

## My favourite hat



By Nate Smelle

TALKING WITH MEMBERS from a few of the Lake Associations in Hastings Highlands following Council's decision not to approve the proposed amendments to the vegetative buffer bylaw, I suddenly felt the urge to get out on the water. Temporarily giving up on my quest to purchase an inexpensive canoe, I dropped in by Trips and Trails in Bancroft over the weekend to pick up a rental, so that I may quench my thirst. Lashing the vessel down tightly to my vehicle I now had to make the difficult decision which waterway I wanted to explore the most.

With so many to choose from the managed to narrow the pool down to a handful of selections that fit my limited timeframe. Unable to make the final call on my own I decided to let the coin decide. Tossing coins until I had my two winners, I soon found myself standing on the dock at the public launch on L'Amable Lake wearing a canoe for a hat. Racing to get out on the water in time to watch the sunset, I nearly jumped in the boat without a paddle.

Paddling under Highway 62 I made it out to the middle of the lake just as the sun started to sink into the horizon. Living in L'Amable for more than eight years now I have driven by this heavenly body of water thousands of times without ever really experiencing it. Sure I have slowed down to admire the view of the two islands from the causeway and swam at the L'Amable dam before, but it wasn't until I got out on the water that I fully appreciated what a marvelous location this is to catch a sunset. Listening to a pair of loons calling to one another through the darkness I headed back to shore.

Eager to get back on the water I was up early the next morning ready to check out another local roadside treasure I had been eyeing up for sometime on my way to work... the York River.

This was not my first exploration of this premier destination for paddlers in North Hastings, but it was my first time traveling south of the rapids at Egan Chutes. Like L'Amable Lake this location did not disappoint in delivering me with a newfound appreciation of yet another local gem. The list of wildlife that caught my eye seemed to grow with every stroke. A family of Canadian geese led the way in the beginning steering me down the winding river until the current I had been paddling against slowed. After a while the geese disappeared into the marshland adjacent the river, leaving me alone to continue on my way. Almost as soon as they vanished I noticed a beaver swimming up ahead of me. Slapping its tail to say hello, the beaver slipped beneath the surface not to be seen again. At the same time a loud noise came crashing from the forest, revealing a white-tailed deer leaping away from the commotion the beaver and I had created. The more I looked and listened, the more there was to see. Returning to the launch where I had set out four hours earlier with a camera full of photos it was unfortunately time to take the canoe back before it turned into a pumpkin.

Canoeless once again, I took the long way home to renew my search for somewhere new to paddle the next time I wear my favourite hat.