

## Point Grondine Exploratory Trip July 7-13

Four experienced canoeists, Trudy, Catherine, Mandy, and Keith, thoroughly enjoyed our 8-day stay in Point Grondine Park. Point Grondine is near Killarney bordering on Georgian Bay. This is a vast and beautiful Park, which we had to ourselves. It was a true wilderness experience; for most of our stay, with the exception of Guardians (Winona and Dave), we saw no one. It was found comparable to Quetico without the 2-day drive from Ottawa, or Killarney without the crowds. We had light till 10:30 pm, though mosquitoes chased us to the tents about 9:30. There are hiking trails, and beautiful vistas.



*Sunrise Cedar Lake*

Point Grondine has over 18,000 acres of scenic natural wilderness; old growth pine forests; stunning river vistas; and six interior lakes to explore. There are picturesque water trails along the Georgian Bay coast, hiking trails, and backcountry campsites located throughout the interior of the Park.

In 2007 the Wikwemikong Department of Lands and Resources began a project at Point Grondine to construct a campground that would capitalize on the overflow from Killarney Provincial Park. Several primitive campsites, trails and a cordwood building were constructed. Wikwemikong Tourism has since adopted and revitalized the project as it is a vital component of their vision of sustainable tourism development and an important piece of the Georgian Bay Coast Trail.

Our initial plan was to spend time in the interior sites, then head out to the coastal campsites on Georgian Bay. Keeping the adventure relaxing and fun. Thinking of the 1000m portage and eyeing our pile of gear and food, we decided to reverse the plan - to head to the Georgian Bay Coast, then tackle the 1000m portage as a day trip from Cedar Lake. In the end, that didn't work and we spent a relaxing week on one campsite, with day trips to explore beautiful Cedar Lake, and connecting lakes.

#### What we found

Though there is a large new sign on Hwy 637, promoting the park, camping, and hiking, we were unsure this was where we were to meet the Guardian or where to access the put-in. This parking lot is the trail head for day and multi-day hikes. Looking at the map, and not being sure we were in the right place, we ventured out to find another access to the Lake, ending up driving down a road not suitable for cars. Shortly after returning to the parking lot at the sign, Guardian Lonnie arrived. We followed him to the put-in.

We spent quite a while at the put-in, revising our route and providing it to Guardian Lonnie, unloading and organizing gear and chatting with the locals. Eventually we were on our way. We expected 2 short- 45m portages enroute to our first campsite on Cedar Lake. We found the 2 portages, interspaced with 2 large beaver dams, along a meandering water trail through a marsh of grasses and wild rice. By mid-afternoon we arrived at our campsite on Cedar Lake, protected by a bear skull high in a tree.

The next morning we packed up, preparing to head to the coastal campsite at the mouth of Beaverstone Bay and Georgian Bay. We spent considerable time looking for the Cedar Lake - Mill Lake portage trail. There was no visible portage sign. After awhile, the back of a Park boundary sign, located part way up a trail caught our eye. Walking the trail without gear, we found it was not maintained, with grass at chest level. We found ourselves lurching forward in the tall grass as it entangled our legs putting us off balance. We could only imagine what it might be like to carry heavy packs or canoes over such potentially injurious terrain along with the ever present danger of poisonous snakes in the tall grass. With such tall grass, we apparently missed a turn in the trail that would have taken us to the Mill Lake put-in. Instead, we went through a dump area with old cars, finally deciding to abort our walk when we were able to see private dwellings in the distance, but no visible water. After scouting several other campsites, we returned to the one we left that morning, once again revising our plan. Later, Guardians Winona and Dave were able to confirm that this was indeed the portage. They promised to groom it the next day. We made no further attempt to scout the portage.

After a rest day, we decided to explore the Tri-Lakes Canoe Route, a 21 km interior route through Bejeau, McDougall and Missery Lakes. This route starts with the previously mentioned 1 km Cedar-Bejeau Portage. The portage starts from a beautiful Lillypad bay. Unfortunately, due to low water levels, it was impossible to paddle to the trailhead. Keith and Trudy checked out a route long the edge of the lake. While they made it to the trailhead, it was not a route to portage a canoe over. Meanwhile, Catherine and Mandy, were able to take out across the bay, with a relatively easy walk around the end of the bay. The portage itself was mostly flat with logs recently laid in low areas. After checking out a few of the campsites, and having lunch, we proceed to the Bejeau-MacDougall Portage. The channel leading to the portage was a narrow path through dense marsh. As the channel got progressively narrower, and the grasses higher, and knowing we would have to retrace our route, we opted to abort the exploration, returning to our campsite for a refreshing swim.



*The portage trail is at the white dot (Trudy) upper left of the blue boat*

Another day we explored the north end of Cedar Lake, scouting campsites and having a relaxing paddle through another beautiful lily pad stream. It was much more pleasant when we were not trying to get somewhere. We then hiked a portion of the Wemtagoosh 2-day Hiking Trail to a hike-in campsite. The hiking trail was well maintained and marked, with beautiful vista of the Lake.

We scouted several campsites as we toured the park. Though they all had thunderboxes, fire pits and showed signs they had been recently maintained (i.e. grass cut, fallen trees cut, and sometimes stacked for firewood), we found them to be small, and rugged, with minimal development. It was difficult to see more than 1-2 flat tent pads.

Conclusion:

Point Grondine is a beautiful area; a gem in the rough, with lots of potential. Park Guardians and band members are friendly, helpful and open to feedback. We feel privileged to being given permission to be on Reserve, with access to a pristine almost untouched world to explore.

At this time, it is most suitable for experienced canoeists looking for a true wilderness adventure. We were told the fishing is excellent. We were also told guided trips can be arranged.

We have provided feedback to Point Grondine. We have asked that they keep us informed of further developments in the park.

Special thanks to our Guardians: Lonnie, Winona, and Dave, and locals Ken and Theodore.

For more information [Point Grondine Park](#)

Miigwetch!