



Ritt Kellogg Memorial Fund Registration

Registration No. 5XNY-Y318L

Submitted Jan 9, 2019 1:03pm by Sara Fleming

Approved Jan 9, 2019 1:10pm by Andrew Allison-Godfrey

Registration

2018/2019

Ritt Kellogg Memorial Fund

RKMF Expedition Grant Group Application 2018-2019

Registered

This is the group application for a RKMF Expedition Grant. If you have received approval, you may fill out this application as a group. In this application you will be asked to provide important details concerning your expedition.

Participant



Sara Fleming

Colorado College Student



I. Expedition Summary

Expedition Name

And I Walked Off An Old Me: Backpacking in the Canadian Rockies

Objectives

We are 4 women who aim to transform ourselves by walking through the wilderness in the Canadian Rockies. Our expedition is within our skill levels but purposefully challenging. We are lovers of the high alpine—we want to get up above forest bushwacking and into the mountains—so we planned our route to spend as much time as possible near and above treeline without requiring more risky technical climbing. We aim to travel safely on our route, develop our backcountry experience in order to have the chance to do even more trips like this in the future, and develop our relationships with each other as four dear friends reflecting on our experiences after graduation. While thinking about and planning this trip we took inspiration from Maggie Rogers' song "Alaska," written after her NOLS course. In this song, she explains how walking through a beautiful place is a way to develop a) respect for ourselves and the places that we go, b) trust in each other, as a trip like this requires serious planning, self-management, and teamwork, and c) respect for nature, as we will be exposed to beautiful, untrammelled landscapes that will make us feel in awe. Here are the lyrics for this song:

I was walking through icy streams that took my breath away
 Moving slowly through westward water
 Over glacial plains
 And I walked off you
 And I walked off an old me
 Oh me oh my I thought it was a dream
 So it seemed

And now, breathe deep
 I'm inhaling
 You and I, there's air in between
 Leave me be, I'm exhaling

You and I, there's air in between
You and I, there's air in between

Cut my hair so I could rock back and forth
Without thinking of you
Learned to talk and say
Whatever I wanted to
And I walked off you
And I walked off an old me
Oh me oh my I thought it was a dream
So it seemed

In "Alaska," Maggie is reflecting on her time in the wilderness (specifically Alaska) and how it helped her to grow as an individual and also to discover her own strength and capability. The song has a positive spirit of moving on and growth and also acknowledges the challenges that she faced along the way. This song gives a nod to girl power and females exploring the wilderness, which is a big component of our proposed trip as well. As all of us will be graduating in this May, this song (and this trip) speak to feelings of newness and future growth, and continuing to challenge ourselves even after we leave CC.

Location

Our trip takes place in Alberta, Canada, spanning three sub-ranges of the Front Continental Ranges in Canadian Rockies: The Cloister Mountains, the First Range, and le Grand Brazeau. We will travel in a loop starting in the very north boundary of Banff National Park, cross briefly into Jasper National Park, and then east to the White Goat Wilderness. We will then travel north over mountain passes and high-altitude basins, camping alongside alpine lakes and streams. North of Samson Lake, we will be in the Job/Cline "forest land use zone," which is currently proposed to be incorporated into the "Bighorn Backcountry." We will then cross back west into Jasper National Park and travel south back to our trailhead.

Following CC's value to explore, understand and respect our sense of place, we will study flora, fauna, and geologic features along our route. Annabelle will serve as trip Naturalist following her summer job as a Hut Naturalist in the AMC Huts of New Hampshire, and will study up on local ecology before the trip.

The ecology of the area is multifaceted and our route will traverse two major vegetation zones. Below treeline, we will encounter lodgepole pine, spruce, and fir trees along with riparian vegetation along creeks and rivers. Caribou, grey wolf, moose, elk and coyotes inhabit areas below treeline. Above treeline, we may spot marmots, bighorn sheep and pika. Horned larks and eagles inhabit the skies (Albertaparks.ca). Creeks and rivers along our route feed into the Columbia River Basin which provides water to plants, animals, and people in two Canadian Provinces, Alberta and British Columbia, as well as seven U.S. states. Since we are lucky enough to explore the very birthplace, or headwaters of this major river, we will come to appreciate its beauty and value by practicing Leave No Trace Principles.

Geologically, the region is exceptionally intriguing, made of predominantly sedimentary units deposited along the North American craton, Laurentia, as it subducted during the Early Cambrian. Many of these beds were later uplifted, building the peaks we will admire and exposing massive swaths of sedimentary bedding that would otherwise be inaccessible to our eyes. The Gog Group underlies the region, which contains thickly-bedded, fossiliferous sandstone, conglomerate, and quartzite (ParksCanada.ca). Annabelle will bring her hand lens and surely offer up some geology lessons along the way.

Departure Date

Aug 17, 2019

Return Date

Sep 3, 2019

Days in the Field

13

Wilderness Character

A 109,856-acre expanse of peaks, hanging glaciers, and alpine lakes on the eastern borders of Jasper and Banff national parks, the White Goat Wilderness offers a rare key combination of solitude and spectacularity. Established in

1961, it is one of only three other places in Alberta that have received the strictest definition of "wilderness area," establishing a strict benchmark for pristine landscapes and allowing only travel by foot. We will primarily be travelling off-trail. Especially once we get into the remote northern section, we are unlikely to see other parties. It is extremely likely that our exact route has never been done before.

North of Samson Lake, our route takes us out of the strict boundaries of the White Goat Wilderness and into the proposed "Bighorn Backcountry." Though these sections don't receive the same strict protection the White Goat does, they still retain a similar wilderness character because of their remote nature, being at least a day's travel from the nearest trailheads and only allowing non-motorized travel.

We will also spend 2 nights in established backcountry campsites in Jasper National Park, and 1 night in a "random" (dispersed) camping in Jasper. The established sites are considered "semi-primitive," with amenities such as pit toilets, bear poles, and fire rings and we are likely to meet other parties camped here. This route is the best way to get into more remote wilderness via our desired trailhead, and Jasper National Park does not allow random camping closer than 6 km to the nearest established site. Because we will only be in the (comparatively) more populated national park at the beginning and end of our trip, our time there won't detract from our wilderness experience.

II. Participant Qualifications

a. Participants' Graduation Date

Annabelle O'Neill, May 2019

Clare Ende, May 2019

Sara Fleming, May 2019

Sonya Padden, May 2019

b. Medical Certifications

Annabelle O'Neill, WFR expires January 2020

Clare Ende, W-EMT expires May 24, 2020

Sara Fleming, WFA expires June 2019, intended WFR May 6-14th in Denver, CO through NOLS WMI

Sonya Padden, WFR expires January 2020

Does your group have adequate experience?

Yes

d. Training Plan

One of the reasons we are so excited about our group for this trip is that we have all been backpacking together before, on a first block break trip in the Collegiate Range that included a Class II peak summit. Sonya, Sara, and Annabelle have planned many backcountry skiing trips together, and Sara, Sonya, and Clare have travelled extensively together while they were studying abroad in Spain. Thus, we have a lot of experience making decisions together and some experience navigating the type of terrain we will be travelling in together. We know each other's communication styles, skill-sets, strengths, and limitations, and feel confident that we will create a fun and safe group dynamic.

However, we will need to practice, particularly specific skills that we need for this trip that may be rusty, such as off-trail navigation in forests and high alpine, alpine travel in Class II/III terrain, and bear safety. In late spring, we plan to do a weekend trip in the Sangre de Cristo range, which is warmer and dryer than other Colorado ranges. By May, enough snowpack will likely have melted so that we can practice off-trail scree scrambling.

As our route will be physically challenging with a lot of elevation gain and loss each day, we will need to be in shape. We will all have a regular exercise routine this spring, including skiing, hiking, and running. To prepare and fulfill a long-talked about CC goal, we will do the incline weekly.

Annabelle will have a summer job that includes hiking 5+ miles daily from May-August, with twice per week 5-mile hikes carrying 60 lbs. Clare will be working at a farm/summer camp where she will be leading backpacking trips each

week with the campers. She will also be getting in shape through the physical labor involved with working on the farm, taking care of the animals and the garden. Sara is planning on working for a trail crew with Southwest Conservation Crew or Colorado Fourteeners Initiative, where she will be expected to perform heavy manual labor and carry a large pack up steep trails. Sonya will be travelling in Russia and hiking in Kyrgyzstan with her family for July, and will also have access to a gym and running trails when she is back in the US. With our outdoor-filled summers, each group member will also have a chance to practice off-trail navigation with other parties on our days off.

III. Expedition Logistics, Gear and Food

e. Travel Plan

Sonya and Sara will drive from Glenwood Springs, Colorado. We are driving because we'd like to see some cool scenery along the way, and it will be somewhat essential to have a car up in the park as there is minimal public transportation available, and none to our trailhead. We will split the drive from up into 2 days, the first day being 11 hours and the second day being about 7 hours—this means Sara and Sonya only have to drive 5.5 and then 3.5 hours per day. We will switch off frequently, ensuring we will not become overtired. On the first day, Sara and Sonya will drive to Belgrade, MT, stopping to camp. On the second day, they will drive to Calgary.

Annabelle and Clare are flying from their destinations to Calgary because they both have summer jobs that end very soon before our start date. Sonya and Sara will pick them up from the airport and spend the night camping outside of Banff National Park, then spend the next day and night preparing and camp in Jasper National Park near our trailhead.

On the day we hike out, we will drive to campsite close to the Calgary airport and drop Clare off the next morning for her flight back to Charlotte. Annabelle is working in Colorado for the fall so she will drive back with Sonya and Sara. We will again split the drive up into 2 days, this time with 3 drivers.

The travel plan is discussed in more detail in the itinerary.

e. Expedition Itinerary

[RITT Final Itinerary \(1\).pdf](#) (1.3MB)

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[Ritt Evac Plan .pdf](#) (142KB)

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We will not be re-ratoning due to the remote location of our route and the expense of a horsepack re-ratoning.

Food Storage

We will use ursacks. We have chosen this method because they lighter than bear cans, but bearproof, which is good because hanging our food might not be feasible in some of our higher elevation campsites. When possible, we will also hang the ursacks for additional protection from wildlife. Semi-primitive sites in Jasper have bear poles that we will use to hang the ursacks.

We will always cook, eat, store our food, and dispose of graywater at least 100 yards away from and downwind of our tent site to avoid attracting wildlife to our camp.

g. Food List

[Food Ritt - Sheet1.pdf](#) (72KB)

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f. Equipment List

[Ritt Equipment List.pdf](#) (52KB)

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b. LNT Principles

Yes

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When travelling in the national park, it is imperative that we follow designated trails and camp in designated sites unless doing so presents a safety hazard (#2). We will do our business in pit toilets at campsites (#3). We will probably encounter other people, so we will respect their space and quiet, and also do thorough camp sweeps to pick up others' waste as well as our own (#7).

When we are travelling off trail, we will travel on rock and snow as much as possible. If we have to travel in sensitive vegetation zones, we will spread out to disperse our impact. When choosing campsites in remote valleys we will look for "durable surfaces" (ideally flat rock, sand, or snow). We will dispose of waste with catholes 6-8 inches deep, 4-6 inches wide, and 200+ feet from water, trails, and camp.

We will try to avoid encounters with wildlife by lightly chatting to alert them of our presence and by properly storing our food. If we encounter wildlife we will leave them at a safe distance (#6). We will abide by any seasonal fire restrictions and only make fires in designated fire rings below treeline, using deadfall sticks that are thinner than a person's forearm (#5). We will not pick wildflowers or take cultural artifacts (#4).

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See above

IV. Risk Management

b. Objective Hazards

Inclement Weather

The most significant weather hazard is lightning, which is most dangerous when above treeline. To mitigate this risk, we will always aim to traverse high passes in the morning. If we cannot traverse passes in the morning, we have backup campsites on the close side of these passes (see Itinerary Day 6). If thunderstorms are rapidly approaching we will stay below treeline and wait them out, spending the night on the other side of the pass if necessary. Although we have a few camps that are near and above treeline (Nights 2,3,5,6, and 11), we will make sure to choose a low-lying tent site so we are not the tallest thing around. We also have contingency plans for these sites in case weather is truly threatening.

In August, new snow is unlikely, but enduring rain is a possibility. We will have adequate rain gear and shelter (tent, ground tarp) and will secure our tents tightly to avoid getting wet. Heavy rains may also increase river flows, make passes slippery, and increase the possibility of mudslide and rockslide. We will be mindful of recent weather patterns when we encounter these terrain obstacles. We may also encounter high winds, which can make high passes more difficult, and at their worst, threaten to break tent poles. We will ensure that each of our campsites has adequate shelter (trees, rocks, etc.) and will move to a lower campsite if not.

Wildlife

Wildlife includes bighorn sheep, mountain goats, woodland caribou, elk, cougars, wolves, grizzly bears and black bears. When it comes to bears, the best approach is to avoid encounters with bears by taking steps such as making a lot of noise, watching for fresh bear signs (tracks, droppings, diggings, etc.), hiking with other people, hiking during daylight hours, storing your food properly at night, and packing out garbage. Other precautions include carrying bear spray with us at all times and knowing how to use it, and if you see a bear you should remain calm and move away quietly without getting its attention. If a bear does see you, make yourself look big and back away slowly. If the bear approaches you, get ready to use your bear spray and do not run and do not make direct eye contact with the bear.

River Crossings

We chose to travel in late August to avoid high water and mitigate the danger of river crossings. The Brazeau River is the largest river we will cross. According to the Jasper National Park backcountry office, the Brazeau River will likely be lower than waist-deep at most sections and can be crossed as long as one is cautious. We will make sure to call the backcountry office closer to our departure date and get updated information on water levels and bridged crossings.

Rough, off-trail alpine terrain/ Class II and III scrambling

Several of the passes we are planning to cross over in the high alpine do not have an established path or have only a very faint established path, and thus we are expecting to run into some Class II and III scrambling. We have taken several measures to make navigating these passes a fun and rewarding challenge rather than a terrifying epic that leads to injury.

Although we have checked all the trip reports we can find online and reached out to post authors when possible to confirm that certain passes are doable with a large pack, there are some that we were not able to find information on due to their remote character. Since topographic maps and satellite images can only reveal so much, we have researched backup routes in case any of the passes we are planning to travel over turn out to be more dangerous when we see them from the ground and require technical skills or equipment we don't have. The passes we are most concerned about are Stewart Pass (Day 4), Fallingwater Pass (Day 6), and Obstruction Pass (Day 9). Before travelling over Stewart Pass and Cline Pass we will have a rest day, so we'll have a chance to scout the passes with packs off to determine the safest route. For Fallingwater Pass, we have a backup campsite on the McDonald Creek basin side in case weather moves in before we can cross the pass.

Safe Alpine Travel Technique: Before traversing wide slopes or faces, we will assess previous and potential rock slide zones and choose a route as a group that is safe and reasonable. When travelling through loose scree fields that present danger of rockfall, we will move very slowly and carefully. If we notice that the danger is more serious (steeper slopes, bigger boulders, looser rocks) we will only move one at a time, staying in "safe zones" away from the fall line while others are moving. We will frequently check in with each other on comfort levels and note when there is a loose rock by yelling "ROCK!"

Although most of the snowpack should have melted by late August, we may also encounter permanent snowfields. We will avoid these when possible. Following Sara, Sonya, and Annabelle's training with snowpack analysis, we will assess routes before passage, if required, and then travel one-by-one over zones that we feel have the most stable snowpack.

Navigation

Our route includes a significant amount of off-trail navigation. On the days we are off trail, we expect to experience route finding problems and go much slower than on trail (~1 hour/mile, plus ~1 hour per 1000 ft of elevation gain), thus, we have made sure our mileage is much shorter on those days.

Common mountain ailments

Altitude Sickness: The northern rockies are lower in altitude than the Colorado rockies. Most of our trip we will be between 6,000 and 9,000 feet. The highest altitude we will be at is the summit of Mt. Willis (10,417 ft). Thus, serious altitude sickness isn't a huge concern, but knowing that Annabelle and Clare will be coming from lower elevations (New Hampshire and North Carolina, respectively), we will make sure to hydrate well, take it easy, and watch for signs and symptoms, especially in the first few days.

Illness: If any member is struck by illness such as cold, flu, or stomach bug, we will assess to see whether it requires evacuation or whether the individual can try to stick it out in the backcountry. The best way to get over any of these illnesses is rest. We have the advantage of having a route with several rest days built in, so if we had to, we could spend 2 nights in any site and skip a rest day further on. If an ill individual does not start feeling better within a day of rest, it will be a risk for them to continue, and we should hike out the nearest self-evac route or trigger SOS if more serious conditions are involved.

Dehydration: To prevent dehydration, we will drink water! We will also bring electrolyte mix to make water more appetizing and carry a backup purification method.

Cold injuries: The average low in Jasper National Park in August is 35 degrees. Although we aren't travelling through an especially cold climate, it's potentially cold enough to get uncomfortable, and hypothermia and frostbite are still risks. The best way to avoid the serious dangers of cold is to stay warm and dry. We will bring proper layers and be mindful to change out socks and layers after river crossings and when they are sweaty, especially if temperatures are low.

Infection: Our WFR courses (and EMT for Clare and OEC for Sara) have prepared us to assess whether infections (most likely from open wounds or blisters, but also venomous animals) require evacuation. If they do, we will begin this process immediately. If not, we will provide appropriate care within our scope of practice.

Exhaustion: We will be hiking a challenging route off-trail with lots of elevation gain and loss, so we've kept our mileage for each day relatively short and given ourselves 2 rest days with optional day-hiking/peak summits/exploration. This should give us time to do our route without having to rush each day. We'll all be in shape before we leave, but we'll make sure to check in with each other and make sure no member is being pushed beyond their limits.

Sun injuries: We will wear sunglasses to prevent snow blindness and sunscreen and hats to prevent sunburn.

Evacuation Plan

In the event of an illness, injury, or other event, we will first assess the urgency of the situation. If a rapid evac is necessary, we will trigger the interactive SOS function on our inReach Explorer device. The interactive SOS allows 2-way messaging with emergency response teams (for us, the Jasper National Park Dispatch). If a team member is in life-or-limb danger, we will communicate that, treat the team member as well as possible, and await instructions for a helicopter landing.

If it is not a life-or-limb emergency but still requires an evac that we don't feel comfortable self-assisting an evacuation, we will trigger interactive SOS and inform emergency response teams of the situation. We will then be able to coordinate with search and rescue teams, and likely exit the wilderness via one of our self-evac routes, but with their help. Having 4 expedition members is advantageous because in the case of an emergency situation we should never have to leave any member alone.

In the event that a team member is injured or ill enough that they must leave the field, but can safely hike out of their own accord or with minimal assistance, we have planned evacuation routes and noted which evac route we would take for each day in our itinerary. Evac routes don't exceed Class III, with very minimal Class I or II terrain. Due to the nature of our route, many evac routes are not ideal—some are 20+ miles on forested trails or off-trail, and would thus require 2 or more days to hike out an injured person. Self-walkout routes for each day/night are detailed with maps and mileage in the Evac Plan, which is attached alongside the detailed itinerary.

We will use our judgment as to whether a self-walkout makes sense depending on the day, type of injury/illness, and conditions with the rest of the group. If we do decide on a self-evac, we will travel slowly, and safely with first aid supplies, a communication plan, and food and shelter supplies. We will immediately contact appropriate emergency response teams or self-transport to a clinic when we reach the frontcountry. See emergency resources below for contacts.

Special Preparedness

N/a

e. Emergency Resources

RESCUE RESOURCE: If we are faced with an emergency requiring evacuation, we will trigger an SOS on our inReach device, our messages will go to the International Emergency Response Coordination Center (IERCC). They will receive our current GPS coordinates and begin communication with local emergency response teams, which for the entirety of our trip will be the Jasper National Park Dispatch Office.

When we make our permit reservations for designated campsites with the Jasper National park backcountry office, we will also tell them the dates we are planning to enter the wilderness area and give them coordinates for all of our campsites, so they will have our entire intended itinerary. This will be also be shared with the Jasper National Park Dispatch Office. Below is the contact for that office, as well as some more general contacts that may be useful in an emergency situation and to receive information.

Jasper National Park Dispatch Office: (780) 852-6155

Jasper National Park Information Centre and backcountry trail office

Located at 500 Connaught Drive

Information Centre: Tel - 780-852-6176

Backcountry trail office: Tel - 780-852-6177

Park Wardens - 24 hours: 780-852-6155

White Goat Wilderness Administration/Information Office:

1st fl. Prov. Bldg. 4919-51 St.

Rocky Mountain House, Alberta

T4T 1B5

403-845-8349

HOSPITALS AND CLINICS:**Seton General Hospital:**

518 Robson St, Jasper, AB T0E 1E0, Canada

780-852-3344

Cottage Medical Clinic, 505 Turret St.:

300 Miette Ave, Jasper, AB T0E 1E0, Canada

780-852-4885

Emergency Communication

DeLorme InReach Explorer device (we have explained how we will be using the device in the above sections)

V. Budget**Budget**

[Ritt Budget.pdf](#) (218KB)

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Transportation

900.18

Food and Fuel

558.55

Maps and Books

55.80

Communication Device Rental

64.95

Permits/Fees

221.29

Gear Rentals

33.00

Total Funding Request

458.45


Cost Minimization Measures

2 team members are driving instead of flying on the way there, and 3 team members are driving on the way back. Not only does this save us the expense of airfare, but also of a shuttle or taxi service from the airport to the national park. We are buying cheaper lightweight food instead of doing all of our meals with expensive lightweight-freeze-

dried foods. We already own a satellite device, which saves us the expense of paying for one. We are able to borrow most of our other equipment or rent it for free from CCOE. At any point (permits, map purchases, etc.) we are choosing the cheapest option that still allows sufficient quality to safely do our trip.

VI. Expedition Agreement

Expedition Agreement

132KB)
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