

Safety on the Mazinaw

At the AGM this year, I was asked to discuss the safety concerns that our members have related to the Park with the canoe/kayak rentals operators and the Superintendent of Bon Echo Provincial Park, and to send out a communication to our MPOA members. We live near a Provincial Park and so we need to expect some things that perhaps are an annoyance to some of us, but at the same time we cannot ignore things that could lead to serious consequences including injury. As such, this is an important topic that concerns all of us, so I'm asking you to please read this, although I admit it is long.

I believe that there are at least these classifications of people who could be on the Mazinaw which we might need to try to reach out to:

- Campers (e.g. Bon Echo, Brown's trailer park)
- People who launch at the Tappings Landing for the day
- MPOA members
- AirBnB, cottage renters, non MPOA cottages

All of these include swimmers, canoeists, kayakers, Stand Up Paddleboards (SUPs), Personal Water Craft (PWCs), motorized boats of various sizes, and motorized boats pulling water skiers, tubes, etc. So, we will try to address each group in the best way we can. Through mutual respect, and some education and awareness initiatives, we can all champion water safety at Mazinaw Lake. An excellent resource for boating safety is the National Boating Safety School's [Boating Safety Course Manual](#).

I've broken down this communication into issues & recommendations that were brought forward by various members; documentation of conversations with the Superintendent at Bon Echo, and a constable with the Napanee OPP detachment. And, action items that I plan to pursue before the end of the season.

Please note that if you are an owner of an AirBnB on the lake, or rent out your cottage, would you kindly consider creating a one page "Mazinaw Etiquette" that can be left out on the table for your guests to review?

Thanks, Fran Bates, MPOA President

Issues of concern & recommendations sent to me by MPOA members this spring:

- Canoeists & kayakers (this is not all paddlers on the water, but happens rather frequently)
 - sitting/lingering in the channel and not clearing through it in a timely manner
 - don't know the rules wrt boating and water safety
 - don't use the 'proper' canoe format (e.g. many sitting backwards in canoe, standing in canoe, facing each other in canoe)
 - don't know how to paddle/navigate or what to do in the event of waves
 - canoes overloaded; not enough PFDs e.g. 4 people rescued by an MPOA member & discovered they only had 2 PFDs
 - canoes with dogs that are causing imbalance at unsafe times

- canoes out at night w/o lights
- canoeists/kayakers out just after ice breaks; water still freezing cold
- Motorized boats
 - too close to other people on the water, which have swamped canoe/kayakers causing members to have to rescue them. This is especially true when pulling a tube and making tons of waves
 - too close to cottages where children & dogs are swimming off their docks
- Swimmers
 - w/o boat support e.g. from beach to rock trail landing
 - across the narrows channel where boat congestion
 - lots of people jumping off rocks at the Park

Recommendations by members:

- Ensure canoe/kayak rentals operators teach proper rules & etiquette on water, including to clear the channel quickly
 - Could have them read 'how to operate a canoe (signage of front/back of canoe, both sitting forward, etc.) and safety rules' and sign prior to renting the canoe/kayak or have a 'How to canoe' video that can be downloaded to phone
 - Assess skill level in lagoon before allowed to rent
 - Provide instruction to inexperienced canoe/kayakers, including face into waves
- Put up 'no swimming' signs at the narrows
- Enforce a speed limit within the entire length of the cliff
- Post signs for 'no tubing, water skiing, wake' in bay in front of rock (at boat launches)
- Sign at narrows with a picture of motor boats going through the channel between buoys and canoe/kayakers going between buoys and shore
- Have a staff member at the narrows for 1 day on a summer weekend to determine how prevalent safety issues occur by canoe, kayak, boaters
- Ensure boaters know to look at the wake they are making as they get close to the narrows, the shore or places where paddlers are

MPOA ACTIONS TO-DATE:

1) Met with Superintendent of Bon Echo

- Facts:
 - The Park nor the canoe/kayak rental operators have jurisdiction on the navigable water. Their jurisdiction ends at the shore's edge. The OPP water unit are the ones with the jurisdiction.
 - Asking campers to do some things we are suggesting are not part of the Transport Canada rules, but good etiquette on the Mazinaw, and not enforceable (but can be looked at).
 - The Park works with the OPP on boat safety initiatives e.g. focus on infractions – e.g. speed and how close to shore; safety equipment for boats, canoe/kayaks.
 - There are already 2 'no swimming' signs posted at the narrows.
 - It is not an option to ask paddlers to go outside the buoys. They have the same right to pass through the channel and in fact if they go outside of the channel they may hit their paddles on the rocks.
 - Acknowledgement that canoe/kayakers need to clear the channel faster.
 - Acknowledgement that canoe/kayakers do some things such as jump out of the canoe, sit facing each other, etc. *Note: If the act of facing one another in a canoe is causing safety issues or adversely affecting other vessels, then it is cause for concern and should be addressed. If the canoeists facing one another are fishing or engaging in conversation without causing safety issues, then this arrangement should not raise concern. It is no different than a strong paddler in the back, paddling a canoe solo.*
 - Bon Echo get complaints from both canoe/kayakers about boats swamping them and also from cottagers about canoe/kayak issues. There are by far, way more complaints and observations by Bon Echo staff about mechanized vehicle issues.
 - The inappropriate actions of boaters can cause much bigger safety issues. Anecdotal example of someone water skiing through the narrows last year and hitting/injuring a paddler – OPP were involved; waves capsizing canoe/kayakers.
 - The canoe/kayak rental operators do an element of onboarding in their contract (e.g. how to sit in the canoe, general strokes, about wind and where the protected areas are). Superintendent has witnessed them doing this. Sometimes they do things right in the lagoon, but change it up next time they get in the canoe/kayak and this is out of the control of the canoe/kayak rental operator.
 - Signs at the narrows are often stolen and they are not cheap to keep replacing. E.g. a cottager stole the 'no wave' sign that was chained by an anchor (as they passed through the narrows with their boat).
 - Note: we were asked to work with the Superintendent and he will in turn work with the Rental contractor.
- Action as a result of meeting:
 - Add something into their tabloid (Park newsletter that is given to all campers) directed to canoe/kayakers/SUP about boating etiquette, less congested areas to travel, clearing the channel etc. and as well to mechanized vehicles...mutual respect, awareness, education and consequences of actions (e.g. wake can cause a paddle to be dumped).

- Consider handing out boating rules/etiquette to those who come to the Park with a motorized boat (e.g. no wake areas, slow through narrows, along cliff, in congested areas). We discussed two opportunities:
 - Do's & don'ts rules on the water as per Transport Canada (generic rules such as 10 km speed limit within 30 metres (100 feet) of shore)
 - Mazinaw specific etiquette (request they follow as this is not enforceable but good etiquette like clearing the channel quickly)
- Add signage at the narrows "to clear narrows quickly" to reduce congestion.
- Changes to the next canoe/kayak rental contract (end of 2020) to include language around skills assessment and training.
- Option to review safety at the narrows with the OPP as an initiative.
- Note: Interpretative staff already provide guided "canoe hikes" on Mazinaw Lake. The staff are certified ORCKA instructors. Superintendent will work with staff to expand on the paddling etiquette and Mazinaw Lake "narrows" specific considerations during the program.
- Continue to offer programs on the topic of paddling at the Amphitheatre and include a section regarding etiquette and safety. Ensure emphasize this important topic during the programs.
- Superintendent is willing to come to the 2020 AGM as a guest speaker.

2. Met with OPP constable out of Napanee detachment:

- Operating a boat in an unsafe manner (e.g. not paying attention to others using the waterway) can lead to a charge of careless operation of a vessel and a \$450 fine.
- There are a few ways you can approach this situation:
 - i. Talk to the person e.g. "Hey buddy, I've got my whole family up and your boat came dangerously close to where we swim. There are also a lot of rocks just under the water here so you're lucky you missed them this time. Please make sure you boat at least 30 metres off shore, as per the law." Only do this if you feel comfortable to do so and in a non-confrontational manner.
 - ii. Call the OPP, but first note the date, time, who also witnessed it, get a picture or video on your cell phone of the boat if you can. Note the make, model, colour. If you can, follow them in your boat at a safe distance to see where they go (e.g. they pulled into this cottage...or they went to the Tappings boat launch and pulled off in 'x' vehicle type...or they went to Bon Echo Provincial Park, etc.). Perhaps return the next day to get the 911 number of the cottage and the boat Registration Number, usually off the bow of the boat. It will be 2 Letters followed by 7 digits (the 2 letters indicate where the boat is from, e.g. ON for Ontario).
- Note: If you want to call the OPP to investigate when you have witnessed someone operating a boat in an unsafe manner (e.g. speeding past your dock where you children, yourselves, your guests, your dog swim; causing waves that knock a canoeist out of their boat,) they will talk to the person causing the infraction and decide based on the discussion whether to give them a warning or

charge them. Should it go to court, the person(s) making the claim must be prepared to show up in court.

3. Communication to MPOA members:

- Newsletter
- Email
- Website update
- Note: this reaches approximately 200 property owners so if your neighbour is not an MPOA member, please consider telling them about the benefits of being a member and to send us an email to communications@lakemazinaw.ca.

MPOA ACTIONS in progress:

4. Consider a one page "Mazinaw Etiquette" doc that can be downloaded from the website.
5. Connect with Brown's Campground and ask if they will distribute a communication to their campers.
6. Signage at the Tappings boat launch to reach non MPOA members, day users of Mazinaw.