

Charles Summer 25 #3: Finally Putting Some Kms on Charles



(The cool sign Jim's holding was a Christmas gift from sister-in-law Jayne MacAulay. One of these days we're going to figure out how to attach it to Charles.)

After saying goodbye to Jim's sister Margaret in Norway Bay, Quebec, we made one more stop to visit an old friend. Eric Bell and I worked together at a little Toronto advertising agency back in the late 80s to early 90s. We hadn't seen each other in at least 15 years. It was good to catch up with him in his cool little neighbourhood in Montreal. It seemed appropriate that we meet at a pub, which is where we did most of our "creative" thinking back in those days.



From there, we headed east, catching a few interesting sights (but not caught very well by my camera). It's hard to tell in this shot, but the front of the bus was attached to the barn and the rest was painted on the side of the barn.



And this front yard display showed a bunch of cartoony convicts being led away by the cowboy hero on horseback. (You can tell he's the good guy because he's wearing a white hat.)



Eventually, we got to another Boondockers Welcome overnight stop. A nice property with an impressive home, which apparently was built for the couple's son to live in. But he decided to live elsewhere so they inherited the home.



The next day, we continued our journey east and were happy to eventually see the mighty St. Lawrence River. (Jim is helpfully pointing it out to you.)



We've always loved the drive from just past Quebec to Riviere-du-Loup. There are so many distinctive homes, stores and pieces of art.







After a lovely drive on a perfect day, we arrived at our next stop, yet another Boondockers Welcome spot. (In our first ten days on the road, we only stayed in 2 campgrounds. The other nights, we either stayed in a friend's driveway, a free spot on the road, or at Boondockers Welcome site.)

This spot was right on the St. Lawrence, and we were happy to spend two nights there. The road in was a little tight ...



... but once we got there, we had a terrific site. And we met some very nice people.



The owners of the property, Lise and Serge had a permanent trailer home there (where they're staying for the summer).



And their very good friends, Johanne and Gilles had stopped in for a visit. The foursome have travelled together all over the world, and we enjoyed sharing our traveling adventures.



We took a nice walk in the area, which was very colourful.



But the river itself is the main attraction. It's so wide and powerful and, as this photo shows, even though it's over 600 kms from the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the tidal ebbs and flows are significant.



But the best thing about our spot on the river was the sunsets – especially on our first night. It started as a nice, perfectly acceptable sunset.



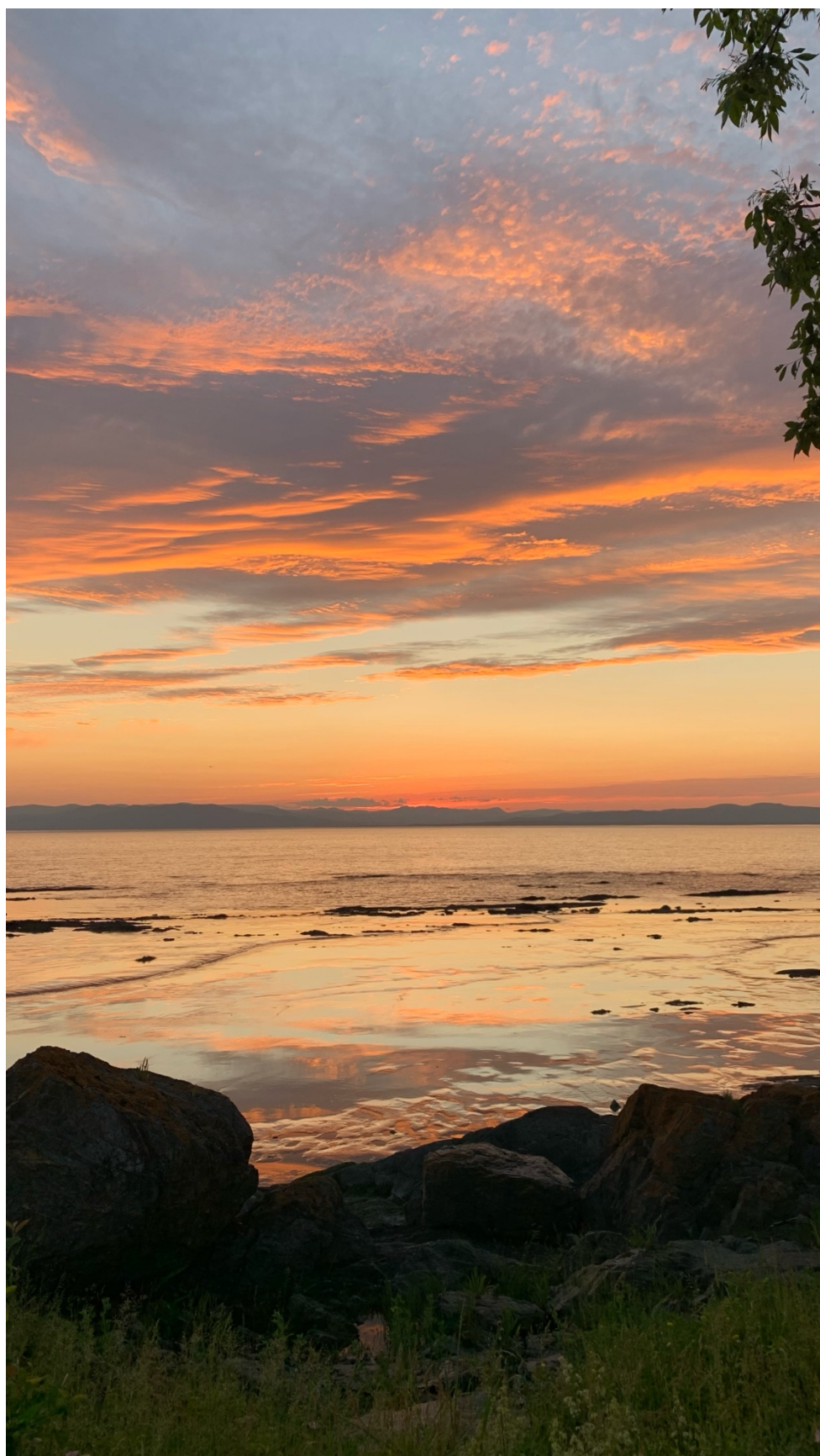
But over the next half hour, it just kept getting better....



And more dramatic...



And finally...



The colours changed and lingered in the sky for the better part of an hour all together.



The second night's sunset was nice, but just couldn't compare.



The next day, we said goodbye to our friends and continued through the Kamouraska area, which has such beautiful landscapes.



And more playful establishments and colourful homes.



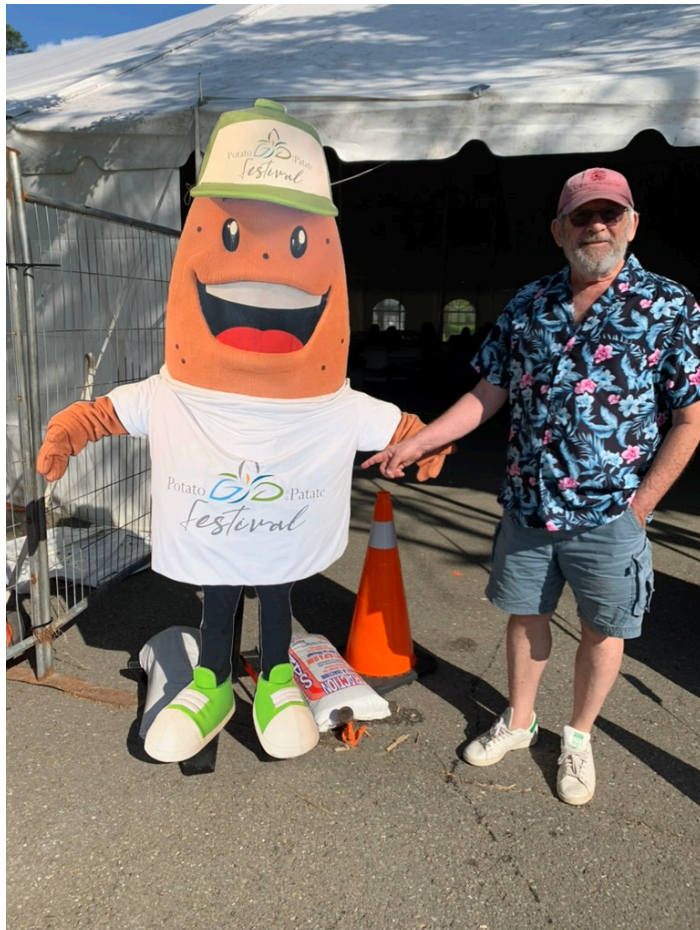
After a right turn, it wasn't long before we found ourselves in New Brunswick.



We stopped for the night in the town of Grand Falls. They have a nice, compact campground that worked just fine.



And it's right beside the Grand Falls Gorge, so you can walk along a path and see the surging waters that have just flowed over the falls.



We discovered that we had arrived in Grand Falls just in time for the Potato Festival, where Jim made a new friend.

Unfortunately, the main events started the next day, so we didn't really have a chance to experience the excitement.

But there was fun to be had in the nearby park. I missed the shot of this kid getting doused.



But we hung around for the next shower, and were glad we kept our distance.



The next morning, we left the campground and drove through town to visit the falls. Along the way, Jim found another important site of interest. Grand Falls happens to be the home of Ron Turcotte, the jockey whose claim to fame is that he rode Secretariat to win the Triple Crown. (Acknowledging this made Jim feel a little disloyal to Northern Dancer, our Canadian equine hero.)



Of course, the best reason to go to Grand Falls, is ... the Grand Falls. Which is very exciting.



The entrance to the falls featured a “snake” made of stones painted (mostly) by kids, which we’ve seen in a few areas.



This one included a few nods to the Potato Festival.



We've passed through here three or four times and we always stop at the falls. Visiting early in the season is best, because the flow of water is at its height. It's very impressive when you get to see it like this.



Although there are usually people blocking the view.



But soon there'll be an online video you can enjoy...



On our way out of town, we passed future stars of the next Grand Falls Potato Festival.



From that point on, our trip through New Brunswick was a continuous rendezvous with the impressive St. John River.



For the rest of the day, we could count on either following it...



Or crossing it.



As you can see, we had great weather for our do-si-do with the St. John River.





The other thing you can count on when you're driving through New Brunswick is that you're going to see their famous covered bridges.



The most famous is in Hartland, which has the distinction of being the world's longest covered bridge. You can see it from quite a distance.



Jim had suggested we drive through it this time. But although the bridge may be longer than Charles, Charles is definitely taller. These dogs looked like they were letting us know what they thought of Jim's idea. We took their advice and stayed on this side of the river.



So we continued on our way, along the St. John, until we got to our next planned stop.



The town of Woodstock has one of our favourite boondocking spots. This was our third time staying here. And this time, we planned to stay two nights. It's a wide, flat parking area, right on a bay on the Meduxnekeag River (which empties into the St. John) and it's available to anyone who wants to park there.

We got there early, so we were all by ourselves and we got a prime spot with great views. By nighttime there were about five other RVs parked there.



But there were other families to entertain us.



Three families here, with goslings of different ages.



While the little ones ate, the adults always kept a watchful eye.



During past Woodstock boondocks, we'd enjoyed beautiful sunsets.

This was the best we got that evening.

And it was the last time we saw any sun at all.



Fortunately, the rain let up enough so that we could walk into town (for the first time!) and explore what Woodstock had to offer. We were a little late for the market, and all the fresh produce was gone.



But there was lots of variety available - from local books to homemade crafts, to jams and jellies, to yarns.

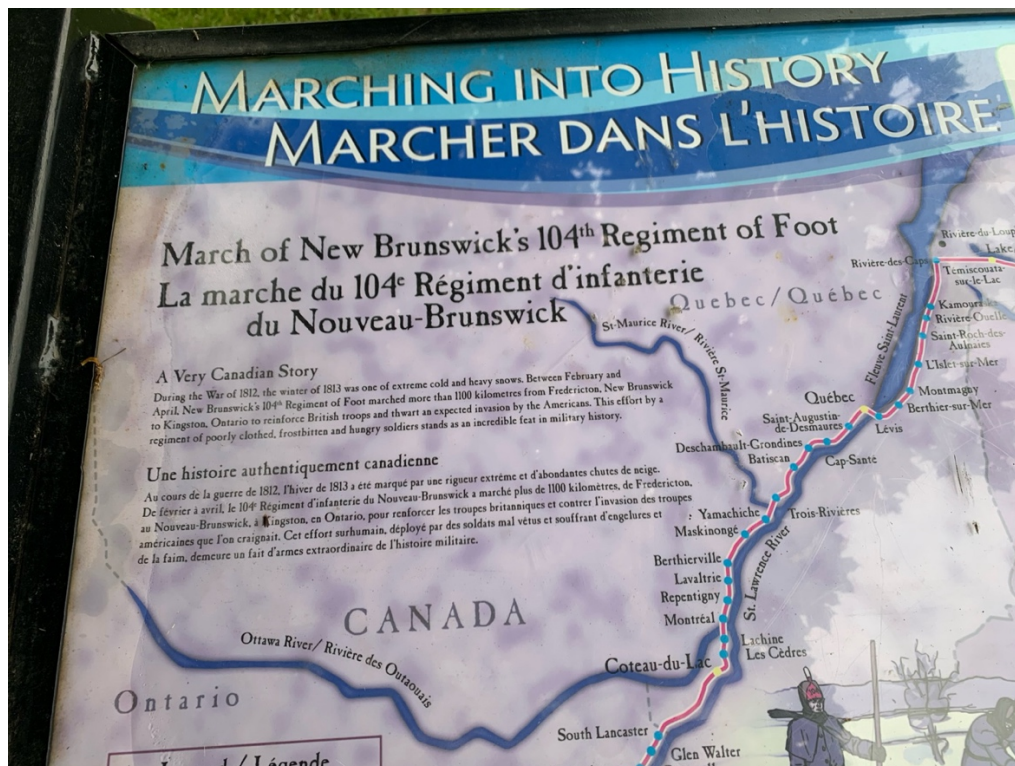


We were happy to help support the community. We also bought a book about New Brunswick waterfalls (hilarious video to come) and some sourdough cinnamon buns which supplied us with a sugar fix to last us the rest of the week.

Obviously, fishing is a popular pastime in Woodstock.



And we discovered a piece of New Brunswick history we'd never heard of before. During the War of 1812, a regiment from New Brunswick marched over 110 kms to Kingston to "thwart an expected invasion by the Americans." With any luck, such a feat won't be required again.



The next day, we left our private spot in Woodstock...



... and continued our relationship with the St. John River.



Our next stop was at another Boondockers Welcome. Mike and Marie's place was not the most scenic or well-maintained we've stayed in.

But it was definitely one of the most memorable.



About 7 years ago, Mike and Marie were travelling across Canada in their RV. They were somewhere in Manitoba when Marie broke her leg. She also had a stroke, but we weren't sure if that happened before or when she broke her leg. In any case, she had to be flown home by air ambulance, while Mike and their dog Storm turned around and drove back to New Brunswick, which must have been a harrowing experience for all of them.

Since then, Marie has had one medical issue after another. She's basically bed-ridden and Mike does his best to look after her.

We went inside to visit and, despite the fact that they obviously live with great challenges, the two of them are so sweet together, and show no signs of bitterness.

They love having boondockers stay there, because it gives them the opportunity to meet people from all over – as they used to when they travelled in their RV.

Boondockers Welcome encourages people to post reviews of the places they stay in. Every reviewer commented on how charming Mike and Marie are. Apparently, Marie often helps visitors with their knitting problems. Does it get any sweeter?

This is Mike and Storm. Ricky the cat is in the background.



We said goodbye to our lovely hosts and got back on the road.

If we ever start to complain about any challenges we face, we'll remember Mike and Marie. And we'll thank our lucky stars.