

*Tundra swans*

## SOLO ON THE BEAUFORT SEA

**Deborah Percival**

I'm paddling alone in the waves of the Beaufort Sea. Overhead the bright blue sky is punctuated with a few fluffy cumulus clouds. I'm leaving the protection of the Mackenzie River Delta and heading out into the Arctic Ocean. The only sounds are the water: waves lapping the kayak and the slice and drip of my paddle as I ride the waves of the Beaufort Sea. Distant mirages make offshore islands appear to rise high out of the water. I can't believe the breathtaking beauty of this land: rolling seas and rolling tundra. And I can't believe I'm here.

It had all started the previous January when I was pouring over the maps for a canoe trip I was organizing on the Snake River in the Yukon. I noticed how close I would be to the tundra of the Arctic coast. While I was looking forward to paddling through the mountains on

the Snake River, my true love is the tundra: paddling in the Barrens had hooked me. So I started dreaming about paddling from Inuvik down through the Mackenzie Delta and along the coast of the Arctic Ocean to Tuktoyaktuk.

At first I didn't take the dreaming seriously because I feared that such a trip was too far outside of my experience, but the more I read about the area and talked with people who had paddled there, the more realistic the dreaming became. In the Mackenzie Delta the Arctic coast is at its gentlest: the tides are low, the terrain is low with few cliffs, and the waters are warmed by the river flow. The tree line extends furthest north here and human activity is high: my route would follow a well-charted shipping lane. I'd like some day to go

on the kind of challenging solo trips that George Luste, Gail Ferris, Herb Pohl, and Victoria Jason do, and this looked like a good place to make a beginner's solo Arctic journey.

Why travel alone? When alone you tend to see more of the land: your interactions with the land are not diluted by your interactions with others in your group. Actually, one of the things I like about travelling with a group is sharing your thoughts and life experiences. But then you keep finding that while you are physically travelling through the wilderness you are often mentally back home in our human-dominated environment.

When alone, wildlife is more approachable, and you're more approachable. It's easier to leave more of your society and culture behind which makes it easier to learn from the native people you meet along the way. With a group, conversations between us southerners tends to impose more of our culture into the interactions. And the hope of visiting with the Inuvait was one of my motivations for taking this trip.

So in mid-July 1995 I flew from Toronto to Inuvik with my packs and my folding kayak. I had called the airline company to find out what the excess baggage fee would be for my third pack and described the dimensions of the bag holding the kayak frame. The helpful airline person said: "Too bad it's not two feet longer, because then it would travel for free as a ski bag." I immediately got out my sewing machine and lengthened the bag by two feet and thus managed to fit all my gear for five weeks, including my 17-foot tandem kayak, into the standard airline baggage allowance.

My hope was to spend the next two weeks paddling to Tuktoyaktuk and to then join my friends for the Snake River trip. I still hadn't made the final decision on whether I was experienced enough for the Tuk trip, and was planning on using any advice I could get about the coast from the locals to make that decision. I still had unanswered questions about surf, coastal elevations, freshwater, tides, currents, and polar bears. I figured that if I decided against the Tuk trip I could easily entertain myself for two weeks paddling around the Inuvik area.

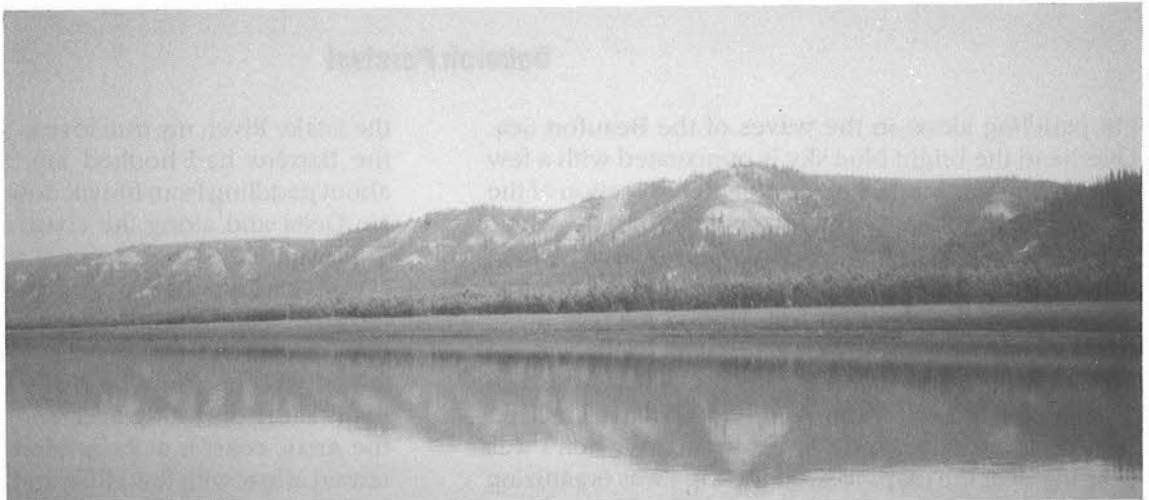
I started getting advice before I even got off the plane. When I was talking with a couple heading for a trip on the Horton River, their obvious advice for me came concealed as

a question: "Won't you be afraid being out for two whole weeks all by yourself?" The answer I gave was that my one-week solo trips had never seemed long enough. I wish I had thought to answer with a quote from my favorite polar writer, Apsley Cherry-Gerard: "If you are a brave man you will do nothing; if you are fearful you may do much, for none but cowards have need to prove their bravery."

In Inuvik I quickly got lots of useful advice. The taxi driver told me I would have to get up at three in the morning to see the midnight sun as sun time is three hours off from white-man's time up here. (If you look at a globe, you'll see that Inuvik is actually above a spot fairly far out into the Pacific.) From the Gwitch'n Tribal Office I got permission to travel their lands.

An Inuvait elder spent an afternoon with me pouring over maps of the coast while telling me tales from her childhood about going whale hunting with her family. She pointed out a protected inland route to use to avoid rounding a rough exposed headland. She told me about water so shallow that you have to pull up the "kicker" way offshore when you come in to land. She recalled the abundance of driftwood for fires, and showed me several good spots to get freshwater. She indicated the locations of whale camps I would be passing and told me to stop at them even if there was no one there and to wait for the occupants to return from their whale hunt, as the people would want to visit with me. All of the information indicated a doable trip, so I registered with the RCMP and set off.

I was camped just a kilometre from the Mackenzie River, so it was an easy initial portage; actually a very easy portage since I took a taxi to the mud beach which serves as the public boat launch. I gathered the usual interested crowd of young and old as I assembled my folding kayak. But Inuvik's crowd was a little different from the ones that have watched me down south since it included some boys who had just finished making a seal-skin-covered kayak and they were eager to compare my aluminum frame structure to their wooden one.



*Caribou Hills bordering East Channel*

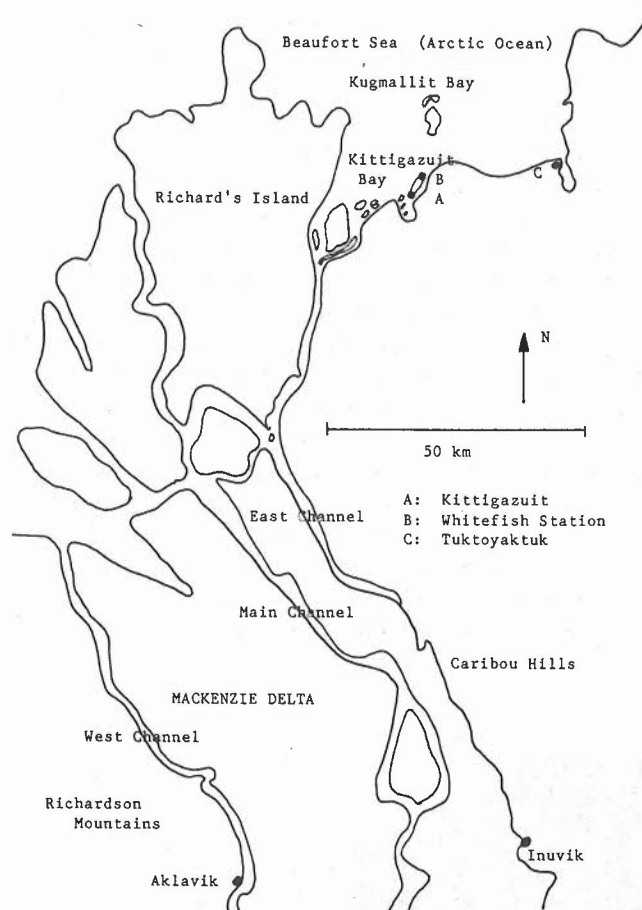
I eventually put in on 12 July and began paddling down the twisting East Channel of the broad Mackenzie. The narrow, spruce-lined channel had a peacefulness only occasionally punctuated by the drone of the motor of an approaching small boat. The bright sun and gentle breeze contributed to the idyllic atmosphere.

About lunch time I decided to head for a nice sand-covered stretch of shore for a break. I threw both legs over the side of the cockpit and jumped to my feet. But my feet just kept going down into the thick muck and didn't stop until I was thigh deep in mud. Guess it wasn't sand after all. Only by hanging onto the kayak and thrusting my paddle into the mud was I able to extricate myself. Since both shores of the channel were either covered with dense willows or with patches of soft mud, I realized this was to be a day without shore leave.

By evening I was beginning to worry a bit about finding a spot to camp when I saw a cut in one bank that led to a beautiful little bay which had one small beach with just enough space for a tent. I found I could get ashore by paddling into a marshy area and then gingerly walking across the plant roots. I spent half an hour making a driftwood boardwalk from the beach to my boat so that I could easily unload. Only afterwards did I notice the fresh grizzly tracks right across my proposed tent site. I decided to leave this little bit of paradise to the bear and paddled off, glad to know that the sun wouldn't set before I found a campsite (unless of course I couldn't find a site within the next two weeks).

A few kilometres downstream I reached the beginnings of the Caribou Hills which form the eastern border of a portion of the Delta. I found a boulder-covered shore whose solidity and lack of bear tracks greatly outweighed its roughness and tilt. But after dinner I noticed three bears swimming across the river towards my camp. I was reassured by recalling the advice I'd received on bears in Inuvik. One guy had asked, "Aren't you afraid of bears, travelling alone by yourself?" "No," I replied, "should I be?" "No," he answered, "it's just that most southerners are." Then he went on to explain that since the bears are hunted up here, they are afraid of humans and thus are actually less of a problem than the bears in parks and protected areas down south. That thought was reassuring as I watched the bears approach with my camera in one hand and flares in the other. But even more reassuring was seeing the three bears transform miraculously as they emerged from the water into three wolves.

In the middle of the night I heard the same three wolves near my boat and pack. I unzipped my tent and stuck my head out to see what they were up to. I yelled at them to leave my stuff alone which prompted one of them to mark my pack and sent another one running towards me. He jumped right into my tent and only then did he miraculously transform from a wolf into an unusually friendly sled-dog. Further down the river I found out that while everyone else keeps their sled-



dogs staked out in the summer, the one guy whose fishcamp I had been near lets his dogs run free.

The next day I paddled along the Caribou Hills, which form the eastern boundary of the Delta. On my right were the sandy, esker-like, 150-metre-high hills. On my left was over 60 kilometres of flat, featureless delta. The locals warned me to be very careful with navigation in the Delta; you can easily get lost there. But since my route took me along the Caribou Hills much of the way, navigation was easy.

I didn't get tired of looking at the Caribou Hills, as they would change appearance as the light changed; and with 24 hours of daylight, there was a lot of light to change. On still days the hills were perfectly reflected in the river.

On the second day I approached one of the landmarks I had read about: the abandoned settlement of Reindeer Station, which had been established for the Inuvialuit when the government decided to turn them into reindeer herders. A herd of reindeer was driven from Alaska to this spot, a feat which took over two years and resulted in the deaths of most of the initial reindeer. The herd which arrived was predominantly made up of animals who had been born on the trek. After a brief period, the experiment failed and the remaining herd was sold off.

Nowadays Reindeer Station is a group of cabins and tumble-down houses. I decided to stop and take a look around, but was daunted by the stretch of mud between the water and the solid shore. With a little experimentation I found I could use the two pieces of my aluminum take-down paddle as "mudshoes": lay down a blade, step on it, throw the other blade forward, step on it, etc.

On reaching shore I scrambled up the bank to the group of cabins. Some of them had been fixed up as winter hunting camps. Leaning outside one cabin was a wooden komotik and its canvas tank used to hold the gear onto the sled. I examined it to see if it might suggest improvements to my winter camping sled. Other cabins had the standard northern roof repairs of blue or orange tarpaulins tacked to the roof using furring strips. One cabin sported an old snowmobile on its roof, while a meadow of wild rhubarb almost hid the shell of an old Bombardier bus. I wandered through a deserted two-story house and was especially interested in going into its cellar to see the exposed permafrost, but the cellar had filled with water.



*View from Caribou Hills across Mackenzie Delta*

Back on the river I spent a lovely day paddling along the Caribou Hills, the East Channel slowly winding along them. At one stage you'll be paddling right up next to them, then the river will bend away from them through a flat plane of willows lined at the water's edge with the brilliant green of the sedges. A few more bends and you'll be paddling back towards the hills.

That evening I chose a lovely sand beach right up against the hills for my camp. The next morning I spent several hours hiking up the hills and enjoying the view. You could look back across the delta lying in a great flat plane below you. When you looked away from the river you saw that the hills formed the edge of a rolling tundra plateau, where you could stroll for great distances. The hills get their name from the Bluenose caribou herd that frequent this area, but I saw only hoof prints.

The vegetation of the Caribou Hills is a combination of alpine and tundra species: alpine mountain avens and little willows less than 30 cm high. I was enjoying seeing some of the tundra vegetation I recalled from the Barren Grounds when my walk was cut short by the appearance of something else I recall from the Barrens: clouds of persistent little black flies crawling over my clothes, looking for a way inside. I thought my bug jacket would make me immune to their attack, but the constant bending over to photograph tiny plants exposed a narrow strip of my back, resulting in an almost solid red welt of fly bites. I was driven back out onto the river, where the breeze kept the black flies at bay. It was only when I reached into my pocket for my knife that I found a handful of black fly stowaways.

I was now paddling near the northern limit of the trees, but the black spruce were still growing profusely in sheltered hollows. It's not the latitude or the cold that gets the trees, it's the wind.

I was enjoying the scenery and the solitude. When I travel with others I try to gain their approval — even to the point of doing things which often have the

opposite effect. I'm more relaxed alone and see more humor alone. For example, I keep my map in a waterproof case under an elastic cord on the deck of my spray cover and tied to a rib of the kayak. When I get out I put the map down onto my seat so it won't blow into the water. When I get back in I invariably forget to retrieve the map and only when I want to check out where I am do I recall that I'm sitting on my map. The thought of navigating "by the seat of me

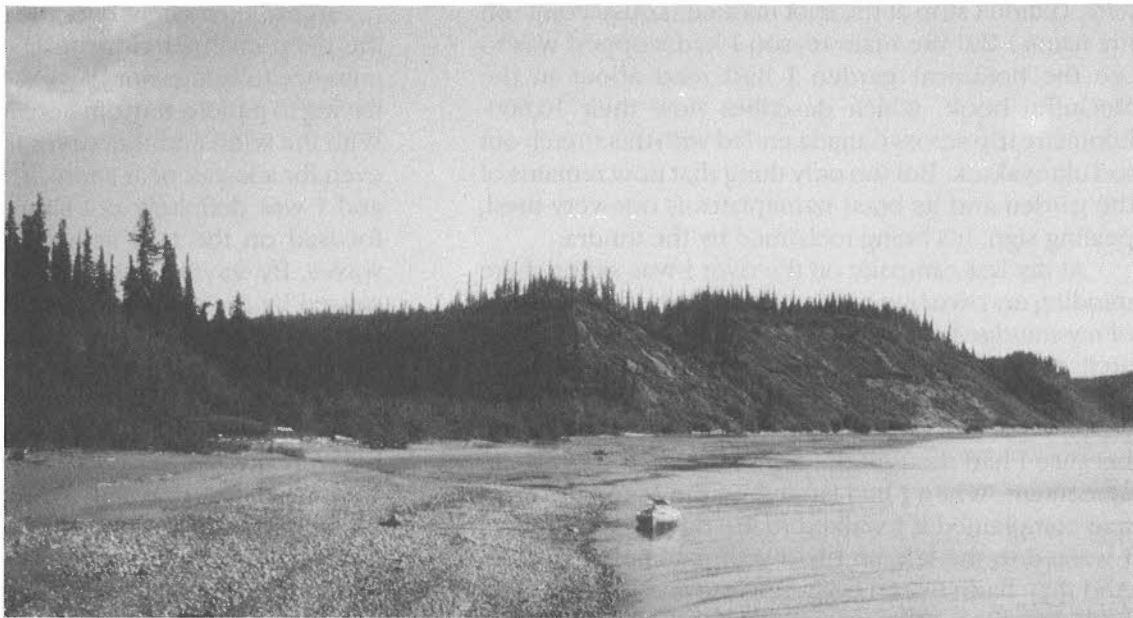
pants" would cause a burst of laughter. Well, maybe you had to be there.

By evening I was in the tidal region of the river so set up camp on the narrow strip of ground between high water and the willow thicket. I had made a new tent for this trip because I wanted something that could withstand high winds, yet be easy for one person to set up in the wind. I settled on a simple pyramid design with a single pole and large sod cloths on each side to enable one to easily anchor the tent down with rocks. Its bright yellow color was chosen for visibility.

I'd forgotten to get a tide table in Inuvik, so used sticks to mark the height of the river every hour to get an idea of the timing of the tides. In between sticks I strolled the beach as others had done shortly before

me: I found the tracks of a moose that was being followed by a wolf. At one end of the beach was a marshy bay full of swans, ducks, geese, and loons.

The next day I came to the start of Richard's Island, a large island sticking out from the delta into the Arctic Ocean. I was singing loudly as a response to the beauty of the rolling tundra and only stopped when I



*Near northern tree line*

had beached in a little bay for a rest. To my surprise in the silence I heard a strong wind blowing just the other side of the thin peninsula forming the downstream part of the bay. It seemed so strange since there was only a light breeze in the bay. As I climbed the slight rise to investigate I saw a group of barges being pushed up the river by a big tug whose engines were producing that wind-like sound.

One reason I had felt this trip would be a good beginner's solo trip to the Arctic was because much of my route would follow a shipping lane. Barges travel along the Arctic coast by coming up the Mackenzie and going around Richard's Island. This river route is longer, but it's preferred because the water is deeper and it's more protected. Because of the shipping lane I had figured that if I got into trouble there would be a chance that I might be rescued before freeze-up. But having seen the barges barreling along I realized that their presence was more of a hazard than a safety feature. If I had been paddling out in the middle of the channel to be in the swiftest current and then had rounded a point to find a set of barges approaching, I would have been hard pressed to get out of their way in time. And the captain of the tug would surely be unable to notice my little kayak in his path.

On pulling into the next bay I noticed a large white trailer of the type used by scientists as base camps in the Arctic. I wondered if it could be the base camp of the group of ornithologists and geologists I had met on the plane. When I pulled ashore a discrete distance from the trailer I was approached by an Inuit elder and a younger guy. They told me they were just off to get some logs to build a smoke house but that I should stay and wander around and wait for them to return. I decided to do just that since visiting with the Inuit is one of the things I love about paddling in the Arctic. There's a lot they can teach us about respecting the land and respecting our fellow humans.

Turned out this was a fish camp being set up by the elder, Joe, an Inuk from Sachs Harbor. On their return Joe invited me in for tea and bannock and told me about his life as a trapper. He talked about his wife dying and his loneliness. He told me about his children and how he loved them even though they were all adopted. He said he really enjoyed the children when they were little, but after about the age of ten he stopped talking with them and let his wife deal with the children. I understood his loneliness a little better.

Joe showed me his wife's *ula* that she had used to skin all the foxes he'd trapped. He said trapping is dying out despite the high price for furs because it's so much harder to trap using the new humane traps, and modern wives just don't seem to want to skin foxes.

Joe showed me his muskox sleeping furs that he'd made from a muskox he'd killed on Banks Island. (Later in the trip I got to eat some muskox and was pleasantly surprised to find it doesn't taste like skunks smell.) He showed me the graceful birds he carves out of the muskox horns.

Joe took me up the hill through patches of fireweed and showed me the fresh water lakes he uses for water. His love of the land was obvious as he explained how it provides for all his people's needs. It seems that in our culture many of us are egocentric and think mainly in terms of ourselves. The Inuit seem to be more ecocentric and think in terms of the land and the Inuit people as a whole. I think there's a lot we can learn from them.

I don't have pictures of the people I met because the Inuvait don't like for visitors to take their pictures. They've had bad experiences with people taking pictures and using them for profit or for anti-whaling or anti-trapping propaganda.

I stopped at a spot marked "Swimming Point" on my map as the name conjured up images of a pleasant beach spot for a cooling dip. Turns out the name comes from the fact they used to swim the reindeer herd across

here. (I didn't stop at the spot marked "Lousy Point" on my maps.) But the main reason I had stopped was to see the botanical garden I had read about in the McGuffin book, which describes how their 10,000-kilometre trip across Canada ended with this stretch out to Tuktoyaktuk. But the only thing that now remains of the garden and its brass nameplates is one very tired, peeling sign. It's being reclaimed by the tundra.

At my last campsite on the river I was sitting there minding my own business eating in the bug-free smoke of my smudge fire when I was suddenly bombarded by arctic terns. I was only saved from having peck marks on my head by the fact that my hat crown sits a few centimetres elevated from my scalp. I was surprised, because I had thought the terns and I had come to an agreement. When I had landed on the island the terns had complained if I walked to the right, but not when I walked to the left, so I had set up camp on the left. And they hadn't been bothering me and I hadn't been bothering them. Why the sudden attacks now? I looked over to their side of the island and noticed a little furry chick who had wandered out of the protection of the tall grasses and was waddling towards me over the open ground. I made the politically correct move and relocated further left.

The next day I finally started paddling in the Arctic Ocean. I was heading out through Kugmallit Bay when I saw a seal and had to take the obligatory photo of wildlife as a black dot. I was singing again and I guess the seal was curious as he just kept swimming closer and closer right up to the kayak and circling it, eyeing me the whole time with huge brown eyes. Looking into his eyes felt like we were communicating soul to soul. Then with a gentle "huff" he submerged and swam off.

In my excitement over the seal I forgot to look for the deep channel close to shore by the cliffs at the entrance to Kittigazuit Bay (NM433902) and ended up having to paddle way offshore in the shipping channel. With the wind and the waves the bay was too shallow even for a kayak near shore. The wind was picking up and I was definitely not singing. My mind was fully focused on the task at hand: paddling the growing waves. By staying just outside of the breaking waves caused by the shallows I finally found a narrow deep channel that took me into a whale camp situated on the site of the old village of Kittigazuit.

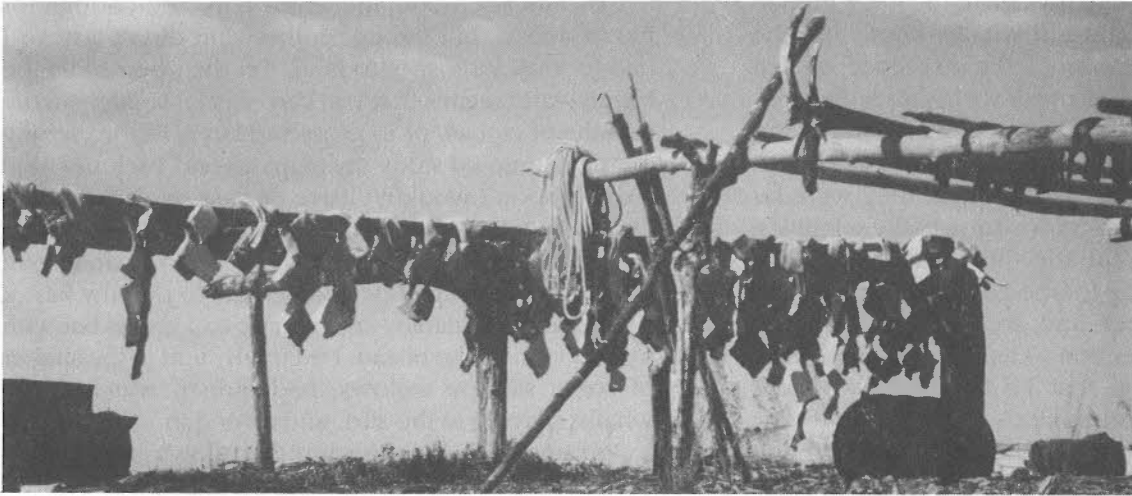
I gratefully pulled ashore at the deserted camp (NM509932), had lunch, and looked around. Up on a hill were the remains of the old log trading post. Below was the whale camp with a wall tent and a wooden hut, inside a kind of driftwood blockade. When the occupants arrived they explained that the driftwood was a wind break for the camp.

One of the teenagers tried out my kayak; he'd never been in one before. He was pretending to throw a harpoon, saying he thought it would be pretty awesome to hunt whales from a kayak like his grandfather. He explained with excitement how you could get right up to the blowhole with a kayak. But when he tried to turn the kayak as he had seen me do, he ran into difficulties and ended up having to pole the kayak back to shore. He appeared to be very impressed with my superior paddling skills, so I had to explain my secret: my long legs reached the rudder pedals and his shorter legs didn't.

His mother gave me some of their delicately smoked whitefish — Inuit sushi! They invited me to spend the night either there in their tent or around the



*Looking west along Arctic coast*



*Muktuk and whale meat drying racks*

point at their other camp at Whitefish Station. I opted to carry on to Whitefish Station, but avoided paddling in the wind out around an exposed headland cliff by going up a little protected creek (NM509918).

As I was paddling away from Kittigazuit I had a sudden urge to write to my husband's Uncle Al. I figured that thoughts of Uncle Al had popped into my mind because of his polar travels: as a young scientist he had accompanied Byrd to Antarctica. So when I arrived in Tuktoyaktuk I mailed off a post card to Uncle Al, even though I only knew his name and town. When I returned home three weeks later there was a letter waiting for me from Uncle Al. Turns out that 44 years ago, when he was 44, he'd travelled by canoe from Aklavik to Kittigazuit, covering much of the same route that I was now covering in my 44th year.

As I neared Whitefish Station I saw the floats of a gill net stretched across the creek. Just downstream I encountered an Inuk coming to check the nets. We had a short chat and he too invited me to camp down at Whitefish Station.

Where the creek meets the ocean is the narrow spit of Whitefish Station (NM538969). I could see two separate camps. On the right was an impressive collection of expensive geodesic dome tents and an enormous insulated dining tent complete with a plywood floor. It was the camp of a group of scientists who were tagging the whales. On the left were the canvas wall tents of the Inuvaluit whale camp. I pulled ashore on the left

and enjoyed a hot cup of tea and conversation. The invitation to camp was repeated and I gratefully accepted and put up my tent.

The Inuit come out to their whale camps in July and hunt the white beluga whales. I admired a couple of their home-made harpoons leaning against a drying rack that had strips of the black whale meat

drying on it. But the real taste treat was the muktuk hanging on a neighboring rack. Muktuk is the whale skin and blubber. After it's dried a bit, it's boiled and stored in pails covered with the whale oil. Muktuk is great food: it contains more vitamin C per gram than oranges, and has lots and lots of calories. One guy explained how his face gets so fat in the winter from eating the muktuk.

That night I met the lead scientist on the beach and he started the conversation saying: "Boy, you've got a lot of nerve to just pull in there and set up your tent." He seemed quite surprised when I explained that I had been invited.

I got more insight into his relationship with the Inuit the next day when a guy explained that the scientists had been there three summers trying to tag whales. The first summer the scientists had said they knew what to do since they had read the accounts of the old whale hunts where the Inuit used their kayaks to herd the whales into the shallow Kittigazuit Bay. The scientists tried to do just that to catch the whales they



*My tent in shelter of skimpy willows on Arctic coast*

wanted to tag. But they had no luck the whole summer. What the Inuit knew, and the whales knew, but the scientists didn't know, was of the existence of that narrow, deep channel I had used. So the herded whales were just swimming to the channel, diving, and swimming back out to sea right under the scientists boats. And since the Inuit hadn't been asked, they were far too polite to volunteer this information to the scientists.

Up to this point in the trip the weather had been hot. I was just remarking to one guy how I had all this unused long underwear and woollens in my pack when he called my attention to an approaching storm and correctly predicted that I'd need my woollens within hours. I spent an anxious night in the terrific storm wondering if my home-made tent was going to remain standing, let alone dry. The next morning we compared notes. My tent had a few drips at one corner, but each wall tent had a row of pots catching water under the ridge poles. The Inuit laughed since they had worried about me out in my little tent.

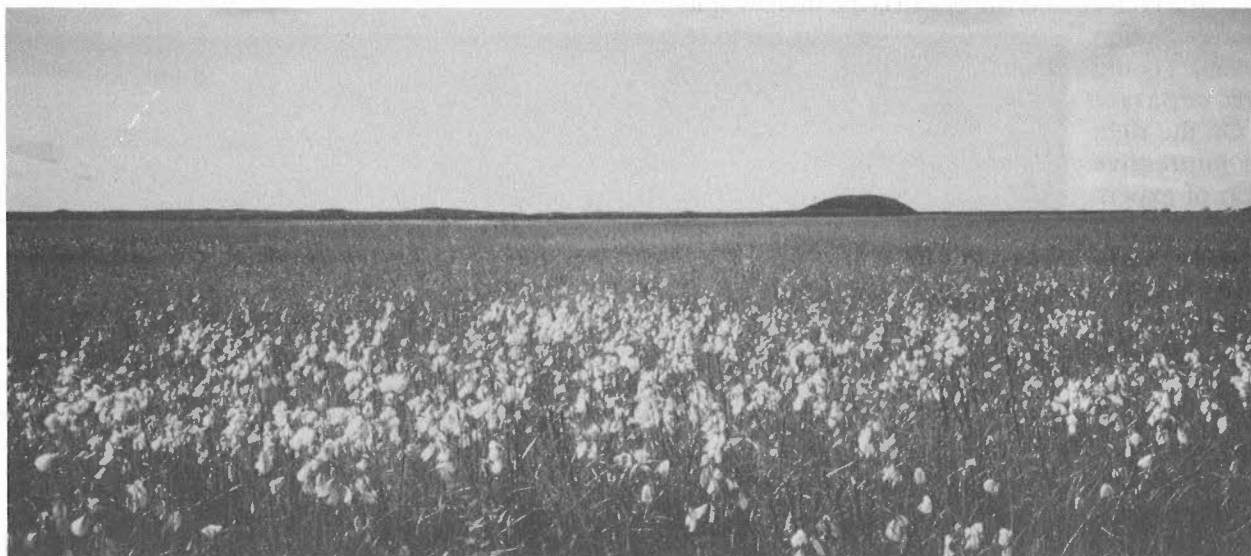
Since the wind was still rather strong I decided to spend the next day hiking on the tundra above the whale camp. There were impressive views out over the Beaufort Sea, with Richard's Island off in the distance. No matter what the Inuit are doing while in camp, they keep glancing out to sea to check on the whereabouts of the beluga whales. I had a hard time at first distinguishing between belugas and whitecaps, but I eventually got the hang of it. I saw what I thought were dark seals swimming with the whales, but the Inuit explained that those were the baby belugas.

It took me a long time to go a very short distance on my hike because I had to stop and look at all the tiny flowers. The rain from last night's storm still hung in drops like jewels in the hollows of the lupines. Each hike I seemed to find new wildflowers, such as Siberian aster. It is easy to remember plant names up here: most start with one of three terms: "Siberian," "Arctic," or "Tundra."

By late afternoon, the winds had died enough for me to depart, but the lull in the wind didn't last, so I had to look for a spot to land. On the open coast the rough water means that you can only land safely in the mouths of creeks, or in protected bays. Before setting out each time I'd study my maps to find each possible landing spot. I wouldn't leave or pass one spot unless I knew I could make it all the way to the next one. I had only paddled for an hour this time when I had to pull into a bay. The high tide allowed me to pull my kayak right through a marshy area and up to a gravel bar with a good view of the ocean. I set up my tent in the shelter of some skimpy willows, had dinner, watched the whales playing in the surf, and turned in.

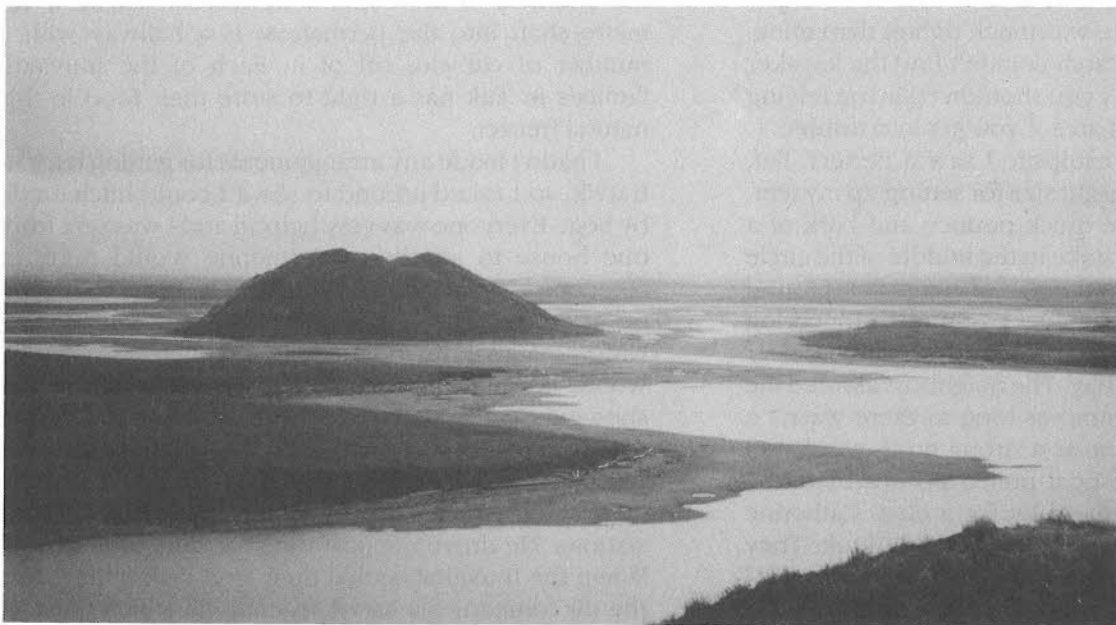
About midnight the wind died down, and since I was starting to worry about finishing this trip before I had to begin the Snake River trip, I packed up and left, despite the fact it was now low tide. It took an hour of slogging through the marshy mud to get my gear and kayak to water deep enough for paddling. But I was rewarded with a lovely paddle in the low light of the slowing lowering sun and the sight of Whitefish Pingo standing out in contrast against the thin, pink clouds which hugged the horizon. Pingos are hills formed of permafrost that grow sort of like the peak you get on an ice cube. They provide the only elevation along this section of the coast and thus serve as excellent navigational markers.

Around 3 a.m. a fast-moving bank of fog came rolling in and I had to make a mad dash for the coast and my nearest possible landing spot. Good thing it had a nice pebble beach for camping, since I was windbound there for two days. The sea breezes were strong and cold coming from the pack ice a hundred kilometres to the north. But being windbound provided plenty of time to do some beach combing. There are no sea shells here, but the multicolored pebbles at the water's edge were a constant source of delight. There were lots of bleached bones from previous whale hunts. I even



*Whitefish Pingo behind expanse of arctic cotton*





*View from top of one of Tuktoyaktuk's pingos*

found a butchered whale carcass just down the beach — fortunately downwind of my camp.

Being windbound is an integral part of tripping. Travel days provide a time to push yourself physically, which I like to do not by travelling fast but by travelling long days and letting those endorphins kick in — my drug of choice. But windbound days provide the counterpoint: a chance to catch up on sleep. Sometimes I sleep for 48 hours or more and feel like I'm hibernating — such a peaceful existence. The best pre-trip advice I received for travelling in this area came from WCA members Bev and Joel Hollis: "Bring a good book; you can count on being windbound."

Behind the pebble beach of my windbound camp was a marsh covered with the fluffy white tops of cotton grass, and ringed with wildflowers. But looking across the marsh I could still see Whitefish Pingo which reminded me that I wasn't travelling very fast.

Around 3 a.m. of the next day I was finally able to paddle again. The winds had died, so the sea was pretty calm. No belugas were around me now, although I did see one washed up on shore. But the strangest flotsam was the desiccated remains of a polar bear.

A cold rain was settling in as I neared the pingos of Tuktoyaktuk. You can avoid a stretch of exposed coast by

paddling in behind the pond-filled barrier islands which separate Tuk's pingos from the sea (NM718770). Despite the rain I felt compelled to climb one of the pingos. The light rain gave the landscape a surreal feel as I looked from my pingo back towards another one. I could have stayed there all day.

With mixed emotions I approached the sheltered harbor of Tuk on 20 July. I was glad to have gotten here

on time, but I didn't want to stop paddling. I wanted to stay in the waves and swells with the belugas and seals.

Approaching Tuk I saw three tents on an exposed gravel bar. They belonged to some young people who'd flown in to see the town, and were now leaving due to the constant rain and cold. As a campsite it wasn't too inviting; not just that there was no shelter from the wind, but there was also a bulldozer noisily pushing gravel around. I talked with the workers and asked where to camp and got the standard Inuit answer: "Just camp anywhere." I parked the kayak in a slough and walk about the older part of town.

Some of the residents were really excited to see me: they thought I was the solo kayaker for whom the coast guard had been searching for the past few days. The coast guard didn't find the kayaker but he paddled into his destination on his own a couple of weeks later.



*My pyramid tent in old part of Tuktoyaktuk*

He'd been hit by the same winds and storms I'd experienced, but his schedule was much tighter than mine. The fact that an aerial search couldn't find the kayaker is a good example of why you shouldn't plan on relying on being rescued in this area if you get into trouble.

In my search for a campsite I saw a perfect, flat, cleared circle of just the right size for setting up my tent, but as I approached the quick pounce and bark of a sled-dog chained to the stake in the middle of the circle made me realize it wasn't the best of campsites. I found an almost level patch of gravel by an abandoned log church with an old beached wooden whale boat near the shore of a protected bay. The neighbors assured me it was a good spot to camp as long as there wasn't a high tide at the same time as a strong north wind. As I set up my tent a motor boat pulled up nearby and a family alighted and stopped by for a chat. Catherine and Clarence invited me in for tea and muktuk. They showed me how to prepare and cut the muktuk. I found it to be a bit chewy, but strangely addictive.

I spent two happy evenings with Catherine and Clarence. They borrowed a video tape of local drum dancing to show me. What was great was watching everyone, young, old, and even teenagers watch the tape with obvious enjoyment. They dressed up their youngest in her fur winter parka with its cotton over-parka for me. Once the baby had it on, she wouldn't take it off, and went outside to play. But she wasn't too overdressed since it did snow that night.

Catherine and Clarence don't have running water but offered to boil water and fill a tub for me to bath. Knowing that they fetch their own water from an inland lake, I couldn't accept their offer.

During my two days in Tuk I toured the town a bit. Since Tuk is built on permafrost, you can't lay pipes for water, sewage, and fuel. So each of the newer houses has external hookups, and the water truck and the sewage truck come by daily. The southerners in town live in the newer houses with full utilities. But the permafrost has its advantages too: a little white shed is

the entrance to the community freezer. Down a 10-metre shaft into the permafrost is a hallway with a number of cubicles off of it. Each of the Inuvait families in Tuk has a right to store their food in this natural freezer.

I hadn't made any arrangements for getting back to Inuvik, so I asked around to see if I could hitch a ride by boat. Everyone was very helpful and I was sent from one house to another as someone would think of someone else who might be going to Inuvik. I ended up at Fred's, who is Tuk's Inuvait multimillionaire. Unfortunately it wasn't until the next weekend that he would be going to Inuvik, but he spent half a day showing me the sights. He took me to his road camp and pointed out the equipment his crews use to make the winter ice road from Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk and the huge snow crawlers they use to resupply the DEW line stations. He drove me past the abandoned oil camps. When the Inuvait settled their land claim, they gave the oil companies a list of regulations which must be followed to reduce their impact on the land. These demands, in combination with the drop in oil prices, caused the oil companies to leave. Many Inuvait lost their wage jobs, but most think the town is much better off without the oil companies. They now spend more time hunting caribou and whales and fish and geese and seals and muskox.

The Inuvait here prefer the traditional all-meat diet. When I had asked Catherine if she knew what a particular plant was, she told me about a botanist who had visited the area and had told her that this plant had edible roots and that plant had edible leaves and the other plant had edible stems. She said that her response to him was: "Why would anyone want to eat plants?"

Not being able to hitch a boat ride, I ended up flying back to Inuvik on a little commercial flight and got a last view of the pingos I'd paddled around and a last view of the Arctic Ocean, before heading back to Inuvik and the start of the Snake River trip.



## FRENCH RIVER, SUMMER 2006

### A PRECAUTIONARY TALE

We had not canoed the French River since the nineties, in the days before the Ontario Provincial Park system was forced to become financially self-supporting. We were looking forward to revisiting the western outlets of the river for a weekend.

After paying the registration fee, we parked in the multi-level garage recently blasted out of the rock under the Hartley Bay access point. Our battered green canoe attracted some amused comments as we waited in line to purchase tickets for the jet-boat ride down-river to the West Channel Entry Gate.

Once there, we faced some initial scepticism from the hospitality staff when they realized that we intended to make our own way to the mouth of the river, rather than board a monorail car for the scenic ride through Voyageurland. However, after signing the appropriate waivers, and purchasing search-and-rescue insurance, we were soon on our way.

We decided to follow the Old Voyageur Channel, so we paddled to the rapids at La Petite Faucille where we were assisted across the short portage by period-costumed "voyageurs." The down-channel dam, which ensures a predictable flow of water for the hourly re-enactment of the voyageurs' passage, was closed, and the water level was backed right up to the foot of the rapids.

We re-embarked, and floated down to the dam on the former rapids at Palmer Rocks, where the operator helped us to lift over. Then came the highlight of our trip, as we paddled down La Dalle. Waving to the passengers in the monorail car as it passed overhead, we shot down the narrow channel.

Soon we reached the Radisson Outpost Camp on the Western Cross Channel. We were able to secure a tent pad only one row back from the water, and after setting up camp we watched a re-enactment of the passage of the fur traders, who sang as they paddled down the channel. Later, the realistically costumed voyageurs cooked rubaboo for the campers, which we ate to the recorded calls of the loon, now rare in this part of Ontario.

The following morning, we awakened to the cry of "levez! levez!" broadcast over the public address system. We arranged with the maintenance staff to have our canoe and outfit returned to Hartley Bay, and boarded the next "brigade" of motor canoes headed to the Mike Harris Interpretative Centre, on the islands at the mouth of the river. The day quickly passed as we participated in the various traditional activities organized by the staff. In the evening, we joined the line for the return trip to Hartley Bay, where we were granted certificates naming each of us a "true Northman/woman." The river certainly has changed since our earlier paddling days.

Andrew Hall

## MY IMAGINARY HOME

For many years I have been fortunate to participate in yearly canoe trips. From these memorable experiences I now have a plethora of natural images which have helped me formulate what I believe to be my imaginary home. This home could not be more different from my university home, the dirty, musty, neglected piece of construction students call their 'pad.' My imaginary home contains no driveway, no expensive car, no congestion, no conspicuous consumption, few fashion trends, and certainly no video games.

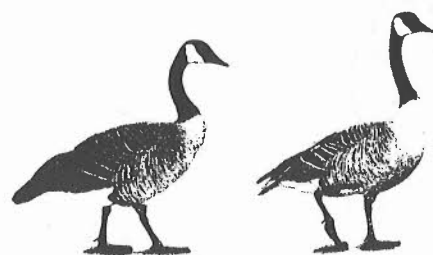
My imaginary home consists of old-growth forests, fresh clean water, breath-taking scenic views, the hypnotic call of the loon, and a tent to shelter me from the elements. I travel by canoe and on foot, the same way as our native peoples, whom we all can learn from. The selection of roommates in my imaginary home is not as important as the selection of roommates in other homes, since they all contribute to the team to ensure that everyone can reach an ultimate goal.

To some, an imaginary home is as valued spiritually as aesthetically; to myself, perhaps a little of both. Using an idea from Reuben Berger in a different context, I believe when staying outdoors or in my imaginary home, even when I am alone, I can feel a-l-l- o-n-e. This feeling is a very special one. My imaginary home is the only place in which I can forget who I am for a brief moment.

I feel very fortunate that I can visit my imaginary home three seasons a year, but the increasing popularity of canoeing is slowly taking its toll on the environment. There is a theory which states that an increased level of education results in an increase in outdoor recreation participation which in turn results in the preservation of nature. But, for every theory, there is always another one which disputes the first. There is a counter theory which states that the resulting increased participation in outdoor recreation leads to a destruction of nature. Unfortunately, I tend to lean toward the latter view.

These words are not intended as a plea for help, nor to try to persuade one to join Greenpeace, but rather to raise awareness that my imaginary home may well become a figment of my children's imagination. This is an idea I only recently began to fear might come true. Let's not make my imaginary home literally imaginary.

Riley Watson





CPM # 0628980

ISSN 1828-1327

Published by the Wilderness Canoe Association — Editor: Toni Harting

Nastawgan is an Anishinabi word meaning 'the way or route'

The WILDERNESS CANOE ASSOCIATION is a non-profit organization made up of individuals interested in wilderness travel, mainly by canoe and kayak, but also including backpacking and winter trips on both skis and snowshoes. The club publishes a quarterly journal,

*Nastawgan*, to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas of interest to wilderness travellers, organizes an extensive program of trips for members, runs a few basic workshops, and is involved in environmental issues relevant to wilderness canoeing.

## EDITORIAL

*Articles* My thanks to those members who so quickly and generously responded to the request for material, resulting in several fine articles that will be published in our journal. Please keep up the good work by sending me submissions of all kinds; see the first item in the News Briefs for what and how. *Nastawgan* is your publication, make it live.

*E-mail* You can now submit your articles and other written text and correspondence by accessing my e-mail address: [aharting@netcom.ca](mailto:aharting@netcom.ca) To keep the procedure simple and avoid tricky conversions, the material should be sent as a text file. In the near future I will also be able to handle graphics such as maps, but photographs will have to be sent (prints or slides) by regular mail.

*Index* I have finally been able to bring the index of our journal up to date. It now covers the years 1974 to 1996 incl. and presents lists of articles, trip reports, technical subjects, and more. Hardcopy printouts can be ordered by sending \$5.00 to my address mentioned on the back page.

*Teacher* I want to enthusiastically thank Roger Harris for his patience and optimism when explaining to me the intricacies of modems, Internet, and e-mail, as well as helping me get the Index into a new database and then printed out. Where would we be without him?!



## NEWS BRIEFS

*NASTAWGAN MATERIAL AND DEADLINE* Articles, trip reports, book reviews, photographs, sketches, technical tips, or anything else that you think might be of interest to other readers, are needed for future issues. Submit your contributions preferably on floppy computer disks (WordPerfect preferred, but any format is welcome) or in typewritten form; contact the editor for more information. Contributor's Guidelines are available upon request; please follow these guidelines as much as possible to increase the efficiency of the production of our journal. The deadline dates for the next two issues are:

<i>issue:</i>	Summer 1997	<i>deadline date:</i>	27 April
	Autumn 1997		3 August

*WCA MEMBERSHIP LISTS* are available to any members who wish one for personal, non-commercial use. The list can be ordered as hardcopy or on a 3½ in. DD computer diskette. Send a five-dollar bill (no cheque, please!) to Cash Belden at the WCA postal address (see WCA Contacts on the back page).

*MAINE CANOE SYMPOSIUM* will take place at Winona Camps, Moose Pond, Bridgton, Maine, on 6 – 8 July 1997. For information contact Jerry Kocher at (617) 237-1956 or at e-mail [Jerry-Kocher@msn.com](mailto:Jerry-Kocher@msn.com)

## DON RIVER PADDLE

Metro Region Conservation and the Wilderness Canoe Association invite you to our 3rd Annual "Celebrate the Don" on Sunday 4 May 1997. Beginning at Serena Gundy Park (located in Sunnybrook Park, City of Toronto) where registration opens at 10 a.m., the first leg of the paddle is on the West Don River until you reach the east Branch. The trip then continues south down the Lower Don to the two take-out points at the Keating Channel and Harbourfront.

Much of the route is flatwater but there are a few stretches of mild whitewater to test your skills; see note below. The scenery varies from wild and wooded to uninspired urban, but all in all it's a very interesting trip. Buses will be on hand at both take-out points to transport all paddlers back to Serena Gundy, where you can

get your car to retrieve your canoe. Be sure to bring extra warm clothes sealed in plastic. During the paddle refreshments are available.

For more information call: Bill King (WCA) at (416) 223-4646, and Beth Williston (MTRCA) at (416) 661-6600 ext. 334.

**Note:** Participants in this trip will notice a big change in the river. For aesthetic reasons as well as to improve accessibility for migrating fish, two of the three weirs have been largely eliminated. At the highest weir, north of the Pottery Road bridge, two artificial rapids have been created in the 100 m below the weir. They will raise the water level so that the drop of the weir itself is only 1/2 m. The retention of some physical barrier is essential to prevent lamprey migration but will offer no hindrance to species such as salmon. An overhanging steel plate will be added to the lip of the weir. A new portage trail with improved take-out and put-in is being cleared. The lower weir south of Pottery Road will be undergoing similar treatment prior to publication of this issue of *Nastawgan*. For the present, the first weir, located at the lower end of the West Don, will remain unchanged. These improvements should result in a much more natural appearance, and it is *possible* that the rapids could be runnable at the right water level.

---

## RIVERS CANADA

An new organization has been formed outside government, dedicated to protecting the nation's rivers and lakes. This Society for the Preservation of Rivers and Lakes in Canada (Société pour la Protection des Fleuves, Rivières et Lacs du Canada), or "Rivers Canada," has the following goals:

- Form a nation-wide network of local and regional watershed and basin conservation organizations.

- Develop a database of river issues, study and prioritize them for possible action.

- Strengthen initiatives to protect wild rivers, lakes, and wetlands.

- Promote the conservation, restoration, and enhancement of urban rivers and streams.

- Act as an NGO adjunct to the Canadian Heritage Rivers Program.

- Increase public awareness and appreciation of the river heritage of Canada.

- Work towards the development of coherent federal and provincial policies to conserve and protect Canada's fresh water resources and their energy from exploitation.

- Liaise with US-based river organizations and networks, particularly in issues regarding transboundary rivers.

- Develop a newsletter, computer bulletin board, and web page for use by local river conservation groups and watershed members and communities.

Develop a River Ethic whereby we can gauge the sustainability of proposed and actual uses of rivers and the impacts of resource use in watersheds.

Memberships, which are \$10.00 per year for an individual and \$15.00 for a family, are available from: Rivers Canada, 50 Union St., Coaticook, Quebec, J1A 1Y7; e-mail 71762.1776@compuserve.com

---

## SHOWS AND MEETING

### CANOE EXPO 1997

On 11 to 13 April 1997, Canoe Ontario, (416) 426-7170, will again present its annual canoe/kayak consumer show and educational exhibition, as always in the Etobicoke Olympium, 590 Rathburn Road, Etobicoke, Ontario.

The WCA will again have a booth at this show and we are looking for volunteers to help man the booth. Please contact as soon as possible Paul Hamilton at (905) 877-8778.

### WCA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This important meeting will be held at Canoe Expo (see above) on Sunday, 13 April 1997, in the Main Seminar Lounge. Doors will be open at 8:30 a.m. for refreshments and conversation and the meeting will start at 9:00 a.m. and end at 10:00 a.m. Enter via the main entrance and walk up the stairs where someone will collect a \$5.00 fee for entry into Canoe Expo after our get-together. (The regular admission fee for adults is \$8.00.) In addition to this discount from the organizer, Canoe Ontario are offering the room at a nominal fee balanced by a revenue guarantee. In other words, more than 50 people need to show up for the meeting, otherwise the room cost will rise to offset any shortfall in attendance. The WCA Board has taken this approach as a way of increasing the value of coming to the AGM. Thus you are provided with a quick summary of what is happening with the club's organization, while saving a few dollars in the process.

### EASTERN ONTARIO AND WESTERN QUEBEC CANOE AND KAYAK SHOW

This increasingly important and informative show will be held in Ottawa at the Civic Centre on 25 to 27 April 1997. The organizers, the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association, present a wide array of equipment manufacturers, outfitters, tour companies, a range of speakers, seminars, workshops, and a demonstration pool. Tickets for the show are available at the door or in advance from the CRCA (inquire about discounts): P.O. Box 398, 446 Main Street West, Merrickville, Ontario, K0G 1N0; ph. (613) 269-2910; fax (613) 269-2908; e-mail: staff@crca.ca website: <http://www.crc.ca/>

## SYMPOSIUM: HISTORIC CANOES AND HISTORIC TRAVELS

A rich blend of old and new delighted the 800 or so participants in this annual symposium, organized by George Luste and sponsored by the WCA, on 31 January and 1 February in Toronto. The following presentations were made:

- |  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| – Reflections of a Long Trail                              | Kirk Wipper      |
| – Native Crafts and Traditions                             | William Commanda |
| – David Thompson and His travels                           | David Anderson   |
| – “Coke Stop in Emo” Revisited                             | Alec Ross        |
| – “Down North to the Sea” in 1938                          | Alden Hayes      |
| – Lady Vyvyan’s Arctic Adventures in 1926                  | Ian Maclaren     |
| – The Canoe in Canadian Art                                | Donald Burry     |
| – Myths and Legends of the Cedar Canvas Canoe              | Hugh Stewart     |
| – Canoe Design — Then and Now                              | John Winters     |
| – P.G. Downes’ Travels in Northern Canada                  | Bob Cockburn     |
| – J.B. Tyrrell’s Explorations and Canoe Travels            | Jack Purchase    |
| – A.P. Low’s Explorations and Canoe Travels                | Herbert Pohl     |
| – Klondike Gold Rush                                       | Sally Wilson     |
| – Nor’Westers and Their Canoe Routes<br>— Past and Present | Hugh MacMillan   |
| – Rocky Mountain House to Grand Portage                    | Carmen Ditzler   |
| – Canada Sea-to-Sea-to-Sea by Voyageur Canoe               | Peter Labor      |
| – Canoeing and Crafting Via the Stone Age                  | James Dina       |
| – A Daughter’s Reflections on R.M. Patterson               | Janet Blanchet   |
| – Growing-up with Canoes                                   | Becky Mason      |



In addition, a number of Northern Songs and Voyageur Songs were performed by David Hadfield and Peter Labor.

**This is a special opportunity, offered for free by professional canoeing teachers Barbara Hutton and George Drought, to learn the skills of whitewater paddling:**

### ORCA MOVING WATER 1 COURSE

The course will be given on 7 and 8 June at Palmer Rapids in the Madawaska River and is limited to WCA members and six canoes. Book before 15 May by phoning (905) 528-0059.

*Instructors Background:* George and Barbara both hold their ORCA Moving Water Level 3 Instructor Certificate and their Level 3 Tripping Certificate. They have been teaching Moving Water and Guiding together for 15 years and have a list of about 40 rivers under their belts, from Georgia and South Carolina to the Northwest Territories.

#### *Course Detail*

Saturday 7 June:

1. Review or teach, on flat water, all strokes required for handling a canoe in moving water, followed by instruction in rescue techniques including self-rescue and throw-bag skills. Then introduce students to eddy turns and ferrying techniques.
2. Continue with practice of eddy turns and upstream

ferrying, then introduce downstream ferrying. The day will end with controlled dumps and swims.

3. Pairing up mandatory for those who want, on their free time, to continue practising until sundown.
4. After sundown we will show videos of individuals paddling during the day.

Sunday 8 June:

1. Start day with review of paddling, tilting, eddying, and ferrying. Walk and analyze the bottom run of Palmer Rapids. Instruction will be given on characteristics of rapids and route selection through a rapid.
2. Guide first run down Palmer Rapids.
3. Finish day with controlled free runs down Palmer Rapids with safety installed.

*Equipment Required:* Candidates are expected to supply their own boats, paddles, PFD's, camping gear, and food.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I feel I must respond to the story in the last issue of *Nastawgan* entitled "Caution: Armed Robbery in the North." I was surprised and disappointed to read such an article in a 1996 publication, especially one for and by canoeists. It seems to me that of all people in our society, wilderness travellers who use a craft developed by the indigenous people, and who do most of their canoeing in parts of the country that have sustained the traditional way of life of these peoples for centuries, should have some sensitivity towards the people they encounter.

I gather it never occurred to Bob McCoubry that he was an intruder in the "home" of the Dene. I don't expect he was invited, or even thought of asking if he could travel and camp on their land. With the attitude he expresses I would probably treat him the same way if he showed up on my doorstep.

My wife and I have spent the past several summers travelling through the North. In almost 200 days of canoeing and camping in Cree and Inuit lands we visited 17 villages and dozens of seasonal camps. Our most memorable moments are the unsurpassed and unconditional hospitality we received on numerous occasions. People have literally opened up their homes and camps to us, offering accommodation, food, and anything else we might need. We stayed several days in some settlements, made a point of purchasing some

supplies at the local stores, and left our canoe and equipment during two winters in those "native" communities. One of the many things we learned when travelling in the north is that this generosity and sharing is an important part of life for people who have traditionally lived on the land.

If Mr. McCoubry's attitude is prevalent among wilderness canoeists then I am ashamed to belong to that fraternity.

Greg Brown

*Editor's note:* After reading the above letter and discussing the issue with a few friends I realize that I've made a grave error by publishing Bob McCoubrie's article "Caution: Armed Robbery in the North" in the last issue of *Nastawgan*. The WCA does not condone opinions such as the ones presented in it, and they have no place in our journal.

My only reason for including the article was to emphasize that wilderness canoeing can occasionally expose trippers to dangerous encounters, wherever we travel. I had of course no intention of condemning any community as a whole. But I failed to critically read the rest of the article and published it in full — which should not have happened.

This has been a tough lesson in editorial responsibility and I apologize to anyone offended by the article.

---

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors of the Wilderness Canoe Association consists of six members either elected or acclaimed at the Annual General Meeting. Each member serves a two-year term. The Board is responsible for the management of the club and its finances. We are also responsible for the direction the club is going as an organization. The Board organizes the Fall Meeting, the Wine & Cheese Party, the Annual General Meeting, our booth at Canoe Expo, and our booth at the new Outdoor Adventure Sports Show. We meet four or five times through the year, usually at the secretary's house (Bill King), to discuss the current club affairs and plans for the rest of the year. (Bill is a wonderful host and puts on an excellent "meeting.")

The club has been fortunate to have been served by several long-term members, such as the current Secretary (Bill King), Treasurer (Rob Butler), the membership/computer records organization (Cash Belden, Linda Lane), the *Nastawgan* Editor (Toni Harting), and the various people of the Outings Committee.

In the past four years that I have been on the Board, I have noticed that one of the club's big problems has been the lack of volunteers. One of the reasons for that may be not knowing who to call or what to do. If any member wishes to volunteer to help in any of our

activities described above, they only have to contact a Board member (our phone numbers are on the back page of *Nastawgan*). Currently we are looking for any club member who would like to join the Board of Directors this April at the AGM. The only two real requirements to join the Board are, that you have been a member for at least a few years, and that you bring some enthusiasm with you. This appeal is especially directed towards those members who have not yet had an opportunity to volunteer, but would like to help keep the club operating. Besides, being a Board member looks good on one's resume! If you are interested, please call me at (905) 877-8778 (leave a message if I'm not home).

Paul Hamilton

---

## PARTNERS WANTED

**Mountain River, NWT.** 19 July to 3 August 1997. Must have whitewater experience. Call Bill Stevenson at (416) 925-0017.

## MEANWHILE ...

John Winters

*(This is what happened after John Winters and Bill Swift separated from George and Tija Luste on their trip down the northeast coast of Labrador; see "Kuujjuaq to Nain" in Nastawgan (Winter 1995).*

As Bill and I watched George and Tija paddle south I thought to myself, "wimp." The decision to call for help had been mine. Bill, always game and willing to do more than his share, felt his injured back would be well enough in a couple of days so he could paddle again, but I overruled him. All I could think of was the slow, tedious progress from Collins Point with only me paddling. With that thought superimposed over the furious off-shore winds already encountered, our lack of Portuguese visas, and the possibility that Bill might re-injure himself, the prospect of paddling looked bleak. I tried to rationalize the decision. The Lustes would be better off without us holding them up. We would be better off by getting home and back to work building boats. The trip was risky even for people in good health. Still, watching our companions paddle off into a light westerly made me scratch my back to see if the yellow stripe would come off.

We now had time on our hands. Virtually every means of transport in Labrador was employed in mining exploration and, since we were not in danger, our priority was low. So, Bill retired to his tent and more drugs while I made camp more secure for a possible week-long wait. The barometer was falling rapidly so I tied the canoe painter to the largest luggable rock and put extra rocks on the tent guy lines. Our location was hardly the best. We were camped on a bay open to the ocean and exposed to westerly winds that funnelled down the valley behind us and across Miriam Lake. A slightly better protected Inuit campsite was located farther out on the point among the rocks. We would find out later why they chose this location so far from fresh water and the beach.

Our routine was simple in the extreme. Read, eat, gather wood (more than we would ever need), sleep, hike. I took long walks and mulled over the nagging feeling that I had acted rashly. Despite the falling barometer, 30 July dawned calm with only a heavy swell breaking on the beach and hinting at a storm off-shore. Bill was feeling a bit better so we went for a walk but the uneven terrain aggravated Bill's back and we cut the stroll short.

That evening and night dispelled any doubts about our decision. The wind rose to a howling pitch. Tija's comparison to a windtunnel is apt. Bill's dome tent was blown flat in the gusts and my mountain tent, although it stood erect, shook, flapped, and rattled causing me an anxious night. Here I would like to offer a testimonial to the Eureka Sentinel tent. Mine is old, worn, and many times re-waterproofed and yet it stood up stoutly

to those gusts. At the height of the storm it did begin to flap wildly and I thought the fly had torn, but it had only dragged the tie-down rock up against the tent.

I can only recall one night in worse wind. We were hove to under storm tri-sail off the coast of New Jersey in the Annapolis - Newport race and the wind had that same note of malice. It would shriek and roar and then grow deathly quiet. We would brace for the worst and sure enough the next gust would knock us flat.

That night at Miriam Lake was much the same. At some point Bill, who was closer to the canoe, heard it being flipped over and got up to turn it back. The mistake made him return to his tent in worse pain than ever. This time I placed large rocks on either side of the canoe and ran a strap over top. The force of the wind must have been tremendous. Rocks that surely weighed thirty or forty pounds had been dragged across the ground by the tent guy-lines until the tent flies flogged like torn sails. In the dim light I set about searching for even larger rocks and re-set the tents.

The wind persisted the following day. What an extraordinary place this is and what exceptional reserves of patience and endurance the Inuit must have had to live in this country.

A digression is in order here to deal with the subject of reading matter. Two of our original party had light escapist reading and the other two had books dealing with travel and life in the north. I subscribe heartily to the escapist literature. Books about starvation, cannibalism, and being lost or abandoned in the north are not my idea of reassuring entertainment. I read it anyway and imagined myself in emaciated tatters when the rescue boat arrived months later through some mix-up in communications.

All that third day we watched as the wind whipped the crests off the breaking waves and hurled foam out to sea. If the Lustes were in the same weather system they sure weren't doing any paddling. I joked with Bill that morning about how handy my meagre knowledge of Portuguese would have been had we been caught in that wind. Could we have made any headway against it? I doubt it.

On our fourth day we awoke to fog and a booming surf. There was no doubt Bill was getting better but we were now approaching the first possible date for pick-up. Would he be up to a surf launch under such conditions? The more we looked at the surf the more we felt an alternative launch site was needed. One was found in a small cove just below the Inuit camp site. No doubt they too recognized the danger in a beach launch. Always practical, the Inuit also set up their tents on well-drained ground while we softer white people settled upon grassy meadows that were wet but soft. It was a long carry from the Inuit site but that was preferable to potential capsizing on the beach.



Near noon the pick-up boat appeared through the fog. We raced about packing gear. I almost had to fight with Bill to keep him from carrying too much and eventually we got our gear out onto the slippery rocks. Loading was difficult with the canoe being bounced around by the surge and we gave up at getting the spray cover snapped all the way aft. When we were loaded and ready to launch we briefly reviewed our plan. The swell was running at three feet and timing was important. On the rising swell Bill clambered aboard, I shoved off and leapt into position in the stern and we paddled like all hell to get out of the cove before the wave could drop out beneath, leaving us stranded on a rock and at the mercy of the next breaker.

It always surprises me how close one can be with impunity to waves breaking against a rocky shore. Hardly a canoe width away on both sides the water looked like a class 4 rapid and yet we bobbed through nicely. No more than a canoe length out of the cove and we had an easy float over to the pick-up boat.

The boat trip to Nain was a delight once I got over my traditional bout of power boat-induced sea sickness. Once purged I felt fine but the first few hours were a fresh hell of repeated trips to the rail. We stopped at

Hebron, had a steak dinner (your meals were great, Tija, but ...), and got the first-class tour of the mission site the next day from a young fellow doing his doctorate on Moravian churches.

We arrived at Nain at about one in the morning. Later that day we toured the town where the scars of mining exploitation are already visible. These are hardy people but I don't think they will survive prosperity. We were lucky (you need it if you're travelling up there) and got flights out to Goose Bay and, eventually, Montreal where my van had been left.

In retrospect we might have been able to continue the trip from Miriam Lake but one doesn't know. In the absence of professional diagnosis every error should be on the side of caution and I feel reasonably good about the decision to request pick-up. It is unlikely that the same opportunity would have presented itself later in the trip if it had been needed. One must always keep in clear perspective the objective of a wilderness trip. We were there for the enjoyment and not to prove our survival skills, our courage, or our perseverance. We do that every day here in Ontario.

---

## THE ESKER

Camped at the base of an esker that looked to be 60 metres high. Looked even higher from canoe level. Just around the nose of the esker where it met the river, there was a wide flat spot and a sheltering grove of trees. Too scenic to pass up. One look into the eyes of the buddies said that the vote to camp here would be unanimous. Later, after setting up camp, all of us hiked up to the top of the esker for a look around.

Tough climb up to the top. Soft sand. For every two steps up, slide one step down. My feet tell me that we've done this dance before. Once at the top the esker was fairly level. Relatively easy to walk along the ridge as long as you didn't lose altitude. Good view on both sides of the esker for quite a distance. The setting was so dramatic that we decided to follow the ridge for a kilometre or two and do a little exploring.

Looking at the notes of the hike. Made four entries:

- Lots of footprints going across the esker. Some old, some not. None of the prints made by man.
- A buried tree slowly re-emerging from a depression in the sand.
- Exposed rocks blown clean by the wind.
- Scattered shrubs struggling to survive. As porous as the sand is, the plants must have a widespread root system to capture rain before it sinks out of reach.

Either that or they must have deep roots.

Marvelling at how clean the sand is. It could be packaged right up as is and sold for use in children's sandboxes back in the city. Thought how much better it would be to bring the children here instead. They could discover more about the natural world and where sand comes from than they ever could from a sandbox. Sand in sandboxes eventually disappears. What the children learn here would be with them forever.

This esker could be with us forever too. It could be with us till the next ice age. That is, if we choose to leave it alone.

According to the map this esker stretches on for 15-plus kilometres. I wonder what it would be like to take a couple of days and hike it to the far end. What awaits at the end not touched by the river. Always the unknown. Maybe that's why we keep coming back. The chance, the golden chance to explore the unknown.

Man was born to wander. We are tied by families, jobs, and obligations; but the urge to wander must be a root that also goes very deep.

Greg Went

## PADDLING A CANOE IN WINDY AND COLD-WATER CONDITIONS

A couple of years ago my paddling partner and I went paddling in late March. We were on a river that wound through a marsh. There was ice at the edge of the river and the temperature was slightly above the freezing point. A gusty wind was blowing.

Although we had all our gear for a whitewater trip with us, we left it in the cabin we had rented. We thought that we didn't need to wear it because we were only going out for a couple of hours to explore the marsh. In the process of turning around to get closer to a beaver, we came broadside to the wind and a gust flipped us over. I couldn't believe it, it happened so quickly.

Luckily, we were only about a half hour's paddle from our cabin, although we did have to paddle directly into the wind to return to it. The marsh was frozen solid so we were able to cut off a large curve in the river by dragging the canoe across the marsh.

By the time we reached the cabin, my speech was starting to slur from hypothermia. Fortunately we were able to have hot showers. My fingers and toes were a little painful as they warmed up, indicating the early stages of frostbite. We had hot drinks and snacks in our cabin, put extra logs on the fire to heat up the cabin, and fell into bed. We might not have recovered from our capsizing so quickly if we'd been camping. As it was, it took many hours before our bodies were fully warmed again.

Later, we analyzed what had happened — why we had tipped and what we had done wrong (oh, so much!). We put the following suggestions down on

paper so that we wouldn't forget to prepare ourselves for windy and cold conditions in the future.

### *PRECAUTIONS for WIND and COLD WATER:*

- Notify someone of your trip plan and what time you expect to return.
- Wear wet or dry suits, even for paddling in flat water. Wind can capsize a canoe.
- Wear gloves and bootees as their designers intended so that they keep you dry, e.g. allow dry-suit gloves to seal on your wrist, don't put them over the cuff of your jacket.
- Wear wool or synthetics, such as synchilla or polypropylene, and not cotton. Cotton won't keep you warm when wet.
- When turning the canoe broadside to the wind, wear your life jacket, get down on your knees before starting to turn, and lean upwind during the turn, just as you lean upstream in fast moving water.
- Install float bags.
- If you find that you have cold feet during the trip, put on a hat! A large amount of body heat is lost from the head and neck.
- Take with you the following items: dry clothes (in waterproof bag); woolly hat; glucose/candy/food; heat-reflecting blanket; whistle; waterproof matches and/or lighter; towel; hot drink (preferably soup); map and compass.

Joan Etheridge

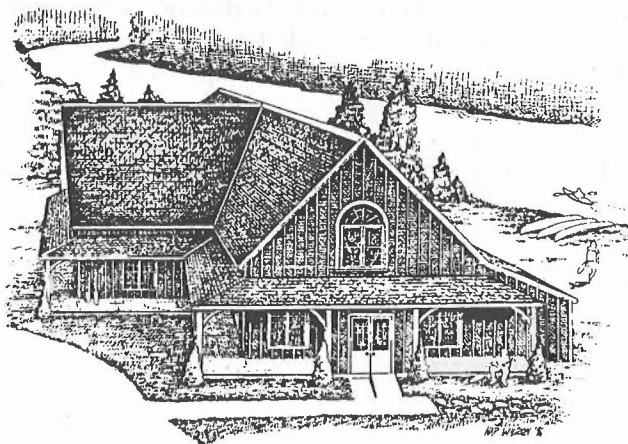
## CRCA NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

The Official Opening of the new Ron Johnstone Paddling centre, the National Headquarters of the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association, will take place on Saturday, 24 May 1997, on the shores of the Rideau Canal in historic Merrickville, Ontario.

The Centre will not only house the Association's administrative headquarters, but it will also provide on-water programming to teach children, youth, adults, and the disabled how to paddle, as well as hosting canoeing and kayaking events, symposiums, courses, and the world's largest bookstore on paddle sports.

The general public is invited to attend and participate in the Official Opening that will feature: the Colonel By Canoe Triathlon; paddle-making workshop by Jodie Lalonde; Waterwalker Film Festival highlights; historic canoe and kayak display; seminars and slide shows by Kirk Wipper and James Raffan; canoe and kayak sale featuring over 100 boats; test paddle your canoe and kayak before you buy; voyageur canoe rides for the public; and much more.

For more information contact: Joseph Agnew, tel. (613) 269-2910, fax (613) 269-2908, web site <http://www.crca.ca/>



# L'OURS POLAIRE

Earl Silver

We had just finished paddling the delta of the Firth River at about 12:00 a.m. in the land of the midnight sun and had stopped to pick up fresh water before heading out to the Beaufort Sea. To our surprise we could not paddle. An extensive sandbar stymied our journey. Instead, we had to tow and sometimes drag our canoes and the accompanying raft. This continued for about an hour or so. And only then did we have a chance to paddle the Beaufort. It was about 2:00 a.m. before we landed on a spit to set up camp for the night. After a 14-hour day we were a bit tired and did not waste any time while setting up the tents. Even though we had no desire to rush, we wanted to get as early a start as possible to minimize problems caused by any headwinds or high waves on our way to Herschel Island, a five-to-six-hour paddle in good weather.

Between 7:00 and 7:30 that same morning, "someone" shook our tent. I woke with a start and looked out the screen door of the tent only to come face to face with an animal that looked like a polar bear since it did not resemble anyone in our party of 12. What do you do when one moment you are asleep and the next minute you are facing a rather large carnivore that does not have the reputation of the teddy variety? I shouted "BEAR!" with conviction and loudly. The noise woke my tent partner Ann Dixie and in turn made the bear seemingly more inquisitive. Ann was sceptical. She thought I had seen an animal off in the distance until she spied *l'ours polaire* up close. There were the three of us. The adolescent bear staring at us with its head cocked like an inquisitive dog, Ann scrutinizing the bear with fascination while trying to find her camera, and myself in full voice attempting to scare the animal in an unaggressive manner. It is one thing to see a wild creature on your terms and quite another to have a polar bear look at you on theirs.

Since the mosquito screen on the front entrance of the tent was not designed to keep out an animal the size of a polar bear, he had no difficulty poking his nose through the mesh. The distance between us and Mr. Bear was getting smaller.

Meanwhile, the shouting roused our colleagues (at least most of them) in the other tents. A couple of brothers, Tom and Andrew Heinzman, were busily concocting all sorts of escape plans just in case they also received our visitor. Jim Risk and Carolyn Pullen (the Black Feather co-leaders) were busily trying to find the bear mace after overcoming their initial disbelief that we were "under attack." We were pressed up against the back door of the tent which leads into the vestibule packed full of gear. Ann tried to reach for the zipper but my behind was plastered against the tent wall.

What to do? Since verbal reasoning did not work, I waved an article of clothing in a non-threatening way

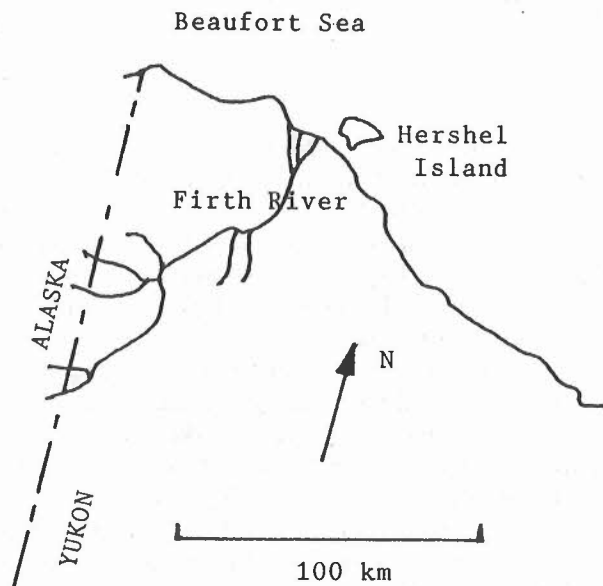
and *l'ours polaire* finally ambled away. (We learned later that he ended up visiting another tent.) We dressed as quickly as possible for the cold weather outside and retreated from our now insecure shelter. Slowly we sneaked out to find a group of fellow campers in a state of consternation. The bear, on the other hand, was cool. His inquisitiveness was not to be rushed. He continued to amble slowly around the spit, probably wandering what all the commotion was about.

Meanwhile we managed to wake the rest of the group, who were still asleep, with as little noise or movement as possible. Eventually, all of us made our way behind a tent belonging to Jill Pangman (co-leader from EcoSummer) so we would not be seen by our interloper. We crouched behind this flimsy structure of nylon and proceeded to lift the tent to where we had tied down the canoes. It must have looked rather foolish. Our plans were to either scare the bear by beating the canoes with driftwood or making a paddle for it.

Subsequently, we learned that Jill and Sue Langevin had observed the bear earlier when they were both outside for an early morning tinkle. Patiently they observed *l'ours polaire* doing its rounds of investigation while they kept a low profile, making their way back to their tent. Nothing like reinforced nylon to make you feel safe. Since they had doubts about this form of protection, one of their plans was to empty a few barrels and crawl inside. Some of our defensive strategies were indeed bizarre.

Most of us reverted to humor for stress release. We were all apprehensive to varying degrees. Our greatest concern was that the bear took forever to move on and kept looking back as if he had ideas about returning. We were lucky that the bear at no time showed any aggression. He may have simply wanted to know more





about us. When he finally did stroll to the other end of the spit, we lost no time in packing our gear and moving on.

The incident certainly polarized our group (pun

intended). For the remaining few days of the trip, we talked repeatedly about the encounter amongst ourselves and with others we met along the way. L'ours polaire left a lasting impression on all of us.

This is not the end of the story. While in Inuvik, Dave Tyson convinced Ann and me to tell our tale on the local CBC radio station. Sure enough, with our P.R. man leading the way, Dave persuaded them to interview us. We were taped for an afternoon show that day. Even in the far north, people are curious about the bear facts.

Our 15 minutes of notoriety doubled in Toronto. Ann received a phone call from Catherine O'Hara to appear on her radio program here in T.O. We traipsed down to the CBC building for a live interview. People in the big city also seem to be fascinated by bear encounters.

Upon reflection, l'ours polaire and our group shared a common spirit. Even though we met on different terms and for separate reasons, we respected one another. Our experiences grew into an adventure seasoned with humor. Maybe later on the polar ice the bear also chuckled about meeting these strange creatures.

## REVIEWS

**CANADA'S RIVER HERITAGE**, edited by John Marsh, Bruce W. Hodgins, and Erik R. Hanson, published by The Frost Centre for Canadian Heritage and Development Studies, Trent University, Peterborough, Ont., K9J 7B8, 1996, softcover, 336 pages. Reported by Toni Harting.

In October 1994, over 200 delegates from across Canada and the New England states gathered in Peterborough to reflect, critique, debate, and celebrate the first ten years of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System. The three-day conference saw the presentation of over 40 papers, with topics ranging from management strategies for individual rivers to discussions on modifying the designation process, to narratives on the history and cultural significance of Canada's myriad streams and waterways. Thirty-six of these papers have been reproduced in these proceedings and together they provide a tremendously valuable resource for understanding the complex, creative, and sometimes tenuous nature of the CHRS as a mechanism for reconciling conservation and growth on Canada's rivers.

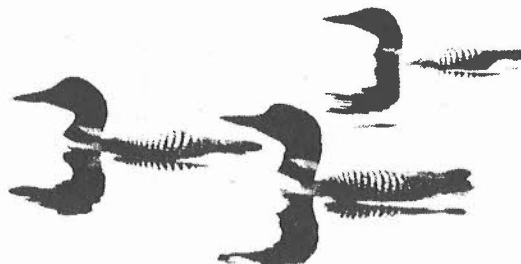
**MADAWASKA RIVER and OPEONGO RIVER WHITEWATER GUIDE**, by George Drought, published by The Friends of Algonquin Park (P.O. Box 248, Whitney, Ont., K0J 2M0), 1996, softcover, 103 pages, \$5.95.

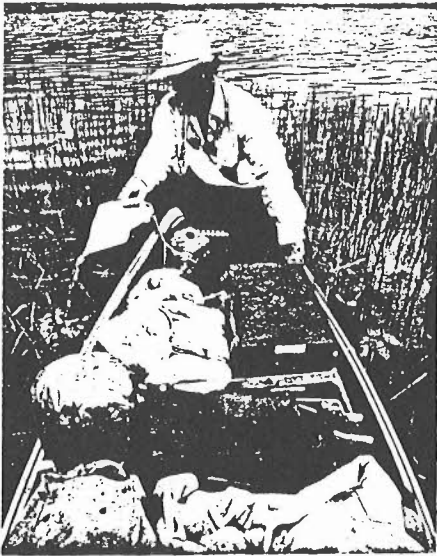
**PUKASKWA RIVER CANOE GUIDE** by George Drought with mapping by Arie Snelleman, published by ORCA (c/o Canoe Ontario, 1185 Eglinton Ave., E, North York, Ont., M3C 3C6; ph. (416) 426-7170) and

The Friends of Pukaskwa (General Delivery, Heron Bay, Ont., P0T 1R0; ph. (807) 229-0801), 1996, softcover, 48 pages, \$7.00.

Reviewed by Toni Harting.

These two booklets by the author of the best-selling Petawawa River Whitewater Guide are valuable additions to the growing collection of guide books being published these days. They provide much detailed information on access and take-out points, trip routes, rapids, falls, portages, some campsites, and other aspects of the rivers. The numerous maps are uncluttered and well made, showing the correct routes to follow down the rapids at different water levels. It will probably be hard to find these books in the general bookstores, so it is best to order them from the publishers. We are looking forward to more of these convenient guides rumoured to be in the making.





### Temagami

*Oh, Wild and Beautiful Temagami  
Where I'd love to go, and my heart is free  
Your beauteous shorelines and waters deep  
Where many lakes and rivers leap  
Through elevations, hills and vale,  
'Round rocks and pines, smooth seas and gale  
'Tis wondrous country, as far as you see  
'Tis wild and beautiful Temagami*

*For animals, both large and small  
And birds and otters, pines so tall  
Great fish remain in waters blue  
Bogs, bears, beavers and great herons, too  
And here you hear the Whippoorwill,  
the moose call, bird songs and 'white throats' trill  
'Tis wondrous country as far as you see  
'Tis wild and beautiful Temagami*

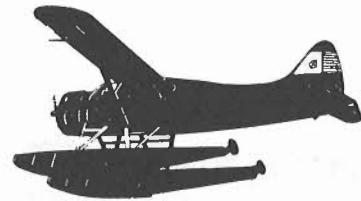
*On my paddle I long to feel  
the pull of your waters, to know it is real  
On your wild, wild waters, your winding shore  
I travel on in my little canoe  
and enjoy your beauty, and while I do  
I know all I see is made by God's hand,  
and I thank our Lord for this great land  
For this wondrous country as far as you see  
For this wild and beautiful Temagami*

-- Wilhelmina J. Wicha

## FLOAT PLANE REGULATIONS

Transport Canada has been working on new regulations as they pertain to the attaching of external loads (*i.e.*, canoes/kayaks) to planes carrying passengers. This means that small parties may no longer be able to economically access wilderness paddling trips with Cesna 185's, Beavers, Porters, and possibly single Otters in one flight. Twin Otters will be able to carry both external loads and passengers at the same time but at a higher cost to the participants.

The reasoning behind the review is safety. There have been increasing incidents of canoes or kayaks coming off during flight and causing serious safety hazards for the passengers and anyone below. Andy Barr, an inspector for Transport Canada Airworthiness division, outlined that floatplane operators may be able to carry specific boats with specific colors, seat type, etc., on a one-of-a-kind basis after meeting certain regulations. Whether or not these regulations will be useful or not remains to be seen in terms of safety, ease of implementation and enforcement. The draft regulations, available shortly, will spell out the new requirements. Depending on the contents of these new regulations, be prepared for a nasty shock in the cost of your next paddling trip if you use a float plane.



For more information contact Jim Laird, Transport Canada, Air Carriers Department, 1100-9700 Jasper Ave., Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 4E6; ph. (403) 495-5274.

(Reprinted from *Kanawa*, Nov/Dec 1996, courtesy of the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association.)



M.T. Kelly's caricature appeared in the September-1996 issue of *Books in Canada*. His latest book is *Out of the Whirlwind*, a story set in the Thelon River Valley.

## KAZAN SOLO

Theodor Mellenthin

In the fall of 1995, I started seriously considering the idea of challenging the wind and ice of the Inuit Ku (River of Man) — if I could manage to get four weeks vacation. Trip reports and books on anthropology and ecology spurred my enthusiasm until I was almost obsessed with the idea. Farley Mowat's book *People of the Deer* made this area come alive for me.

On 14 July 1996, the huge jet plane landed on a makeshift air strip on top of an esker at Kasba Lake Lodge. The Lodge had earlier made me a deal I could not refuse, and when I arrived the manager rolled out my canoe and gear. He had picked them up a month earlier at my home on his way north to the lodge. The 16-foot, home-built, fibreglass canoe used on previous trips, outfitted with airbags, a Perception solo seat for kneeling, and a sail I had made at the last minute, looked fine.



When I left the dock at 4:30 in the afternoon, I had the peculiar feeling that everyone doubted my ability — and so did I after struggling in a headwind around islands and bays until 8 p.m. However, I soon was in the flow of the Kazan and the first expected portage didn't materialize. (Because of my attitude, skill level, and the water levels I experienced, I managed to run every rapid on the river except the exit rapid out of Thirty Mile Lake; when I got there, I was not on the side recommended as the easiest route.) A short portage at some falls and two short portages around two cascades immediately after dispelled a lot of myths of long, exhausting portages through knee-deep muskeg. I used as a guideline a travel report "Travelling the Kazan" by Anne B. Spragins-Harmuth which was published in *Nastawgan* (Summer 1991).

I sailed and hiked and took pic-

tures of many inukshuks, ancient tent rings, and graves. With the silence of the canoe, I could sneak up to and observe herds of muskox and caribou. Wolves, snow geese, sandhill cranes, and sunsets were beautiful sights in the distance. The tundra which covered the ground like an aromatic carpet, was very soft underfoot and filled the lungs with fresh air.

My Magellan 2000 GPS position finder guided me through some very difficult terrain and around bays and islands to the hidden outlets of the river. I thought of it as imperative to my survival, but on the fourth day of my trip it fell into the water, rendering it useless. Even though I had taken a map and compass course just prior to my departure, my knowledge wasn't as strong as I'd hoped when faced with this situation. Luckily, I met and joined in their campsite two trippers who had ended their two-week excursion on a beautiful sandy

peninsula and were waiting for a plane from Kasba Lake Lodge to return them to civilization. I appreciated their hints on compass navigating and accepted their kind offer of their remaining food, which added greatly to my limited variety. The next morning, I proudly sailed off at a good speed, only to be windbound a couple of hours later when the wind changed.

I wasn't to meet anyone for two weeks after that, until I reached the water resources cabin a few kilometres above Kazan Falls. A Parks Canada archaeological survey crew out of

Ottawa was there, documenting ancient Inuit signs of habitation, such as tent rings, graves, stone blinds, and Inukshuks. I was invited to have a vegetable soup for lunch with them as they had made the cabin their restaurant. There was no meat in the soup because the party was waiting for supplies, which were being picked up in Baker Lake by two Inuit. Little did I know that I would later be windbound in a tent with them for





two days just below the falls.

At Kazan Falls, I had paddled and lined my canoe into the last eddy just before the drop. As for the two-kilometre portage around the falls, I managed to avoid that. I noticed a crack in the canyon walls just below the falls and it took two hours to portage just 300 metres into an eddy down below past the monument commemorating the Kazan as a Heritage River in recognition of the Inuit who used to call this area home. With everything tied securely in the canoe, my floater and life jacket strapped to my body, I left the eddy and paddled into the hissing and surging 20-kilometre-an-hour current of the so-called "unrunnable" canyon, only to be through it in 10 minutes.

Below the falls I met up with the two men who were on their way back to Baker Lake to get supplies

for the Parks Canada crew that I'd met earlier. They had been caught by the weather which kept all of us wind-bound for two days. During our time together, I supplied and cooked all the meals which were fortified with some fish they had caught. While the wind and rain tore at the tent, we were nice and cosy around the Coleman stove, drinking tea, joking, laughing, and listening to some Inuit stories.

As the wind subsided somewhat on the third morning, I left the tent of my two friends and paddled into an ever-strengthening northerly head-wind, but nothing could slow me down on my last 50 km. There were strong currents as I arrived at the cabin of an Inuit couple just past the mouth of the Kazan. Their planned one-hour motorboat trip to the village of Baker Lake the next morning, 8 August, coincided with my decision not to paddle the remaining huge expanse of windswept lake, and I gratefully accepted a ride.

All in all, my map wheel indicated 906 paddling kilometres from Kasba Lake Lodge to the mouth of the Kazan, not counting all the little detours and wrong turns. This was accomplished in 24 days, at an average of 38 km per day, including two six-kilometre and two zero-kilometre days. I did not cross any lakes outright but straightened out a lot of shorelines by paddling from point to point across some large bays. I made five portages for a total of 1500 metres. The rapids on the Kazan were wide open and easy to see. I strongly recommend using a sail, but a 16-foot canoe to go solo is too big. One could say I was lucky with the weather but then my Back River solo in 1985 was very similar in time and distance, using a ground sheet for a sail.

Two days in Baker Lake were very enjoyable, as I made many friends with the easy-going Inuit and renewed a friendship with an old acquaintance. The milk run over Hudson Bay with Sky Ways airline brought me to Churchill and on 12 August I embarked on a 36-hour Polar Bear Express train ride to Winnipeg.



## WCA TRIPS

For questions, suggestions, or anything else related to the WCA Trips, contact any of the members of the Outings Committee: Bill Ness (416) 321-3005; Mike Jones (905) 270-3256; Ann Dixie (416) 486-7402; Tim Gill (416) 447-2063.

*Remember that WCA trips may have an element of danger and that the ultimate responsibility for your safety is your own.*

March-April **HAVE PADDLE, WILL TRAVEL**  
Steve Bernet, (519) 837-8774.

March and April weekends. Spring whitewater playboating. Call any time before 10:00 p.m. We will be going out nearly every weekend to wherever the good water levels are in Ontario, Quebec, or the northeastern United States. If you would like to join us for some serious grade 3 to 4, cold whitewater, give us a call. Limited to experienced whitewater paddlers with fully outfitted craft. Cold-water canoe clothing, helmets, and whitewater PFDs are essential. Limit six canoes per trip.

16 March **BRONTE CREEK**  
Harrison Jolly, (905) 689-1733, book before 9 March.

A narrow creek similar to Oakville Creek. Cold water, tight manoeuvring, and the possibility of sweepers blocking the river. Experienced canoeists in outfitted boats. Limit six canoes.

28 March **MOIRA RIVER**  
John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 21 March.

We will meet at Chisholm's Mill in the morning and run down the river from here to Latta. In the afternoon we will run the more difficult Lost Channel section. Wet or dry suits, helmets, and properly installed air bags are required. Limit six boats with advanced crews.

28 March **OAKVILLE CREEK**  
Mike Jones, (905) 270-3256, book before 21 March.

Water levels are always unpredictable. A late thaw or a heavy rain can mean fast water. Early thaw and no rain makes for a shallow run. Plan for fast cold water and possible sweepers. Oakville Creek can be a long day's paddle if the conditions are bad. Put-in and take-out depend on weather. Limit six canoes.

29 or 30 March **LOWER CREDIT RIVER**  
Barry Godden, (416) 440-4208, book before 22 March.

From Streetsville to the Golf Course. Cold, fast-moving water. The Credit can provide some exciting challenges. Intermediate paddlers and properly equipped boats. Wet suits or dry suits required. Limit six canoes.

30 March **UPPER CREDIT RIVER**  
Paul and Diane Hamilton, (905) 877-8778, book before 24 March.

Inglewood to Glen Williams. The river will be fast and cold with some swifts. This is a very pretty section of the Credit, making for a good spring paddle for intermediate paddlers. Canoeists should be prepared for cool, wet conditions. Alternative date if the river hasn't broken up is 6 April. Limit six canoes.

5 April **TEESWATER - SOUTHERN BRUCE COUNTY**  
Heinz Hoernig, (519) 524-6976, book before 28 March.

From Riversdale on Hwy. 9 to south of Paisley. This river is rich in bird life and provides some whitewater (maximum level 2) at its northern sections. The Teeswater leads us through a charming pastoral landscape of southwestern Ontario. For eager novice paddlers that are well equipped for a Spring run. Limit five canoes.

6 April **BRONTE CREEK**  
Harrison Jolly, (905) 689-1733, book before 30 March.

A narrow creek similar to Oakville Creek. Cold water, tight manoeuvring, and the possibility of sweepers blocking the river. Experienced canoeists in outfitted boats. Limit six canoes.

12 April **LOWER CREDIT RIVER**  
Gerry Yellowlees, (905) 607-0608, book before 5 April.

From Streetsville to the Golf Course. Cold, fast-moving water. Although the level should be dropping, the Credit can still provide some challenges. Intermediate paddlers in properly equipped boats. Kayakers welcome. Cold-weather gear and change of clothes required. Limit five boats.

12-13 April **BEAVER CREEK and UPPER BLACK**  
Barry Godden, (416) 440-4208, book before 12 April.

Saturday's run follows Beaver Creek down to Fiddler's Rapids. Sunday the Upper Black River. Both of these require advanced paddling skills. Limit five canoes properly outfitted for cold whitewater. Dry suits or wet suits required.

13 April **UPPER AND LOWER BLACK RIVER**  
Del Dako and Steve Lukasko, (416) 421-2108.

From Cooper to Hwy.7 the Black River offers strenuous paddling through a series of demanding rapids. As much scouting as possible will be done from the boats. Paddlers with fully outfitted boats and who are comfortable paddling in class 3 rapids. Limit five canoes with advanced paddlers.

19-20 April **SALMON and MOIRA RIVERS**  
Glenn Spence, (613) 475-4176, book before 12 April.

Just north of Belleville, these two rivers offer exciting whitewater and fine scenery. The Salmon is the more gentle one but has some ledges to practise your skills. The Moira has larger rapids possibly up to class 3. This is one of southern Ontario's finest spring rivers. Intermediate paddlers welcome. Limit six canoes.

20 April **BLACK RIVER (WASHAGO)**  
Bill King, (416) 223-4646, book before 14 April.

This trip will take us down the Black River from Cooper's Falls to Washago. For the most part, the Black flows along gently with a few easy rapids. The outing is suitable for novices and families who are equipped for cold weather. Limit eight canoes.

26-27 April **UPPER MADAWASKA and OPEONGO RIVERS**

John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 19 April.

Two days of whitewater excitement for advanced paddlers. Saturday we will paddle the Upper Madawaska, which is a fast-flowing pool-and-drop river with quiet stretches interspersed with some very serious rapids. All rapids can, and some must, be portaged. On Sunday we will move to the Opeongo, which contains long stretches of continuous riffles plus several significant drops. Portaging is more difficult here and in high water this can make for quite a strenuous trip. Wet suits or dry suits, helmets, and fully outfitted whitewater boats with good floatation are a must. Limit six canoes.

26-27 April **MISSISSAGUA RIVER, EELS CREEK**  
Bill Ness, (416) 321-3005, book before 19 April.

On Saturday we will paddle the Mississagua which is a classic pool-and-drop run. The river is a series of class 1 to class 3 rapids separated by flat sections, and some scenic falls (Class



4-5). All major rapids can be easily portaged making the trip suitable for intermediates. The next day we will run Eels Creek, which is similar to the Mississauga but narrower. Paddlers must be able to manoeuvre well in fast water as sweepers are always a potential hazard. Limit six canoes.

3 May **WILLOW CREEK**

Mike Jones, (905) 270-3256, book before 24 April.

Novice paddlers are welcome to participate in this scenic trip on a gentle river. Limit five canoes.

4 May **MOIRA RIVER**

Bill Ness, (416) 321-3005, book before 28 April.

By early May the level on the Moira is usually just right for experienced, enthusiastic novices who want to begin paddling intermediate-level rivers. There are some excellent play spots at this level to challenge the newcomer and delight the veteran whitewater paddler. Limit six canoes.

10-11 May **WAHWASHKESH LOOP**

Paul & Diane Hamilton, (905) 877-8778, book before 2 May.

Come see the trilliums. Starting from the Marina on Top Lake, we will paddle into the Magnetawan River to just below the Graves Rapids. From there we will paddle into Kashegaba Lake through a series of lakes and portages to find our way into Wahwashkesh Lake. A two-day trip suitable for intermediate paddlers with whitewater experience. Be prepared for cold weather. Limit three canoes.

10-11 May **MADAWASKA and OPEONGO RIVERS**

Frank Knaapen or Jay Neilson, weekends (705) 776-2653, home Mo-Fr (416) 690-4016 or (819) 689-2307.

In high water these rivers require advanced whitewater equipment, dry/wet suits and airbags are a must.

10-11 May **NORTHEAST GEORGIAN BAY**

John Winters, (705) 382-2057, book before 28 April.

This will be an intermediate trip from Key River. Cold weather gear recommended. Limit four canoes.

10-11 May **UPPER MAGNETAWAN RIVER**

Tim Gill, (416) 447-2063, book before 5 May.

An exciting whitewater weekend on the Magnetawan. From Ahmic Lake to Wahwashkesh Lake. The upper section contains a series of grade 2 to 3 rapids and some falls that must be portaged. Cold-weather equipment and extra flotation advantageous. Fit, intermediate whitewater paddlers should enjoy the challenge of this historic waterway. Limit five canoes.

17-19 May **FRENCH RIVER**

John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 10 May.

From our beautiful campsite on The Ladder we will play at Blue Chute, Big Pine, The Ladder, and Upper (Little) Parisien. Suitable for all skill levels. Wet suits, helmets, and flotation are required. Limit six canoes.

17-19 May **BONNECHERE RIVER**

Karl Schimek, (705) 487-0172, book before 12 May (phone before 9:00 p.m.).

Moderately strenuous trip upstream on the Aylen River to McKaskill Lake. This includes several portages on the way. The first part of the Bonnechere River includes some lining and portaging while the lower section has some demanding rapids. We will end the trip at Aylen Lake. Suitable for fit, intermediate paddlers. Limit three canoes.

23-25 May **TEMAGAMI RIVER**

Frank Knaapen or Jay Neilson, weekends (705) 776-2653, home Mo-Fr (416) 690-4016 or (819) 689-2307.

We will be running the Temagami River the long weekend hoping for some whitewater and bug-free weather. Whitewater equipment is required as no scouting is done.

24-25 May **PALMER RAPIDS INTERMEDIATE WHITEWATER CLINIC**

John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 17 May.

This tandem and solo clinic is designed for those who have previous whitewater experience and want to further develop their skills. The emphasis will be on having fun and playing in whitewater. We will practise surfing, jet ferries, and eddy turns across a strong current differential. Participants should have an ABS canoe outfitted with thigh straps and full floatation. Helmets and wet suits are required. Limit five canoes.

24 May **BASIC FLATWATER WORKSHOP**

Doug Ashton, (519) 654-0336, book before 17 May.

This workshop is being offered to new members who wish to develop their basic paddling skills. We will discuss and practise strokes, portaging, and canoe safety as it relates to flatwater paddling. The day will be paced to allow for plenty of practise time. Participants will be expected to provide a suitable canoe, PFDs, and paddles. Registration is limited to twelve current members.

7-8 June **ORCA MOVING WATER 1 COURSE**

See the separate announcement on page 14.

7-11 June **SAND RIVER**

Frank Knaapen or Jay Neilson, weekends (705) 776-2653, home Mo-Fr (416) 690-4016 or (819) 689-2307.

We will be running the Sand River in beautiful Lake Superior Park. The train leaves Frater (two hours north of Sault St. Marie) on Saturday at approx. 1 p.m. This is a well-maintained wilderness river with lots of variety, including winding marshes and long advanced whitewater sections.

21-22 June **WHITEWATER COURSE AT PALMER RAPIDS**

Hugh Valliant, (416) 699-3464 (evenings), e-mail valliant@micomtech.com (preferred), book before 14 May. Assisted by Anmarie Forsyth, Jim Morris, and Debbie Sutton. Now for the 14th season. Due to its immense popularity, the course has filled up within the first week for the past several years. Those wishing to register should phone immediately. There is a possibility, as in previous years, that a second course will be arranged.

We will meet at Palmer Rapids on the Madawaska River for an exciting and instructional weekend. The emphasis of the course is on the strokes and techniques necessary to safely negotiate a set of rapids. Palmer Rapids is considered class 2. In this controlled and structured environment where the pace is slow, there will be plenty of time to practise and perfect your strokes. You will learn how to control a canoe in moving water so that you can go where you want to go (most of the time). The river will no longer control your canoe (all of the time).

To feed your hungry appetites there will be a group BBQ on Saturday night featuring a real salad, a real steak, and real potatoes using real charcoal. A deposit of \$25 is required to secure your spot on the roster. Open to experienced flatwater, novice, or beginning whitewater paddlers. Preference will be given to those who need it. Friends are more than welcome to the Saturday night's festivities. Limit eight canoes.

**28-30 June PETAWAWA RIVER**

Paul and Diane Hamilton, (905) 877-8778, book before 21 June.

This is an exciting whitewater trip from Lake Traverse to Lake McMannus. There are some challenging rapids on this route, for paddlers with skill levels of intermediate to advanced. Limit four canoes.

**28-30 June TIM RIVER**

Howard Sayles, (416) 921-5321, book before 21 June.

A three-day paddle on the Tim River in western Algonquin Park. A pleasant long weekend for those who enjoy a faster pace and have the skill to manoeuvre a canoe through tight s-turns. Limit three canoes.

**20-25 July FRENCH RIVER DELTA AND BUSTARD ISLANDS**

Richard Todd, (829) 827-3175, book before 13 July.

A generally easy trip with only a few hundred metres of portaging. Possibility of some big waves for one or two brief periods. Incomparable scenery and unlimited opportunity for exploration. Limit nine people.

**26-27 July PALMER RAPIDS PLAY WEEKEND**

Bill Ness, (416) 321-3305, book before 21 July.

Just a relaxing summer weekend at Palmer's. A great opportunity for those who participated in the whitewater clinics here in June to return for some practice. Bring the family. The bugs will be gone and the water warm for swimming. There's a good beach for the kids. Limit eight canoes.

**1-10 Aug. ST IGNACE ISLE, ROSSPORT**

Gerry O'Farrell, (519) 822-8886, book early for planning.

A week of paddling the northern coastline of Lake Superior. Limit five canoes.

**2-4 August OTTAWA RIVER**

John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 28 July.

We are fortunate to have access to the most beautiful private campsite on the river, right where we take out. On Saturday we will paddle the Middle Channel, On Sunday the Main Channel, and Monday the Middle again. Suitable for paddlers with intermediate whitewater skills who are prepared to portage if they choose to. We will scout most rapids. Boat floatation and helmets required. Limit six canoes.

**16-24 August GEORGIAN BAY and CENTRAL KILLARNEY PARK**

Richard Todd, (829) 827-3175, book before 8 August.

Several days exploring the inlets and islands of northern Georgian Bay will be followed by a visit to Threenarrows Lake in the centre of Killarney Park. Our route will take us through the village of Killarney, past Baie Fine and up Kirk Creek. There will be one long portage and a handful of very short ones. Limit nine people.

**30 Aug.-1 Sept. OTTAWA RIVER**

John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 28 August.

See previous description (2-4 Aug.).



Photo: Toni Harting

## PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

*This PRODUCTS AND SERVICES section is available, free of charge and on a first-come, first-served basis, to members as well as non-members for their announcements regarding items for sale, special products, discounts, services, courses, etc. Contact the editor if more information is required.*

**DISCOUNTS ON TRIPPING SUPPLIES** WCA members who present a membership card will receive a 10-percent discount on many non-sale times at:

- Algonquin Outfitters, RR#1, Oxtongue Lake, Dwight, Ont.
- Rockwood Outfitters, 669 Speedvale Ave. West, Guelph, Ont.
- Suntrail Outfitters, 100 Spence Str. (Hwy. 70), Hepworth, Ont.
- Smoothwater Outfitters, Temagami (Hwy. 11), Ont.

Members should check at each store to find out what items are discounted.

**CANOE FOR SALE** Wood and canvas 16 ft Chestnut, good condition, \$950. Greg Brown, RR.1, Heathcote, Ontario, N0H 1N0; (519) 599-3288.

**CANOE FOR SALE** Polyethylene 16'4" Old Town Discovery with ash thwarts and cane seats. Partially outfitted for whitewater. Excellent condition, \$750. Jim Paton, (905) 336-0461 (please leave message).

**CANOE FOR SALE** Perception Gyramax C-1; red, very good condition, \$450. Bill Ness, (416) 321-3500.

**CANOE FOR SALE** Swift Madawaska ABS, hardly used, like new; will consider trade for solo whitewater play boat, or tandem Kevlar tripping canoe; best offer. Linda Lane, (519) 846-2586 or e-mail lindal@kit.micro-age.ca

**GRAND CANOE SCHOOL** Improve your canoe and kayak paddling skills. The Grand Canoe School runs ORCA accredited Moving Water and Flat Water canoe courses, OWWA accredited kayak courses, canoe (or kayak) rolling clinics, and River rescue classes. All courses and classes take place in the Guelph area. The School also offers wilderness canoe trips throughout Ontario. For a brochure, please phone (519) 763-9496 or (416) 440-4208; e-mail us at canoesch@sentex.net or write to The Grand Canoe School, 17A - 218 Silvercreek Parkway N., Suite 101, Guelph, Ontario, N1H 8E8. Please visit our web page at <http://www.sentex.net/~canoesch/>

**PADDLING IN OTTAWA VALLEY** Valley Ventures offer full services (canoe and equipment rentals, shuttles, accommodation, trip reports) for people paddling lakes and rivers in Algonquin Park and the Dumoine, Coulogne, and Noire Rivers. ORCA programs and guided trips are also available. Contact Don Smith at Box 1115, Deep River, Ont., K0J 1P0; ph. (613) 584-2577; fax (613) 584-9016; e-mail: vent@intranet.ca

**TEMAGAMI** Smoothwater Outfitters offers unique wilderness trips, including Sturgeon River Fly-in, An-

ishinabe Celebration, Temagami Challenge, Full Moon Glory, Family Canoe Trip, Summer Camp Flashback, Old Growth Pine Celebration, Heritage Highlight Tour, and Hot Colour Bike Tour. Also ORCA courses: Canoe Tripping 1, 2, and 3 and Moving Water 3. For artists we have two workshops: Painting the Great Pines, and Visions in Paint. SO offers a full line of trip support services, including shuttles and accommodation. For full details contact Caryn Colman at Smoothwater Outfitters, Box 40, Temagami, Ont., P0H 2H0; tel. (705) 569-3539; fax (705) 569-2710; e-mail: temagami@onlink.net

**WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE INC.** is offering in 1997: ORCA canoe tripping level 1 and 2 leadership courses (May 16-19, June 5-8, July 17-21; custom designed courses for groups), courses for educators/human services providers, a Youth Leadership Challenge (The Algonquin Traverse, Aug 23 to Sep. 1), year-round retreats at our fully winterized house situated on a 185-acre property near Georgian Bay, week-end or longer trips using techniques based upon traditional winter camping (in the Haliburton Highlands or Algonquin, co-led by Bob Davis, an expert in this field). We also organize events in the city (potluck dinners, story telling, slide shows). For more information contact Reuben Berger at (416) 782-6710 or at 44 Park Hill Rd., Toronto, Ont., M6C 3N1.

**KUKAGAMI LODGE** A little log cabin by the lake ... Swimming at your doorstep ... Freshly baked, organic whole-grain bread on the table ... A place to relax away from the crowds ... Enjoy nature in the heart of the Northern Ontario forest ... Forget about the hassles of everyday living while you swim, hike, bicycle, and canoe in and around Kukagami Lake. Our lodge has no direct road access; we will bring you in by boat, you must phone to arrange pick-up times. Our dock is located about 32.5 km north of Hwy. 17 between Sudbury and North Bay, a 5 to 6-hour drive from Toronto. For more information contact Viki and Allan Mather, Kukagami Lake, RR1, Wahnapiatae, Ont., P0M 3C0; ph. (705) 853-4929.

**CORPORATE ADVENTURE COURSES** Year-round courses that address the challenge of leading and working together in the midst of turbulence and change. Our customized programs are about engaging people to accomplish significant, intentional, real change within their organization. We specialize in Managing Strategic Change for business and governments across North America and the Caribbean. Two of our Senior Partners have extensive wilderness out-tripping leadership experience in guiding, whitewater instructing, and stock wildlife photography. For more information contact Oldring Consulting Group, #34 - 1480 Foster St., White Rock, B.C. V4B 3X7; tel. (604) 541-8424; fax (604) 541-8425; e-mail: ocg@mindlink.bc.ca

# Where it is ...



## ... in this issue

- |                                   |                                    |                                   |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Solo on the Beaufort Sea       | 13. Rivers Canada                  | 18. Paddling a Conoe in Windy ... |
| 11. French River, Summer 2006 ... | 13. Shows and Meetings             | 18. CRCA National Headquarters    |
| 11. My Imaginary Home             | 14. Symposium: Historic Canoes ... | 19. L'Ours Polaire                |
| 12. Editorial                     | 14. ORCA Moving Water 1 Course     | 20. Reviews                       |
| 12. News Briefs                   | 15. Letter to the Editor           | 21. Temagami                      |
| 13. Don River Paddle              | 15. Board of Directors             | 21. M.T. Kelly Caricature         |
|                                   | 15. Partners Wanted                | 22. Kazan Solo                    |
|                                   | 16. Meanwhile ...                  | 24. WCA Trips                     |
|                                   | 17. The Esker                      | 27. Products and Services         |

**WCA Postal Address:**

P.O. Box 48022  
 Davisville Postal Outlet  
 1881 Yonge St.  
 Toronto, Ontario M4S 3C6

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**

Earl Silver (Chairman)  
 117 Sherwood Ave.  
 Toronto, Ont., M4P 2A6  
 (416) 486-7402

Paul Hamilton (Vice Chair.)  
 Georgetown, Ont.  
 (905) 877-8778

Pat Buttigieg  
 Pickering, Ont.  
 (905) 831-3554

Sharon Hackert  
 Scarborough, Ont.  
 (416) 438-7672

Mike Jones  
 Mississauga, Ont.  
 (905) 270-3256

Dan Rusciollelli  
 Pickering, Ont.  
 (905) 839-6004

### WCA Contacts

**SECRETARY**  
 Bill King  
 45 Hi Mount Drive  
 Willowdale, Ontario  
 M2K 1X3  
 (416) 223-4646

**INFORMATION**  
 Herb Pohl  
 480 Maple Ave., #113  
 Burlington, Ontario  
 L7S 1M4  
 (905) 637-7632

**WCA TRIPS**

Bill Ness  
 194 Placentia Blvd.  
 Scarborough, Ont., M1S 4H4  
 (416) 321-3005

**JOURNAL EDITOR**

Toni Harting  
 7 Walmer Road, Apt. 902  
 Toronto, Ontario M5R 2W8  
 (416) 964-2495

**TREASURER**

Rob Butler  
 Toronto, Ontario  
 (416) 487-2282

**MEMBERSHIP**

Linda Lane  
 Elora, Ontario  
 (519) 846-2586

**COMPUTER RECORDS**

Cash Belden  
 Toronto, Ontario  
 (416) 925-3591

**CONSERVATION**

Richard Culpeper  
 160 Wembley Drive  
 Sudbury, Ontario  
 P3E 1N2  
 (705) 671-3343

## Wilderness Canoe Association

## membership application

I enclose a cheque for CDN \$25 (single) or CDN \$35 (family) for membership in the *Wilderness Canoe Association* (for non-residents US \$25 or US \$35). I understand that this gives me/us the opportunity to participate in WCA trips and activities, and entitles me/us to receive *Nastawgan* and to vote at meetings of the Association. I also understand that WCA trips may have an element of danger and that the ultimate responsibility for the member's safety is his/her own.

**PRINT CLEARLY!** Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Prov. \_\_\_\_\_

New member Member # if renewal: \_\_\_\_\_

Single  Family

Phone Number(s):  
 ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ (h)

( ) \_\_\_\_\_ (w)

\* This membership is valid for one year. Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Ext. \_\_\_\_\_

\* Send completed form and cheque, payable to the WILDERNESS CANOE ASSOCIATION, to the membership secretary at the WCA postal address.