

In Search of Fall Colours

The day after I attended the Recollectiv Fundraiser, happened to be our 6th anniversary. So how are we going to celebrate? By going ...



(Credit to my sister-in-law, Jayne MacAulay, who created this as a Christmas gift, in tribute to Charles Kuralt, who reported on the CBS Evening News from the road for years, and after whom Charles is named.)

It was September 16, and we thought it would be the perfect time to explore more northerly parts of Ontario, partly because we hadn't really done that yet, and also because we'd be able to see the spectacular colours of the leaves as they changed.

First stop...



You may wonder why we would choose to spend our anniversary in Parry Sound. Well, as we discovered, the town has lots to offer. Before we got there, I was unaware of its UNESCO status.

Nor was I aware (bad Canadian that I am) that it was the home of one of the most famous hockey players of all time, Bobby Orr. Which explains why they have built a Hall of Fame as a tribute to him.



It's a fun museum, which covers his hockey career, as well as his contributions to the community and to young hockey players everywhere. As we all knew, Bobby was just a good guy. And that comes through in this museum.



NHL Prospects

Spring 1961: Boston Bruins scout Wren Blair attends a bantam tournament in Gananoque, Ontario where he sees the 12-year-old Orr. Blair spends the next year working to secure Orr for the Bruins.

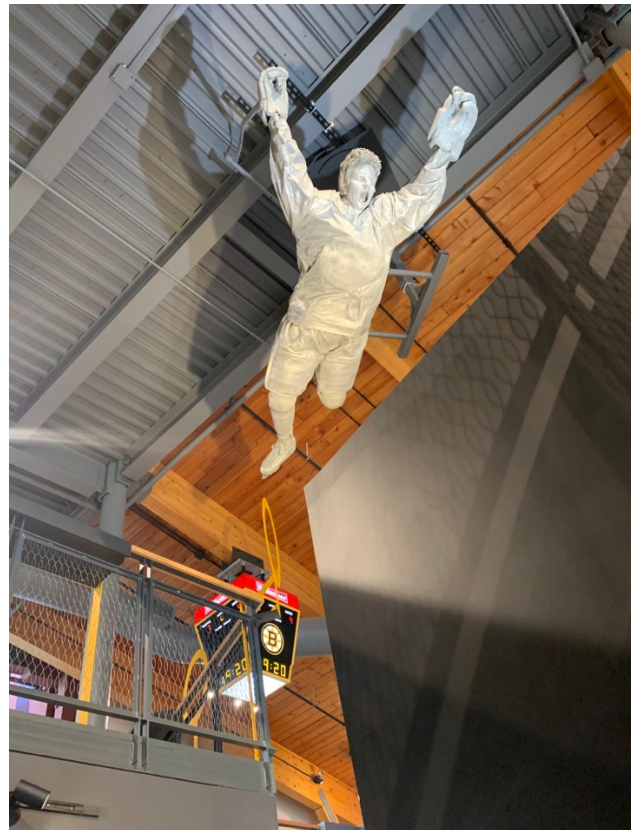
**1961/62
Bantam
All Stars
Parry Sound
Shamrocks**

- A new suit for Bobby
- Stucco on the house for his mom
- A car for his dad
- \$1,000



They used the limited space cleverly, as this item shows.

Look up to see Bobby Orr
flying through the air after
scoring the 1970 Stanley Cup
winning goal!



And they had some hands-on interactive opportunities for kids of all ages.

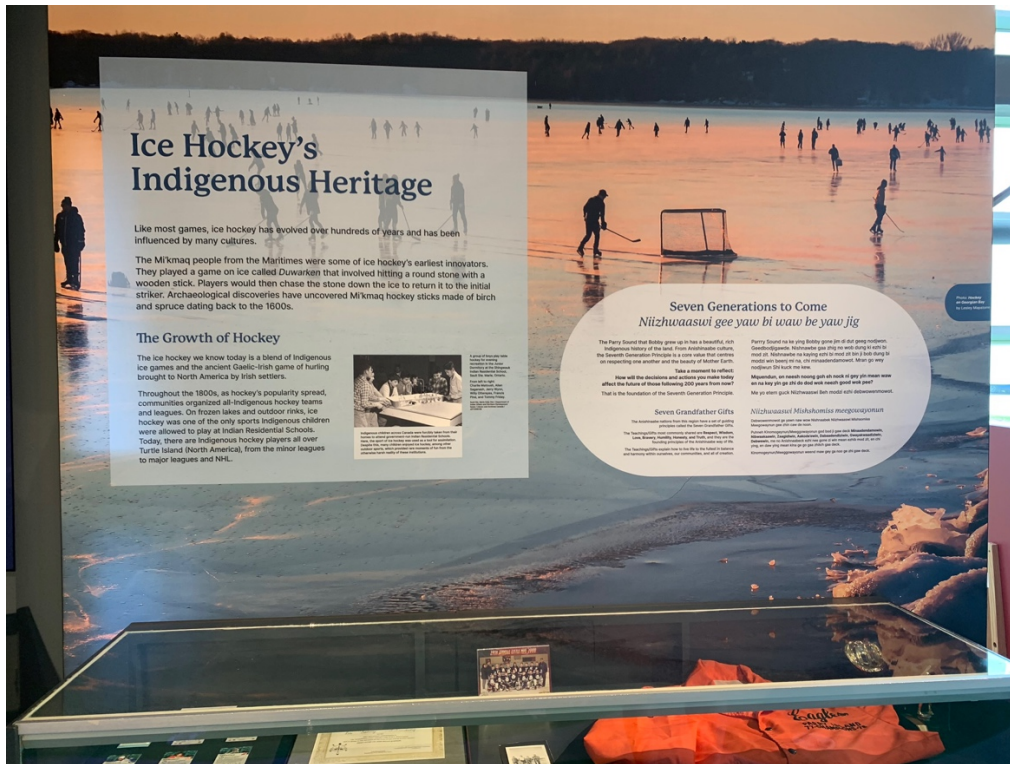


I hate to brag, but I beat Jim
1-0.

Who am I kidding? I LOVE
to brag that I beat him 1-0!



We also appreciated the way they acknowledged the role of Indigenous people in Canada's national sport, crediting them for being the inspiration for the game of hockey. All in all it was a very nicely designed and thought-out museum.



Downtown Parry Sound had some interesting shops, including the “Bearly Used Book Store” which boasted housing over 300,000 books!



And there was this intriguing shoe store...

Unfortunately, they didn't have any in my size.



We were able to stay for a minimal charge in the marina parking lot, right near the water, where there were some restaurants, a coffee shop, and some nice water views.



There were a few surprising sights. Like the very busy train bridge that goes right over town.



And a surprise sighting of a moose right by the water!



We had fine anniversary dinner. (I'd never had duck wings before!) With the obligatory Aperol Spritz!



And then we were treated to a combination of beauties.

A lovely, placid sunset...





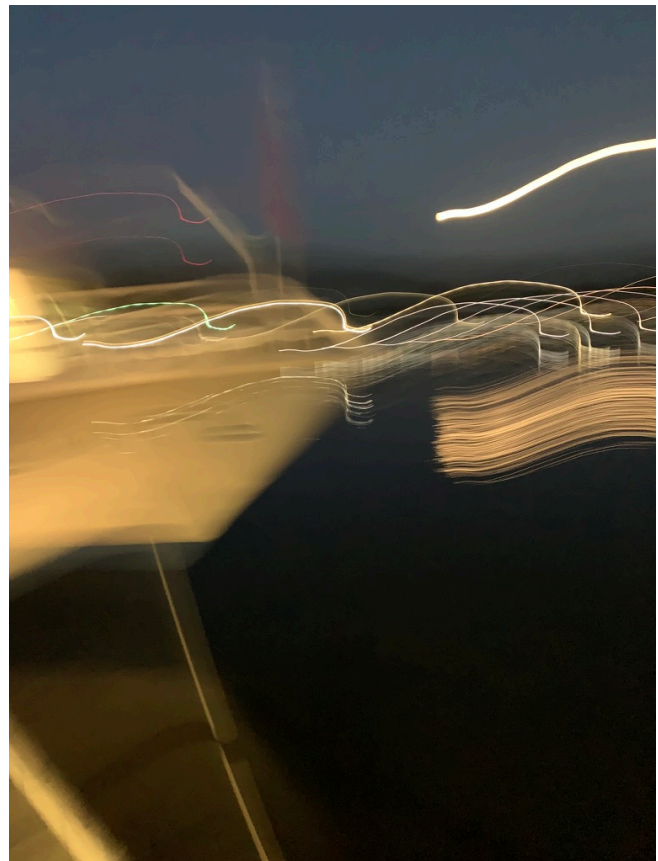
Followed by the rising of an almost full Harvest Moon.



That evening, I apparently also snapped this shot.

I have no idea how it happened or what it is.

But I'm thinking of naming it "Our 6th Anniversary" and entering it in some photo contests.



The next day, we continued travelling north and west, expecting to see lots of turning leaves. We did see some.





We also stopped at Chutes Provincial Park, because you can never see too many waterfalls.





And you can't have too many selfies in front of waterfalls either.



That night we stopped at another marina in Blind River, where they charged a small fee for overnight parking. It was a lovely, peaceful spot, so we stayed for two days. Two beautiful and very interesting days!



Along with a shop, very nice showers and laundry facilities, they also had a museum and an art gallery.



The first night, we got a stunning sunset.





Moments later, the full harvest Supermoon rose. My little iPhone camera doesn't nearly do it justice. But it was magic.



And a little while later, this happened.



Of course, in any Ontario marina, there are going to be Canada Geese, making their presence known both vocally and physically, with their thousands of droppings. (As we learned earlier this summer, the average goose poops 60 times a day!)



But I noticed one goose who looked different.

It appeared to be a loner, not really part of the flock.

I did some research and discovered that it was a “domesticated goose”.



I chatted with Josh, the owner of the marina and asked about the unusual goose. He explained that it had arrived earlier in the season. He assumed that it had escaped from a local farm, and could fly a little, so it joined up with the wild geese.

He told me that the young people who worked there over the summer had named him “Goosetopher”. Although he was not totally accepted by the wild geese, they did like him because Goosetopher had taught Josh to shake branches of the apple trees to make the apples drop to the ground, and the other geese benefitted. Josh said that he doubted Goosetopher would be able to migrate south with the more skillful flyers, so he would probably capture the domesticated goose and take him to his brother’s farm. As a pet, I like to think.

Josh also seemed to be “not part of the flock”, an interesting character who surprised me with some of the stories he told about his life. Not what one might assume of a guy who runs a marina in Blind River. A reminder that you can never prejudge someone by their looks or their station in life.

Another reminder of that philosophy came when I spoke to an older gentleman who had an RV similar to ours. When he and his wife drove in, towing two very muddy and well used ATVs, I was kind of surprised. That’s not something you normally see behind a Charles-like vehicle. I made assumptions. One of my assumptions was NOT that he was a retired Appeals Court Judge.

He and his wife had travelled in RVs for years and they’d never once stayed in an actual campground! At 81, with some health problems, he was now thinking they might have to give up that lifestyle. I was so glad I had a chance to talk to him.

And before we left Blind River, the mayor stopped by to say hello! Blind River was a great find!

The main objective of our northern Ontario trip was to get to Sault Ste. Marie, which we did the next day.



We arrived in time to explore a little bit about the city, which is on the international border between Ontario and Michigan.

We had a lovely walk in the park by the water.



We found out that “Sault” means rapids, and we witnessed the reason for the name on the border between Canada and the US.



And we got back to the canal just in time to see a boat go through the lock.



That night, in the casino parking lot, where you can park for free (in the hope that you'll spend more money in the casino than you did on the RV), we got another fine sunset, which reflected beautifully on Charles.



The next day, we set out for the main event of this trip: The train to Agawa Canyon.



This train runs from August 15 to October 15, just to take people to the Agawa Canyon during the season of changing colours. We boarded at 8:00 and returned at 6:00. (The fact that Jim had to be there at 8:00 is a testament to how excited he was about doing this.)



It was a grey day, and most of the leaves had not yet turned, but there was lots to see.



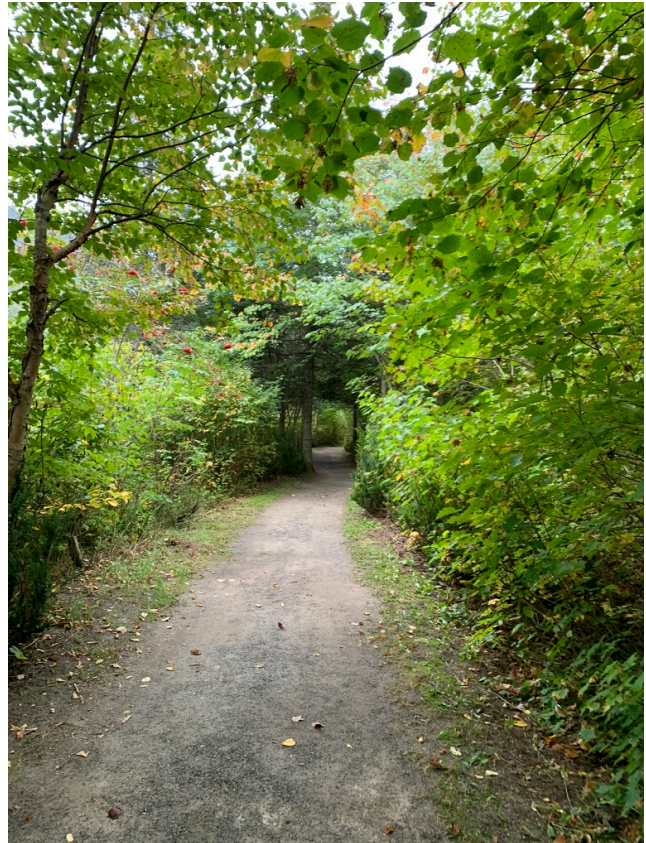




The first thing to greet us as we stepped off the train at Agawa Canyon, was a reminder of the inspiration this region gave to the famous Group of Seven. These artists are recognized as the first to reflect a distinct form of Canadian art to the world.

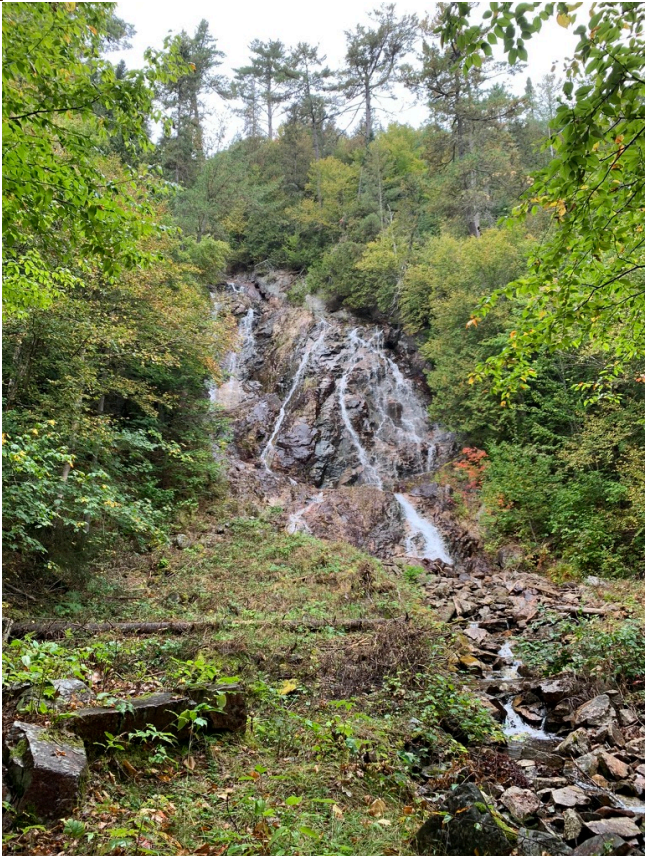


It was grey and rainy, but we still enjoyed the walk through the forest to get to the three waterfalls.









An hour and a half later, we boarded the train and looked out the window for another 4 hours on the way back to Sault Ste. Marie.

The skies were a bit clearer, but the colours weren't nearly as spectacular as we had hoped.

You can't predict Mother Nature. Apparently last year at this time, there were no leaves left on the trees. It all depends on the temperatures and how much sunlight there is.

Still the views were always lovely.





The next day we went to the Art Gallery of Algoma, which was a surprising treat.



In this exhibition about artists in the area of Cobalt, there were a number of paintings by Group of Seven-esque artists, a couple of them women we'd never heard of before. (Surprise, surprise!) Yvonne McKague Housser, Bess Larkin Housser Harris and Isabel McLaughlin.





And even more surprising was a display of paintings by one of the men behind the discovery of insulin, Frederick Banting! Apparently, he was a friend and admirer of A.Y. Jackson, who mentored him. Quite well, I'd say.



After visiting the gallery, we started heading back toward home. Our first overnight stop was at a "Harvest Host", property owners who offer a place for campers to stay. The theory is that you "pay" for your stay by buying something they provide on the property. In this case, our host had a garden, and we bought a zucchini that she picked for us herself, and some jam that she'd made. Both delicious.



It was a pleasant stop, where we met an American couple (about our age) who were in Canada for the first time and were travelling to PEI! Unfortunately, I didn't get a chance to get their contact info. I often wonder how their trip is going.



Next stop ... Manitoulin Island.



We had been to this alluring island once, briefly – when we were experimenting life in an RV for the first time! We were looking forward to exploring it a bit more in our own Charles.

One of the most popular spots – then and now – was Bridal Veil Falls. It being a chilly, grey September day, we assumed we wouldn't see any bathers in the water this time.



Wrong!



We did not join the bathers. But the Bridal Veil is always worth another visit.



On our way out, one of our very few wildlife sightings.



We continued to our destination – at the northwest tip of the island. Our plan was that this would give us a chance to see as much of the island as possible.

Once again, our campground was a marina, this time in Meldrum Bay.



As we'd hoped, we got a spot right on the water. The clouds followed us there. But that just made the views more dramatic.



And the next morning...



We walked around the marina and were amazed at how clear and blue the water was.



I went for a walk and discovered that the red shed in my photos was a museum! Unfortunately it was closed, so I have nothing to report on nets or their sheds.



It was a glorious day.



Which we appreciated, because that was the last time we saw the sun for a few days. Pouring rain kept us inside Charles.



On our way off Manitoulin, we stopped in Gore Bay, to seek out what was purportedly a superb chocolate shop. Larry Mirkin, chocoholic extraordinaire, told me that Finnia Chocolate was so good, they had it delivered to their home regularly.

We decided we'd drop in and check it out for ourselves. We also figured we should pick up some for Larry. To make sure we were getting some of his favourites, we asked the woman in the store to check one of Larry's recent orders. We needn't have bothered – he seemed to have ordered everything!



We sampled some for ourselves: inside out s'mores, salted caramel in dark chocolate and dark chocolate covered sponge toffee.

Believe Larry.

He was lucky to get the assortment we bought for him!

We continued our drive off Manitoulin, which was consistently gloomy ...



□

... And very rainy.

But we did get a laugh from this "Misery Loves Company" sign. Which seemed even funnier in the pelting rain.



The sun appeared again when we got to this beautiful provincial park.



We finally got some much needed Vitamin D, and some gorgeous fall views.





We made a note to go back to this park for an extended stay.



The rest of our drive was full of sun and lovely views.



We had set out, 11 days earlier, in search of fall colours and beautiful Ontario landscapes, and although the colours were still not at full brilliance, we did appreciate so much of what we saw.

But then, the day after we got home, I went to Ashbridges Bay, just a 5-minute drive away, and saw this.



And looking out our front window, there was Charles, bathed in a brilliant orange glow from the tree across the street.



Four days later, we were on the road again!