



Camp Nominungues canoeing instructors preparing their canoes for their next canoe trip -1991  
(That is me in purple)



## Portaging a heavy canoe with a Tump Line.

At Canoeconia 2007-08, I had the opportunity to demonstrate a traditional system for portaging a canoe. Before the introduction of the Yoke, canoeist used a system that incorporated center thwart, some string and a tump line.

Today, this system is used by only a few people and a summer camp in Quebec, Camp Nominungue. This camp uses this system because of its dedication to maintaining tradition and its use of heavier than average cedar canvas canoes. Each summer, hundreds of young teens navigate their 70 lbs canoes with ease over some of the most challenging portages.

Traveling in a small group of 7 trippers, each trip is able to transport their gear and canoes, over any portage, no matter how long, in only one trip. They can accomplish this because, using a tump line, each canoe can be carried by one person.

This is a crash course in how to build your own traditional Portage Tump Line.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at [brian@levelsixinc.com](mailto:brian@levelsixinc.com)



Canoeconia 2008

## Portaging a Canoe with a Tump line: 101 Part 1. Orientation

1. Tump Line Attachment Point, 1.5 inches forward of the Center Thwart.

I now use a 2" Nylon Seat Belt webbing as opposed to the Leather version shown here. Nylon stretches less and lasts far longer than degradable leather. My Tump line is 1 yard long with 2 feet of rope (3 mm thick) attached to each end.

2. Center Thwart replaces your center Yoke.

I have only utilized this system using a Center Thwart. I concept of using a contoured yoke instead seems problematic.

I use 4 yards of 3mm cord to complete this Cow Hitch rigging system. Four cow hitches will do it.

3. Rope rigging on the Thawrt.

This allows you to insert two paddle blades into the gaps, allowing you to rest the blades on your shoulders while you get your Tump Line in place over your head.

What you will need:

1 x Ash center thwart

2 x Canoe paddles

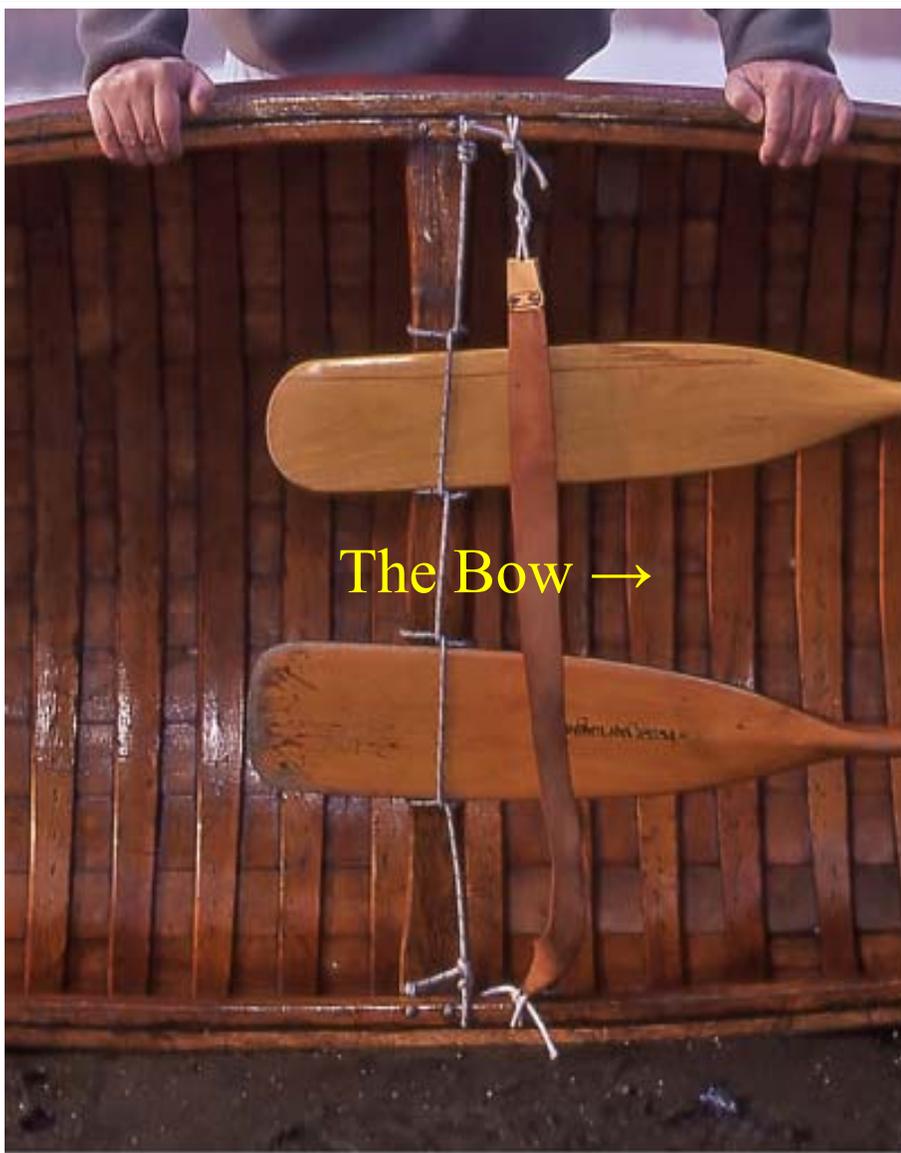
1 yard of 2" nylon **Seat Belt Webbing** for the Tumpline.

2 x 12 inch long **3 mm Cord lengths** to attached the tump line to the canoe.

4 yards of **3 mm cord** for center thwart rigging.

2 x **10" cords** to tie the paddle shafts to the bow seat.

Ian Blatchford rigging his canoe for portage. Camp Nomingue, 1985.



Me and my mother, Diane Cooke at the end of our 10 day Canoe trip in La Verendrye Park, Quebec, 1991.  
(Note the paddle shafts tied to the bow seat)



## Part 2. Detail Installation

### Thwart:

Replace your Canoes Yoke with a Center Thwart of the same length.

### Cord rigging:

Attach a 3 mm cord to the gunwale just forward of the thwart.

Tie a series of four cow hitches from port to starboard with gaps wide enough to insert two paddle blades. The tighter the gap, the less play there will be while carrying the canoe

### Head Gap:

Make sure that the gap between the two paddles blades is wide enough for your head (and ears).

### Tump Line:

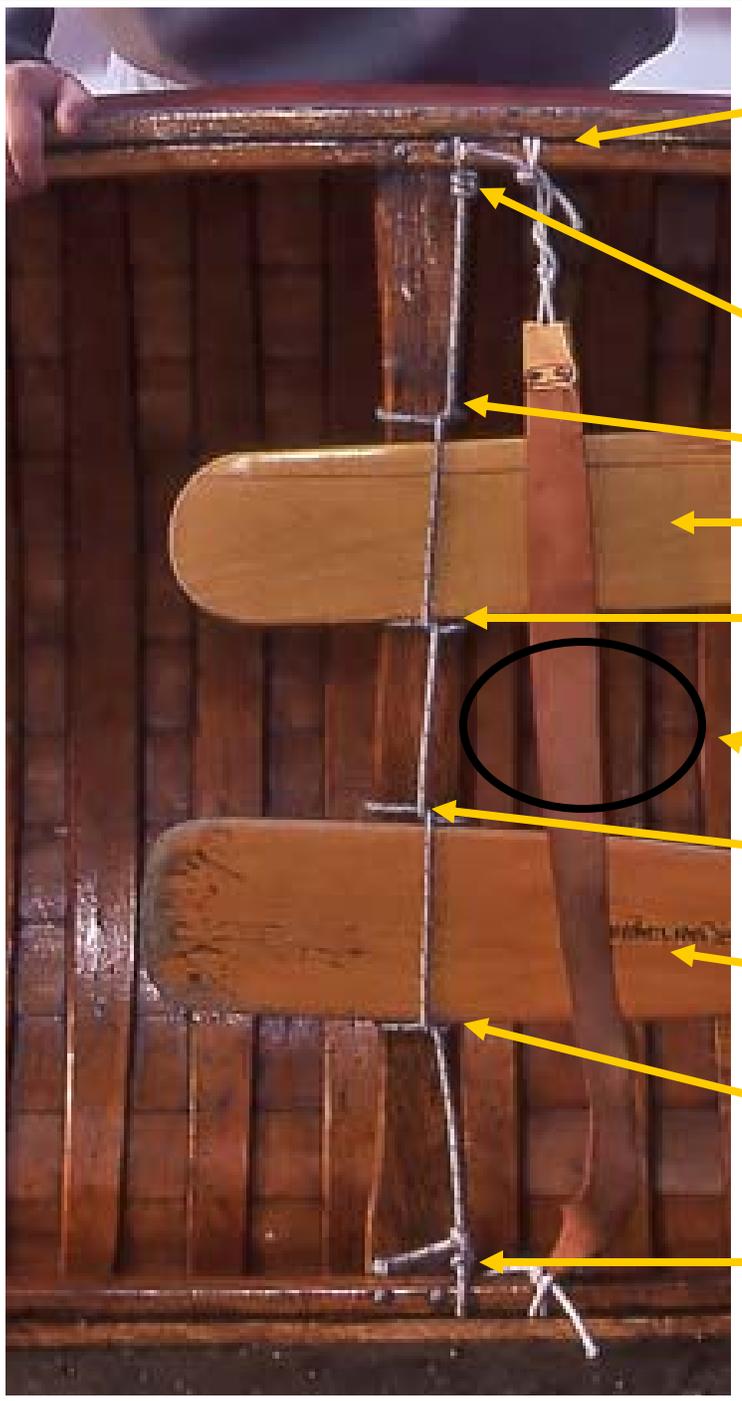
Attached to each gunwale 1.5 inches forward of the center thwart.



The Bow →

Detailed View:

1. Tump Line attachment point. ( If your gunwales are not scuppered, drill a hole between the inwale and outwale, wide enough to insert a 3 mm cord.)
2. Thwart cord rigging attachment point.
3. Cow Hitch
4. Paddle
5. Cow Hitch
6. Head Gap
7. Cow Hitch
8. Paddle
9. Cow Hitch
10. Trucker Hitch



#### **Why a Tump and Not a Yoke?**

**The answer is easy. A Yoke is designed to carry weight on your shoulders. But your shoulders are not designed to carry weight. If our canoe is heavier than average, 65 lbs or more, then that weight should be carried on your head, which will transfer the load down your bodies frame. Your frame (spine) is designed to carry far heavier loads then you shoulders, so a heavier canoe should feel lighter when carried using a tump line.**



75 year old FM Van Wagner, the founder of Camp Nominigwe portaging a 70 lbs cedar canvas Canoe using a Tump Line

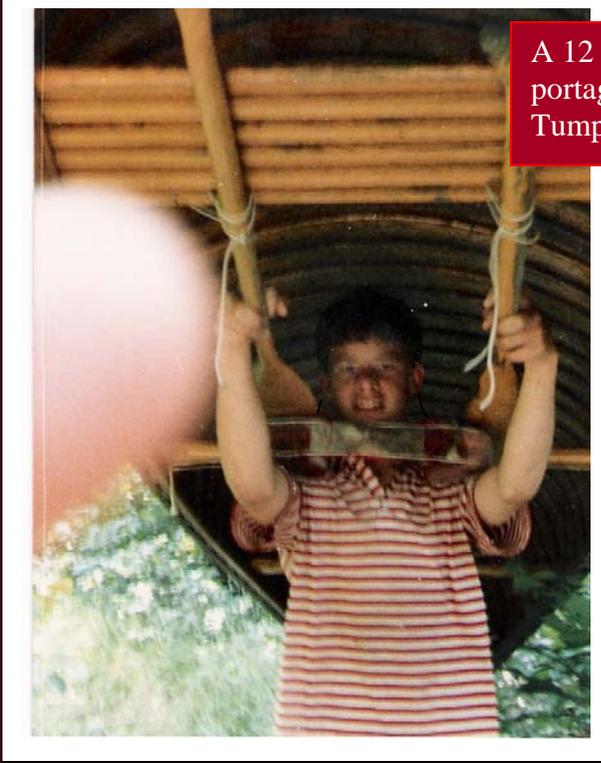
Note the Tump Line strap running under the paddle blades and over his head. The paddle shafts are secured to the bow seat.

Once you have the canoe on your shoulders, slide the Tump Line over your head. This will transfer the weight directly to your bodies frame.

Note: the canoe is not resting on my shoulders. If the Tump line is adjusted right, there should be a ¼ inch space between the paddle faces and your shoulders. This will leave enough space for the canoe to rock while walking over uneven ground.

Demonstrating the carrying technique at Canoecopia 2008





A 12 year old Camp Nomingue canoe tripper portaging a 70 lbs cedar canvas canoe with a Tump Line.

Step 1. Rig your paddles

Step 2. The Roll

Step 3. Watch you head

Step 4. Place the canoe on your shoulders

Step 5. Slide the tump line onto the top your head. Stand up straight so the canoe lifts off your shoulders.

Step 6: Enjoy the portage.



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.

Demonstrating the technique at Canoecopia 2008. The canoe is a 17 foot Royalex Prospector from Nova Craft Canoe.