

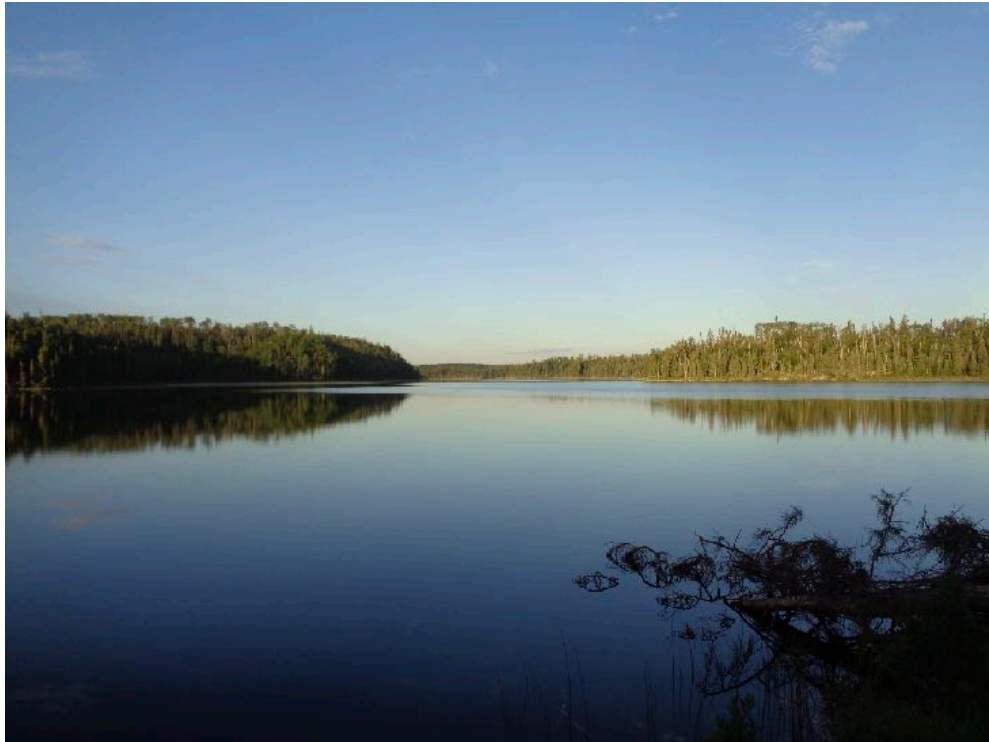


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# Newsletter

Spring 2017

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**Friends of Wabakimi** members are outdoor enthusiasts who cherish every day spent in the wilderness. They demonstrate support for our volunteer conservation initiatives with their gifts, donations and membership subscriptions. These initiatives include:

- promoting the Wabakimi Area as a world-class outdoor recreation destination;
- producing printed and electronic materials to further public awareness, understanding and appreciation of the Wabakimi Area;
- participating in land management planning process to advocate sustainable use of the natural, cultural and historical resources of the Wabakimi Area;
- maintaining, documenting and preserving canoe routes and other outdoor recreational opportunities within the Wabakimi Area; and
- assisting visitors to safely plan and successfully execute self-propelled recreational activities within the Wabakimi Area.

Friends of Wabakimi

[www.friendsofwabakimi.org](http://www.friendsofwabakimi.org)

Find us on

[www.facebook.com/friendsofwabakimi](https://www.facebook.com/friendsofwabakimi)

## The Wabakimi Project

Friends of Wabakimi was created in 2014 to support and eventually assume the volunteer efforts of The Wabakimi Project to re-habilitate and document canoe routes in the Wabakimi Area.

In 2016, over 72 days, 27 volunteers of The Wabakimi Project explored canoe routes in the Wabakimi Area that traverse the Atlantic/Arctic Height of Land into the Lake Nipigon watershed via the Big River, and into the Kopka River via Vale Creek. Together, they travelled over **48km** (30 miles) of canoe routes, located and inventoried **28** campsites and cleared and mapped **33** portages that measured a total of **4,580m** (**5,009** yards or **911** rods).

Another season of exploration, discovery, new and renewed friendships, camping and canoeing is upon us. The Wabakimi Project has ambitious goals for the summer in 2017. We are approaching completion of our explorations and mapping of the Wabakimi Area. 2017 will mark the sesquicentennial (150th) anniversary of Canada's Confederation. Hopefully, all the routes in the Lake Nipigon watershed will be completed so Volume Five of our series of Wabakimi Canoe Route Maps booklets can be released.

To date, 199 volunteer trip leaders and participants from North America and Europe have collectively spent a total of 1,099 days on 133 trips exploring and mapping the canoe routes of the Wabakimi Area. Together, they have travelled **4,826km** (**2,999** miles) through this vast, virtually-roadless wilderness area, located and inventoried **924** campsites and located and rehabilitated 938 portages whose measured lengths have totalled **243,267m** (**266,040** yards or **48,371** rods).



Exploring new territory searching for a possible route between Cosmo Lake and D'Alton Lake

What is there that confers the noblest delight? What is that which swells a man's breast with pride above that which any other experience can bring to him? *Discovery!* -- *Mark Twain*

## **Authentic Aging, Leaving a Legacy & the Wabakimi Project**

*Amy Funk*

At Canoeopia 2017, I spoke on authentic aging. In contrast to the shallow, physical focus of our mainstream society, aging authentically empowers an earthier, more spiritual way of aging. Three key ideas encompass authentic aging: accepting the whole self, creating a relationship with nature, and leaving a legacy. Setting out on a Wabakimi Project adventure embraces all three of these patterns of living.

My first Wabakimi adventure was memorable for many reasons, not the least of which was the Beaver floatplane ride. Sitting in the front seat, with the window open, I could feel the breeze on my face as we lifted over the lakes and forest. I tried to spot a bear from above, with no luck. Circling the lake, looking for the canoes in the water was quite the adventure. Landing close to the waiting canoes and being in the canoes to be picked up were both exhilarating experiences.

As my wilderness trip unfolded, the process of finding old trail blazes captivated me. We cleared routes thick with years of unchecked growth. I fell in love with the boreal forest. I loved the mystical feeling of thinking about the First Nations, the fur traders and the past adventurers who had taken these same paths.

I know many of you have the same fond memories of Wabakimi. Adventuring into the wilderness, you come to know yourself in a whole new way. You learn to push yourself past where you thought you could go. In the solitude and the wildness, you feel that kinship with the natural world. Away from the rampant materialism, the insane pace and shallow living of our modern world, you find yourself and your true place in the world.

Even more than accepting self and relating with nature, a Wabakimi trip matches the leaving a legacy aspect of authentic aging. According to Merriam-Webster, a legacy is “something transmitted by or received from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past”, done out of altruistic concern for others. A legacy is a mark that you leave on the world. In a very physical way, finding the old blazes marked by previous travellers, and then reconstructing the trails for future adventurers is a perfect legacy to leave upon the land. Through time, the legacy moves from the First Nations to the traders to adventurers like you and me. We continue the legacy by clearing the trails for future travellers.

**Amy** is a two-time Wabakimi Project past participant and is currently a Director of Friends of Wabakimi. For a free authentic aging newsletter contact: [amy.funk1012@gmail.com](mailto:amy.funk1012@gmail.com)



**Leaving a legacy. The average age of Wabakimi Project participants is over 65.**



## One of My Favorite Wabakimi Routes

*John Sinclair*

In June 2016, I paddled a very scenic route just south of the CNR tracks west of Armstrong. The entire route included Tunnel Lake to Mountain Lake to Vale Lake to Nameiben Lake. The trip started at the CN tracks where they cross Tunnel Lake and ended at Highway 527 in Waweig Lake.

I travelled from Tunnel Lake to Vale Lake as a participant in a one-week Wabakimi Project trip. The entire route was explored, cleared and mapped over three weeks by three WP groups. By the map, it appears the entire route is about 22-23 km in length and thus easily done in a week.

For those with more time, I would advise making this a leisurely trip so the scenery, fishing and solitude can be fully appreciated. For a route available from the railroad and Highway 527, it had a very remote feel. During my week, no other parties were encountered. The fishing was excellent with several dinners of fresh lake trout enjoyed by all.

My favourite lake was Vale. We found an abandoned First Nations fish camp on the east end of the lake which required only an hour or so to clean up. This was a comfortable campsite with a great smooth gravel beach. Its only drawback was its west-facing orientation putting the campsite in full sun during the afternoon and well into the evening. Our weather that week was very nice with only a few periods of overcast and light rain. Since all the physical effort re-establishing this route is complete, parties traveling it will now be able to enjoy the warm, sunny weather without the necessary work to clear it.

The absolute highlight of the week and of all my trips in ten years to the Wabakimi Area was my first sighting of a woodland caribou on Vale Lake. Unfortunately, I did not have my camera handy to record this sighting.

After discounting the considerable physical labour involved in clearing portages and rehabilitating long abandoned campsites, this trip was very enjoyable and is now able to be completed without undue effort.

***John*** has participated on 12 trips in his 10 years with the Wabakimi Project and is an Incorporator and currently is Vice-President of Friends of Wabakimi.



**John and friends setting up camp.**

## Where in the blazes?

*John Holmes*

Finding portage trails that have not been cleared or travelled over for long periods can be challenging. Conditions in the boreal forest can quickly eradicate most of the evidence of passage left by explorers, trappers, surveyors and canoe trippers of the past. In some cases, we have government geological surveys maps, MNR section sheets or old trip notes, and the position of portages on these maps are a good place to begin looking. Fortunately, most of the people who first cut these portages followed some pretty basic rules:

- 1) Try to make the portage short as possible
- 2) Avoid wet or marshy areas and steep hills where possible

We begin our search at the most likely spot based on these rules and any map information we may have. The traditional method for marking a trail in these areas is the blazing of trees. Generally they are 1.5m off the ground and are cut through the bark down to the wood. They are cut and cut on opposite sides of the same tree. Sometimes a chunk of the bark can be removed from a tree by a falling tree and appear like a blaze. This is called a 'rub' and can usually be dismissed as a 'rub' because it is only on one side of the trunk. Blazing a tree also often leaves one or two horizontal lines in the wood where the axe stopped as it cut into the trunk. A 'rub' will not have these axe marks. On portages that were blazed long ago, only a few trees may remain standing on the whole portage. These are usually found on the oldest trees, or in areas that are protected from the worst storms.

Other signs to look for are logs that have flat ends that have been cut by a saw, old nails in trees, or survey tape left in more recent times. Even the hardness of the ground can provide clues. The compaction left by the feet of passing canoeists and by animals that subsequently make us of these trails to get from lake to lake can be felt if you are lucky.

Finding an old portage makes you think of the adventures of those who passed before you. Opening them up again ensures that they can be enjoyed by future generations of adventurers.

***John** is a veteran participant and leader of many trips with The Wabakimi Project. He is an Incorporator and currently Chair of the Board of Friends of Wabakimi.*



An ancient blaze

## Fishing for Speckles and Lake Trout in the Wabakimi Area

*Ray Tallent*

One of the delights of a Wabakimi Project reconnaissance expedition is the opportunity to fish waters that see very little angling pressure. There is a kind of magic to the experience. The poster-fish for the Wabakimi Area is the walleye (as underscored by the Mattice Lake Outfitters website: walleye.ca). Those in search of trophy Northern Pike might beg to differ.

On my first trip to the Wabakimi Area, we opened up an old route on some smaller Crown Land lakes just east of Wabakimi Provincial Park. One evening, at a camp just below a small flowage, one of our participants had perched herself on the edge of a rock ledge to pump some filtered water. We were startled to hear her holler as she tumbled backwards. A walleye had bitten at the shiny coil on her filter uptake tube and severed the float from the intake tube. Hungry fish! Naturally, her husband was up first thing the next morning and caught a couple for breakfast in that very spot. Incidentally, they will taste better if you refer to them by their Canadian designation, i.e., pickerel.

Trout may be caught throughout the Wabakimi Area in cold, clear, well-oxygenated waters. Lake Trout (*Salvelinus namaycush*) and Brook Trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) are both native to the area. The latter are often referred to as brookies, speckled trout or speckles. Both of these species spawn in the Fall. Brook Trout are more likely to spawn in flowing waters, while Lake Trout spawn in the shallows of colder, deeper lakes.

In June, 2016, volunteers of the Wabakimi Project cleared and mapped a canoe route south of Armstrong Station that stretched from Mountain Lake through Vale and Namieben Lakes to Waweig Lake. These smaller but deep lakes harbour Lake Trout, which prefer water temperatures between 9-13°C (48-50°F) and tend to lie below the thermocline in summer. Even so, we had fairly good luck catching them in the 20' depth range using shad rap type lures trolled at about 15'. While they were not in the trophy range, they were a good size for the frying pan!

Speckled Trout frequent the Wabakimi Area in flowages leading to the Albany River and Lake Nipigon. They require water temperatures below 22°C (72°F), and prefer the 13 to 17°C (55-63°F) range. The fly-fishing purist can certainly catch them (I recall chatting with a fisherman who had good luck in that area with a mouse fly and a #9 rod!), but neither do these trout turn their noses at a spoon or spinner delivered from a spinning rod.

All Trout should be handled carefully with wet hands and released quickly if not being kept for the pan. This is especially true in summer when the waters may be warmer and the fish more easily stressed. In the Wabakimi Area, an Ontario Conservation Fishing Licence allows for one (1) Lake Trout of any size or two (2) Brook Trout (only one of which may exceed 30 cm) to be kept. Ontario non-residents angling on provincial Crown lands must obey Conservation Fishing Licence limits regardless of which licence they hold.

**Ray** is a trip leader with *The Wabakimi Project* and the Conservation Officer for *Friends of Wabakimi*.



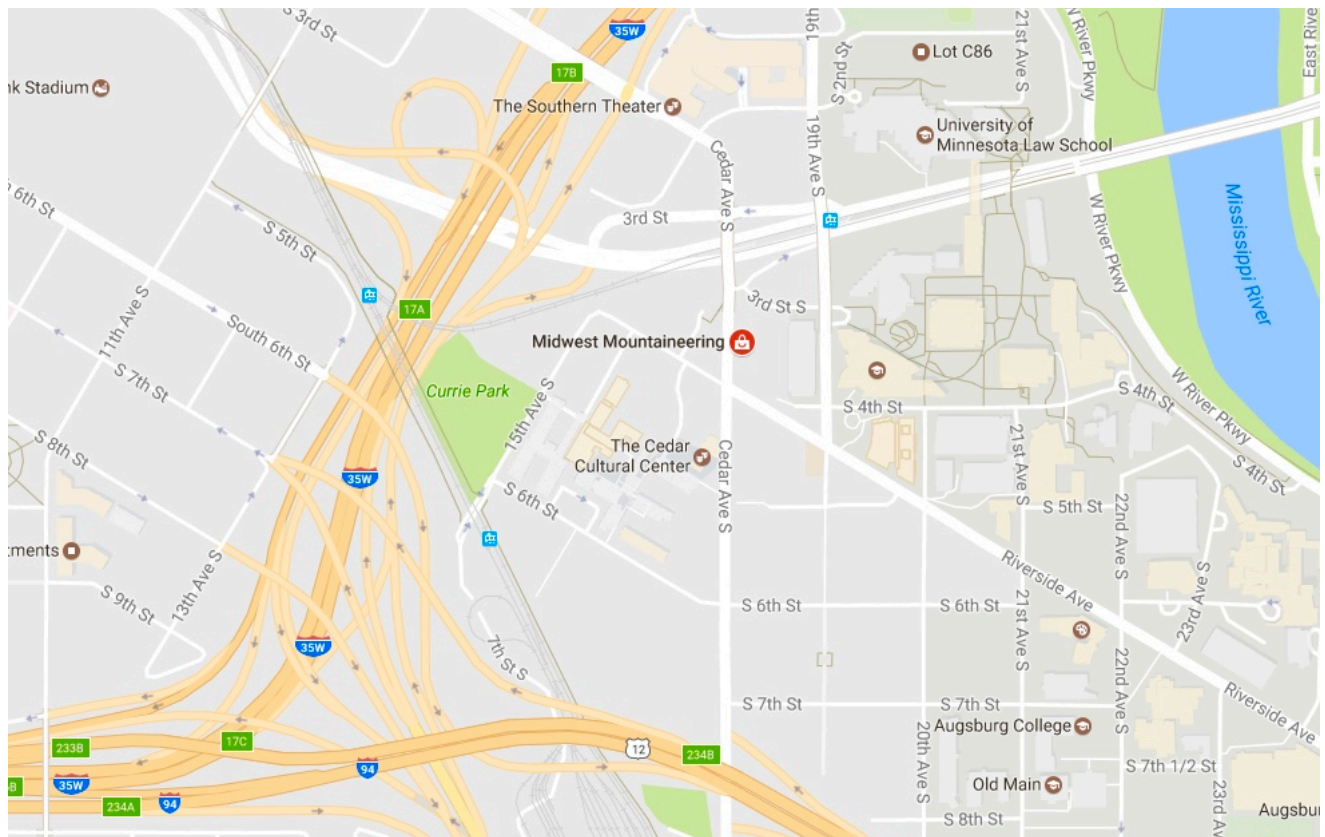


**Notice: Annual Meeting of the members Friends of Wabakimi**

The FOW annual meeting of the members will be held in conjunction with the Midwest Mountaineering Outdoor Adventure Expo on Sunday April 30th, at 9:30am sharp. The meeting will be held in the Expedition Room of the store at **309 Cedar Avenue South**, Minneapolis, MN 55454, USA. The store's front doors will be open to attendees at 9:00am

**Eligibility to Vote**

The only members entitled to vote in person or by proxy at an annual meeting of the members are those who have been in good standing for a minimum of forty-five (45) days prior to the meeting.



**Friends of Wabakimi**  
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