

The Coureurs De Bois

Members Handbook

Ottawa, Ontario

4/6/09

This document is available to all members. If you wish to make any suggestions or feel you could submit a section for inclusion in this document contact a member of the Executive.

Table Of Contents.....	Page 1
Welcome.....	Page 3
Preface.....	Page 3
Disclaimer.....	Page 3
General information.....	Page 4
Club Summary.....	Page 4
Membership.....	Page 4
Paddling.....	Page 4
Training.....	Page 4
Social Events.....	Page 4
Club History.....	Page 5
Executive.....	Page 10
Membership and fees.....	Page 12
Finding out what is planned.....	Page 12
Newsletter.....	Page 12
E-mail - egroup.....	Page 13
Membership list.....	Page 13
Pub Nights.....	Page 13
Web page.....	Page 13
How to get started with the CDB - a member's life story.....	Page 13
Trip Hints.....	Page 15
Safety.....	Page 15
Other Trip Notes.....	Page 16
Skill Improvement.....	Page 16
Pool sessions.....	Page 16
CDB Training Reimbursement Policy.....	Page 17
Club Equipment.....	Page 17
Tripping Equipment.....	Page 17
Pool Equipment.....	Page 17
Other Organizations.....	Page 18
Equipment Rental.....	Page 18
Training.....	Page 19
Associations.....	Page 20
Events.....	Page 20
Appendix A - Bylaws.....	Page 21

Welcome

Welcome to the Coureurs de Bois club. We are over 100 active members who kayak, canoe, and have fun.

Preface

The information contained in this booklet was prepared by your executive as a means of making you aware of some of the general information about the club.

Your questions, comments and suggestions are welcome at any time. Contact any member of the executive.

The creation of this document has taken a significant amount of time. Suggestions, submissions, or ideas from any member are welcomed and should be submitted to the executive.

One of the purposes of this document is to collect several sources of information in an organized manner. By doing so it is easier to ensure that all members, particularly new members, have access to the information they may need.

Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure the information in this document is current. The list of retailers, kayak schools and Associations are listed as a service to CdB members and by no means are meant to be endorsements by the CdB. The authors, contributors, and CdB members shall not be held liable for any errors in the document.

General information

Club Summary

The Coureurs de Bois is a non-profit volunteer-based organization dedicated to self propelled recreational activity in the outdoors. Provincially registered in 1982 and based in the Ottawa Valley, the Club promotes outdoor safety, tripping, and skills development with a focus on whitewater paddling.

Membership

The Coureurs de Bois offers a combination of paddling, fun, training and socializing. Paddlers of all abilities are welcome (kayaks & canoes - solo, tandem, whitewater & flat water).

Events vary from year to year. We have weekly E-mail, trip planning meetings, web site, and the newsletter to keep track of upcoming events. All members are also invited to attend the club meetings held during the year.

Paddling

We paddle lots of local rivers requiring various skill levels - the Ottawa, Gatineau, Madawaska, Rouge, Beaver, Black, Mississippi, Carp, Rideau, Opeongo, Petite Nation, Picanoc, Petawawa, Jock, etc. depending on the time of year. Trips further away from home - whitewater & tripping excursions are also organized by the members. There are usually C. de B. members practicing/playing at the Champlain Bridge when the water level is good.

Training

The C. de B. organizes pool sessions for its members in the winter months. Sessions are held at local pools and include flat water sessions. Informal instruction is offered and we also liaison with other local training organizations for group courses in paddling skills and river rescue.

Social Events

C. de B. members and their families are welcome to take part in many social occasions throughout the year. Some of the traditional social events include: Skating Party, Carp Party, New members' Barbecue, Palmer Rapids Weekend, Summer Barbecue, Final Party & AGM.

Club History

In the spring of 1980 Wally Schaber of Trailhead ran an ad in the Ottawa Citizen announcing a meeting of people interested in starting a recreational canoeing club. Trailhead had a problem -- the people who took their whitewater courses would hang around the store and spend a lot of the staff's time talking about their wonderful adventures and inquiring if the staff knew of any others who wanted to do trips. They needed to shove that task off to others so they picked the gullible -- the new paddlers who wanted to talk of their prowess and find anyone willing to listen

to them.

At the first meeting of over 100 people Victor Botari and Peter Kemp were chosen as co-chairs of the new organization with Cathy Melnychuk as secretary-treasurer. Out of the 100+ that showed up at the first meeting about 25 became active paddlers and did a total of 9 trips season. They did not know a lot about camping, tripping, outfitting and organizing and would spend a good Thursday evening planning and organizing the weekend trip which would take place 9 days later. Everybody swam a lot, learned to paddle, became efficient campers, laughed themselves sick and became good friends. They even did some day trips such as the Picanoc, Madawaska, Mississippi and middle Rouge. At the first year end party on Halloween three people, Jim Apostle, Bill Young and Nancy Gerien came as a canoe with each of the 3 sections of Jim's fibre glass canoe suspended from their shoulders. The canoe had fit the rock at the entrance to the canyon on the middle Rouge and each piece had chosen, as with the canoeists, separate routes through the canyon. Thus started the prizes -- some of which one wins with distinction and honour and others with humility and disgrace.

The next year the membership decreased to about sixty with at least thirty of them being active (ie. at least 3 trips in a year). More Trailhead graduates opted for our continuing education, total immersion courses. By now some of us thought we were pretty good paddlers (We were by the standards of that day.) and started extending ourselves and paddling new rivers. We became much more efficient at organizing trips and started drinking beer on Thursday evenings as well as planning trips.

In 1981 we got so good that the intrepid were able to convince the enthusiastic to take on the upper Rouge River. For those of you who don't understand the snickers about the CdB, this trip was the start of jealous, spurious stories. The forecast record warm weather turned into very heavy rain and cold for Thursday, Friday and Saturday. It was so cold, that in those days, before wetsuits and good Gortex, we had our first hypothermia case. On the Sunday it did not thaw until afternoon and the river was at flood levels (now that we can paddle class 4 water we go back hoping we will get high water like that again.) and we had problems - dumps and rescues. New World Rafting had passed us and decided that it was too high for rafting with paying customers. We ended up running rapids we were afraid of because the portage was even scarier. On the Monday we woke up under a beautiful blank of snow. Later in the day, when we were arguing whether to continue lining the canoes downriver or climb out of the canyon and walk out (at this point only 3 of 8 people were in good enough shape to survive another swim), Louis Grenier of Kanuc and Jim Swabby of W3 arrived with a raft. We ditched the canoes in the bush and road the rubber bus to the take out. We went back the next weekend when the river had dropped 3 feet and paddled to the take out. It was an AFGOE (another fu@^ing growth experience) which has continued to grow in derision around the campfires of those with too few AFGOEs in their lives.

Even though that wet the wick for the weekend it set some members on a search for more fun and bigger and better rapids.

The CdB was initially very loosely organized with a minimal constitution, no insurance or waiver. We went through considerable argument over several years with advice from lawyers to get ourselves organized with the documents that would help to protect ourselves and particularly the executive from legal problems. We lost some members during those arguments. Eventually Warren Creates, shiny new lawyer and CdB member, polished up the documents which we democratically adopted.

Since we had been created by Trailhead and we operated out of the basement of the store the original members decided that we would not take business away from Trailhead and refused many requests to give beginner courses. We have told people to take their basic skills course from the commercial operators and then further develop them by paddling with us. We have always encouraged people to extend their abilities within the bounds of safety and have done a lot of coaching. We try to impart the safety attitudes we have learned.

From the very beginning we have never allowed trip leaders (river bosses). We have coordinators who facilitate the organizational aspects of trips. We wanted everybody to know that they share equally in the decision making (by silent consent if they do not express opposition) of trips and cannot blame anyone else for the decisions. Too many of us were determined that no arbitrary or bureaucratic person was going to spoil our recreational time with any authority to impose their opinions on us.

It has always been the policy that anyone can suggest a trip and see if others want to go with them. Usually a new member has to be cajoled into organizing their first trip. Organizing was usually done on Thursday evenings. It could be done over the phone using the membership list. Trips have been announced in the newsletter. Those are always subject to change by those who chose to participate. The reality is that a small number of people have organized the majority of trips. This has meant that throughout the club's history there have been those who have been dissatisfied because the club was not organizing the type of trip they were interested in. The most active members have tended to be strong paddlers and organized trips which they wanted to do and there have been too few flat water and novice level trips. People are reluctant to use their time organizing a trip they are not interested in. The CdB has seldom published a long list of trips because the decisions are made by the participants. The CdB is more on the anarchist end of organization than the bureaucratic end. By the late 1980s it was increasingly difficult to get people to honour their commitments to weekend trips so the main organisers stopped and the club was oriented to day trips. Weekend trips and long trips seem to be returning in the late 1990s. Over time the club developed a number of positions on issues such as sharing of camping and transportation costs, wetsuits and cold weather paddling, group decisions on safety and running of difficult rapids, etc. These were all positions which resulted from the agreement which developed from discussing the issues around campfires and over drinks. We contracted Jim Raffan to run his "Wilderness Crisis Management" course for us for many years. Cathie Closs ran CPR courses, Bernie Lalonde did wilderness medicine, and Dirk Van Wyck developed the River Rescue course with us. In 1982 Paul Mason and John Shoenfeld gave the first solo paddling clinic at Palmer's Rapids and later lead us down the middle channel of the Ottawa in tandem boats for the first time. For many years after that the advanced solo boaters gave our own clinic each spring. Chris Lok taught telemark skiing.

In 1984 or 1985 we had a debate about allowing kayaks on trips. Those who were handidextrous tended to belong to the River Runners as well. Kayaks were allowed but not many participated at first. This has changed and now the membership is clearly dominated by yakkers, although recently some of the hot shots have realized that there is a challenge to canoeing and particularly playboating and have taken it up. We rented various swimming pools (Rockcliffe, Champagne Bath, Lower Town Pool, Carleton U.) to teach members how to roll kayaks. Renting the Kanata Wave Pool in 1985 was such a hit that we have used it every year since then. Once we learned to roll our solo play boats we have continued teaching the technique at the pools in the winter.

Over time a small group, who liked the feel of a good adrenalin rush, distinguished themselves by running rapids (rapids, chutes, falls, dams and flood water levels) which had been considered beyond the capabilities of open boats. This group, known derisively as attack canoeists or the 'A' team brought more undeserved notoriety to the CdB. What was adventuresome years ago is common now. There are quite a few people around who can roll their playboats and run class IV rapids in control. Of course that always begets more embellished stories around campfires and cocktails. For new members it's an advantage to join the Coureurs de Bois because you gain a reputation for excitement and adventure without exposing yourself to danger. There is cache in the name. If you go to the pub or go on trips, and most particularly, ply this author and other oldtimers with beer, you can hear the stories of some of the famous and notorious trips of the past. Some things you never forget and always enjoy re-telling. Get out and accumulate some yourself and try not to get hurt in the process. It is a delight to hear the wild eyed novice tell the story of their first thrashing in a souse hole. If they laugh after you know they will love white water.

Not all of the funny things took place on the water. From the beginning the CdB has also organized off season, off water activities such as cross country skiing, hiking, skating. There have been a number of 2-4 day ski expedition/parties, with and without snow, at various sites. En passant, several people who met in the CdB have married and even had children and many other relationships of varying length and harmony have formed. Of course, over indulgence in white water has added tension of many relationships. Miraculously, some couples can even paddle together and enjoy it.

If this exuberant group does not please you, don't take offense. About 30 percent of the membership turns over every year.

We bought a few things which we felt could benefit many members -- cooking pot sets, first aid kits, canoe repair kits, roof racks, maps, etc., and have always had trouble with these things growing legs and walking away or being stubborn and refusing to get back in the equipment box.

In the beginning the newsletters were short and had a few good stories in them -- they were mainly to inform members of events. When John Crysdale was editor he beat stories out of any one who would say anything about a trip and broke the budget with his 24 page monster newsletter in 1986. New technology, micro-print and determined editors have maintained the high quality although we have never let anything like John's enthusiasm cripple our finances again with book length editions.

From the ramblings, recollections and musings of the canoeist, extraordinaire Blaine Kennedy. Opinion is mine, although I know some others agree. Facts are fading. Read some of the old newsletters if you want to know the names and more of the details.

Year	President	Vice-President	Treasurer	Secretary	Newsletter	Member at Large
1980	Victor Botari	Peter Kemp	Cathy Melnychuk			
1981	Victor Botari	Peter Kemp	Cathy Melnychuk			
1982	Alex Vandenham	Sue Mackinnon	Bill Schlarb			

Executive

The CDB executive is elected for a one year period. The current members and contact information is provided in each newsletter. Executive members volunteer their time. The following are the positions with typical duties. Club members should feel free to contact any of the executive members for further information.

President - presides at all meetings and is responsible for general management and supervision of the affairs of the club. This person fields questions, comments and criticism about on the club.

Vice-President - replaces the president as required and is in charge of club social events. Is the Official Keeper of the Party Box.

Secretary/Treasurer - attends all meetings and records the minutes. Is the custodian of all books, papers, records, and other documents of the club. Performs the usual duties of a Treasurer (maintains the books in good order). Stands in line at the bank.

Director, Skills Development - responsible for the planning, organizing and promoting the activities of the club, and for promoting increased interest, appreciation, understanding, knowledge, safety and skill development.

Newsletter Editor - publishes the CdB newsletters during the year by obtaining articles, pictures, and advertisers, putting it all together (typing, composition, etc.), arranging for printing, and mailing.

External Contacts - maintains liaison with provincial bodies such as the Ontario Wild Water Affiliation and the Ontario Recreational Canoe Association as well as other whitewater clubs.

Member at Large - assists other Directors in performing their duties. In the past has been most concerned with skills development.

Appointed positions:

Membership Coordinator - receives membership applications and fees and maintains the membership list

Webmaster - maintains the CDB website.

Pool Session Coordinator – Administers the pool sessions during the winter. The position involves advertising, collection of funds, performing bank deposits, keeping track of participants and organizing helpers.

A more detailed and even more bureaucratic description of these positions is available on request by contacting the executive. Also see the club bylaws document.

Membership and fees

Membership is \$15.00 a year (single or family). The membership year runs from January to December, however if a membership is purchased after Sep 30, it is good until the end of the following year. Benefits include: a newsletters (1 copy) published during the year, access to E-mail, answering machine, pool sessions and club trips and events.

Finding out what is planned

Newsletter

The Coureurs de Bois Newsletter is published during the year on recycled paper or in an electronic format and is available to all current CdB members and sponsors. Your articles and photos about outdoor activities make this the great read it is... so keep 'em coming!! The preferred submission medium is via E-mail, to the newsletter executive member, however practically any format will do.

Advertising

Current advertising rates are: \$50/quarter page commercial, \$40 for individuals. Space permitting, classifieds are free!

On-line Forum

The majority of our members now have access to E-mail. The club uses an Online forum which club members use to organize trips, receive information about events and carry out on-line discussions. Members in good standing have access to the forum using their email address as the login username. This is the main communication tool the club uses.

Membership list

Our membership list is constantly being updated. A copy can be included with the newsletter. The list provides names, addresses, and phone numbers for all club members. This list is not always fully up to date as it takes time to process each new membership form. Due to Privacy Issues if you wish you can indicate on the membership form that you don't want your name included on the phone list.

Pub Nights

Regular pub night meetings are at a local pub Thursdays at 8:30 pm. C'mon out, swap some tall tales and help organize a paddling trip! Check with other members in case this has been changed since this document was printed.

Web page

Currently we have only a very simple web page providing general information about the club and how to contact us. These pages do not change very often. It does not contain information about upcoming events at this time. The page can be found at www.cdb-ottawa.com/drupal/

How to get started with the CDB - a member's life story

I remember when I first started paddling a couple of years ago, it seemed difficult to get going on the first river trips with the club; I wasn't that confident, I didn't know anyone, I didn't want to be a burden to others. Fortunately, the Coureurs de Bois is a club which is aware of the concerns of new folk, and as a group is eager to help the new member feel more a part of things. Here are a couple of articles addressed primarily, but not solely, to the new members which deal with the transition from pool to river. I hope they are useful.

Everyone out of the pool (and onto the river)

Question: How do I make the transition from pool to river?

Answer: Come paddling! Ask questions! Take a course!

Simple, eh? Actually it is, once you know how things work and what is expected of each paddler; whether novice or expert, the same rules apply. Here are some things to consider:

River as friend, River as foe

The river is totally different from a pool. It's a helluva lot more fun for one thing and a very cool

thing to do. It's also much less forgiving of stupidity. The river can kill you - it's a Darwinian thing. Paddle smart and learn the lessons the river will teach you. Utilize the experience of others you trust to help you learn those lessons. Read the book "Kayak" by William Nealy, watch videos, be amazed by others, be amazed by yourself, protest against dams, paddle for fun, paddle for profit, brew your own beer, don't piss in the creek, rotate your tires!

The Fashion Faux-pas!

Dress for the weather and the water. Several of us start paddling in March when the water is still frozen in places. This is not a good time to haul out the bikinis and muscle shirts. Dry suits or tops are a MUST for early season paddling. When you share the river with ice bergs you had better be warm. Wear some fleece or polypro underneath. Also needed are gloves or pogies. A neoprene hood to fit under your helmet is an excellent way to avoid "ice-cream headache". In late May are we get closer to just wetsuit weather.

If you are ever unsure as what is needed for a trip, call the trip coordinator in advance and check. Please don't show up on a trip without cold-weather gear when it is needed. Not everyone carries extra gear to lend. You will be, asked not to paddle with the group if you are not properly attired. Remember: the air might be warm, but the river will be COLD!

Novice going on expert

Challenge yourself, but not your paddling buddies! What I mean by that is be willing to push yourself a little more each time you paddle, but don't push so hard as to potentially put you or your buddies in danger.

Events specifically for the novice paddler occur most weekends. These trips are down rivers which will challenge you, but also allow you to succeed and develop your skills. They are lead by an experienced paddler with several other intermediate or better paddlers along to assist and maintain a safe mix of novice and experienced boaters.

Each time you go out, you gain skills - such as paddling, river reading and rescue, confidence, judgement and the vital ability to walk a rapid so that your buddies don't have to perform heroics to rescue you. If anyone ever gives you a hard time for walking a rapid, find new people to paddle with.

Once again, call the trip coordinator for information as to the ability level for a trip. The coordinator will know the river well enough to be able to offer guidance. The coordinator has the right to decline your wish to paddle that trip if he/she doesn't feel you have the needed abilities.

I want my own boat

The number of different boats on the market seems to be exploding. Many of the new models are specialized play boats. i.e. the boat loves surfing and/or hole riding. You'll notice a wide variety of boats driven by club members. If you're wondering what to buy, go ahead and ask anyone for their thoughts; we love to talk about our boats! There are many boats suitable for beginners, with some more appropriate than others, based on a person's height, weight and other factors. The boat outfitters in town, i.e. MEC and Trailhead, will also give you advice as to what kind of boat may be suitable for you. Before you buy, try renting.

There is also an active used boat market. Check the notice boards at the stores and ask around the club.

Courses

You pay money for these and it is money well spent. The Ottawa area is blessed with whitewater and we also have several paddling schools within easy reach. Madawaska Kanu Centre (usually referred to as MKC) has been around for 25 years and has an excellent reputation in the paddling community. River Run, Wilderness Tours, Trailhead and others also offer kayaking training. My only advice is - TAKE SOME! Ask around for personal recommendations from club members and others. The cost is reasonable - count on about \$80 - \$100/day including meals, training, camping and perhaps a few extras.

Get moving!

Read the weekly e-mail for the weekend trips, or call the club training dude. Come on out, get involved, come paddling with us!

Trip Hints

Safety

Every spring a lot of new members join the CdB. Our club tends to be pretty informal in general, so we don't have masses of rules written down for people to follow. However, there have been a couple of instances in spring that made it apparent that we should repeat a few general club understandings to ensure safe and enjoyable paddling.

1. Although we endeavour to help new people on the river, we are not a teaching club so we encourage people to take lessons before attempting (especially difficult) whitewater.
2. Paddlers are expected to come to trips with safe paddling equipment. Up until the May 24 weekend, people must have wet suits, warm undergarments, and windproof jackets. Cold temperatures increase the risk in any paddling. In particular, cold weather /water dry tops etc. may be asked for. Paddlers should wear helmets in white water. Boats should have proper flotation and grab loops. Any club member has the right to express concern if they think someone else on the trip is not properly prepared. One ill-prepared member can threaten their own safety and the safety and comfort of the whole group. If necessary, people may be asked not to paddle on that day.

3. The contact person is the person, from which you can find out information about the river (access and paddling). However, this person does not have liability for the trip. All members are expected to be responsible for their own safety. Usually the contact person tries to ask questions when talking to potential trip members (whom they do not know) to see if their paddling abilities are suitable for the trip. You should talk to the contact person if you are unsure of your suitability and see if it is possible to walk any rapids which may be too difficult for you.

4. The club communicates through the On-line Forum, website, at Pub nights and the newsletter. People who want to advertise a trip usually list the level of the river and suggested paddling abilities.

Beginner paddlers have little paddling or river experience. **Novice** paddlers have paddled rivers at least a few times; have some river reading and stroke knowledge. **Intermediate** paddlers have considerable experience and usually at least the start of a whitewater roll. **Advanced** paddlers have a fail-safe roll and are well experienced in skills and river knowledge and rescue techniques.

Class 1 means ripples. **Class 2** means easy rapids which usually can be run straight from the top to the bottom. Some people also include simple maneuvering in class 2 rapids. **Class 3** is a large variety of rapids increasing in difficulty which require maneuvering and some scouting. **Class 4** means particularly difficult rapids with some risk, which should be paddled by advanced paddlers only.

5. You are expected to stay with the group unless you tell someone what you are doing. If you do break off from the group make sure someone else goes with you.

Other Trip Notes

1. Generally there may be an opportunity to share rides. Often trips meet at a convenient location and people will organize themselves to avoid bringing too many cars. If you take a ride from someone else offer to share in the cost of gas.

2. Contact the trip coordinator in advance of the trip if you have any doubts about the skill level required for a particular trip or your abilities.

Skill Improvement

Pool sessions

The C. de B. organizes pool sessions for its members in the winter months. Sessions are held at a local pool and include flat water sessions. Signs up usually start in November for the up-coming winter. There is a fee involved for the pool rental.

CDB Training Reimbursement Policy

Executive will review the number of applications and the funds available and make an equitable distribution between approved applicants to a maximum of \$50 per person out of a possible \$300 allocated. Applicants must apply before taking the course (prior to the AGM) and must pass the course in order to be eligible. Course must be one approved by the Executive as eligible for reimbursement. There is no guarantee of reimbursement as it totally depends on whether or not funds

are available in the year.

In general, eligible courses include river safety, rescue etc. They do not include general paddling skills courses.

Club Equipment

Pool Equipment

Spray skirts (nylon)

Paddles

Other Organizations

Organizations of interest to our members.

Equipment Rental

Occasionally some members have been known to rent personal equipment to other members. Sometimes this is mentioned in the weekly E-mail or newsletter.

- Trailhead
 - www.trailhead.ca
- Mountain Equipment Coop (MEC)
 - www.mec.ca

Training

- Down to Earth
 - Ottawa
 - <http://www.downtoearthkayak.com/>
- Madawaska Kanu Center (MKC)
 - Barry's Bay
 - <http://www.owl-mkc.ca/>
- Paddler Co-op
 - Palmers Rapids
 - <http://www.paddlerco-op.com/>
- River Run
 - Cobden/Beachburg
 - <http://www.riverrunners.com>
- Ottawa Kayak School
 - Cobden/Beachburg
 - h
- Liquid Skills
 - Cobden/Beachburg
 - <http://www.liquidskills.com/>

Associations

Both of these associations can be contacted through:

Canoe Ontario.

1185 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 104

Don Mills, ON M3C 3C6

(416) 426-7170

Whitewater Ontario: a non-profit organization which acts as an umbrella organization for Ontario's white water clubs. It coordinates and sanctions the provincial white water races and maintains and develops the Ontario Wild Water and Slalom Teams. The OWWA encourages and provides opportunities for people to learn about recreational and competitive white water paddling via clubs and clinics.

<http://www.whitewaterontario.ca/>

ORCA - Ontario Recreational Canoeing Association - focus on safe, competent and fun canoeing and the development of canoeing skills both flatwater and white water.

<http://www.orca.on.ca/>

Events

These are some annual events in the area which may be of interest to members. Ask around to get more details.

- Level 6 Cup
- MackFest
- Trailhead ‘Been There & Back’ sale - early Sept

Appendix A - Bylaws

This is contained in a separate file of 16 pages.