

THE GREAT MUSKOKA PADDLING EXPERIENCE

A fun racing experience for canoes, kayaks & SUPs for all levels of participants

CANOE, KAYAK AND SUP MARATHON SAFETY

Canoe, kayak and SUP marathoning is an extremely safe, low risk sport. Years go by without mishap. The sport is also low impact and easy on the body. Unfortunately, all of this can lead to a sense of complacency among both race organizers and participants. The truth is that over time there have been cases of drownings, fatal cardiac arrest, lightning strikes, injuries and dehydration during marathon canoe races. We all know accidents can happen in any sport.

So who is responsible for safety during a canoe marathon? The answer is everyone. Race organizers do their best to make sure race courses are relatively safe. However, the nature of canoe marathons is such that there are often long periods of time when paddlers are on their own and without support. In this case it is up to individual paddlers to be in charge of their own safety. You are operating a vessel and as such laws and race rules apply and it is up to you to know what those are. The race organizer can provide you with the rules and the Transport Canada publications can provide you with the applicable laws.

The key is really just common sense. Always have a life jacket with you and wear it. Know your own abilities as both a paddler and swimmer. Watch for other paddlers in distress. Pull out of the water and find shelter if lightning is near by - follow the 30-30 Rule - if you see lightening and hear thunder in 30 seconds or less, pull off and wait until 30 minutes after the last thunder before re-entering the water - DO NOT TRY TO OUTFRAN A STORM. Don't race if your health is not 100% and quit if you become ill during a race. Look out for the obstacles (floating debris, under surface logs/branches, sweepers, etc.) on your watercourse. The list goes on. Know the facts and think safety.

Concussion

It should be understood that The Great Muskoka Paddling Experience volunteers are not medical professionals and as such will consider any possible occurrence of a concussion as a medical concern.

Concussions in canoe/kayak/SUP's are rare, but can occur while participating in any sport or recreational activity. While there are relatively few reported concussions sustained while marathon canoe training and racing it's important to remember that aerobic activity can exacerbate the effects of a concussion. Since the circumstances under which a concussion can be sustained are so varied, it's important for all GMPE volunteers and participants to be aware of the signs, symptoms, and what to do if a concussion occurs. The volunteer's role is not to make a firm diagnosis, but to recognize the participant at risk, remove him/her from event and get the person assessed medically.

An athlete injured in another sport should not take part in a marathon canoe/kayak race.

Initial Response to Loss of Consciousness

If there is loss of consciousness or a suspicion of concussion without loss of consciousness, Initiate Emergency Action Plan and call an ambulance. Assume possible neck injury. Continue to monitor airway, breathing and circulation.

Key Steps

- i. If a suspected concussion occurs, remove the participant from the event
- ii. Do not leave the participant alone - monitor symptoms and signs
- iii. Do not administer medication
- iv. Inform the Communications Coordinator and if applicable, parent/guardian about the injury
- v. A medical doctor should evaluate the participant as soon as possible
- vi. The participant must not return to the event.

NOTE: Children are more sensitive to the effects of a concussion.

Notice!

The wearing of PFDs (life jackets) is mandatory. As this event takes place after October 1st, Ontario Marathon Canoe Kayak Racing Association has this: Before May 1 and after October 1 all paddlers in every class must wear a lifejacket or PFD. It is not enough just to have a PFD on-board. We are under obligation to enforce this. For this race, due to COLD water temperature, inflatable life jackets and belts are not acceptable. Thank you for your understanding.

Why disallow inflatables?

The primary basis of disallowing inflatables is that the Muskoka River is **COLD** in October. Colder than in the summer. Inflatable life-jackets provide little or no thermal protection.

It has been noted that inflatables would not necessarily be inflated by people who fall in but expect to continue to race. Continuing to paddle with a inflated PFD is very awkward, so there is a disincentive to inflate. Also when you deflate them they are no longer valid and legal because the cartridge has been used, unless you insert a spare cartridge. This event attracts paddlers of all levels of skills and ability. **Safety of our paddlers is paramount.**

If you do not own a regular PFD and if that is your reason for not racing, we have a local outfitter on-site on the day of the event renting them for \$3.50 per day.

For more background on cold water: www.coldwaterbootcamp.com/pages/home.html

Full OMCKRA Safety Policy can be viewed at [OMCKRA Safety](#)