

The Lost Treasure of Malcolm Lake

My grandsons, Nathaniel (Nate – now 11) and Maxime (Max – now 8), love treasure hunts, especially when there is loot waiting for the successful hunters. A couple of summers ago when they came for a summer visit the two were hardly out of the car when they asked "Boppa, can we do a treasure hunt?" I agreed, but said I'd need a couple of days to set it up.

I came up with a plan, borrowing heavily on a bit of local folklore and one of my daughters' favourite movies, "The Princess Bride", and told Nate and Max the story of the "Dread Pirate Myers". Myers was a mid 19th century, North Frontenac kind of pirate. He didn't capture ships, but raided logging companies and occasionally hijacked log booms. Over the years he built up a considerable fortune, but his life of crime was bound to come to an end. With the local constabulary hot on his trail, the Dread Pirate Myers hid his treasure and disappeared. Rumour had it the treasure was hidden in Myer's Cave, but despite numerous searches over the years neither the cave nor the treasure was ever found.

Nate and Max were clearly interested. Then I told them I had had a breakthrough. I had bought an old book at a book sale at Ardoch, and in the book I found a very old map, on which were written clues pointing to where the Dread Pirate Myers' treasure was hidden. And the map was not a map of the Myers' Cave area, but of Malcolm Lake! Now the boys were very, very interested.

Early that morning I had gathered up the treasure, gold and silver (Chocolate coins covered in gold foil, Loonies and Toonies), headed out into the lake and hidden the treasure on a number of the islands in Malcolm Lake. With the boys hot to get started, I produced a copy of the map (The original was way too valuable!) and we began to decipher the clues. The first three clues were fairly easy, and at each location the boys correctly identified they found a zip-lock sandwich bag of swag (Who knew they had such things back then?). They quickly figured out there was more swag in bag 2 than in bag 1, and more in bag 3 than in bag 2. Since there were 10 clues, they were already counting up the fortune they'd have when they managed to decipher them all.

We continued down the lake, following the clues, visiting islands and accumulating swag. Then, at clue 7, disaster. We got to the site where the clue had led us and the boys swam ashore. No swag. Hmmm, thought Boppa, there is something unfamiliar about this place. Maybe I left it at that spot, just down the shore. The boys got back in the boat and we went to that spot. No swag. Hmmm, thought Boppa, was it this island or the next one? All these islands are starting to look the same.

To make a long story short, we couldn't find swag at any of the spots where the last clues took us. Apparently the treasure map and Boppa's mental map of where he had stashed the last four treasure bags did not match. We searched for another half hour and then gave up. Still, the boys were happy with their haul, and tried to make Boppa feel better by telling him another treasure hunter must have got to the treasure before us. They still talk about it whenever they visit.

All that to say, somewhere on four of the islands of Malcolm Lake there are zip-locked sandwich bags filled with "treasure" yet to be found.

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