

WATER BOY

By Lois Nuttall

Thunder Bay Ventures

Greg Heroux is one of Thunder Bay's 'lifestyle entrepreneurs'. His business plan focuses on making a living from a lifelong passion for sailing. He'll do it by sharing that passion with the thousands of residents, students and visitors that haven't yet discovered the fabulous experiences that exist beyond the breakwater wall.

One of four siblings raised in Thunder Bay, Greg says he never really 'knew or understood' the lake until his dad Frank and uncle, Hank Akervall, bought a sailboat. From that point on Greg was hooked and became a lifelong 'water boy'. Lake Superior was suddenly accessible to him and those early daytrips with his dad and uncle changed his 'whole view of what Thunder Bay has to offer'. At 15, he was very capable on the water and often took the boat out with friends. Now, at 43, he's an accomplished, bilingual, certified captain and teaching master. He still gets a big rush when people are in awe of nature as a bald eagle hovers over the sailboat at Thompson Island or they feel the wind across their faces as they head for the harbour as the sun is setting. Greg feels Thunder Bay has so much to offer within four hours of the harbour: Silver Islet, Thompson and Pie Islands, the Kam River, Amethyst Harbour etc. "The waves sometimes are a good size but you're not out on the 'big lake' as the bay itself lends protection".

When asked 'why Thunder Bay?' Greg replied: "For 4 months a year, there is no better place to sail". He should know. Greg studied engineering at Queen's University, then quite by accident stumbled upon the world of fashion and modeled professionally for the next 15 years. For 2 to 8 months at a time, he worked in over 16 countries - Japan, Turkey, Greece, Finland, Australia etc. - where he always sought out opportunities to sail. When his daughter was four, he and his mate parted ways and Greg brought his daughter back to the 'stability and support of family' in Thunder Bay. He found a good job with Summit Pipeline Services who were quite supportive of his 'need to be on the water'. Perhaps, if his brother hadn't suggested buying a sailboat, he would still be



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in the pipeline business. Instead, he took a huge risk and bought the 40 foot "Frodo" with his dad. Father and son started to work and sail together again with the idea that the boat must 'earn its keep'. They first chartered it out to experienced sailors as a bareboat charter, then discovered that a lot more people didn't know how to sail and wanted to learn. So one thing led to another - tours led to students, teaching led to ISPA certification and more business led to another boat. Greg's dad has since passed away but would be pleased to see that July and August are busy, busy with harbour tours, adult sailing instruction and corporate charters. Greg's business plan will fill June and September with corporate team building sessions and teaching university, college and senior high school students to sail. He firmly believes that if our post secondary institutions offered sailing as a credit course (a natural for our location), a future engineer, doctor or MRI technician would eventually want a lifestyle that includes water based activities. Thunder Bay would definitely be a top of mind destination and we, as a community, would retain and attract more families.

For staying the course and helping to build waterfront business (www.sailsuperior.com), Greg Heroux is an everyday hero.

Everyday Heroes is a community initiative by Thunder Bay Ventures. Everywhere there are people living, working, playing and contributing to the fabric of our city. Nominate a hero-heroes@thunderbayventures.com. Read about past heroes at www.thunderbayventures.com