for another. I often find myself sympathizing strongly with both camps and brainstorming compromises, but sometimes the compromises satisfy no one.

~~Sept 24~~ Sept 24 - We had our big meeting today about packing. It took all day. Sara did a brilliant job facilitating the whole thing. We packed up all the canoes, then removed the things we didn't absolutely need so we can send them up in a pickup truck instead. The food conversation was the hardest. We fully loaded ~~1~~ one canoe with the 120 pounds of rice each canoe would have to carry for us to avoid transporting any food by car this whole year, then paddled it upstream on this little creek where we are camped. The canoe had only six inches of freeboard and was quite ungainly and tipsy. We made a nearly unanimous decision to take only 60 pounds per boat and transport the balance up to our Boundary Waters Whitefish Camp in the truck... everyone voted yes on this except one person who very mournfully stood aside from the entire consensus process on this matter. Having crossed that boundary, we then found it sensible to ship up much of our dried fruit, nuts, bear fat, maple sugar, and sea salt. I am relieved that we have decided to carry only what we need for the canoe journey

in our boats, because we are already taking ⁽²⁾ on so many challenges on this section - paddling upstream most of the way, doing two major portages and countless smaller ones, taking small waterways that will be full of log jams and beaver dams that we must haul our heavy canoes over, running a few small rapids, and being on the water for 6 weeks (about 240 miles) while also gathering fruits and berries and trapping as many beaver as we can in the areas where we have nuisance permits - and bowhunting for deer when it is possible, and shooting ducks and geese with the shotguns when we can. Oh yes, and cooking all our meals over open fires! Each day will be so full, and if we are injured from portaging too much, or if we tip our boats, or if we are just plumb worn out from paddling too much, then we won't meet our other goals or have the energy to enjoy what we're doing. I was really proud that today we clearly chose our value of taking care of each other over a strict purity about never transporting food in cars. One person is extremely sad about it, and all of us feel the twinge of letting go of some of the grandeur of that

dream, but I think we made a very good, (3)
kind, and prudent decision. Today's process
went a great ways toward increasing my trust
in this group. We even stood in circles, shared
our feelings, and sang a song together, and
nobody hated it! Slowly but surely, we will
figure out how to hold each other through this
endeavor.

Throughout Rice Camp we've been buying eggs,
onions, cabbage, and butter from the store, since
all our energy went into the ricing process, leaving
no time for hunting or foraging. We stopped buying
those things days ago and our diet slowly narrows.
Breakfast was rice cooked with wild apples and
some dried nettles, with some thin bone broth to
scoop over it. Lunch was the same. Tonight
our Minneapolis-based support person arrived to
take away all our ricing gear, and they brought
fresh venison, maple syrup that members of this
group harvested last spring, and homemade
saurkraut. Dinner was a local feast! Evening
brought a warm rain... tomorrow we set up our
stashes, then launch unless the rain intensifies.