



The Icy portage

100 DAYS FROM THE ROCKIES TO THE ARCTIC OCEAN

Authors: Pat Maher, Phil Mullins and Anthony Berkers

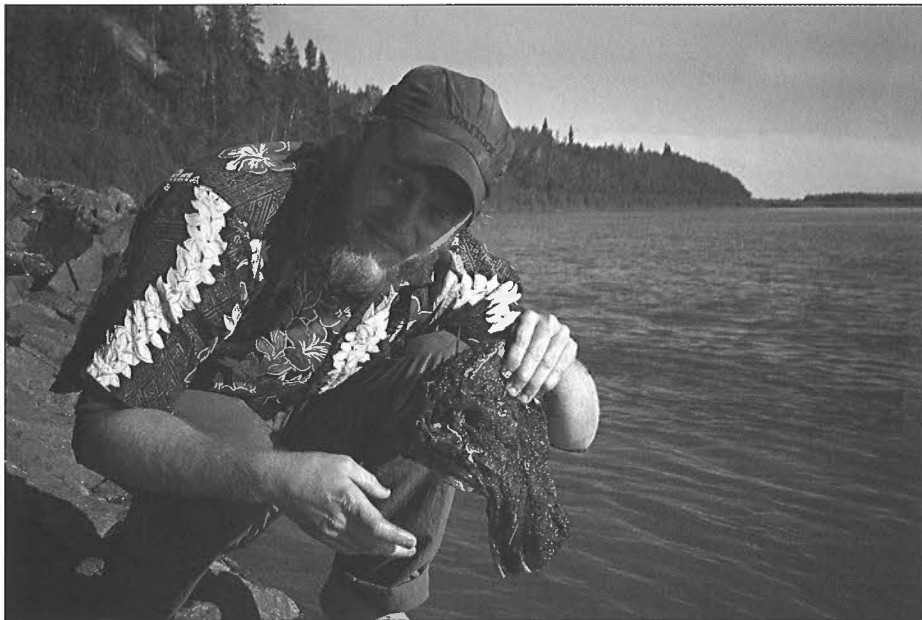
Photos: Phil Mullins, Anthony Berkers and Margo Millette

Overview

The Paddling the Big Sky expedition began as many expeditions do, from the banter, stories, daydreams and past trips of a group of friends. Our 2,800-kilometre journey departed in early May from Hinton, Alberta in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains and crossed prairie and boreal forest into the barren lands. Seven people completed the 100-day trip that also encompassed a university outdoor education program at the University of Alberta. The expedition ended in Kugluktuk, Nunavut in mid-August, where winter had arrived on the shores of the Coronation Gulf.

We were a varied group of athletes, guides, and teachers, our educational backgrounds ranged from a first undergraduate degree to doctoral studies in the fields of outdoor recre-

ation, tourism, education and/or socio-cultural perspectives on physical education. The breadth of our experience was equally varied; some of us had grown up canoeing and/or worked with international environmental education and adventure programs, whereas others were experiencing their first-ever extended canoe trip. The bridge in this diversity was an overarching interest in the past, present, and future role of outdoor recreation and education as a mode of personal, social, and environmental learning. This theme guided the approach to planning and executing the journey. Our purpose was to explore and challenge how skills learned through outdoor activities engage people in meaningful relationships with their environment, and promote ecological and social responsibility.



Pat cleaning fresh moose meat

The expedition really began during the winter of 2003 and daydreams about the expedition gave way to long hours of planning and preparation. Food was dried, equipment procured, sponsorship arranged, and courses planned. For the first leg of the journey, twelve students and three instructors paddled the Athabasca River to Fort McMurray, Alberta. The students returned home from there and three others met our trio for the second leg of twenty-one days. Motivated by the short northern summer, concerns over August weather, and a strong desire to complete the third leg around Great Slave Lake and reach the ocean, we altered the plan. From the original Athabasca River/Lake Athabasca/Slave River to Great Slave Lake route, we found ourselves bumping along by truck from Fort Resolution to Yellowknife. Here we replenished our food stocks and adjusted the team membership in preparation for the final fourth, longest, and most difficult leg of the journey. Beginning this fifty-day leg, we left the docks of Yellowknife and traveled slowly north against the current of the Yellowknife River, over the Canadian Shield, and into the Barren Lands of the Arctic tundra. We lake-hopped and portaged heavy loads for nearly four weeks and finally crossed the height of land into Starvation Lake and down the Starvation River into

Point Lake, the headwaters of the Coppermine River. This Canadian Heritage River led us to Kugluktuk where the river's fresh water mixes with the salty Arctic Ocean. The full route can be seen in the following map (adapted from <http://atlas.gc.ca>).

As with all travel logs there are countless stories waiting to be told. This is just a smattering.

May 9th, 2005

Another extended expedition begins! Our group consists of twelve students and three instructors including a guest for the next three days, the Dean of the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Alberta. A unique part of this trip though are the students who are taking Spring Outdoor Camp during the first month of our travel. After a four-hour drive from Edmonton to Hinton, we cross the Athabasca River on a forestry bridge and drop down next to the river. Taking 30 minutes to sort out gear, tie on throw bags, and make sure paddles and PFDs fit, we say goodbye to our drivers and hit the water. The students are somewhat green but very enthusiastic. I think that it should be a great month providing the water levels co-operate and how nice it is to have the Dean along because of his administrative involvement in getting the program running. Also, he evens out our numbers.

After he leaves, an instructor will have to paddle a solo boat over the wide, slow sections of the Athabasca River, the prospect of which we are not too keen.

May 30th, 2005

Wow, it's already been three weeks on the Athabasca River and so much has happened. We're now getting a bit of a late start after a wonderful evening of camaraderie with some of the "community" along the river (Zelman's lodge at Grand Rapids). So many great people are sharing with us their lives, their food, and their stories of the river. For a trip that many students probably expected to be a wilderness, it sure has a lot of human presence. In fact, we've felt a very strong sense of community.

May 31st, 2005

We're now on the Grand Rapid portage and it is very hot! During a month in which we expected cold to be our greatest adversary, we have had over a week of cloudless days and scorching heat. We discuss with Darlene Zelman our mutual amazement at how much water the Athabasca River carries and how not a drop of it can be used to quench our thirst. The water is high in silt and thus difficult to filter and siphon and its quality is also suspect, given the number of towns and amount of industry along the banks. Overall, this produces a difficulty in finding enough small tributaries to keep the group hydrated. We've taken a rest day, camping in a large clearing at the top of the Grand Rapid portage, completing some teaching requirements and also portaging, at our leisure, some lighter loads.

June 3rd, 2005

Well, we have a bit of a surprise today! We paddled through a number of big-water rapids where a few student boats took on water. Folks were, in general, hollering with delight. This white-water environment is a welcome change from our weeks on a big, slow, muddy river. We ran Boiler Rapids on river left, then to the right, and back left. Rated as C-3, it was probably C-2 at this high water level. We were also able to run Middle Rapids, rated C-4, on the left side for the first bit and then via a long ferry to

river right. Long Rapids was also rated C-4 in the Canoe Alberta Reach Report, but again was probably C-2 when we ran it river right all the way down. After a swamp on the rapid we ate lunch and everyone enjoyed the sunshine. Then we continued on to Crooked Rapids, which is formed by a sharp right-hand bend in the river combined with ledges extending from the right (inside of the bend). Running the rapid far left, we hit a number of big waves. Centre-left probably would have been ideal, but would have been difficult given the students' level of experience. The surprise of the day came at Rock Rapids where we could hear the water pouring over a ledge, but could see nothing. A limestone ledge like many on this stretch, forms this rapid, extending the width of the river with a narrow tongue in the centre. With instructors in the lead, we hit the tongue and held on for the ride. All the students made the deepwater vee and broke through the curling wave. Despite this, due to a few stressed minds and spirits we called it a day at the next island.

On the heels of Crooked Rapids is Rock Rapids, rated C-3 and we concur. In high flow we couldn't see the ledge. The tongue is tight, but shouldn't be too much trouble for a more experienced group. Though we didn't have the opportunity, scouting might be possible on river right.

June 6th, 2005

One phase of the expedition is over and another is about to begin! Arriving in Fort McMurray, it's time for the students to head back to Edmonton. Under the highway bridge in the midst of town we met up with Ron and Rob who provided transportation for the program on behalf of Western Outdoor Works. We sorted gear and waited for the other three group members to arrive. A short stay in Fort McMurray should be a good chance to revitalise, get everyone on the same page, and also close up/debrief a great month of teaching.

June 15th, 2005

After about ten days and yesterday's marathon day, we've now arrived in Fort Chipewyan for a day of rest and re-

laxation. Yesterday, we started at the site of an old store on the Athabasca River and continued through the Fletcher Channel and Embarrass River into the beautiful low-lying Peace-Athabasca delta. Once we reached Lake Athabasca, the delta seemed to spread out in all directions and apart from the mass of Canadian Shield behind the lights of Fort Chip, the sky and land seemed to go on forever in all directions. From the map, we knew it was about a seven-kilometre crossing to Fort Chip and so given the calm winds and time (10:30 p.m.) we felt it was a safe bet to head straight across. Getting to the beach at just after 11:30 p.m. was a relief. The weather had remained relatively calm but feelings had existed amongst the group as to the decision to cross. In the end, today is very windy and it was really quite fortuitous that we did cross. Also, there were no campsites at the delta prior to the crossing despite what we had been led to believe.

In Fort Chip we've taken the mandatory trip to get fresh and junk food from the Northern Store and have begun to see the sites. The town seems really friendly and we've managed to get a lot of good information about the upcoming route from both locals and the Parks Canada office. I'm not sure if we'll be heading out tomorrow – wind doesn't look promising – but at least it's a very nice place to stay a while.

Yesterday we were tracked down by another expedition: a solo paddler from Poland paddling from Jasper, Alberta to Tuktoyaktuk, North West Territories. He had heard about us (as the larger group with students) throughout his journey. He seems like a nice guy and is keen to chat and paddle with us, at least through to the large rapids on the Slave River where we'll need to hire a shuttle and can split costs.

June 18th, 2005

Yesterday, after another day wind bound in Fort Chip we were able to depart. The Rivière des Rochers and Revillon Coupé took us through to the Peace River which about nine kilometers later became the Slave River (proper). Yesterday we camped at the confluence of these two after a monotonous day of big river travel with few campsites to be found. Tonight we are camped at La Butte (river right) on the Slave River, a very nice rocky point and also near the site where plains buffalo were re-introduced to Wood Buffalo National Park. Excellent camping exists up on the cliff overlooking the point with a view well worth the jaunt through the woods. It's Marcin's (Polish journalist/adventurer) birthday today and so we made dinner and chocolate cake for him supplemented with some moose meat that we had been given earlier in the day by a family at one of the cabins along the Slave River.



Amazing evening! Caught up in the migration of the Bathurst caribou herd

June 21st, 2005

Today is the summer solstice and National Aboriginal Day in Fort Smith, NWT. Yesterday at 9:30 a.m., after a 20-km paddle to Fitzgerald, Alberta, we met Clayton Burke who ran our shuttle. We crossed the 60th parallel in the back of Clayton's pickup truck on a dusty road leading around the Cassette, Mountain, Pelican, and Rapids of the Drowned. We camped at the Fort Smith boat launch, just downstream of a large white pelican colony. Today has been a wonderful opportunity to get to know the community of Fort Smith. Although many of the shops and services are closed, that's fine because we've been able to share dried caribou meat, learn about sculpting and watch some truly entertaining axe throwing and burlap sack races. Intermittent thundershowers made today a bit of fun for those of us camped by the river and serving at the community BBQ.

June 27th, 2005

With the abrupt news over the past few days that our group will be changing one member in Yellowknife and that crossing the east arm of Great Slave Lake would no longer be an option due to wind and ice, we have arrived in Fort Resolution ready to sort out the upcoming logistical challenges. At dusk last night following an amazing sunset of moon rising over trees like a neon sign or ball of flame, we paddled from the mouth of the Slave River to the town of Fort Resolution.

Fort Resolution appears to be a wonderful town with a vibrant history. We have camped down by the beach and this morning said goodbye to Marcin. I wonder how he'll cope solo after so many days with us. He's off to the town of Hay River and then down the Mackenzie River. I hope the weather holds for him.

June 28th - July 2nd, 2005

After four days sightseeing in Yellowknife, we've re-stocked our food, revitalized our bodies and minds, and have a new group member. The fresh food in Yellowknife was a wonderful treat as was the ability to contact friends and loved ones in the outside world. We did not have too much ex-

citing news to tell but the group seems to have a new enthusiasm and getting back on the water tomorrow will be a welcome but difficult change. We are facing upwards of a month of upstream travel.

July 11th, 2005

We didn't expect to see this sight on the river. As we rounded a point in the Yellowknife River, we knew that we would come upon the start of the Icy Portage. But the Icy Portage we came upon was very much icy. While we'll rest here for the next day, it'll be a bit of work to get up and over the deep freeze. However it's nice to have some cool clean ice in the powdered milk, and a bit of the rocks to go with our limited supply of scotch.

July 19th, 2005

Again wind stifles our progress. We tried to wait it out over the better part of the day but it kept up and we were forced to spend a second night on Dissention Lake with many hours of reading, writing, and drinking hot tea but enjoyed a good break in our daily routine for a meeting to discuss Phil's research.

July 24th, 2005

Since leaving Greenstocking Lake two days ago, we've jumped from lake to lake, shot down some small streams through overhanging bushes on creeks just wide enough for our 17-foot canoes and completed a number of 400-600-m portages along sandy, open eskers. Upon entering Winter Lake, we encountered a large bull moose. This fascinating experience was made more so by Anthony who seemed to be able to call it closer and closer. Camped on one of the islands in the middle of Winter Lake, we could see that the Winter River enters with an impressive drop that cuts a wide swath through the tundra. More than likely we will portage around it.

July 29th, 2005

Last night we camped on the portage between Big Lake and Starvation Lake and were treated to an amazing sight. As we paddled to where we planned to portage, Pat noticed something moving

on the hillside. After checking it out with the binoculars, we were super excited, as it was our first sighting of caribou. "Hey wait a minute," someone remarked while looking through the binoculars, "There's a whole line of caribou on the ridge...oh my gosh The whole hill is covered!" We had come upon the migration of the Bathurst caribou herd. Quickly, we landed and ran up the shore to get a better look. A few hundred caribou grazed a ways off to our right and so we figured we could safely portage up to the ridge without disturbing them. After unloading the boats, we took the first load up to the height of land and realized how many thousands of caribou surrounded us. We were captivated with amazement as we alternated between taking pictures and shuttling gear to a depot 1.5-km along the 2.5-km portage. Given the hour, we decided to make camp on the ridge, at times no further than 5m from hordes of curious caribou who streamed by, a truly amazing experience. We basked in a gorgeous pink sunset while listening to the clicking of caribou as they passed. Although we had hoped to make it through the entire portage in one go, this sight was just too fantastic to pass up. After shuttling a number of loads over the entire portage, by dusk at midnight we were well set to finish with ease in the morning.

July 30th, 2005

We took a celebratory group photo this morning when we made it to Starvation Lake as we are finally now heading downstream on the Starvation River into Point Lake and on to the Coppermine River. Our month of heading upstream is over. After some gorgeous sunshine crossing Starvation Lake, we came to the first large set of rapids (a waterfall) which we portaged (300-m) on river right. We ran the next swifts (C- I) and although they were a bit rocky at least the walking was good. The section that followed was shallow and rocky but not too difficult. Eventually we ended up at a series of steep ledges that we portaged on river right. About halfway through the portage we made camp with a lovely view of the Starvation River winding towards Point Lake.



Finally over the height of land and on to Starvation Lake (L to R: Anthony Berkers, Haley Elzen, Pat Maher, Phil Mullins, Sean Ryan, Margo Millette)

July 31st, 2005

Continuing down Starvation River we ran a number of swifts and camped at a marked site between the second and third set of rapids. We portaged the third set and a possible fourth along river right. The total length of the portage is about one kilometre. From here, the river winds for the next seven kilometers or so before the next marked rapid which requires a combination of running, lining, and lifting. We encountered two more marked sets before Point Lake, the first a boulder garden that we lined, and the second a chute straight into the lake. This final set we lined for the first 3/4 and then ran the last section.

Arriving at Point Lake at 9:30 p.m., we camped right after the final rapid on an excellent point of rock with lots of flat ground for tents. Because it has been overcast all day, with occasional drizzle, it's starting to feel like fall or winter.

August 5th, 2005

Now we're on the Coppermine River proper after passing through Point Lake, Red Rock Lake, and Rocknest Lake. We ran the first set of rapids from

right to left; the second set is series of nasty ledges which we lined on river right before getting in the lee of two small islands and running the end. Between these two sets are a number of swifts. The third set of rapids consisted of a very large standing wave with a ledge running out from river left. We ran these along the eddy line on river right. The final set of the day was a two-km boulder garden that we scouted from the canoes. Today was relatively sunny and we met the first other travelers that we had seen in quite some time. A group from YMCA Camp Pinecrest in Ontario were taking a rest day just after the first set of rapids. Tonight we're camped on a small island (shoal) on "Lake 341" (1:250,000 topo map 86G).

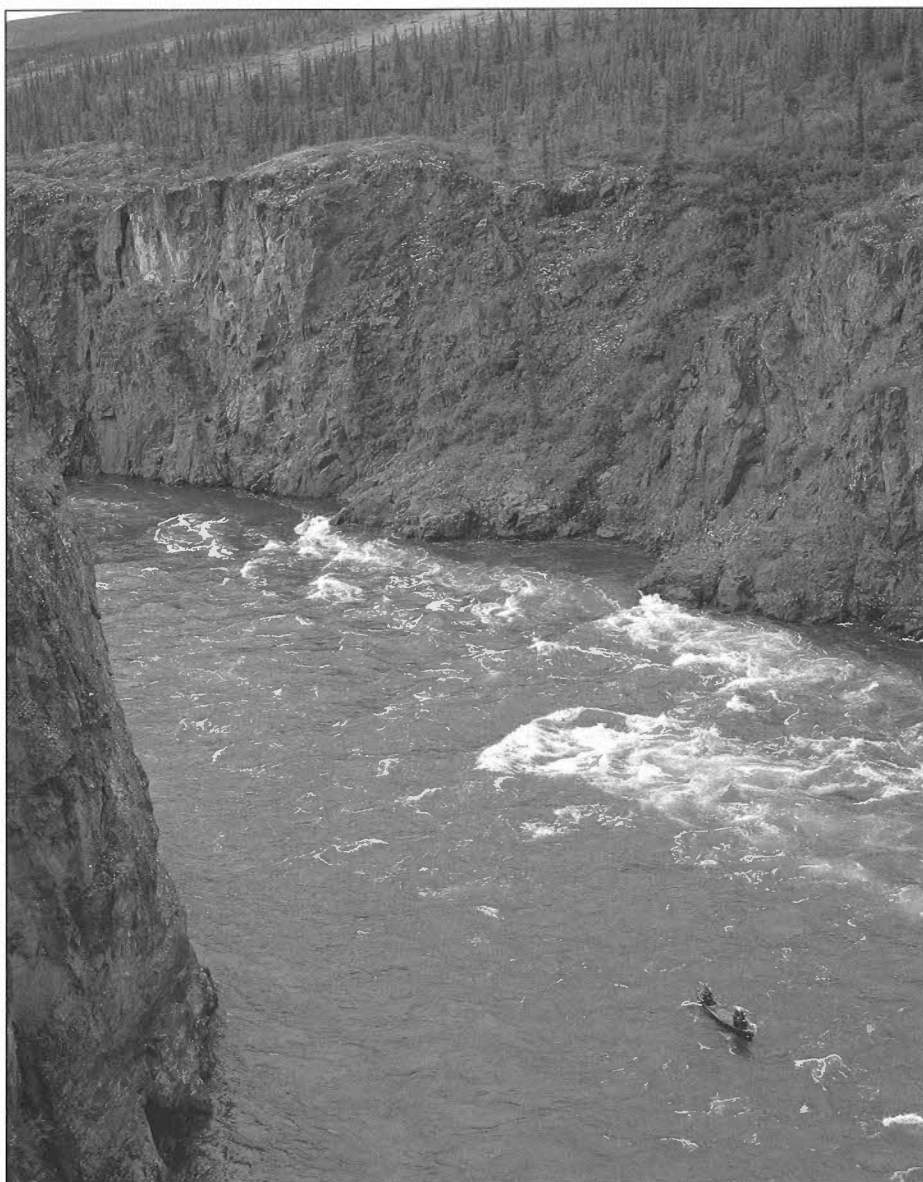
August 11th, 2005

Yesterday we rounded the "Big Bend" of the Coppermine River and the current has picked up as did a nasty headwind. Today we hit the big water of Rocky Defile rapid. A series of big waves and holes occur all along the left shore but are avoidable by sticking to river right, once you turn the initial corner. Rocky Defile is a steep-walled canyon and the

water really pushes through it, especially at the high water level we've encountered all summer. This is definitely a dangerous rapid, as we would note during scouting from the trail on river right. The water slams into the canyon walls in a number of places and a memorial plaque along the portage trail remembers previous paddlers who lost there lives in this rapid. The current is very nice and swift through this section and at the end of the day we camped on river left near the September and Coppermine Mountains, deciding tomorrow would be a rest day.

August 12th, 2005

We finally have a rest day. After 30+ days of continual travel the "sleep in" is great. Anthony and I hike up the terraced slopes of the Coppermine Mountains to stretch our legs (great views and a cloudy day). Winter is certainly coming. Stumbling upon a sandy outcrop, I notice a half-eaten (and still bloody) caribou leg. Closer inspection of the area reveals a series of abandoned wolf dens. As I am peering into yet another dark nook, something (a sound, or movement, or presence?) causes me to turn. Holy shit! A wolf not 20-meters



The big water on Rocky Defile of the Coppermine River

away! Stark and white, it is looking none to pleased as it starts to jump up and down on the spot (making itself look bigger?) while barking and yelping (it really does sound like a dog). I try to remind (convince) myself that healthy wolves don't hurt humans and curse the name of a certain Northern author for all those stories of playing with wolf pups as their parents kindly looked on. With a pounding heart and the occasional beating of big sticks, waving of arms and yelling, I am slowly escorted off the property and make my way back to camp two kilometres away.

August 14th, 2005

This morning, after a series of small

rapids and swifts, we hit Muskox Rapids. We ran the top bit through the centre and then eddied out on river left to scout the next section. The second section centre was negotiated left along the eddy line, missing a number of holes on river left and big waves on river right. At higher water this probably wouldn't be possible because of the size of the waves, but you can portage around the holes on a small point and continue from there. Next we scouted Sandstone Rapids from river right and ran right of centre, then cut to river left for the last third. Between Muskox and Sandstone rapids are a number of swifts which were easily boat scouted. After Sandstone Rapids are a number of

marked but unnamed rapids that we again boat scouted. The best route was generally from inside bend to inside bend.

We camped prior to reaching Escape Rapids because of the cold overcast weather and the fact that we didn't want to run anything in the growing darkness or while we were tired. One rapid of note between Sandstone Rapid and our campsite was a sharp bend with some large waves to navigate; at higher water it may be wise to scout this rapid from shore. At this particular bend we also encountered a herd of about 12 muskox – not the opportune photographic moment but really cool just to see them (males, females, young ones). Today we also saw two white wolves, and at Sandstone Rapid, a caribou ferry across the river with ease. This whole section of the river is quite beautiful in terms of the scenery and cliffs. A lot of birds of prey fly about and signs of their nesting are all along the cliffs. A number of waterfalls crash down from the barrens above the cliffs and, as the trees become sparse, we really get that sense of openness again.

August 16th, 2005

We're done. We've made it to Kugluktuk! Yesterday we continued to Escape Rapids, which have some very large waves. As you approach, a large waterfall draining into the Coppermine River (river right) can be seen. When you see it straight ahead, it's time to get out and scout from river left. The Coppermine takes a large, sharp, left bend at Escape Rapids and has a good view of the rapid from the top of the cliffs on river left. We scouted and then ran the rapid as follows: river right to begin with (avoiding the large waves on river left) and then cut across to river left through the wave train to avoid the hole and large waves below the waterfall. After this, a series of boat-scoutable rapids and swifts continue basically to Bloody Falls. Between Escape Rapids and Bloody Falls, the surrounding valley opens up and the scenery becomes quite vast. Once everything seems to narrow again, you've come to Bloody Falls. It's a bit of a search for the portage trail on river left, but basically at the end of a beach you start to see

the falls. From upstream it's not easy to find the trail, but once you find it, there's a boardwalk, picnic tables, and obvious ATV tracks coming from the other direction as you're now in Kugluk (Bloody Falls) Territorial Park. So, once you've made your first trip across the portage, it's a very obvious route.

At Kugluk (Bloody Falls) Territorial Park, four of us spend our last night on the river, while the other two continued on to Kugluktuk. This split is difficult, but in the end the two who left felt they needed to get to town and rest a number of nagging physical injuries, which perhaps have created the accompanying psychological pull to finish the trip. The skies have cleared at Bloody Falls and the four of us have a wonderful time chatting with fishermen, receiving a gift of grayling, eating a wonderful meal, and generally relaxing. Today, we paddle the final 16-km to Kugluktuk at a leisurely pace, enjoying the sunshine and each other's company. Coming to the end of the journey is both a shock and a joy. We round the point where the Coppermine River meets Coronation Gulf and that is it. There is Kugluktuk, the end of our journey.

August 20th, 2005

After a few days meeting the teachers, students, families, and other visitors to Kugluktuk, we begin to part our ways. With most of us having booked flights south on Aeroplan points, we leave whenever seats are available over the course of four days. While adjusting to life in town we take part in many wonderful experiences: giving presentations to Kugluktuk elementary school classes explaining why we aren't any good with a shot gun or a fishing rod (to the laughs of the kids); we help teachers unload their groceries that had been barged in; we load up our boats to be barged out to Hay River; we go out to the sea ice with Joe Allen Evyagotailak, the Kugluktuk MLA. Kugluktuk has a wonderful friendly atmosphere to go along with its beautiful view – an excellent place to end a stunning expedition.

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement must be made to the other expedition members who did not take part in the authorship of this arti-

cle: Haley Elzen, Margo Millette, Alissa Overend and Sean Ryan. Margo's trip log is where much of the precise detail for the article comes from. As well, thank you to the students involved in the first month of courses.

Financially and logistically, the expedition was sponsored by a number of companies and organisations: a grant from the *Expedition Committee of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society*, grants from the *Mountain Equipment Co-op Expedition and Environment Funds*, *Ostrom Outdoors*, *Totem Outfitters*, *K & K Foodliner*, *Souptacular*, *The Cheese Factory*, *Western Outdoor Works*, *Shecode*, and *Alta-Comm Wireless*.

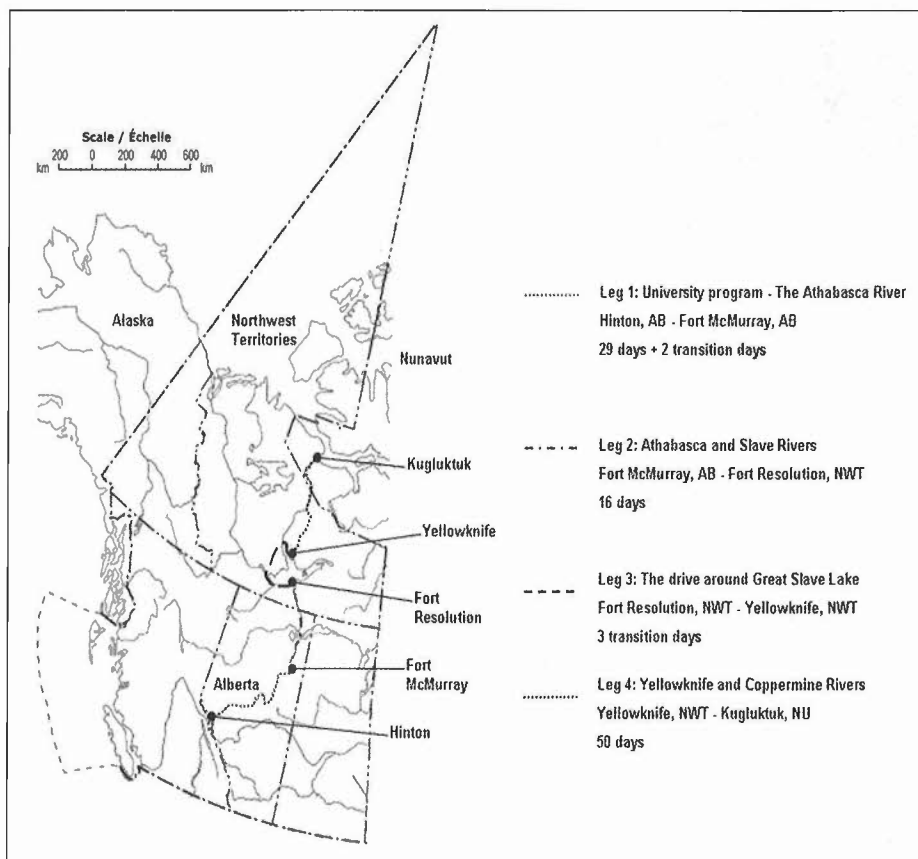
Bios

Pat Maher is currently an Assistant Professor in the Resource Recreation and Tourism Program at the University of Northern British Columbia. Prior to this he studied and taught at institutions in New Zealand and Canada and was an instructor at the Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School. Pat's enjoying settling down in the wilds of Northern BC where he "landed" one

week after this expedition finished.

Phil Mullins is currently pursuing doctoral studies at the University of Alberta where he teaches outdoor and environmental education for the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation. His research interests centre on the ability of outdoor programming to foster and maintain people's connection to particular environments and places. This work builds on his Master's degree from the U of A, his international work with environmental field studies and programming, and his undergraduate studies from Lakehead University in geography, philosophy, and outdoor recreation.

Over the last 10 years, Anthony Berkers has worked as a mountain and kayak guide in Bolivia, a summer camp counselor in Alberta, an Outward Bound instructor in BC, and a youth and community leader in Costa Rica. He holds a degree in Outdoor Pursuits as well as in Psychology. He is currently enjoying a certain sense of geographic stability and teaches Outdoor and Physical Education at Dawson College and the Collège International des Marcellines in Montreal, QC.



THE MOISIE

Authors: Barb and Dave Young

Photos: Bruce Bellaire and Barb Young



Rim Canyon – time to wade

Introduction

The Moisie River begins near Labrador City, drops off the Labrador Plateau and 420 kilometres downstream, enters the St. Lawrence River east of Sept-Isles, Quebec. Though the Moisie can be accessed via the Pekans River or by floatplane, we chose the more popular rail option. The Quebec North Shore and Labrador railway (QSN&L) runs from Sept-Isles to Labrador City. Canoeists wishing to access the Moisie depart the train at Lac De Mille and head south through a chain of lakes to access the Moisie at Rim Canyon.

We had put off doing the Moisie River until this year, having lacked confidence in our ability for this challenge. We (Barb and Dave, Bruce and Beth) have been paddling together for many years and are

advanced intermediate paddlers. We are also advanced intermediate in age (average age 55) and Barb has damaged knee ligaments requiring her to wear a knee brace. As it turned out, the trip was just as difficult as we had thought. We planned on 16 days to complete the trip, which turned out to be the bare minimum. While three or four added days would have been helpful, nevertheless we enjoyed our adventure on the Nahanni of the East.

We used maps developed by Raymond Boyer of Sept Isles although we also took along topographical maps for the initial part of the trip on the lakes. We also referred to a detailed trip description we found on the Internet at Canadian Canoe Routes (www.myccr.com). This was written in

2003 so we referred to it as the SARS group description. We paddled Swift Dumoine canoes with spray covers. Other equipment included a satellite phone and GPS. We used the GPS frequently to pinpoint our locations and campsites.

For the most part the campsites were disappointing and difficult to find. On the train we heard reports that it was a good year for bugs but even so the black flies were bothersome, especially on the portages. We were also prepared for lots of rain and cold weather. Here we were pleasantly surprised. Even though we had rain most days it was usually intermittent. We only had two days when we were chilled from wet and cold.

Water levels were very low but seemed to match the description of the

SARS group. This created some difficulty at the beginning of the trip where we had to drag our canoes on Lac Menistouc and wade through several rapids at the beginning of the Moisie. Other groups had similar experiences at those points in the trip, thus water levels may not make a difference.

The scenery on the Moisie River is quite spectacular but we were often too tired to appreciate it. The long stretches of whitewater were very enjoyable with lots of C-3s. Trestle Rapids on the last day were the most difficult for us. Though listed as C-3, this section was very voluminous and more difficult than any of the previous C-3s.

The following is a day-by-day account of the trip.

Thursday, Aug 4th

Having arrived at Sept-Isles after a two-day road trip from Cobourg, we were up at 6:15 a.m. for a take-out breakfast at Tim Hortons and then the train station. We met another WCA group from Whitby who was doing a shorter trip on the Moisie via the Nipissis River. We checked in, following two other canoe groups.

The train initially traveled along the Moisie River and we were able to see

Trestle Rapids, which didn't look too difficult from our elevated position. Our route then followed the Nipissis River, which appeared dry, and we sympathised with the WCA group who were dropped off on its bank.

At Ross Bay Junction, the train divides, some cars going to Labrador City and some to Schefferville. The train agent had warned us to make sure that our canoes were transferred to the Labrador City train. Amid a lot of confusion, a group of Americans who were supposed to be on the car ahead for Schefferville were on our car and almost went to Labrador City with us. As well, our canoes almost went to Schefferville with them. After a long delay, we were finally on our way to Labrador City with our canoes and gear safely in tow. We asked for a drop-off at Opocopa (mile 23) but should have asked for mile 19, which would have saved an hour's paddle the next morning.

Arriving at mile 23 around 6:15 p.m. we set up our tents on a gravelly spot beside the train tracks. The road behind has lots of train and car/truck traffic as it runs all the way from Baie Comeau to Goose Bay/Happy Valley. Around 3 a.m. some heavy wind and rain began, which flipped our canoe over but luckily not onto the train tracks.

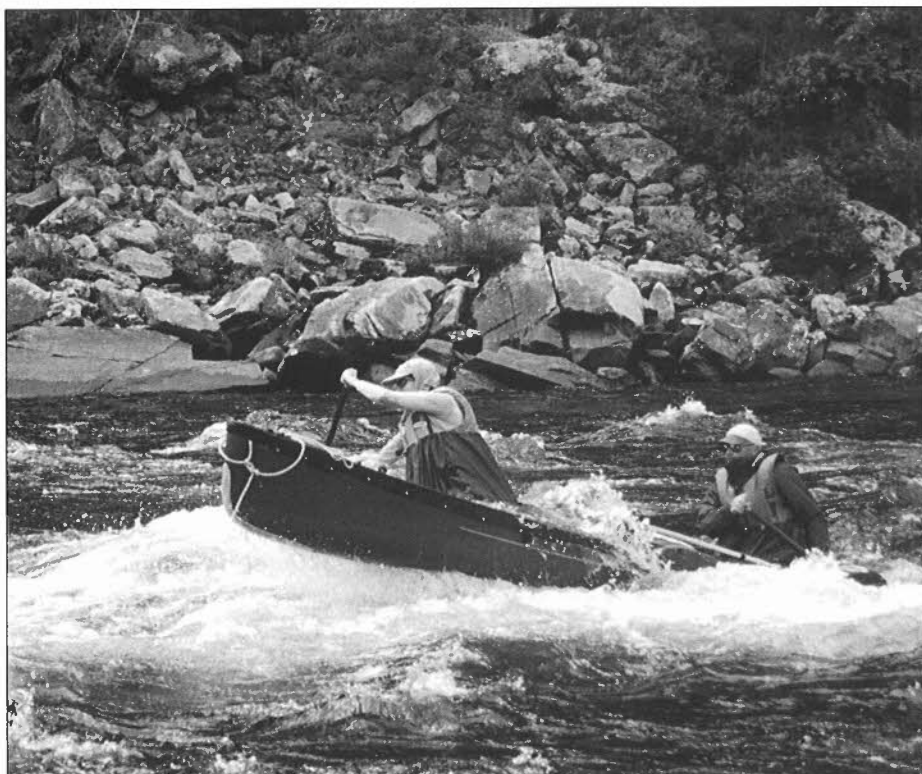
Aug 5th (km 425 – km 403-22 km)

Rising at 6 a.m. we ate a quick breakfast of coffee and granola and packed up in the rain. After a long paddle in a light and wet headwind, we came to the dam near the height of land on Lac De Mille. We pulled the canoes over the dam and then paddled into the narrow arm at the end of the lake, looking for but not seeing the portage indicated on the map. A narrow channel separated Lac De Mille from Lac Menistouc. After some wading and lining, we found that the channel opened up into the wide, shallow end of Lac Menistouc. Barb and Dave got stuck in the shallow water and had to wade up to their knees in deep sucking mud. We stopped for lunch on a mucky sandbar before dragging and walking the canoes through a long stretch of very shallow water. Keep to the left on this piece of the lake to avoid getting totally stuck.

Following this, the sun came out and the wind picked up from the west. At 4 p.m. we stopped at a point about midway down the lake on the west side. Bruce checked the GPS, locating a campsite directly across from us on the east side of the lake. We paddled across with a big tail wind and waves coming up behind us. The campsite was great with lots of beach and we set up the tents before it started raining again. We enjoyed some beer in



Class V rapid ahead



Barb & Dave running an R-III

the dining tent while waiting for the storm to pass and supped on chili before retiring at 9 p.m.

Aug 6th (km 403 – km 389-14 km)

The crashing waves, wind and rain caused a lot of noise overnight and continued into the morning. We waited around a bit to see if the wind would die down but finally left around 9:30 a.m. A strong wind from the west made the paddling very difficult but we were able to make headway. We stopped for lunch behind some rocks to get out of the wind, which was increasing in intensity. The wind was so strong that we had to track along the shore for the last two kilometres to the end of the lake. We set up camp beside a run-down, debris-littered cabin with time for washing, organizing and a game of bridge before a supper of soup and grilled cheese. The wind finally stopped and loons serenaded us. After we got into our tents we heard a loud thumping, gnawing sound, which we decided must have been a porcupine somewhere in the old cabin.

Aug 7th (km 389 – km 368-21 km)

We had a good night's sleep and woke to the loons at 5 a.m. getting underway

around 7:30 a.m. after a breakfast of granola and fresh raspberries, which were growing on bushes around the cabin. The river between Lac Menistouc and Lac Opocopa is about 13 kilometres long. The sun was out and the southwest wind created some difficult paddling. After about an hour, we ran a shallow C-1 and a set of three rapids just before the lake. The first was a C-3, which we scouted from the left and then ran on the right. The C-2 and C-1 were straightforward.

The wind increased in intensity as we entered Lac Opocopa and we stopped to lunch on a beach to the left while waiting for the wind to lessen. About three hours later, the wind had subsided enough for us to paddle across the lake to the west shore. Still fighting the wind, we passed by a narrows, a third of the way along the lake, the shallow, reedy water attracting a lot of terns. We stopped after another four kilometres around 6:30 p.m., exhausted and ravenous, at a large open campsite on the west side of the lake. After quickly setting up our tents and making supper we were hit by another storm.

Aug 8th (km 368 – km 349-19 km)

Rain, thunder and lightning continued overnight and then towards morning the

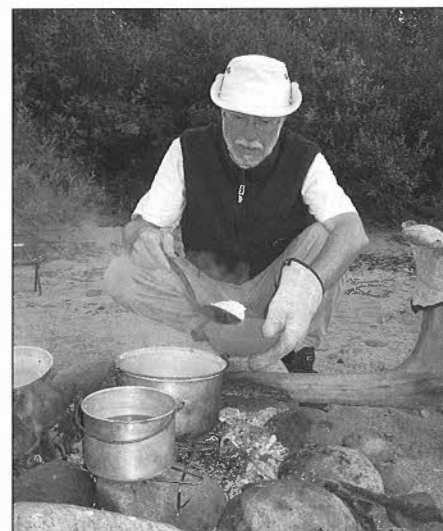
temperature dropped. We were elated to find the wind had finally changed directions. Following a breakfast of porridge and fresh blueberries we packed up and then made a sail and lashed the boats together. The wind was not really strong so we sailed and paddled on and off. We stopped at a very pretty spot for lunch and discovered a cabin called the Three Island cabin.

After lunch the wind seemed to be stronger. We paddled against it for a bit to get closer to the west shore since the waves were picking up and we had not installed the spray covers. We arrived at the campsite we had picked out around 2:30 p.m. and had a swim and beer and then chicken and dumplings for supper. This was one of the few nights that we had enough energy to stay up for a fire and stargazing.

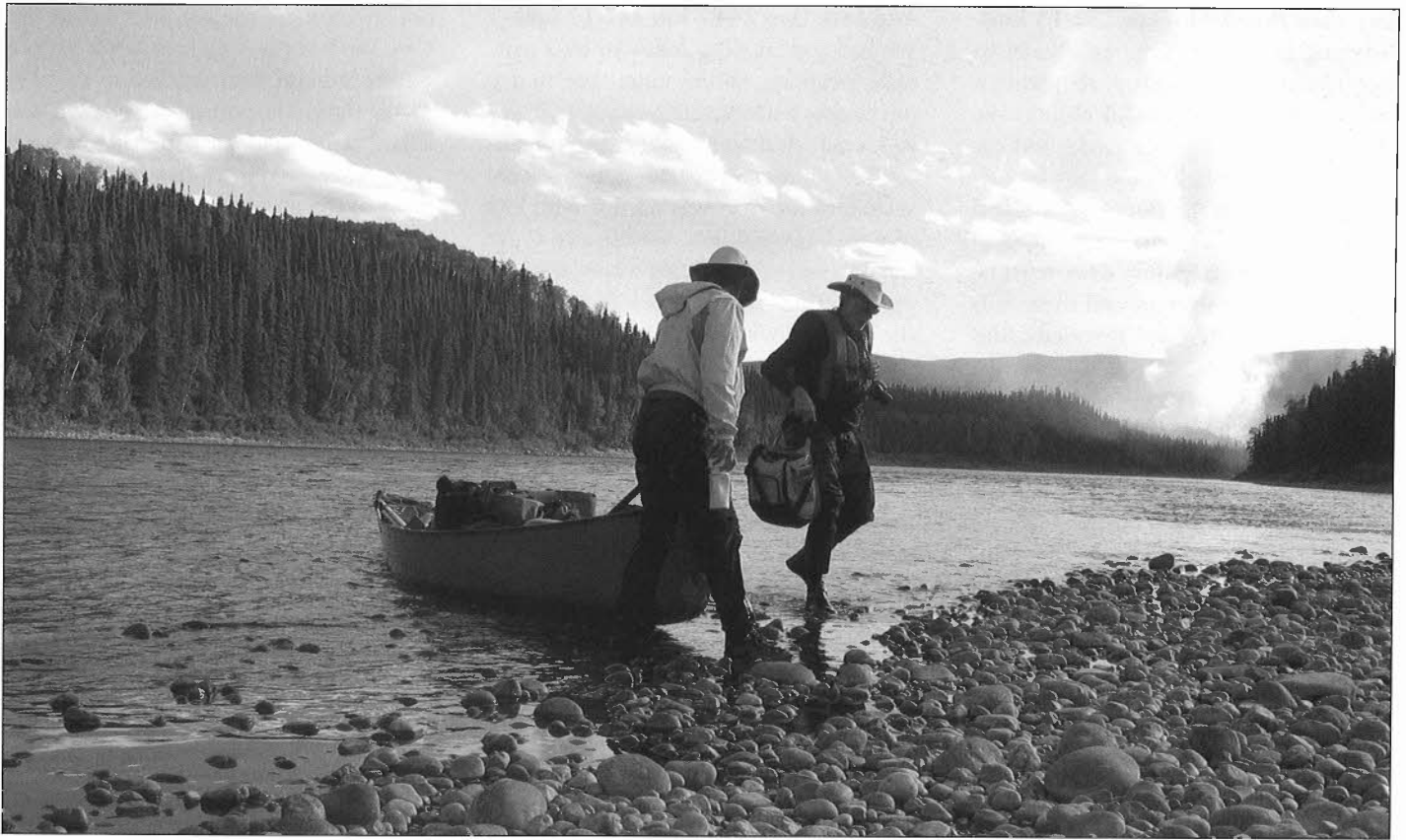
Aug 9th (km 349 to km 325-24 km)

We were packed and off around 8 a.m. after a breakfast of granola. As we paddled around the point just past our campsite we again hit a head wind! Arriving at the official beginning of the Moisie, we stopped for a ceremony, asking for safe guidance and sacrificing an orange and some whisky. We had meant to bring sweet grass but had forgotten it. Each of us also took a swig of whisky, which seemed like the proper close to the ceremony.

As we entered Lac Felix the wind became very strong again. We paddled into it for about one kilometre and then turned right, paddling to a campsite



Chicken and dumplings – yummy!



Fire ahead – Aug 15th

marked on the map. There were fresh bear and moose tracks on the beach. We finished the last of the beer with our cheese and crackers appetizer, followed by a spaghetti supper with chocolate for dessert.

Aug 10th (km 325 – km 318-7 km)

We had no visits from bears overnight that we were aware of. Phew! We packed up after a pancake breakfast and were off by 8 a.m. After an hour, with spray covers on, we started into the first C-2 on the south channel of Rim Canyon, finding it pretty dry. We took two hours to wade the canoes through the C-2 and C-3 to the portage on river left. After exploring all of the portage possibilities, we carried everything about 500 metres, then lined and waded through a C-3/C-4. At this point the north and south channels meet and we were finally able to paddle. A 1,200-m section of C-2/C-3 rapids took us to the next portage on river left. This portage was more difficult with a long gradual climb and then a steep downhill at the end. Beautiful views of the falls below

could be seen from the top of the trail.

We portaged to a small campsite close to the end of the trail just above the water, finishing about 6 p.m. The site was very buggy but with a beautiful view of the turbulent river below. We quickly set up the tents and then had grilled cheese and soup for dinner. (We were eating sandwiches early in the trip in order to finish the rye bread before it got stale.) We were glad to get into bed after a very difficult, hot and sweaty day.

Aug 11th (km 318 – km 295-23 km)

The night was cold and for the first time we zipped up the door on the tent. After a breakfast of porridge, we packed and were off by 8 a.m. Over the next 20 kilometres we ran a number of C-1/C-3 rapids. At one C-4, we lined the first drop and then paddled the next big drop and ran the rest on the right. We had a short portage on the left around an S-5 (ledge) and then ran a C-3 before we reached the portage at 1:00 p.m. The SARS group's description had estimated the portage to be 1,500 metres, so we decided to do it in three

equal pieces. Bruce started with a pack and the GPS and stopped after the first piece. The bog proved troublesome on this stretch and some loud cursing was heard as a canoe was dropped. He measured the second pieces and was very excited when he finished at the river. We were very pleased not to have to do a third. Next, we arrived at Five Finger Falls and started looking for the dried up box canyon the SARS group used.

The description of how to get around this falls was a little sketchy. After quite a bit of exploring, we paddled to an eddy just above the falls. As it was getting dark and we were all tired, we surveyed the top of the island on our left as a possible campsite. Finding sufficient space to camp we stopped, put up the dining tent and had a quick dinner. Everyone was relieved to be camped after a long day. It didn't look like the site had been used before and we found ourselves slipping as the lichen/moss gave way under foot on the uneven terrain. For a last minute, makeshift campsite it was quite comfortable and very beautiful.

Aug 12th (km 295 – km 282-13 km)

Sleeping in until 6 a.m. we awoke to face a cold clear morning, requiring a jump-start of two cups of coffee. We were able to portage the packs and canoes to the river below the falls by carrying them down the slope of the island where we had camped. We congratulated ourselves on finding what must be the easiest way to get around these falls below which the Pekans River cascades to join the Moisie.

Across from the Pekans we stopped to portage around a C-5. The campsite here was very pretty and sandy with some large trees. The portage on river left was not long (about 400-m) but very difficult with lots of bog. A very large porcupine was sited along the trail. For the next 10 kilometres, we negotiated many C-3s, C-4s, and ledges. Some could be run, some lined, and others required short carries. It was challenging, exciting, but exhausting work. We ran the last C-3 centre and then left followed by a long C-2/C-1 run-out on river left. We portaged 400-m uphill to the large sandy campsite, arriving around 7 p.m. and setting up the dining tent. Grilled cheese sandwiches made their last appearance tonight. Darkness and the need for rest chased us into the tents.

Aug 13th (km 282 – km 244-38 km)

We awoke to rain, which remained fairly constant for the day. By the time we got going it was around 10:30 a.m. Again we fought the wind, paddling through C-1/C-2s and some flat water until we arrived at a falls, where we portaged on river right. Most was over smooth rock, which was very slippery. We stopped for lunch at the completion of the portage, before sliding the canoes down the flat slope of rock into the water. We negotiated a few more rapids followed by a long flat stretch.

Around 6 p.m. just before another thundershower hit, we came across a hunt cabin and were very pleased to escape the elements in comfort. We dried out and took our time over drinks and appetizers before a fried rice dinner. The drinks were a bit strong for some people. In the evening, we enjoyed a beautiful sunset and moon, later discovering a note written by the SARS group in the cabin journal.

Aug 14th (km 244 – km 227-17 km)

We had a great sleep followed by a pancake breakfast, taking some time to dry out clothes before starting out at 9:30. We had a tail wind and strong current, making 10 kilometres per hour at times. This section of the river was narrow with lots of rock faces and falls. We ran two C-3s: the first was easy with big waves, the second required scouting before following the tongue down the left side. Stopping at the C-5 to lunch on the rocks and enjoy the sunshine, we then took the portage on river left to the campsite midway along the trail. Barb slipped in some bog on the second trip and her knee gave way causing her to fall. She had forgotten to put on her brace.

At 2 p.m. we stopped at a beautiful site and set up the tents amid black flies and bees before a short rain. We had time for drinks, appetizers, bridge and a spaghetti supper followed by sunset gazing over the water. The night was cold followed by lots of dew.

Aug 15th (km 227 – km 209-18 km)

We awoke to a misty morning that cleared to blue sky and sun for the rest of the day. Another day of navigating around difficult C-4s and falls followed, interspersed with a 500-metre portage. About half an hour after passing the Taoti River we stopped for a snack and noticed a forest fire ahead along the river. We soaked some towels in case we had to canoe through heavy smoke and as we paddled past the forest fire, saw flames but the smoke was billowing upwards and didn't bother us. We stopped for the night at a beautiful cabin (Camp de chasse de Ludovic) enjoying a lovely evening in its luxurious comforts. We had drinks, appetizers and chicken and dumplings for supper. We read an undated journal note from a Camp Kandalore group and noticed a canoe and paddle in the rafters. The special paddle had been presented to the cabin owner from Camp Kandalore, who had used his cabin on numerous trips.

Aug 16th (km 209 – km 170-39 km)

The morning started out looking grey and rainy. We could still see smoke from the fire. After about 10 kilometres we came to a long C-3/C-4 rapid. We started down the C-3 by scouting from eddies, then got

out and scouted the last piece before the C-4. We front-ferried to reach a tongue on the left and then paddled to an eddy on the right. The portage on the right was a hard carry over large boulders to a small eddy. After paddling into a headwind for most of the afternoon we arrived at our predetermined campsite near the Caopacho River. Unfortunately, the Camp Kandalore group that had left the journal note in the cabin was camped at the site. The next site was supposed to be two kilometres downriver on the left. We couldn't find it so we ended up camping on a beach site. We had a quick supper of Kraft Dinner and got the tents set up. Just as we got into bed a huge thunderstorm hit with lots of lightning. The day had been exhausting due to the strong headwind.

Aug 17th (km 170 – km 139-31 km)

We had an early departure at 8 a.m. since we knew the Fish Ladder portage was going to be difficult and would take a lot of time. We paddled hard into a light headwind and reached the portage around noon. A light rain turned heavy as we began the portage. The first part of the portage was a steep carry over broken tree branches. We hauled all the gear up over this first piece to a level bank and then all carried a pack up the initial steep part of the trail. This wasn't too bad for footing – hard ground with tree roots and trees to hang onto but very strenuous. Then Dave and Bruce carried the canoes to the top in one carry – yahoo! After all the gear was at the top we started the next piece. This was much longer with one very steep, down-section, and another section over rocks and logs with difficult footing. As we were doing this next section, the Kandalore camp group joined us. Where we had broken up our carry into three pieces with three trips each, they did two carries from beginning to end (blame it on their youth). At the end there was a cabin, outhouse, and sink with spring and cups for drinking. We filled up our water container at the spring while getting advice from the camp guides on how to run the rapid just below the Fish Ladder. The rapid (? rating) looked dangerous with big volume and a large triangular rock in the middle. The advice was to run it by crossing the tongue from right to left aiming for the eddy on the left

side. The adrenaline had our hearts pounding but we made it without incident.

Following the first rapid were two more C-3s and a C-2. These went by in a blur after the excitement of the first rapid. We passed a fishing lodge on the left and then found the campsite on the right, while being lashed by wind and rain from a microburst of weather. We quickly changed into dry clothes before setting up the tents. This campsite was not very attractive due to lots of garbage at the back of it. We had a very poor sleep since a porcupine could not be dissuaded from eating our pots.

Aug 18th (km 139 – km 83-58 km)

Bruce was up early and had a look at the culprit. Besides chewing on the rim of our cook pots, it destroyed a leather handle on a pack and also put holes in the mesh of the dining tent. Note: roll up mesh of dining tent before going to bed. We got an early start after a porridge breakfast. Paddling was great, beginning with six kilometres of rapids and strong current. The C-3 was a favourite – long and requiring lots of split-second decisions. Following the C-3 the weather changed and rain began falling. We saw a helicopter take off from the beautiful Ouapetec Fish Camp. The river had widened here and looked more like a lake. The sun came out and with a tail wind and strong current we had completed 58 kilometres by 4 p.m. We camped at a nice beach site with time for a little Frisbee toss and a wash in the eddy. After a spaghetti dinner, we enjoyed a porcupine-free night's rest.

Aug 19th (km 83 – km 53-30 km)

We paddled from around 9:30 a.m. until 4 p.m. The day was beautiful and the paddling easy. There was only one short but steep portage around a C-5. We camped on a rock/gravel site just past the Nipissis River fish camp. The last canister of propane lost a lot of gas in the morning when it was disconnected so Bruce made great chicken and dumplings on the campfire. We heard the train, which was close by. People had time to read and relax a bit except for Bruce who was cooking.

Aug 20th (km 53 – km 13-40 km)

We intentionally started early (just in case



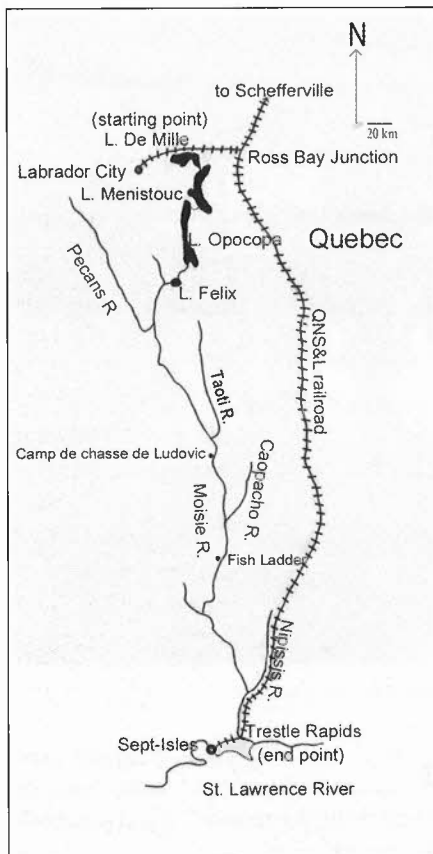
Everyone's hands took a beating on this trip – especially our thumbs!

the day would be longer than predicted) and were off at 8:30 a.m. after a pancake breakfast. We paddled hard for two hours to reach the first rapid, which was supposed to be a C-1 at a narrowing of the river. The C-1 didn't materialize and we paddled on to the first C-3. We stopped on the left to scout. This is where we had initially planned to camp before deciding to make yesterday a short day. We ran the C-3, which was a big tongue of huge waves and no obstacles. We were amazed and exhilarated as the canoes rode up and over an eight-foot wave. Some concern was expressed at this point since one trip description did not mention large waves here but did so for the following rapids. The next C-5 required a portage over the rocks on the left. The launch from an eddy was a bit dicey as we entered the main current with lots of froth and power.

Some trip descriptions name the next rapids as Trestle Rapids for the railway trestle bridge here. The map shows a C-2, C-3, C-3, C-4, C-3 and C-3 in quick succession. Jumbles of large angular rocks at water level make walking difficult. It appears that the rocks are left from the building of the train tracks. This unusual arrangement of rocks creates some very difficult rapids with huge waves criss-crossing and no clear tongue to follow. The first rapid we came to after the C-5 was a huge C-3 (rather than the C-2 described). We didn't scout this rapid since

we were expecting a C-2. We didn't experience a lot of problems but the rapid was certainly bigger than a C-2 and some bailing was required.

We presumed that we had run the first C-3 (our description indicated the first two C-3s were identical) so Dave and Barb decided to run the second rapid without scouting. Though still upright, it had been tricky. Bruce and Beth followed the same route and flipped over. They safely rescued themselves on the right shore while Barb and Dave bailed their canoe and watched from the left side. Then they ferried over to Bruce and Beth through the strong current and saw but were not able to pick up Bruce's paddle. Dave scouted the next rapid while Bruce bailed the canoe. We had lunch, some of which was soggy. It had turned cloudy and looked like it might rain. Dave thought we could run the next rapid – a C-3 – so Barb and Dave went first. The waves were huge, similar to the last C-3 but this time they weren't as lucky and flipped as their canoe turned sideways. This was the scariest dump that Barb and Dave had ever experienced. Dave popped out of the canoe immediately but Barb took some time to extricate herself. Both choked as the waves filled their mouths with water. However, Dave focused and managed to instruct Barb to grab her paddle while he took over the canoe and his paddle. They were in the main current



and moving quickly towards the next rapid. They tried to swim to the right shore but couldn't get there. Then they decided to try for the left shore, which turned out to have an eddy. As Barb got into the eddy she started making progress towards the shore. Dave was below her and looked in danger. Barb yelled at him to let go of the canoe since he looked like he was going to be carried into the next rapid. He decided to hold onto the canoe since he could see a power line overhead and could tell that he wasn't moving downstream. He finally made it to shore. They were both badly shaken thinking they had been in a very dangerous situation. The spare paddle, Dave's hat, bailer and sponge were gone. While Barb and Dave got their canoe and gear back in order, Bruce and Beth lined the rapid.

Our confidence shaken, we scouted the next rapid, judging it runnable. Bruce and Beth went first planning on staying to the right. They missed their line and nearly dumped. Dave and Barb followed and went further right and made it okay but had to lean downstream as the canoe turned sideways.

We paddled to the top of the next rapid before the rail bridge, stopped on

the right to scout and decided to line the first piece. The lining went pretty well although everyone was a bit nervous. After about 80 meters of lining we were able to paddle the rest of the rapid staying close to the right shore. Next we paddled under the rail bridge into a small eddy on the right between the boulders and the shore. From here we were able to scout the last drop. The C-3 looked difficult with lots of big water and obstacles. We found and paddled a channel on the right staying out of the main stream and found Bruce's paddle in the last C-2. We were elated to

be finished Trestle Rapids! It was around 6:00 p.m. at that point.

The last eight kilometres seemed to take forever as the Moisie slowed to a crawl and the wind and rain battered our faces. Finally, with darkness imminent we arrived at the take-out. The last piece of excitement was a hair-raising taxi ride on slippery pavement back to the train station to pick up the van. On our return we packed the van in the cold rain and drove to Sept-Isles with the heater blasting. The Moisie had allowed us to pass safely, but not without incident.

The Tree

I like the smell of it, the look of it, the heft of it. Firewood. It was a tree that once was alive and growing and vibrant and now is dead. Even in death though, the tree is full of dignity. It is returning to the earth, yet it is still providing a measure of comfort to all who come into contact with it on its return journey.

While there is sadness in all death, strangely there is something more akin to contentment and peace here. It's as if the tree knows that it has fulfilled in full measure its purpose in life. The wood from the tree has provided us with light, warmth, and safety. It has dried our clothes, cooked our food, and shared our company. It is a friend who has sat with us in the dark and listened to us and understood our deepest thoughts. No wonder the tree feels so contented returning to the earth. What more service could it provide to us here?

Taking in the aroma of the piece of wood that I am holding before consigning it to the campfire. It's almost like perfume to me. Fragrant and sharp. Newly split always is. Thinking that even if we weren't here to speed up the process, the tree's round trip of birth, growth, death, and decomposition would still take place. It's final decomposition would be a little slower than the campfire to ash process of the wilderness canoeist, but the way time is measured in the wilderness, not that much slower.

When our remains are consigned to the earth will we feel as contented as the tree? That we have fulfilled our purpose in life? That we have brought joy and beauty to all who knew us? That we have warmed another? That we have provided light in their wilderness?

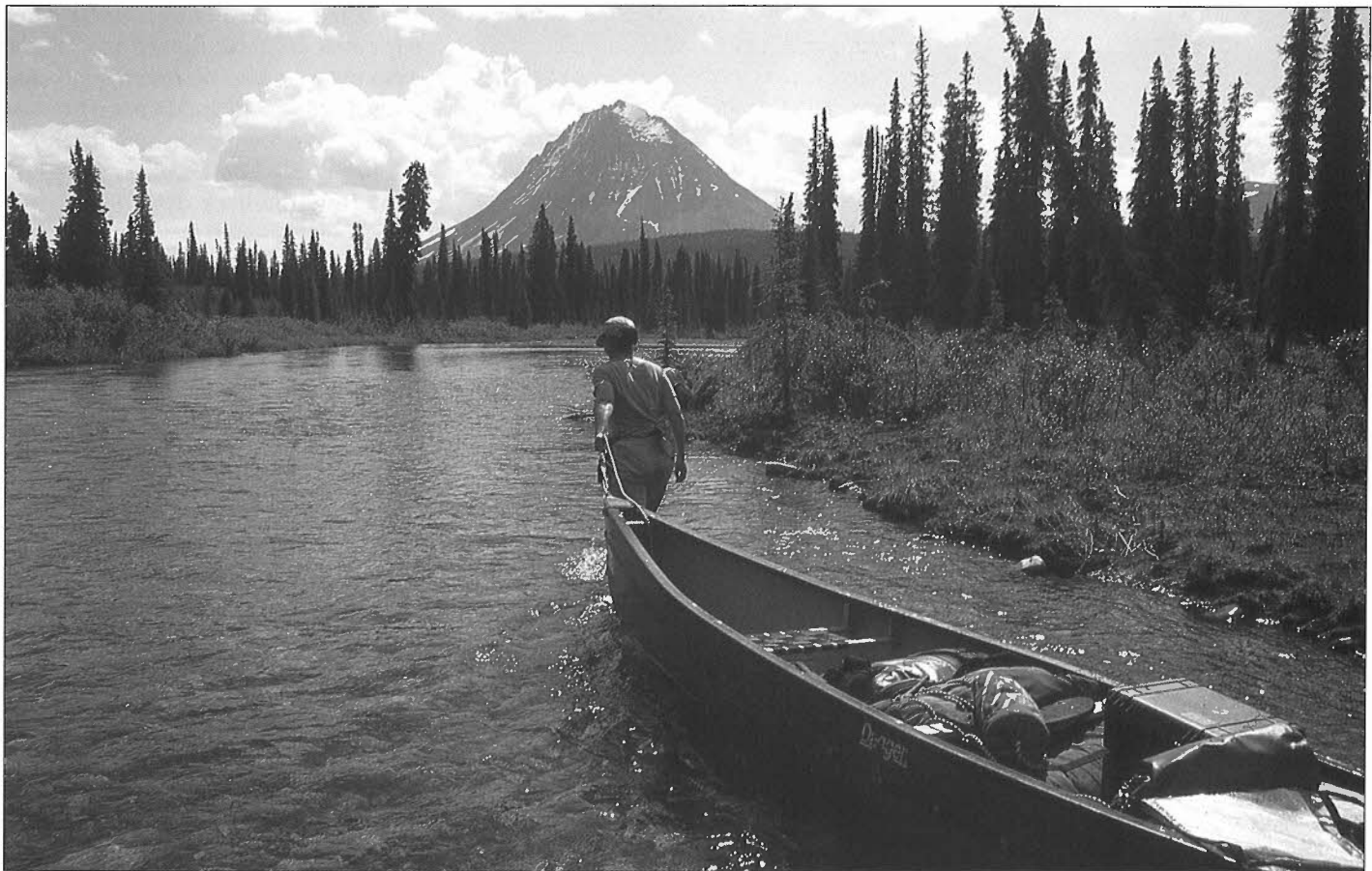
I hope that my round trip can stand this kind of judgment. I'm trying my best to measure up.

Greg Went

PORTRAIT LAKE PASS

Author: Iva Kinclova

Photos: Hugh Westheuser



Lining up the Ross River

The following is the account of our journey from the Yukon over a mountain pass into the source of the South Nahanni River in Northwest Territories. And here is how we dragged, portaged, lined and sometimes paddled our canoe, all that willing and voluntarily...

Late November 2004

My phone rang. It was my friend Hugh Westheuser calling about one of the many details regarding an upcoming self-organized trip to the South Nahanni River. The preparations were shaping up well under his leadership. We had 11 crew members lined up – some were members of WCA and some were friends of Hugh's from British Columbia. Our preparation duties were divided, airplanes pre-booked and we were start-

ing to sift through ideas on equipment.

"I came across an article in a 1977 edition of *Canadian Geographic* (Feb/March) about gaining access to the South Nahanni River by land," Hugh said. "It's written by a couple (John & Mary-Lou Roder) who scouted a number of possible routes into the Nahanni after the South Nahanni National Park was established. The best route they found was down a portion of the South MacMillan River from Canol Road in the Yukon. Then they lined up several creeks to Willow Lake. From there they portaged south easterly into the Ross River Valley, lined upstream to the Continental Divide and carried their gear to the Moose Ponds on the South Nahanni River. It took them about a week to do it with a Grumman

canoe. I wonder if you would be interested in doing something like this?" he enquired. "My sister is making a trip to that area and could drop us off on Canol Road. We could meet others in our group at the Moose Ponds. I will send you the article and you can have a look at it."

I cannot quite recollect my exact thoughts at that moment. What I do recollect is my physical reaction. I felt suddenly so excited! The "dormant pioneer" in me woke up. This idea presented a potential challenge that I was looking for. It promised a pioneering type of experience – finding our way in wild country, bushwhacking, going through mountains with everything needed to support us, working very hard physically and using all our canoeing, camping and survival skills.



Moving the canoe up the hill with a pully system

The next day I headed to the Robarts Library at the University of Toronto to check the topographic maps of the area on the Yukon and Northwest Territories border. In the evening I reported to Hugh over the phone: "I am not sure where Willow Lake is, but it looks to me like there is a way through Portrait Lake. The vertical rise is only 200m between the South McMillan River and Portrait Lake, on a 30km route as the crow flies."

"Did you get the article in the mail?" Hugh asked.

"No, not yet," I responded. "But after looking at the topo maps, I am game to do this, for sure."

When the article came, I was not much wiser as to the route because names like Witham Lake, Peter Creek, Willow Lake used in the article did not appear on the topo maps. But from the travel times and descriptions of locations in the article we eventually established that Portrait Lake on the topo was in fact Willow Lake in the article. Our route has been confirmed and the "Portrait Lake Pass" expedition was born.

Next, we contemplated how this would affect the rest of the group. What if we injured ourselves on Portrait Lake Pass or couldn't make it as planned? We consulted the other members of the group and obtained their consent. Hugh and I made sure that all departure

details, such as air charter contracts, food schedule, canoe rentals, detailed lists of equipment and destination of barrels and packs (our equipment was going to three destinations: Canol Road, Moose Ponds and Island Lakes) were in place and delegated to specific crew members.

Late June, 2005

Hugh, his sister and I departed from Hugh's home in Kelowna, BC two weeks ahead of the rest of our group. It took us five days to drive into the Yukon, which included a detour to Fort Simpson to drop off food barrels for the planes (to take them in with the other members of our group).

"To each their own" was the message received as we left civilization in Ross River, Yukon. While buying gas, the store owner, who was a local game guide, informed us that his pack horses had refused to go through the bush along Witham Creek because of the density of the willows. In addition, his description of Canol Road scared Hugh's sister so badly that she embarked on the last leg of the trip very reluctantly.

Six hours later, Hugh's four-wheel truck was still in one piece and we were near the end of Canol Road. All the talking and planning, dehydrating, packing, thinking through potential

risks was finally going to turn into an actual trip. It was a beautiful sunny day with fluffy summer clouds in the sky and an awesome view of the Itsy Mountains in the east.

But these were not the rounded hills I recalled from pictures of Nahanni trips that friends showed me. These were sharp, steep mountains covered with glaciers and ice. During the last hour on the road, I was quietly thinking to myself: "Do I really want to do this? How the heck does one carry a canoe over this stuff?"

When we reached our destination on the second bridge of the South McMillan River, my attention was immediately drawn to the river. We were supposed to paddle downstream for about 13km. This was merely a creek about 7-metres-wide, rushing noisily down a visibly sloping hill. There were no eddies in sight. The terrain along the creek was dropping off so fast that I had this eerie feeling that something terribly wrong was going to happen. I could not resolve in my mind why there were no rapids marked on the map in the next two-kilometre section. Fears were rolling through my head. Will we be able to eddy-out when we need to? The creek is really quite narrow; what if there are some sudden obstacles in the way, like sweepers in the water? How will I communicate with Hugh? I had never paddled with him before.

I suddenly felt I wasn't ready to go and needed to work through my fears. Logically, there was no reason for them. Both of us had a lot of canoeing experience. I knew Hugh from two long arctic canoe trips and trusted him as a person and as a canoeist. On a spiritual level, I thought that the fears were appropriate. I believe they allowed me to stop, think and focus my energies into what was coming. They allowed me to still myself and start to listen to the surrounding environment, particularly the river, with all my senses and all the pores of my body. It took me a day to focus myself and as I call it, to get "a green light" from my river gods. Thankfully, my partner understood.

Day 1

Just over one kilometre downstream,

the river narrows and rushes through a rock field in a wide right-hand bend. We started lining this part and shortly after managed to swamp the canoe. The bank was not easily accessible because of overhanging willows and to get the now tipsy, water-filled canoe out of a strong current was a challenging task. While I steadied the canoe and held it roped to a tree, Hugh bailed the water out standing waist-deep in the cold, fast current. This "exercise" stressed me enough to refuse further lining at this point.

Our previous scouting showed us a possible portage route around this bend. There was a nice moose path on top of the hill which led along the river. However, to get to it, we had to haul the canoe up a 45-degree slope on a 40-metre high bank. We rigged a three-pulley system using carabineers and canoe ropes and pulled the canoe from one tree to another tree higher up. Hugh pushed the canoe from underneath and I threw all my weight on the

end of the rope. The ground was loose and it was hard to get good footing. We slipped and slid, progressing slowly using all our strength.

When I was attaching the pulleys to the last tree at the top of the hill, I heard Hugh yell. "Watch the axe!" I ducked and heard a thump. As I was recovering from a shock, I realized that the last tree I chose for the pulleys was the same tree Hugh chose to place an old axe we had found while first scouting the rapids. He hung it on this tree so we could easily see it when we carried the packs to the top of the hill. It narrowly missed my head, thank goodness!

In a few more minutes the canoe was on a plateau and we collapsed exhausted.

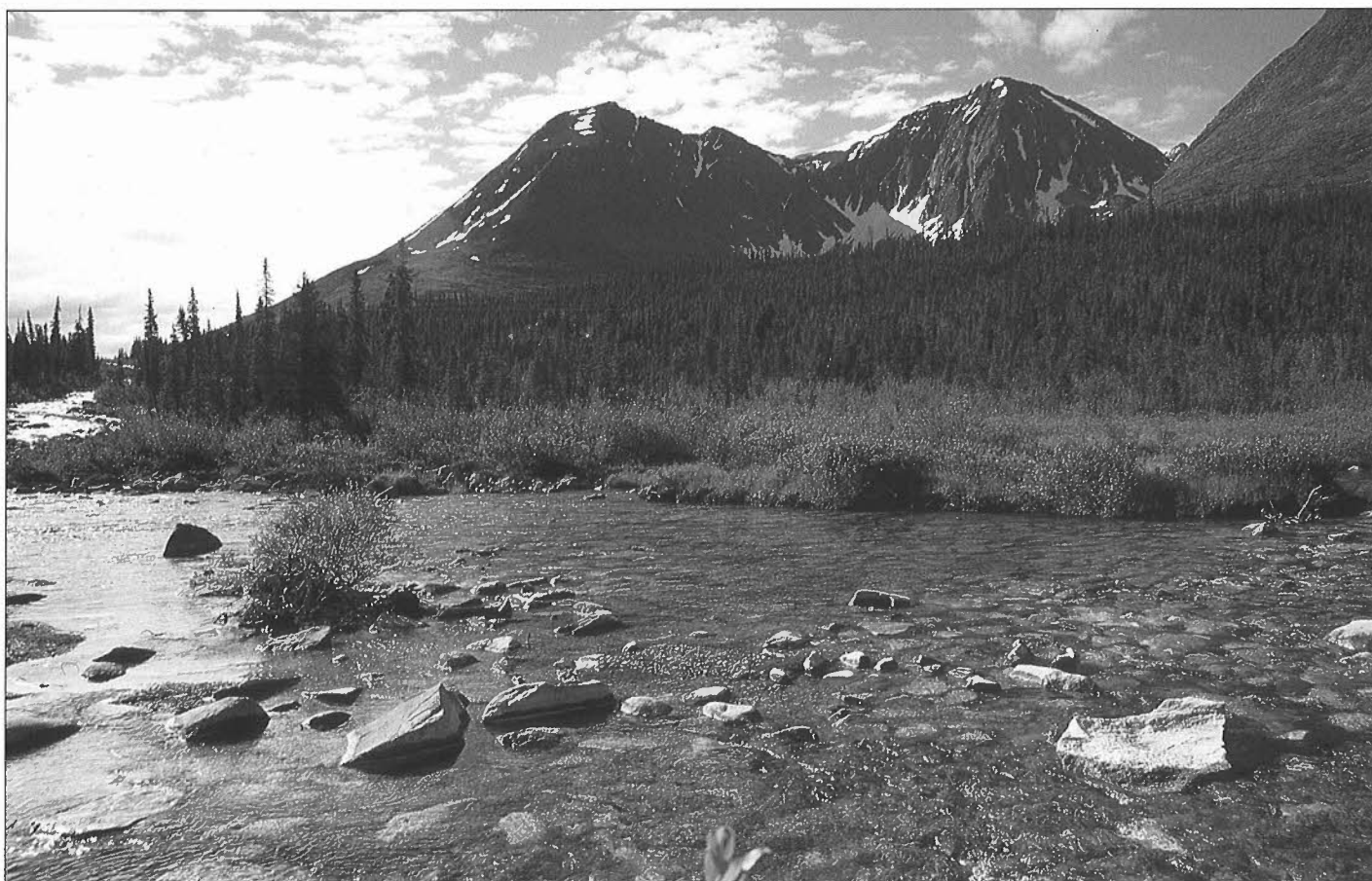
We rested a bit and then completed the portage. When we got in the boat it was late afternoon and we unanimously voted for camping on the first sandbar that appeared in sight. A review of a map showed that we had barely covered

two kilometres downstream of Canol Road although the day surely filled the adventure quota.

Day 2

In the morning the South MacMillan took us through peaceful meanders with swift current and gorgeous mountain scenery all around. We were weaving through the midst of a wide, green mountain valley. In the next section were a series of six marked rapids, all runnable, mostly without scouting. The river was getting progressively easier with more room to manoeuvre and more routes through the rapids to paddle.

When the rapids ended we attentively watched for Witham Creek, a tributary from the left. It was easy to find. Its swift, clear water sparkling in the warm afternoon sun as it entered the browner water of the South MacMillan. After paddling and lining it for about two kilometres, we came to a spot where the creek became much



Peter Creek with Itsy Mountains in the background



Ross River just below the Continental Divide

steeper and the swift current changed into rapids. We took out in an obvious opening in the willows which was made even more apparent by pieces of garbage left there. A fresh Westjet tag suggested that a group had landed here not too long ago. What a disappointment! We are not the only ones on this route. We waited out a shower and started a four kilometre portage along the creek to Witham Lake. We made good progress as a forest fire had come through this area last summer and thinned the willow growth. The land was almost bare with only the odd willow or tree remaining. We followed a moose path on top of a ridge above Witham Creek. As we progressed, pieces of old and new flagging tape kept appearing. "Following a marked route is not my idea of a discovery trip," I thought grumpily.

That evening while we were cooking dinner, two young women in their early

twenties paid us a visit. They were the guides of a group of 14 from Camp Wanapitei in Ontario and the owners of the Westjet tag. They ranged in ages from 16 to 23 years and were doing a 52-day canoe trip headed to the Natla River, NT. My disappointment in encountering strangers and their garbage and flagging tape in a remote wilderness started to melt in light of their grand plan. Our trip sounded like a piece of cake in comparison to theirs.

Day 3

We continued with our two carries on the moose trail along the river, taking the lighter packs first because navigation with them was easier. The canoe travelled in the second round together with the heaviest pack. At first the path was open and dry but as the day progressed it got wetter, less pronounced and covered with deep layers of moss. This was hard on the knees, especially

for those who happened to be carrying "Brute" – the canoe. At noon we decided to cross to the south shore of Witham Creek where the land seemed more open. We had only about one kilometre to cover before that night's destination. We really looked forward to an early finish but it was not meant to be. A kilometre turned into three as we had to find our way around a marsh and through a very rough area covered with big boulders and uneven terrain.

Day 4

Our camp at Witham Lake was on a high bank. It provided a good view of the whole lake as well as the slopes above us as they were cleared by fire. In the morning, while I was packing the kitchen and Hugh the tent, I realized that we were being watched. A grey wolf stood 15 metres away from us and was looking intently at us. He or she seemed curious as if trying to figure out

what we were. Hugh and I spoke quietly and took some pictures while the wolf stood there. Then the animal made a few steps towards me. I held my breath and started playing scenarios in my head about what might happen if he keeps coming. But after two steps forward he turned around and took off running along the shore.

My memories of the rest of the day are vague. I was mesmerised by the wolf's eyes. Those 30 seconds of looking directly into them transferred me into a different dimension of awareness (raw, wild, unfamiliar and exciting). It also started to rain. It rained steadily the whole afternoon, hard at times. Today was supposed to be a day of rest, after three days of working hard. But we were behind in the schedule, so, in spite of our fatigue, we had to keep going. Being inside my head was the most comfortable place to be. My body paddled on automatic up continuous swifts. There didn't seem to be an end to them. The water moved relentlessly and fast, even through a swamp.

We kept looking for Peter Lake, but by 5 p.m. all we found was a hill that we obviously had to climb. I couldn't quite understand why there was a hill in our way. But for now we had other priorities and could not afford to be puzzled by this obstacle. We were cold and wet and needed to camp. As we were between a swamp and a sloping hill the only place we could find was a small sandbar (about 3x3 metres).

After dinner we examined the route ahead of us on the map. There were three contour lines between our camp at the foot of the hill and Peter Lake. "But how is that possible? When I checked the map at the library in the winter this area looked flat," I exclaimed.

Day 5

Bright sun woke us up in the morning. As I looked uphill, Peter Creek seemed just as steep, but with the sparkling water cascading down, appeared far friendlier than the night before. We had to use the creek itself to move onward. The bush was so dense on either side of the creek that getting through it with a pack would have been difficult and

with a canoe nearly impossible. We walked either on the boulders on the banks or right in the water. Some boulders were unstable and some slippery, so we dragged the canoe uphill instead of portaging it. This was perhaps the hardest work we had to do on our trip. The creek kept rising and I had plenty of time to contemplate the meaning of three contour lines (or 60 vertical metres) while doing our two carries. When you hike, climbing 60 vertical metres just gets you warmed up, but carrying an 80-pound canoe over slippery, wobbly boulders changes the picture dramatically. Yet the scenery made up for the hardship. We were surrounded by

beautiful, serene mountains covered with snowfields. The sun kept us warm and in high spirits.

Finally Peter Lake! By 2 p.m. we had made it to the end of the staircase: the one and a half kilometre uphill stretch on Peter Creek was behind us. We "rested" on Peter Lake while flat-water paddling and soon enough we were moving up against a swift, meandering creek, first paddling and then lining on sandbars and on grassy shores. These three kilometres up an unnamed creek contained only one contour line, but the current was again relentless. Then just below Portrait Lake we arrived into the kingdom of the "Giant Beaver".



Hugh at the top of the Staircase



Portrait Lake

As if to “finish ourselves off” we had to haul the canoe up a few high beaver dams. One of them was about 50 metres long and over two metres high!

Day 6

This morning Hugh and I decided to have “a three-coffee cup breakfast.” Our bodies needed some downtime and our pants mending. We enjoyed the coffee with a view of mountain ranges back to the west and a view of willowy shores to the east. I wouldn’t have thought that portrait-like scenery and willows go together, but here we indeed had both.

Portrait and Willow were both apt names for this lake.

When we had finally packed-up by 10 a.m., we dragged our butts over to the end of the lake. As we paddled, Mt. Wilson appeared, guarding the Moose Ponds on the South Nahanni. Our final destination was in sight! It was only eight kilometres away as the crow flies! Our spirits lifted. With renewed enthusiasm we started pulling the canoe over a marsh. It went quite well considering the fact that we were walking in 10 centimetres of water.

When we got through the marsh, a

clear moose path led us on and at this point we started a three kilometre descent into the Ross River valley. The path was rough in some places, marshy in others and surrounded by dense vegetation. This forced us to push the canoe through bushes, a pretty cumbersome and physically draining exercise. The day was hot and we were getting dehydrated. Sometime in the afternoon I tripped over a rock while portaging the canoe and fell flat on my stomach. My whole body was underneath the canoe: only one foot was sticking out. Amazingly, I didn’t hurt a thing, only

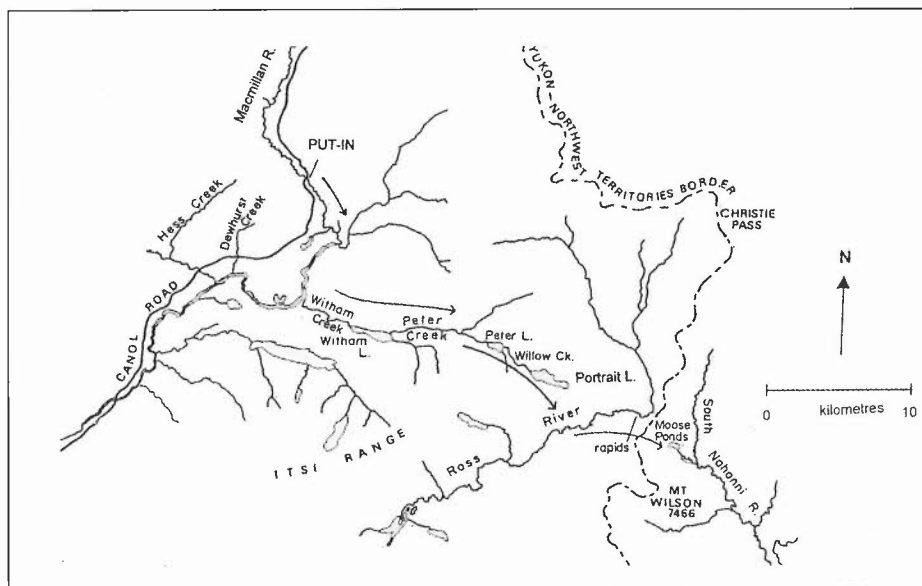
scared Hugh. In my giddy state of exhaustion I didn't even care. Considering the consequences took too much effort.

I felt dismayed when we finished the "portage." There was no river there. I suppose I had assumed that just as in other places, a portage ends at a waterway. Well, this wasn't a portage, but a moose trail. And it ended not at a waterway, but at a huge marsh. So around 5 p.m. we had to drag the canoe and ourselves with the packs again through about 200 metres of slimy gunk and then paddle through meanders that eventually got us to the Ross River.

Day 7

Lining up the Ross River was at first quite easy with a number of gravel bars to walk on as the river flowed gently through a healthy alpine forest. The weather was pleasant and the views of Mount Wilson in the background made the scenery poetic. In the early afternoon the terrain started rising and we had an opportunity to practice upstream ferries. Many of them were tight manoeuvres through C-2 rapids avoiding rocks. This was not Ferry Practice 101! Our moves had to be exact and executed fast. The terrain gained yet a few more degrees in altitude as we approached the pass. We couldn't ferry any longer and had to wade through the water often waist-deep and push the boat up the rapids. As I eyed, with a great deal of apprehension yet another 200-metre stretch of bubbly rapids above us, Hugh found a take-out on river left. I was so relieved to be out of the rapids!

All we had left now was a portage over to the Moose Ponds. We were curious to see what the Continental Divide would be like to portage. I envisaged climbing a Golden Staircase as the gold seekers did during the Klondike Gold Rush. So after dinner we set off with everything we didn't need for our camp at the river. We took turns carrying a pack and the canoe. The path at first went uphill for about 200 metres where terrain levelled off. There were no steep hills, big boulders, scree fields, or snow to negotiate, but something more insidious: moose trails that went on and on through dense willows



in all directions! This was not just an easy after-dinner stroll. Knowing that Moose Ponds nestle at the feet of Mount Wilson but not being able to see them, we managed a circuitous and at times wet, three hour struggle through and around willows and swamp until exhaustion made it time to forget the whole thing for the rest of the day. We headed for a cluster of trees (the only landmark around) and left our canoe and pack there.

Day 8

I woke up with a pain in my back. I didn't pay much attention to it as we had only one more carry to do! Only three kilometres before this journey ends! Tomorrow Norm and Earl would fly in and join us to run Rock Garden rapids! We packed up, said good-bye to Ross River and headed for our cluster of trees. I took frequent breaks because my back was feeling progressively more painful. By the time we reached the trees I was feeling quite miserable and upon reaching the ponds in another twenty minutes I could barely walk. Now was the time to celebrate with a bottle of over-proof rum. We had reached the Moose Ponds and completed an amazing seven-and-a-half-day journey through the mountains!

But all I cared about was putting up the tent and climbing into a sleeping bag. I must have pulled a muscle while pushing the canoe against rapids on Ross River and then further aggravated

the muscle while portaging. I did have the rum but only to ease the pain, not to celebrate our accomplishment. The rum was the best medicine we had because it acted as a muscle relaxant. It allowed me to sleep until the plane arrived and brought me some heavy duty muscle relaxants. Those made me sleep for another 24 hours and put me back on my feet.

Now it was time to start on the second leg of our canoe trip.

Trip Details:

Put-In: I recommend that you start from Canol Road about one kilometre below the second bridge over the South Macmillan River.

Route Description: downstream on the South Macmillan River, up Witham Creek, across Witham Lake, up Peter Creek across Peter Lake, up a creek, across Portrait (Willow) Lake, portage overland to Ross River, up Ross River, portage overland to Moose Ponds.

Navigation: 1; 50000 topo maps # 105 0/1: 105 J/16: 105 I/13, compass and GPS.

Length: Approximately 50km (13km downstream canoeing, 15km portaging. If you have one load, 10km paddling across lakes, 12km lining upstream).

Time: 8 days. Rapids: I – III+.

For a detailed route description

e-mail: iva.kinclova@sympatico.ca



CPM #40015547
ISSN 1828-1327

Published by the Wilderness Canoe Association
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 fac-

ilitate 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.

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. Try to submit your contributions by e-mail, on computer disk (WordPerfect or MS Word or text files preferred, but any format is welcome), or in typewritten form, but legibly handwritten material will also be accepted. For more information contact the editor-in-chief (address etc. see WCA Contacts on the back page). 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 four issues are:

Issue:	Summer 2006	deadline date:	May 1
	Fall 2006		July 31
	Winter 2006		October 30
	Spring 2007		January 30

MULTIPLE YEAR WCA MEMBERSHIPS are now possible, albeit with no discount. This will help alleviate much of the (volunteer) administrative work, save your time and postage, and also hedge against future fee increases. Contact membership secretary Gary James for more information.

A Note of Thanks

Now that I have retired as editor of *Nastawgan*, I want to show my sincere appreciation for the many expressions of gratitude I have received for the work I have done. Producing 82 issues of our newsletter in more than 20 years has been quite an adventure and it's wonderful to read and hear the members' grateful reactions. Also, seeing so many smiling faces at the Wine and Cheese Party did Ria and me a whole lot of good. Being your editor has been a blast, thanks.

Toni Harting

CHINIGUCHI WATERWAY

The Friends of Chiniguchi is a newly formed non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and preservation of the Chiniguchi Waterway. Our organization consists of a group of volunteers who maintain the campsites and portage trails along these unique canoe routes. Our plan is the creation of a provincial park located in the Southwest corner of Temagami, which includes Dewdney, Wolf, Sylvester, Matagamasi, Donald, and Kukagami lakes.

The Chiniguchi Waterway offers interesting geological formations, often compared to those of Killarney Provincial Park, as well as old growth Red Pine forests, several ancient Aboriginal pictograph sites, and miles of canoe routes based on traditional *Nastawgan*.

A website has been set up to help inform the public of some of the news and issues that are affecting the Chiniguchi Waterway, and a thunderbox construction and distribution project is currently in the works, to be installed on the most heavily used campsites along the route.

The Friends of Chiniguchi's first task for the summer 2006, is to wade into the stalled plan to create the Chiniguchi Waterway Park. The park creation has been stymied by the mining leases covering the Wolf Lake area, located in the middle of the park.

Our memberlist of supporters is growing day by day and every name added to this list will help give canoeists a voice when it comes to planning and managing this unique and scenic area. Please visit our website at www.friendsofchiniguchi.org and add your name to our memberlist today.

Thanks
Mike McIntosh
Chair, Friends of Chiniguchi
WCA Contact: Erhard Kraus (erhard@interlog.com)

SATELLITE PHOTOGRAPHY

Want to have a good look at your beloved rivers and lakes? Then go to www.earth.google.com and find out how inspiring it is to see the world from high up in remarkable detail.

T. Harting

NEWS BRIEFS

DROUGHT DISASTER EXPLAINED

(Reprinted from the Canadian Canoe Routes website)

"To put things in perspective," I have decided to talk about the accident that Barbara and I had. First let me say that we have been travelling in the Barrens for 17 years now and it is inconceivable that at some time or other some sort of accident would not occur. We have been lucky. To date in those 17 years, we have only had a sprained ankle, a broken wrist and a prolapsed disk. None of them required medical evacuation. But for the last 14 years we have carried a VHF Air Transceiver, and for the last 6 years, a satellite phone. We have never considered a locator device of any sort simply because they are not precise enough with regard to giving information on conditions of weather or emergency.

To get back to our accident on the 2nd August of this year (2005), we were involved in normal activities, having a late breakfast at 10.30 a.m. We were camped on a high point over the Back River almost precisely 40-km from Chantrey Inlet and 30-km from the Hayes River, which was to be our pick up location. We were using our Tundra Tunnel (Eureka Tunnel Vision Tent) for shelter. Coffee was brewing on an MSR Whisper Lite and about 2ft away porridge was cooking in a large Coleman Pot on an MSR Dragonfly Stove. We had the windshield in use but it was not between the stove and the tank. Right from lighting the Dragonfly it sounded as though it was burning harder than usual. Then simultaneously I bent down to pick the coffee pot off the Whisper Lite and Barbara bent down to turn the Dragonfly down. At that moment the side of the fuel tank on the Dragonfly split about 1" on the side and a ball of fire exploded into the tent. It blew two thirds of the tent away hit me full in the face and set fire to my rain jacket. I burned my hands putting my jacket out. It caught Barbara badly on her left arm, burned her right arm slightly and her thighs also slightly. Her clothing was destroyed but it saved her from worse harm. The biggest blessing was that the tent did not burn as law in Canada and the USA requires tents be made of flame retardant materials. I screamed when it happened and that saved my lungs otherwise I would probably have inhaled the flame and burned my throat and lungs. As it was, the interior of my nostrils was burned.

We were fortunate. One member of our party was an emergency doctor. She was able to treat our wounds immediately and assess the situation. She also gave the two of us morphine injections for the pain. One other member of our party of six had his left hand burned and she treated that.

The satellite phone was then used to contact the RCMP in Baker Lake and arranged the evacuation of the two of us, Barbara because her left arm was so badly burned, and myself in case my lungs were burned. At 4.30 p.m. a helicopter picked the two of us up and flew us to Baker Lake for further treatment. Except for Barbara's arm we are now both fully recovered.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Nastawgan hopes to bring you excerpts of select favourites from our libraries. Sharing passages that stir the soul back home and might find their way into your map case to warm a moment by a campfire or add clarity to a blur of insight almost making it to consciousness: that is our goal. Your editorial team hope this regular feature is well received. Why not, let us know and pass along your ideas for regular or irregular columns.

Nastawgan Editorial Team

THANKS FOR SUPPORTING THE TEMAGAMI INTEGRATED PLANNING INITIATIVE

At the recent Wilderness Canoeing Symposium, George Luste kindly gave us permission to distribute letters in support of the Temagami Integrated Planning initiative. A planning process directed at the management of recreational activities in the Temagami area.

About 150 form letters and other materials were picked up by attendees and we received about 50 signed letters by Saturday evening. That is a pretty good number for a campaign of this nature and I would like to thank all of you who took the time to read the material and respond by signing the letter.

If by chance you are still thinking about it, well, you haven't missed the boat. We still need your help and the MNR would appreciate hearing your thoughts about this process as it relates to canoeists.

In the meantime, thank you all for your help and for taking the time to participate.

Best regards,

Ed. MacPherson

ed.macpherson@sympatico.ca

519-763-1253

Guelph, ON

PS: for further information on the TIP process go to: <http://www.ottertooth.com/Temagami/newsbriefs.htm> and follow the links.

The rest of the group paddled on to the Hayes River towing our canoe and equipment and were picked up as scheduled on 6th August. Bill Layman is correct. If you insist on Location Devices, ONLY use a personal one but a Satellite phone is infinitely better because it allows for sensible discussion and decision making."

I hope that this is of some help to you.

George

Note: Look for more about disasters on the Back in the summer issue.

ON STOVES by Bill Ness

When I started out, the only stoves available were little self-priming ones made in Sweden. They were as simple a stove as one could get (no pump to pressurize them and only two output levels: blow torch and off). They were cantankerous to start and if overheated could blow up in your face with the power of a hand grenade. However, since the only moving parts were the fuel cap and the fuel valve, they were stupidly reliable. Once you figured out how to deal with their idiosyncrasies, they never let you down. You could kick them in the lake, fish 'em out, dry 'em off, and get the water going for tea. However, given their peculiar personalities, most outdoors people didn't shed many tears when more user-friendly stoves came along. However, I still keep mine as curiosities of outdoor gear history.

I've got an old Coleman Peak One that has served me reliably for many years. They seem to have gone out of fashion in recent years though. Let me generalize about stoves, based on my experience with it. Hopefully this will give you some things to think about when you go shopping.

I like the fact that when I take my stove out of the case, it's ready to go. I don't have to do any assembly (attach fuel lines to bottles, etc.) as you do on some stoves. Also, it's very rugged and will take a lot of chucking around without getting damaged. Carefully check stoves that have separate burners and bottles as some have exposed delicate parts that are easily damaged. You'd certainly want to keep them in a hard case or padded bag. The other thing I like about my stove is that it's really easy to light. Pump it up and put a match to it. Some stoves require pumping and opening the valve to put liquid fuel in a cup at the base of the burner. You then have to light the liquid, which heats the burner head. This allows the fuel to vaporize when you re-open the fuel valve to start the stove actually running. I'd suggest you check lighting instructions on any stove you are consider-

ing. Only a few allow instant lighting but I think it's a great feature. I've heard people say these stoves won't vaporize fuel automatically in cold weather. I've used mine down to about -40 without a hitch. If you're going to Antarctica, I'm not sure though. The other thing I really like about the old thing is its outstanding simmer control and large burner head. This doesn't matter for some people's menus as they are mainly heating water. However, if it does to you, ask about the simmer ability of any stove. If you like doing more elaborate meals like pancakes and omelets, you are better with a large burner head. Even if a stove can be turned down well to simmer, if the head is small, it just heats a small spot under the pan. A larger burner spreads the heat out a lot better. With small burner stoves, if you crank up the heat, it's about like putting a propane torch to the pot: intense heat in a small spot. OK for water: not so good for cream sauces.

My stove is basically a miniaturized single version of the classic two-burner Coleman camp stove. These have been around since probably the '30's, and you can see them in daily use as the family stove for native people and outdoor professionals all across the north. That's a great testimonial to its reliability. I've learned by bitter experience to be cautious about products that are new to the market, especially when it's an item that I'm depending on to make my meals in the bush. Personally, before I would buy, I'd like to see a model on the market a couple of seasons so that the manufacturer can work out any bugs and I can get performance feedback from retailers and other paddlers. Now, the Internet, of course, is a great source of such information.

While my stove has always been reliable, I do like to know that I can repair it in the field, if need be, especially on longer outings. Consequently, I carry a replacement generator and a small adjustable open-end wrench. I've also learned that one of the design weaknesses of my stove is

the leather pump washer. It dries out easily and requires periodic oiling. Bottom line is that you must be able to maintain, in the field, any stove that you are considering. The manufacturer should offer a repair or field maintenance kit that I suggest you buy with the stove. Then get a wrench, screwdriver, or whatever you need to dismantle the unit. Do some playing around at home so you feel comfortable "field stripping" your stove. Try to find out the weak spots of your design so you'll be prepared. Again, gossip on the Net is a good source of such information.

A downside of old designs like my Coleman is that it has a steel tank attached below the burner. This makes it larger and heavier than some new models that are basically a burner head with a fuel line that screws into a fuel bottle. So if weight and volume are important, as they are for most trippers, have a good look at the newer designs that use a regular aluminum fuel bottle as a fuel reservoir.

My final comments about stoves would be firstly, buy or make a windscreen. It will improve the performance of any stove. Secondly, be careful about using oversized pots on your stove, especially with a windscreen, if the arrangement on your particular model causes heat to be channeled around the fuel reservoir. If your windscreen encircles the fuel container and burner and you place a jumbo pot on top, you're not cooking a meal, you're cooking up an explosion. Finally, never pour fuel directly from the can you bought at the store into your stove or fuel bottle without using a cloth filter. Cut a piece of felt to fit in the bottom of your funnel. This will protect against contamination with oil and particles, which will quickly do in even the most reliable stoves.

There are a lot of good models on the market so you should be able to find one that meets your particular culinary and tripping style.

Happy shopping and happy cooking.

Bill Ness

Food for Paddlers

PEMMICAN

The word pemmican is derived from the Abnaki word pemikan (pay-me-kan) and the Cree word pimikan (pe-me-kan). In the Cree language, the word was originally used to describe the action of bone marrow grease preparation, but later evolved to mean the product itself. The preparation of pemmican evolved over thousands of years, for the purpose of storing meat. It became the best concentrated, unspoilable and easily transportable food in North America. It was the major food staple which enabled Alexander Mackenzie in 1793 to be the first European to cross the North American continent. The Hudson's Bay Company bought tons of pemmican from the Indians and later the Metis. It paid a premium price for pemmican made solely from the best of lean meats and only bone marrow grease. This was called sweet pemmican, which could be preserved for years. The Hudson's Bay Company factors calculated a supply of food for a long trip on the basis of four kg/man/day of fresh meat or the equivalent of pemmican. It is estimated that 0.8 to 1 kg of pemmican was equivalent to 3 to 4 kg of fresh meat in nutritional value, which is approximately 14,000 calories.

Original Pemmican Recipe

meat, bones & skin from buffalo
saskatoon berries
peppermint leaves (optional)
wild onions (optional)

Cut meat into thin strips and dry over fire or in sun and wind. When meat is dry (all redness gone), shred using two stones (flat stone for mortar and small round stone for pounder). Wash berries, then dry in sun for 5 days at 26 -32 degrees C. Crack femur and tibia bones and boil for 3 hours, let cool overnight. Mix meat and berries thoroughly, add to hot grease. Blend to produce an even consistency. Pour the hot mixture into buffalo hide bags and let cool and harden. Rub the bags with hot tallow to seal. To serve, cut off chunks with an axe and eat raw or boiled.

Alternate Recipe – when buffalo scarce

8 oz. jerky (of any meat) very dry and crumbly
8 oz. raisins
8 oz. peanuts or pecans, unroasted
8 oz. dried apricots, chopped (optional)
8 oz. dried peaches, chopped (optional)
8 oz. dried blueberries (optional)
2 tsp honey
4 tsp peanut butter
3/4 tsp cayenne pepper

Pound the jerky into powder or grind it using an electric blender. Add fruit and nuts. Heat honey and peanut butter to soften them, then blend into the mixture. Add cayenne pepper, working it thoroughly through the mixture. Put the pemmican in plastic tie bags, or, if you want to be completely natural, pack it into sausage casings.

Source: <http://www.geocities.com/Yosemite/Geyser/4034/pemmican.html>

The above information and original pemmican recipe adapted from:
http://collections.ic.gc.ca/notukeu/pemmican_e.htm

If you would like to share your favourite tripping recipes, please contact Barb Young, 12 Erindale Crescent, Brampton, Ont. L6W 1B5; youngjdavid@rogers.com.

Letter from the Editor

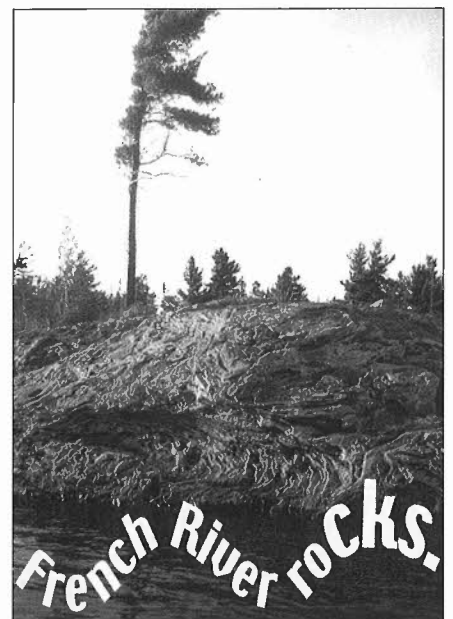
If we all have just a little more patience, we will soon be on the water. We're especially ready for spring this year due to the poor showing of snow, which has certainly eliminated most local cross country skiing fun. I consider myself lucky though, having found something else to do and that is to be your new editor-in-chief. Even luckier is the fact that the first issue of 2006 is out to you just as run-off or at least warm air is about to begin.

In this issue you will find a notice from Toni Harting who has decided to find other uses for the time that he usually spends editing Nastawgan. He thanks us for letting him be our editor all these years. Well, I think that everyone who was ever a member of the WCA or happened to read an issue of Nastawgan owes Toni a tremendous thankyou for donating so many years of his talents. Thank you Toni.

You may be wondering why you are reading this letter from me. Not too long ago, we announced that Bob Henderson would be the new editor-in-chief and I would be a member of his team. Unfortunately, Bob could not continue with the job and I guess I was standing there in line. Bob has not left the team though; he will be a resource person, looking for new material of interest to readers of Nastawgan.

We hope that you enjoy this issue of Nastawgan and that we can continue to bring interesting stories of paddling and wilderness to its pages and to you, its most important participants. And Toni, let me thank you for the job.

Elizabeth



Book Reviews

THE CABIN, A Search for Personal Sanctuary by Hap Wilson, published by Natural Heritage Books, Toronto, www.naturalheritagebooks.com, 2005, softcover, 192 pages, \$24.95. Review by Toni Harting.

If you thought that Hap could only paddle and draw you will be pleasantly surprised by this delightful book that clearly shows he can also produce some pretty thoughtful quality stuff with the pen. The Cabin is a sometimes painfully honest account of various ups and downs in Hap's life, focussing on his search for personal freedom and, indeed, sanctuary. It's all there, the lack of understanding and insight of his parents, the unhappy periods in his childhood, his discovery of his great love (paddling the wilderness) and his overriding passion (the lakes and streams of Temagami in northern Ontario). This guy really has the outdoors in his blood and he is prepared to fight for its well-being with the dedication of a fanatic.

It's really not necessary to write a thorough review of this book. It's fine, it's touching, it's intelligent, it's wonderful reading for anybody interested in the outdoors and its people. It's also well illustrated with many of Hap's famous drawings. Hap obviously knows how to write his thoughts down eloquently, but the use of "heavy, difficult" words is sometimes a bit too much (and not always required) and makes the book harder to read than necessary. I also have some (minor) squabbles with the presentation of the text: over-use of italics, sometimes sloppy punctuation, confusing mix of miles vs. kilometres (it's best to use either imperial or metric, not both) [have a look at my style guide,] paragraphs that are sometimes too long. However, this is easily forgiven because The Cabin gives such fine insight into the full life of one of our best-known and most-admired wilderness canoeists.

By the way, if you study the "copyright page" in the front of the

book, you will find the solution to a mystery that has been talked about around many a campfire. Indeed, Hap's official first name is David. Let's stick with Hap.

A DEATH ON THE BARRENS, By George Grinnell, illustrated by Rod MacIver, published by Heron Dance Press (01/05), \$16.00
Review by Rod MacIver, Heron Dance Books

In 1955 five men in their early twenties set off with 36-year-old Art Moffat on a summer-long canoe trip through the sub-arctic and arctic. The group traveled through long sections of previously unmapped territory. As winter approached, they ran out of food. When the group inadvertently went over a waterfall, Art Moffat succumbed to hypothermia.

For fifty years, George Grinnell, one of the young men on the trip, has been writing and re-writing the story of the trip. The result is a powerful book of survival and awakening, a physical and spiritual odyssey. *A Death on the Barrens*, was originally published in 1996. The following excerpt is from the revised Heron Dance Press edition.

The storm was long foretold. We continued cautiously down the lake, keeping an eye on the sky all around. The quiet ballet of warm and cold fronts danced all day. Through blue holes in the lower strata I could see wispy cirrus clouds sparkling like diamonds in the golden light of the southern sun. Closer to the ground, the darker clouds burned against the azure horizon. We paddled toward that distant horizon, never able to reach it physically, but being continually transformed by it spiritually. We paddled more slowly. I wondered whether we had already arrived at our destination.

Toward evening, we felt the current drawing us out of the lake into fast water; our paddle strokes quickened to keep pace with the tumultuous river, until something on the left shore caught our eye: small furry crea-

tures walking about on their hind legs.

"I think they are people," Joe exclaimed in disbelief. Three months had passed since we had seen another human being, but, indeed, these were children, dressed from head to toe in caribou fur, playing on the tundra.

When we landed, a woman, also dressed completely in fur, emerged from a tent. We stayed by the canoes so as not to overwhelm her, while Skip walked slowly up the bank, pronouncing reassuring words in English, none of which she seemed to understand. Her children gathered close about her caribou-clad legs for protection. She too was frightened. There were no men around. Was it we who needed rescuing, or her? The only thing we were certain of was that she was more frightened of us than we were of her, so we left and paddled across the narrows to the opposite shore, set up camp, built a stone wall against the impending storm, then cooked up the last of the dehydrated carrots for dinner. During our meal, we heard the sound of an outboard motor and a boat suddenly appeared from around the bend. When he saw us, the Inuit hunter turned sharply towards shore and landed. Three boys and a dead caribou were in the boat with him. They were smiling broadly. We invited them to share some dehydrated carrots with us, which Bruce had cooked directly in the tin can they had been packed in, and from which we were now eating, using the lid as a spoon.

The Inuit shared this spare meal with us with polite smiles. They rubbed their bellies as if it were the best meal they had ever eaten, but they could not all bring themselves to swallow the carrots. Finally the hunter, cheeks bulging, disappeared behind a rock and when he returned he was still smiling broadly and rubbing his belly, but his cheeks were no longer bulging with carrots. He sat down again.

Before we had finished eating, the Inuit hunter pointed to the sky and suddenly stood up; the boys followed and in a moment they were gone.

All was silent. Camp seemed empty without them, as if they had never been there, and we were left to face the storm, which raged all night, alone again.

The following day, as the blizzard blew itself out, we lay low in our tents and slept, for lack of food. Toward evening, I heard strange sounds through the whistling of the wind.

"Is that you, George?" Skip asked from the other tent.

"No. I thought it was you." I poked my head out and discovered our new friend, the Inuit hunter.

"Tea? Canoe?" I was puzzled. I thought perhaps that he wanted some tea, or to borrow a canoe. My companions shortly emerged, but all were just as puzzled.

"Tea? Canoe?" the Inuit hunter asked again.

We decided hopefully that he was inviting us to tea at his place. We picked up our canoes and began to carry them toward the water, but were stopped when the hunter placed his hand firmly on the bow of the green canoe and pressed it down.

"Thank you! Thank you!" he said. His command of English was limited, and ours of Inuktitut was non-existent. He began to walk away, and we stood by our tents in despair, until he turned and beckoned us to follow.

Behind some rocks on the beach, we found other Inuit men standing around and heard the distinct roar of a kerosene stove coming from behind a curtain. He handed us chipped enamel cups, then reached through the curtain and brought forth a pot of boiling tea. We were very grateful to warm our bellies with hot tea, but we could not help notice that there was also a large pot filled with caribou steaks steaming on the rocks nearby.

The hunter caught us eyeing them, reached in and handed them

around. We wolfed them down. I do not know if they had been planning to join us, but when they saw how hungrily we ate them, they held back and left us all the steaks.

When the pot was empty of meat, and our tea finished, the hunter offered us the fatty broth the steaks had been boiled up in. We shook our heads politely. He offered it a second time, and when we again refused, knowing that they, like us, valued the fat more than the meat, he poured a tiny bit out onto the ground. We all leaped forward to save it. They laughed and filled our tea cups with it, then indicated through gestures that we were more like Inuit than white men. We laughed happily, for they could not have paid us a deeper compliment.

After a while the hunter began to prance over the rocks in imitation of a caribou. Then he stopped, and held his hand to his brow as if looking far into the distance.

We shook our heads. We had seen no caribou for ten days. Skip held up both hands, then pointed to the sun, drew its motion across the sky with his finger in the air, and held up his ten fingers again. The hunter understood. He looked sad. We hoped his family would not be facing starvation that winter as so many had before them.

As darkness settled, we went our separate ways. We were tempted to ask the hunter to guide us down the river to Baker Lake, which was still a hundred or so miles away; but we restrained ourselves. He had a family to feed, and here we were, grown men, frightened of what the Inuit children lived with every day.

This book and other classics of northern Canadian canoeing (*Sleeping Island* and *True North*) were recently brought back into print by Heron Dance Press (www.heron-dance.org) and are distributed in Canada by Natural Heritage Books 1-800-725-9982 (www.naturalheritagebooks.com).

This excerpt was selected by Rod MacIver, Publisher of Heron Dance Press.

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.

WCA MERCHANDISE We have a wide selection of WCA merchandise available for purchase at all WCA events (but not by mail order). Items available include WCA mugs (\$5), crests (\$3), and decals (\$1). We also have WCA clothing in a range of colours and sizes. Each item is a high-quality product that has been embroidered with a colourful WCA logo. At your next event plan to purchase one of these garments and proudly represent your organization.

Golf Shirts:\$30; Fleece Vests:\$40; Fleece Jackets:\$60. (Cheque or cash only.)

For up-to-date information on Products and Services items, go to the Bulletin Board of the WCA website: www.wildernesscanoe.ca.

Survivorman Fans

Les Stroud's Survivorman™ Series Season 1 is available on DVD containing 10 episodes for \$34.99. If you are lucky to be one of the first 250 to purchase, you will receive an autographed copy.

Also on VHS are Les's earlier works: *Snowshoes and Solitude*, the award-winning documentary about Les and his wife's one-year escape from modern society to live in the Canadian wilderness.

Stranded (is the pilot version of Survivorman™), where Les makes his first two ventures out in the Canadian Wilderness, without food, water, shelter, matches, or a camera crew. Les experiences these 7-day challenges in the heat of summer and the dead of winter.

To order, go to <http://www.lesstroudonline.com/shop.html>

Excerpts from *The Last Wilderness* by Peter Browning, a trip from...to Snowdrift.

After the meal John broke out his fishing gear for the first time. I relaxed and watched the sunset and the trees and the calm lake, listened to the restless, persistent chirping of the birds, and stared into the fire. Fire was not only comfort and convenience and necessity, it was the means by which we felt environment, bending it to our will and making it perform for us. In civilization, with all the light and heat one desires available at the snap of a switch, there is no such strength and security to be had from so minor a thing as fire. Technological and scientific progress seem capable of supplying endless amounts of power to individuals and societies alike, and at the same time increasing their longing for more power still, always more. But that night I got a far greater sense of power and well being than ever before from fire. What John and I needed was the symbol and not the actuality of power, and for this the small comfort of a modest fire served quite well. Surely primitive peoples have always felt about fire as I did then. An illusory and deceptive feeling, perhaps, yet it sufficed. All the seeming substance of those wavering, evanescent flames was in a man's mind, but for the moment it served to hold back the immense, unknown, threatening darkness.

In the afternoon we crossed a small lake, and wearily waded the canoe down a long, rough rapids. We started across a larger lake, and had made half a mile when a strong wind with huge waves came rushing at us. It was too much for us to buck, so we turned around and attempted to run back to a fine beach and campsite that was astern and slightly to the right of us --- but we couldn't get there. The waves were so large that we couldn't angle across them to the slightest degree. They carried us back past the point we had rounded shortly before. We ducked into the lee of the point to wait for

the wind and waves to moderate, and perched ourselves on a protruding boulder in shallow water fifty feet off shore.

After emptying our boots and wringing out our socks, we discussed the affairs of the world. It was a most incongruous scene: probably the only human beings within a radius of a hundred miles, perched like two soggy cats on a hunk of rock surrounded by water, waiting meekly for a change in the weather, and all the while hashing over the problems of the organized society from which we had temporarily escaped. Perhaps it was a good indication that permanent escape was not possible.

The trip had ended in a crashing anticlimax. We were emotionally empty. The delight and sense of achievement we had anticipated so long had not appeared. Nor was there any incentive other than food obsessions that could drag us from the tent in the morning. What it was that we had expected I could not remember. A brass band? Welcoming speeches: the keys to the city? Adulation of a raucous multitudes? -- I did not know. We were left with the vague, rankling impression that we had been cheated of whatever it was we sought. We felt that there should have been, in some fashion or other, a grand and profound conclusion to our long journey, but there was nothing we could pinpoint. It had abruptly ended, expired, died, like the flame of a candle snuffed out between thumb and forefinger.

The romantic intermezzo was over; the chimerical summer was behind us. Forty-eight hours after the trip ended we were scarcely above to believe that we had done it. Rather it seemed that we had thumbed through a picture book of a journey taken by two remote acquaintances.

Our lives had been torn up by the roots; there was not stability and no permanence. The leap back into the mechanical world was as abrupt and complete as was our departure from it eleven weeks earlier. Once again a host of gaudy, strident impressions obliterated all memory. The present dominated; the past was but shad-

ows and echoes.

We rode the bus to Edmonton, a 1,000-mile trip that took thirty-two hours. We picked up John's car, and steered westward. There followed a rapid tour through Jasper National Park, Banff and Lake Louise, Yoho, Glacier, and Mt. Revelstoke national parks, along the Fraser River, on to Vancouver, and then to Seattle. There was little joy in any of it. We did it because we had planned it, and did not even conceive of altering the arrangement. The food obsessions were still with us. We consumed three large meals a day, had many snacks between meals, and were unable to pass a bakery without stopping for a sackful of tarts, rolls and cookies.

We parted company in Seattle fifteen days after our arrival at Snowdrift. Both of us felt that much had been left unsaid, that we had failed to make a proper summation of the trip in terms that had meaning and value for either of us. And we despaired of ever imparting to anyone else more than a superficial, barren description of the wanderer's progress through the solitude and cold beauty of the North.

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Passing through, staying over, seeking refuge, check out this:

New Peterborough lodging; passing through, staying over, seeking refuge, check out this:

For residents, canoe trippers, guests, and road trips in the Peterborough area, go to website and drop by for a visit at:

www.kingbethunehouse.com (full details of guesthouse)

www.festivalhost.com (useful local information)

King Bethune House, Guest House & Spa

270 King Street
Peterborough, Ontario
Canada K9J 2S2
705-743-4101
1-800-574-3664

WCA OUTINGS

**WANT TO ORGANIZE A TRIP AND HAVE IT
PRESENTED IN THE SUMMER ISSUE?
Contact the Outings Committee before May 15**

For questions, suggestions, proposals to organize trips, or anything else related to the WCA Outings, contact the Outings Committee: Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, bness@look.ca; Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, gisela.curwen@utoronto.ca; Geri James, 416-512-6690, geri.james@barclaysglobal.com; Scott Card, 905-665-7302, scottcard@sympatico.ca

**WCA outings and other activities may have an element of danger of serious personal injury.
You are ultimately responsible for your own safety and well-being when participating in club events.**

All Season **HAVE PADDLE WILL TRAVEL**

Scott Card, 905-665-7302, scottcard@sympatico.ca — Mowing the lawn this weekend because you don't have any trips planned? I paddle whitewater nearly every weekend from spring break-up through as long as the water remains liquid in the fall (or winter). If you want to get out on a river any weekend, just call me to find out where I'm headed. I go wherever there's good water. Longer trips also a possibility. Trip difficulty levels vary from intermediate to advanced. Open canoe, C1, or kayak welcome.

All Season **HAVE PADDLE WILL TRAVEL, PART II**

Al Sutton, 905-985-0261 — I'm on the river most weekends through the season. If you'd like to get away, give me a call to find out what I'm doing. You're welcome to join me. Trip difficulty levels vary from intermediate to advanced.

March - May **FRED'S FABULOUS TRIPS: BLACK (WASHAGO), HEAD, MOIRA RIVERS**

Fred Lum, 416-482-3774 — The Black near Washago and the Head a little farther southeast have some very interesting whitewater sections if you catch them at the right levels. Both are quite different despite their close proximity. The Head is a technical little creek with a number of small ledges that will test a good intermediate's route finding and precision boat-handling skills. The Black has some super surfing waves that make for a day full of fun even for experienced novices. Down Belleville way, the Moira has a very challenging upper section at Lost Channel, requiring solid intermediate skills to negotiate a series of ledges with large waves. There is also a roller-coaster-ride section farther down through long, easy rapids from Chisholm's Mill to the take-out at Latta that all paddlers from skilled novice up will enjoy. If there is interest, I could run a trip down the Upper Salmon, which is a step up in difficulty with many class 2 to high class 3 rapids. I keep my eyes on water levels and go when things look good. If you want to get on my call list for these trips, just send me an e-mail to roocnu@wepaddle.com.

Note: Paddlers must have drysuits or wetsuits, helmets, and at least one throw bag per boat. All cars should be equipped with roof racks capable of carrying MORE than one boat so they can help out with the shuttles.

March 25 **MOIRA RIVER**

John & Sharon Hackert, jhackert@sympatico.ca, book before March 18 — This is our season opener and a chance to recover our skills after a long winter. We will start at Chisholm's Mill and finish at Latta in the morning, eat lunch in our vehicles, and run Lost Channel in the afternoon. This is a good opportunity for new spring paddlers to introduce themselves and demonstrate their competence. The river is not particularly technical and we will only be about an hour from our cars. This trip is open to anyone who doesn't mind swimming in ice-cold water. Tandem canoes must have a centre airbag. Wetsuits or drysuits are required. Limit of six boats.

March 26 **LOWER CREDIT RIVER**

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, bness@look.ca, book before March 19 — Just leave the boat on the car after the Moira and join me on this classic early spring trip. We'll catch the river in Streetsville and run down to the mouth at Port Credit. The river is a delightful continuous class 1 to 2 with lots of play spots. However, as sweepers can present a hazard and the water will be cold, participants should be at least intermediates, and wear a wetsuit or drysuit. Limit of six boats.

April 1 **MOIRA RIVER**

John & Sharon Hackert, jhackert@sympatico.ca, book before March 25 — A great trip is always worth repeating. Please see trip description above.

April 2 **BURNT RIVER**

Jon McPhee, 905-640-8819, book immediately — An easy river trip from Kinmount to above the village of Burnt River. Pretty scenery and a few short portages make this a pleasant spring outing. This is basically a flatwater trip. There are several large rapids at this time of year. However, these are easily carried over good portages, making this trip enjoyable for novice paddlers. On the other hand, for any serious whitewater paddler who doesn't mind mixing a flatwater workout with the frothy white stuff, these Class 3-4 rapids can provide an interesting challenge. Limit 6 boats.

April 8 **BEAVER CREEK**

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, or jhackert@sympatico.ca, book before April 1 — This will be a challenging whitewater run suitable for advanced-level whitewater paddlers with fully outfitted canoes and proper cold-weather attire. Note: if the river isn't open yet, we could switch to the Moira. Limit five boats.

April 15 **BEAVER CREEK ENCORE**

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, or jhackert@sympatico.ca, book before April 8 — Please see April 8 description above. You had so much fun with us last week that you want to come back again; and besides, you have to pick up the Thermos that you left at the lunch spot.

April 16 **LOWER BLACK RIVER (TWEED)**

Jon McPhee, 905-640-8819, Scott Card, 905-665-7302, book before April 9 — We will run the lower section from Queensborough to Hwy. 7. This is an interesting run for solid intermediate to advanced paddlers, with frequent technical class 2-3 rapids. Wetsuit/drysuit and full canoe flotation are required. Limit five boats.

April 22 **UPPER MADAWASKA RIVER**

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, or jhackert@sympatico.ca, book before April 15 — A day of whitewater excitement for advanced paddlers. The upper Madawaska 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. Wetsuits or drysuits, helmets, and fully outfitted whitewater boats with full flotation are musts. Limit six boats.

April 29 MINESING SWAMP

Ray Laughlen, 705-754-9479, rlaughlen@hotmail.com or rlaughlen@gmail.com, book before April 22 — This will be a slow paced trip downstream from the Willow Creek 'coral' to Edenvale. We can check out the heronry, osprey nest, early spring migrants and maybe some furry critters.

April 29 UPPER MADAWASKA RIVER-TAKE TWO

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, or jhackert@sympatico.ca, book before April 23 — Please see April 22 description above. A chance to hit the eddies and surf the waves you missed last week.

April 29-30 SPENCE'S CELEBRATED SALMON-MOIRA WEEKEND

Glenn Spence, 613-475-4176, book before April 19 — Just north of Belleville, these two rivers offer exciting whitewater and fine scenery. The Salmon is the more gentle run, with some small rapids for you to practice your skills. The Moira has larger rapids possibly up to class 3. You can bivouac at my house and enjoy a potluck dinner. These are two of Southern Ontario's finest spring rivers. Intermediate paddlers welcome. Limit six boats.

April 29-30 SPRING IN MUSKOKA

Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, gisela.curwen@utoronto.ca, book before April 22 — We will paddle the Herb and Gun lakes near Minden and experience the returning birds and discover other flora and fauna emerging from hibernation. Maybe we will find the first turtles or the last cranberries, as in past trips. Since it will still be too cold to sit around, we'll try to hike a bit to explore the area and, as in past years, clean up portages and campsites along the way. There will be prizes for the best junk collected! Limit four canoes.

May SPRING TRIPPING IN ALGONQUIN

Andrea Fulton, andrea.fulton@rogers.com, book as early as possible. — Exact dates to be determined. Let's get out there before the black flies do! Join me and my two teenage daughters for an easy weekend trip in Algonquin off the Hwy. 60 corridor. This will be an easy flatwater trip with a few portages. I plan to camp Friday night at Tea Lake campground and do a one- or two-day loop into the interior.

May 6 UPPER MADAWASKA RIVER – FOR THE LAST TIME

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, or jhackert@sympatico.ca, book before April 30. — Please see April 22 description above. For those of you who missed the first two trips. Lower water levels give the trip a different feel from earlier in the season, so come on back to enjoy the Upper Mad in all its moods. Still a challenging trip for advanced paddlers though.

May 13 LOWER MADAWASKA RIVER

McPhee, 905-640-8819, book before May 6. — The classic day run from Aumond's Bay to Buck Bay through a number of big water Class 2-3 rapids. Suitable for solid intermediates or better with proper cold weather attire and boats with full flotation. Limit 6 boats.

Mid-May OPEONGO RIVER ALGONQUIN PARK

Frank Knaapen and Jay Neilson 613-687-6037, book before May 7. — Contact organizers for exact dates. We will run the Opeongo Saturday and again on Sunday, camping at an awesome marsh with the spring peepers. Self-sufficient wilderness and whitewater outfitting including flotation, wet/dry suits and strong intermediate whitewater skills are required for this Class II-III spring runoff river.

May 20-22 MADAWASKA WINE AND CHEESE FESTIVAL

Larry Durst, 905-415-1152 or ldurst@devoncommunications.com, book as soon as possible to avoid disappointment.

Join us for the sixth annual spring paddle/wine and cheese party. We paddle from above Aumond's rapids to the take out at Griffith, a distance of only 28km. The pace is leisurely with only the Sunday as a full day of paddling. Typically there is lots of time to play, chat and nibble. Rapids range from class 1 to 4 and there are a couple of short but muddy portages around falls. All other rapids can also be portaged. The water levels (and cholesterol levels) will be high. As well, cold weather is almost always a challenge. Participants should be intermediate level and be prepared for chilly, wet conditions. Attendees are also expected to share in camp preparations, transporting shared gear, etc.

May 20-22 PETAWAWA RIVER RUN

Frank Knaapen and Jay Neilson 613-687-6037, book before May 14. — Self-sufficient wilderness and whitewater outfitting including flotation, wet/dry suits and strong intermediate whitewater skills are required. Second takeout at Crooked Chute is considered mandatory by organizers on this trip, so if you plan on actually running the chute, please do not join this trip.

May 27-28 INTERMEDIATE WHITewater CLINIC

John & Sharon Hackert, jhackert@sympatico.ca, book before April 22. — This is the tenth year of our clinic, which is designed to help improve your basic skills. We will paddle the Lower Mad on Saturday and practice our basics skills at Palmer Rapids on Sunday. The emphasis will be on front ferries, eddy-outs, and peel-outs. Your paddle strokes will be critiqued. You will also have an opportunity to practice self-rescue techniques. Open to properly outfitted solo and tandem canoes. Wetsuits or drysuits will be needed. We will camp at our cottage.

Early June DUMOINE RIVER

Frank Knaapen and Jay Neilson 613-687-6037, book before May 14. — Contact organizers for exact dates. This will be a 3-4 day extended weekend trip. In early June this river requires self-sufficient wilderness and whitewater outfitting including flotation, wet/dry suits and strong intermediate whitewater skills.

June 4 ELORA GORGE

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, bness@look.ca — Up north the bugs may be at their peak, but down on the Grand, you can at least paddle without getting eaten alive. At this time of year the Gorge is usually pretty tame, but it's a very pleasant day's outing. It's an excellent place for newer moving water paddlers to get some practice developing their skills, and I'd be happy to provide some informal coaching for anyone who wants it. Suitable for novice moving water paddlers.

June 10 GRAND RIVER

Doug Ashton 519-620-8364, book by June 1. — This popular trip down the Grand River offers a local leisurely day from Cambridge to Paris where it passes through scenic farm country. This trip is suitable for novice paddlers with some moving water experience. An excellent family trip without any portaging.

June 15-18 FRENCH RIVER – WESTERN OUTLETS

Bob Fisher, 416-487-2950 or weekends 705-445-9339, book by June 1. — We will complete a circle route from Hartley Bay House out through the Western Outlets of the French River, exploring the historic Old Voyageur Channel, and return past the ghost logging town of Copananing. There is a fee for parking, water taxi, and group dinners. Limit of six canoes.

Late June/July INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED SOLO WW COACHING WEEKEND

Scott Card 905-665-7302, ScottCard@sympatico.ca — Take your pad-

ding skills to the next level! An advanced intermediate solo whitewater coaching weekend in late June or July with Barry Godden. Exact date to be determined. We will be covering advanced river reading and running as well as playboating. The weekend will be on the Ottawa or the Gull River depending on water conditions. Participants must have their own boat and be comfortable with class III water. Limit 6 boats.

July **ROUGE RIVER**

Martin Heppner, 416-365-7802 or 416-465-1558; mheppner@anchorsecurities.com, book by May 31. — Exact dates to be determined. This is a whitewater trip from Lac Rouge to the Ottawa. Contact organizer for details.

July 1-3 **OTTAWA RIVER**

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, or jhackert@sympatico.ca, book before June 22. — We are fortunate to have access to the most beautiful campsite on the river. The Ottawa is big water and many of the rapids are quite difficult. You should be at least a strong intermediate paddler to safely enjoy it. We recommend that you join us on some of our spring trips to develop and practice your skills before attempting this river. Limit six boats.

July 7-9 **CANOEING CHRISTIAN ISLAND**

Richard Steinberg, cell @ 647-284-8083, business 905 671-5494, email @ Steinberg.Richard@ups-scs.com, book as soon as possible. — We will meet on the evening of Friday, July 7. Enjoy a weekend on Georgian Bay. Canoe over to one of the first Imperial Lighthouses on Georgian Bay. If the weather permits, we will search for the shipwreck Maple Dawn up the coast at Daly Point. It's mostly flatwater, but winds can make it rough. This will be a full day outing. Picnic & swimming on one of the sandy beaches before returning. Sunday is open for coastal canoeing. Due to planning requirements, can only accept participants who are certain they will be going. Please do not call unless you can make a firm commitment

July 8-9 **INTRODUCTION TO MOVING WATER**

Jon McPhee, 905-640-8819; Bill Ness, 416-321-3005; Scott Card, 905-665-7302, book before June 24. — This is a two-day workshop for flat-water paddlers who want to develop basic moving-water skills. It should be of interest to trippers who want to become more comfortable negotiating the moderate moving-water they often encounter on river trips, and to canoeists who want to determine if whitewater paddling could be for them. We will focus on the basics of moving-water boat control and manoeuvres, water reading, and safety. Both tandem and solo paddlers are welcome. The weekend will be spent at Palmer Rapids on the Madawaska River, one hour northeast of Bancroft. The location offers some of the best novice to intermediate whitewater in Southern Ontario. In order to be able to work closely with participants, registration is limited to six boats.

Prerequisites: Participants must be able to steer a canoe competently on flatwater. A Royalex canoe with supplementary floatation (air bag, air mattress, inner tube, etc.) to simplify recovery when you capsize is mandatory. If you need to rent a canoe, you should register and reserve the boat immediately as there are very limited numbers available with outfitters. Vest-type PFD's, helmets, and square-bladed, T-gripped white-water paddles are necessary. Lastly, you must feel at home in the water to enjoy these workshops.

Recommended: While not required, a wetsuit will make floating in the river more pleasant. Reviewing a whitewater instructional book or video before we meet will familiarize you with the important concepts so you can get the most value out of your river time.

August 5-7 **OTTAWA RIVER**

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, or jhackert@sympatico.ca, book before July 30. — We are fortunate to have access to the most beautiful campsite on the river. The Ottawa is big water and many of the rapids are

quite difficult. You should be at least a strong intermediate paddler to safely enjoy it. We recommend that you join us on some of our spring trips to develop and practice your skills before attempting this river. Limit six boats.

August 12-20 **TEMAGAMI**

Richard Steinberg, cell @ 647-284-8083, business 905 671-5494, email @ Steinberg.Richard@ups-scs.com, book as soon as possible. — Join us for a 9 day trip on Lake Temagami and surrounding area. Short visit to Bear Island Indian Reserve and a hike on the Old Growth Pine Hiking Trail on Temagami Island. We will be exploring the northern area by way of several portages. This is rated as an intermediate flat-water trip as the lake water can be rough at times. Due to planning requirements, can only accept participants who are certain they will be going. Please do not call unless you can make a firm commitment.

August 22-28 **GEORGIAN BAY**

Don Andersen, dhandersen@aol.com, 716-873-4476, book before July 22. — We will be visiting the more secluded, remote sections of Georgian Bay in the vicinity of the mouth of the Key River. We will be exploring isolated sections of Sandy Bay, Kantos Point and the Champlain Islands in the southern portion of the trip with special emphasis to explore Fox Bay or Fox Lake in the trip's northern extremity. We may spend a night on Tanvat Island depending on weather and group interest. We may be exploring some of these areas by foot as well. We will be searching for new residents to the area, the Sandhill Crane, a large and magnificent water bird, whose range is increasing from the southwestern part of the Bay. This trip will use available sheltered waters whenever conditions require it. This trip is suitable for parents with adolescent children to retired folk alike provided they are competent novices who can manage windy conditions, waves, adhering to no-trace camping principles and can function in a team environment. Limit six canoes.

August 27 – September 17 **VOYAGEUR BOUNDARY WATERS**

Martin Heppner, 416-365-7802 or 416-465-1558; mheppner@anchorsecurities.com — Book by April 28th. We shall travel overland, westward to the Winnipeg River from Fort William and the Kaministiquia River or, alternatively, from Grand Portage and the Pigeon River, over the height of land, stopping in Quetico along the way, then west to Rainy Lake, then Lake of the Woods, ending at Minaki or the Winnipeg River. All plans to be made. Bring your pemmican. Limit of 3 canoes.

September 2-4 **OTTAWA RIVER**

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, or jhackert@sympatico.ca, book before August 25th. — We are fortunate to have access to the most beautiful campsite on the river. The Ottawa is big water and many of the rapids are quite difficult. You should be at least a strong intermediate paddler to safely enjoy it. We recommend that you join us on some of our spring trips to develop and practice your skills before attempting this river. Limit six boats.

September 2-4 **RIVIERE AUX SAUBLES**

Aleks Gusev, 416-236-7079, aleks@gusev.ca, book by August 15 — Riviere aux Saules is west of Sudbury, near Massey. This is a long drive from Toronto but well worth the trip for whitewater aficionados, with some of the best technical water in Ontario (class 2 to 4 with some class 5 falls for the adventurers). Must be at least a strong intermediate paddler. Fully outfitted whitewater boats required. Limit six boats.

ADDITIONAL TRIPS

Check our website at www.wildernesscanoe.ca/trips.htm for additional trips. Members may submit additional trips to the Outings Committee anytime at bness@look.ca. If you miss the Nastawgan deadline, your trip will still be listed on the website. Also, check the bulletin board at www.wildernesscanoe.ca/bulletin.htm for private, non-WCA trips or partner requests.

Where it is...



...in this issue

- | | | | |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. 100 Days from the Rockies to the Arctic Ocean | 14. The Tree | 23. Drought Disaster Explained | 25. Letter from the Editor |
| 8. The Moisie | 15. Portrait Lake Pass | 24. On Stoves | 26. Book Reviews |
| | 22. News Briefs | 25. Food for Paddlers | 27. Products and Services |
| | 22. A Note of Thanks | | 28. The Last Wilderness |
| | | | 29. WCA Outings |

WCA Postal Address

P.O. Box 91068
2901 Bayview Ave.
Toronto, ON M2K 2Y6

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

George Drought (Chair)
43 Brodick Street
Hamilton, ON L8S 3E3
905-528-0059
gdrought@wilderness
bound.ca

Michael Law
B67 Ball Ave East, RR 3
Beaverton, ON L0K 1A0
(705) 426-1951
mike@law.infosathse.com

Elsie Carr-Locke
Toronto, ON
416-463-9019
elsiescot@yahoo.ca

Aleksandar Gusev
8 Valiant Road
Etobicoke, ON
416-236-7079
aleks@gusev.ca

Gillian Mason
Toronto, ON
416-752-9596
gmason@capam.ca

Martin Heppner
Toronto, ON
416-465-1558
mheppner@anchor
securities.com

WCA Contacts <http://www.wildernesscanoe.ca>

Secretary

Bill King
45 Hi Mount Drive
Toronto, ON M2K 1X3
416-223-4646
lyonrex@aol.com

WCA Outings

Bill Ness
194 Placentia Blvd.
Toronto, ON M1S 4H4
416-321-3005
bness@look.ca

Resource Editor

Bob Henderson
19 Lantern Lane
Dundas, ON L9H 6N9
905-627-9772
bhender@mcmaster.ca

Treasurer

Howard Sayles
Toronto, ON
416-921-5321

Webmaster

Jeff Haymer
Toronto, ON
416-635-5801
jhaymer@ionsys.com

Membership and Computer Records

Gary James
27 Canary Cresc.
North York, ON M2K 1Y9
416-512-6690
wca@sympatico.ca

Conservation

Erhard Kraus
Scarborough, ON
416-293-3755
erhard@interlog.com

Editorial Team:

Elizabeth Sinclair, Editor-in-Chief
Mike Wevrick, Associate Editor, Text
Barb Young, Food Editor
Bill Ness, Outings Editor
Aleksandar Gusev, Illustrations Editor