



# nastawgan

Spring 2013 Vol. 40 No. 1

Quarterly Journal of the Wilderness Canoe Association



*In the great outdoors with my favourite friend*

## Embracing Darkness Teaching on Victoria Island

Story and photos by Iva Kinclova

I had a dream for a long time, really since my childhood in communist Czechoslovakia. I dreamt of living with native people. I wanted to live on the land, off the land with a small, caring

group of people. I got this dream through reading novels by Karl May about First Nations of the western United States. I got closer to it when I immigrated to Canada in 1990 and started exploring the

amazing Canadian wilderness by canoe. Some 20 years later, getting a teaching job in Nunavut seemed like a long-awaited next step. I needed to add a tribe to my experience of the land.



*Kiilnik High School students welcoming the return of the sun*

My path took me to Cambridge Bay situated on Victoria Island. Cambridge Bay is home to 1500 people, which makes it one of the bigger communities in Nunavut. It is the location of the government of the western-most region of Nunavut called Kitikmeot. The original name of the community – Iqaluttutiaq (place of many fish) – suggests that the Inuit used to gather here to fish even before a police- and trading-post was established here in the 1920s. The settlement grew significantly in size when about 200 Inuit were hired to help construct the DEW line. (The Distant Early Warning line was a system of radar sta-

tions used during the Cold War.) Nowadays, Cambridge Bay has a health centre, a bank, a hockey rink, two newly built schools (elementary and secondary), as well as the Arctic College that is starting to produce the first Inuit teachers. It is connected to the south by at least two daily jet flights, and an internet service of variable and unpredictable speed. The community is solely powered by fossil fuels. Petroleum products are a source of heat and electricity for all houses, fuel for surprisingly many cars, snowmobiles, water and waste-removal trucks, as well as snow-removal machines. Strangely, just like in the south,

people drive to work distances that can be walked in five or 10 minutes. In order to do that they let their engines run for another 20 minutes beforehand to warm them up. Putting all those combustion engines to use in a place without any sound buffers creates a level of noise comparable to downtown Toronto.

Spending a winter in Cambridge Bay means learning to survive four months of temperatures of close to minus 50 Celsius. The temperature during the winter months would be around minus 30 Celsius and then the ever-present wind reduces it another 10 to 20 Celsius. Being an outdoorsy person, I did my best to spend time outside. For that purpose, I sewed a deep hood with fur around the face and also used beaver mitts when I set out to cross-country ski. My beloved activity, however, proved rather frustrating in the conditions of the high Arctic. There was a variety of reasons for this. First, skis glide very little in “green wax” temperatures. Second, it’s hard to keep balance when you lose your peripheral vision because you are wearing a hood. Third, it is hard to see the surface in flat light, common during the winter. And finally, the slight lift of hands to fit long ski poles takes enough blood out of your fingers to make them cold. After a number of tries, my skis delaminated, saving me from my misery and leaving me to walks with dogs.

Then there is winter darkness to reckon with. The sun doesn’t come above the horizon for six weeks around the winter solstice. During this time there is about three hours of twilight at lunchtime so there was never 24 hours of complete darkness. But the accumulation of dark hours definitely affected me, even though I brought with me a bright SAD lamp and ample supplies of vitamin D. To illustrate the effects of it, I quote from my journal from Jan 23rd, 2012: “White men, who know better, established a 9-to-5 work regime up here. Yes, they/we love conquering nature. Haven’t we learned anything since the days of Franklin? Haven’t we created enough disasters to see that southern ways don’t work up here? I guess we don’t know any better. Sleeping through winter darkness would be considered inefficient and unprofitable, perhaps.”

So, in my teaching world this means



*Cambridge Bay in brilliant spring sunshine*

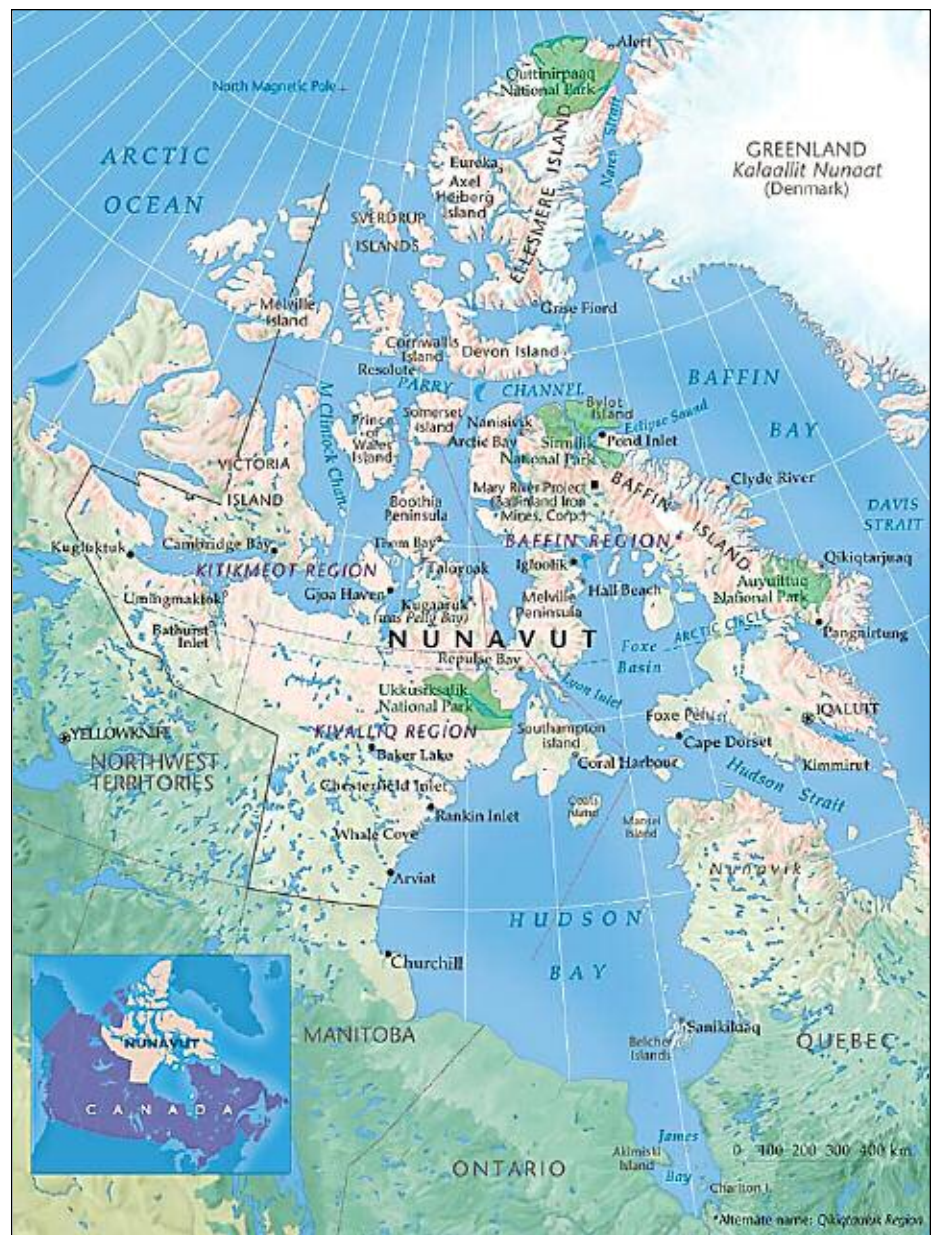


that I drag myself out of bed at 8 a.m. (I stay there as long as I can). It is pitch black outside. I boil some water for coffee and get dressed. The water and clothes are ready from the previous evening to avoid unnecessary moves and decisions – both equally unwelcomed. In a few minutes I am on my way and crunch slowly to school. I hardly settle into the calming repetitive movement of shuffling my feet as I get into our staffroom and start to undress. I resent my parka as it pulls my hat off my head. I resent the person who filled the coffee pot full while I need to boil only a cup of water for my porridge. I swear silently on the way to my classroom while spilling what's in my cup on a new carpet. I unlock the classroom door at exactly 8:45 a.m. when the bell goes. I free my hands from holding cups and bags, breathe a sigh of relief, and hope that nobody will speak to me at least for another hour.

When the sun appeared back over the horizon in mid-January, all our students went to the North-West Passage to welcome it back. Following an ancient Inuit ritual, students 'enticed' the sun to come back by offering it food. The return of the light was impressive in its speed as each day grew by about 20 minutes. I had wished that my mind followed suit but it was not the case.

Both the darkness and slow northern time provided me with an ample opportunity to reflect onto exactly why I came to Cambridge Bay. I had fair warnings before I left that an attempt to live in a healthy sustainable community in the north was delusional in the age of globalized corporate greed. In April 2011, when I took a leave of absence from my Toronto teaching position and started applying for jobs in Nunavut, a long article appeared in the *Globe and Mail*. It talked about the growing pains of Nunavut, focusing on high suicide and crime rates. Also, at the same time, a theatre performance was presented in Toronto by a group of native actors from Toronto and Yellowknife. It described a dark winter day in Igloolik from the perspective of youth. It was dark in every sense of the word. It revealed abuse of children by their parents, high school students involved in drugs and alcohol, as well as teen suicide.

I paid no attention to the warnings



*Cambridge Bay is located on Victoria Island*

and held on to my childhood dream. "The reality of my tribe couldn't possibly be so heavy," I told myself. I needed hope to find my people and an escape from a culture of convenience, consumerism, and constant distraction from reality that is prevalent in the "the Big Smoke."

Wishing to live the lives of characters from Karl May novels of my childhood and Farley Mowat's books I read in Canada, I got acquainted with life in Cambridge Bay in the winter of 2011 - 2012. I did find some aspects of a culture I dreamt of. The Inuit still get some of their food by hunting (mostly caribou

and muskox) and fishing. They gather for community feasts and share frozen caribou and char. They play games (silly, co-operative or traditional athletic ones) and laugh a lot. There were two week-long periods of games while I was there. They value bringing children into this world and some of them (mostly the elders) still remember and respect the old traditional ways.

Most of my focus, though, was given to school. After all, I had committed to a teaching position. Already before I started teaching at Kiiliniik High School, I asked myself often what I was going to teach, to whom, and why? The "what"





*Community Christmas feast*

was easy, in a way, at least in terms of the subjects. I was to teach all subjects to grade 9 students just like in our elementary or middle schools. But it got really challenging when I wanted to figure out what to teach in the subjects. My students reflected the make-up of the community – a mix of the Inuit and people who came from the south. Most of my non-Inuit students were born in Cambridge Bay as their parents came here to work and stayed. Some of my students were from mixed relationships – one parent Inuit, one parent non-Inuit.

As Nunavut has been creating a new educational system since the new territory was established in 1999, I was to follow either the Alberta or North-West Territories curriculum (very similar to Ontario) in combination with the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles. Southern curriculum made sense for university

bound students, and IQ principles, teaching good values, helping to form a responsible individual, were a meaningful addition to it. But what was I to teach to Inuit hunters? What are their lives going to be in five or 10 years when the North-West Passage opens to commercial ships? I thought that with cash economy now firmly established in Nunavut, the traditional way of life, in the sense of living solely from the land, is gone. I figured it would be challenging to barter for a snowmobile. Attempting to make a link between a traditional and new lifestyle, I discussed with my students how many caribou would they need to hunt and sell in order to be able to buy a new snowmobile. In a creative Inuit logic, that often brought a smile on my face; one of my students argued that it would be definitely possible, and since he didn't know how much a snowmobile would cost, he

suggested that the snowmobile his dad owns would last him (the son) for the rest of his life, rendering our discussion unnecessary.

Given the fact that the southern curriculum is pretty packed, my unfamiliarity with traditional Inuit activities, and my inability to see into the future, I figured that the best I could offer the hunters was basic literacy in math and language, and a sense of confidence that comes from knowing self, and successfully applying themselves in really anything that was a part of a healthy lifestyle.

There was a real variety of learning ability in my class. The reason for having highly gifted students mixed with highly needy ones was the idea of inclusion. This in practical terms means that students in elementary school move to a higher grade even though they haven't met the expectations of the course. As a result, teaching my class would essentially require four different lesson plans each day, a task pretty close to impossible to plan and execute. But it never actually came to that as student behaviour got in the way.

In order to teach, you need to have a class of students that are able to follow your program; at least there needs to be a core group that is capable of it. That wasn't, however, the case in my grade 9 class. While a few students were polite and focused, the majority were unable to sit still, be quiet and focus for even a short period of time. It actually seemed like a relief when some students slept in class. And they frequently did.

There were a number of reasons for problems with student behaviour. From the introduction to teaching up north that I received from the school, I learned that the Inuit do not discipline their children and rather let them experience the world on their own and learn their own lessons. Generally speaking, I consider this a good idea for bringing up children, but the concept makes functioning of bigger groups of students in a structured environment such as school chaotic.

From my colleagues I learned that parent care varies dramatically. Some homes are very loving, in some homes money is spent on alcohol on payday Fridays and children go to school hungry. Some children go to school to get some



*Fishing Inuit style*

sleep as their homes are crowded and noisy. A few of my Inuit students didn't live with their parents. One lived with her grandparents and another one with her sister (after she moved to Winnipeg for a part of the year and tried to live with her mother; this however didn't work out).

From a report, prepared by the education authority for Nunavut, about current challenges of Nunavut schools, I learned that many parents do not support school because of their negative experience with residential schools and their unfamiliarity with the way school is delivered (as an institution).

Searching to understand and help my students, I participated in several workshops focused on mental health. In November, my class and I took part in a workshop that was planned for National

Aboriginal Addiction Awareness month and also welcomed by our staff in the emotional aftermath of a suicide of one of our grade 11 students. Talking with the instructor during a break connected me to a lot of incidental stories, angry outbursts (e.g. throwing chairs and slamming doors), brooding episodes in the classroom, parents not willing to speak to me on the phone. Jerry Garchinski, a counsellor with specialty in healing trauma, was a frequent visitor to the community. He flew here from the south, same as most health care professionals do. He suggested that when students act out at school they share their pain and they do so because we (teachers) are safe enough for them. According to Jerry, the pain was caused by colonization and residential schools and passed onto them by

their parents. Stories shared by my Inuit colleagues and community members later at other workshops agreed with his opinion.

The idea that pain and trauma that is not healed gets passed onto the next generation resonated with me and agreed with my own life experience. It also gave me a better sense of what I needed to do in the classroom – a whole lot more healing and a whole lot less teaching southern curriculum. Though I wasn't trained as a mental health counsellor, I needed to trust my abilities and do my best. I was the person who was there for my students, a bit of a teacher, a bit of a counsellor, and a bit of a parent, all in one package.

I prepared units of study for my university bound students and they learned





*Differences of Life (past)*



*Differences of Life (present)*

*Long ago before when we weren't born even before our aunt sisters weren't even born the community was clean but now a days lots of people are treating our community like garbage even if we have garbage cans and bins etc...*

Presentation by Alice Evetalegak

by themselves (actually really well) often with music playing in their ears to cope with the noise of students loudly sharing their pain. I often gathered our class in a circle and checked how everybody was doing. We talked about feelings, naming them, about a safe way of expressing them, about the need to take responsibility for hurting someone, how to better our lives, school work, and what we want for ourselves in the future. This was by no means any easier than trying to teach something. Only some students were ready to talk. Obviously finding trust to talk about certain things in a group wasn't easy for them. But it made more sense to me.

A number of professionals came to our school offering activities that facilitated healing, mostly through movement and art. The most impressive ones, "the Odd Squad," were police officers from Vancouver Lower East Side who came during their holiday time to talk to students about drug awareness, taught them judo, and greatly promoted healthy nutrition and yoga.

Having had a personal experience with yoga and meditation, I also thought that those would be perfect tools for healing. But the yoga teacher who came for a week seemed much less successful than the police officers with their judo training. I think it was the silence required for yoga that was too big a hurdle for our students to overcome. The successful coping activities for my students proved to be gym, outdoor excursions, sewing mitts, and art.

It took an incredibly long time to develop trust with my students, but I eventually did. And I even experienced some small successes. One of them was a request from a student asking me to call her and wake her up so that she could finish her junk art project. The task was to make an art object from things that went to the dump and consider how these things affected our lives. My student made a collage that portrayed a changing relationship to the land. While in the past everything that was left on the land was organic and fell apart, nowadays a lot of plastic, metal, and other materials are left on the land and make it look messy.

The dump in Cambridge Bay is only about one kilometre from the village. You can see some incredibly beautiful

wildlife there, especially birds in the spring because there is food there. It is a bizarre juxtaposition to being on the land and seeing plastic bags roll on the tundra in the wind. Of course, I would have expected it to be the other way around. After all, Cambridge Bay is above the Arctic Circle and that area is supposed to be pristine!

My students didn't like seeing garbage on the land but they didn't seem concerned by burning garbage, a way that garbage is disposed of in the community. Community members didn't seem concerned with burning garbage either. It hurt me greatly to watch people use Styrofoam dishes at community feasts, knowing that they will get burned at the dump, and that someone will be smelling the fumes. When we had a final goodbye barbeque for students and parents, I agreed to serve hot dogs and prepared real plates (the school had many of them). But a group of women from the Inuit association who looked after cooking the hot dogs insisted on using Styrofoam. They argued that Styrofoam is convenient. I offered to wash the plates and suggested that people die of cancer when they breathe and eat chemicals. This was incidentally shortly after the community fundraised an astonishing \$80,000 for treatment of cancer. My argument didn't work. The ladies removed the real plates and I had a crying fit in the staffroom.

I didn't find my tribe in Cambridge Bay. At least not the romanticised kind Karl May wrote about in his novels. I made a few dogs happy and they in turn gave me a sense of purpose as we walked together. Perhaps I made a difference for a few children, too.

In the winter darkness I connected to a dark place in my soul and days of lengthening daylight weren't capable of bringing me out of it. Seeing the pain of Inuit children day after day, caused by colonization and residential schools, was really hard for me. Eventually this drove me to revisit my own childhood, and open up to the pain my parents passed onto me, likely caused by the communist dictatorship and two world wars preceding that.

With time to think and feel, it was as if I looked myself in the mirror and saw something really ugly. It was incomprehensible to me how I could belong to a species that survives on this planet employing hierarchy, military power, and exploitation of life to the point that it endangers its own existence. The darkness threw my face into the garbage dump of human psyche as if to say: "You fool, you thought there are pristine, moral places!"

Light comes out of darkness. There are many false lights we need to stay away from: drugs and alcohol as painkillers, tech toys and other distractions, entertainment, and general preoc-

cupation with stuff as excuses for giving up responsibility for the consequences of our existence.

True light, I believe, can appear, when we embrace darkness. When we embrace all the dark emotions, our pain, despair, and anger, and let them transcend us to another way of being; a way of being with another purpose, including, hopefully, care and compassion for one another and the land.

I think that our Inuit children and we in the south are connected by the cumulative pain of our existence. In order to have a chance, in order to survive, we need to connect how we truly feel, find words to express it, tell our stories.

"We are the mirror as well as the face in it.

We are tasting the taste this minute of eternity.

We are the pain and what cures the pain, both.

We are the sweet, cold water and the jar that pours."

By Rumi, a 13th-century Persian poet and Sufi mystic

\*\*\*\*\*

This article is adapted from a presentation at the WCA Symposium 2013.

For my canoeing friend Hugh Westheuser, whose big heart keeps me going.



*Cambridge Bay in the winter twilight*



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

## Deadlines

The deadline dates for submitting material for the four issues we publish each year are: the first days of February, May, August, and November. If you have questions, please contact the editor; addresses on the last page.

## Events Calendar

Fall Meeting will be held at the Madawaska Kanu Centre on 5 and 6 October 2013.

Wine & Cheese Party will take place on 16 November 2013 at TSCC.

## Correction:

We regret that some columns in the lead article "The Story of Dillon Wallace of the Labrador Wild", published in the previous issue, were mixed up. The left hand column on page 5 continues in the two left hand columns on page 6 and then jumps back to the two right hand columns on page 5 which in turn jump to the right hand column on page 6. This error was corrected in the digital version of *Nastawgan*, available for download to members at WCA website.

## WCA Activities

Want to view all club activities, learn more about our extensive outings program for members, or organize and post a trip? It's easy! Visit the Outings section of the WCA website:  
[www.wildernesscanoe.ca](http://www.wildernesscanoe.ca)

## Contributors' Guidelines

If you are planning to submit any material for possible publication in *Nastawgan*, you would do the editors and certainly yourself a great favour by first consulting the *WCA Guidelines for Contributors to Nastawgan*. These guidelines should be followed as much as possible by all contributors, so that the editorial team can more effectively edit your contribution to make it fit the *Nastawgan* style. The latest draft of the guidelines is available on the WCA website.

## Facebook

**By M. Bernadette Farley**

The Wilderness Canoe Association now has a Facebook page. The idea behind starting this page was to attract new members to our association, in particular some "young blood." It was thought that since social media is all the rage with the younger set, that having a Facebook page would be a step in the right direction. To get our page known we are asking people to go to the page and share your stories, your photos, and share the page with others. If there is an event that you think our members might be interested in, post it there. If there is an article about what is happening with our waterways and this government, post it there.

We would also ask that you "LIKE" the page, this will help us reach other people and hopefully new members of all ages.

## Nastawgan Text Editor(s) Wanted

We know you're out there, somewhere. Perhaps you dream about a job like this, but need some time to think about it. We understand; it's an important decision. After all, we're talking about *Nastawgan*, our very own wilderness canoeing journal.

The job itself is all about responsibility and no pay. Yet it offers the most amazing and gratifying experience. Think about it. First, you get to rub shoulders with Toni Harting and Aleks Gusev while you're in training. Just try to imagine things Toni read, did, and edited during several decades of putting together *Nastawgan*.

Then, you'll have access to the most incredible collection of articles describing every river in Canada you can possibly imagine. A gold mine, really. You'll have access to people that wrote many canoeing books you love, folks that traversed rivers and lakes far and wide.

To take advantage of this opportunity, you need a good knowledge of the English language and strong motivation to help produce a journal worthy of the WCA tradition. It helps if you have good organizational skills, basic knowledge of MS Word, and can work under (sometimes) tight deadlines.

So, what do you say? If you think you're ready to join our great Editorial team, please submit your name and credentials to the *Nastawgan* Editor (see back page for addresses).

Thank you.



# Pierre St-Germain's Miracle Canoe

Text by Bob Henderson and André-Francois Bourbeau

Photos by André-Francois Bourbeau



*Another failed attempt, but fun*

There was death by starvation, death by murder, cannibalism, attempts of mutiny tempered by threats of being shot and a court marshal trial back in England. Many know the story. Recently, I had lots of time on my hands – a hip replacement from an injury in an overzealous canoe race set me back a spell. This afforded me a perfect opportunity to revisit the first Franklin expedition, that

overland journey across Canada to Great Slave Lake – the last fur trade outpost at the time – and beyond to the Arctic coast. The expedition proper followed the Yellowknife River up to the Coppermine River and along the Arctic coast to Bathurst Inlet, all by birchbark canoe. From the Hood River, the group of men, five British naval officers plus sailors of a mix of indigenous half-breed

voyageurs and supporting crew, headed overland for one heck of a “portage.” They crossed the Burnside and Coppermine rivers heading back to Fort Enterprise and onto Great Slave Lake, en route back to Britain. In all, for this one expedition alone, the officers were gone from home for over three years and traversed several thousand kilometres.

That, then, is the route. In all, “the





*Inserting fir branches as ribs*

long portage” was an ordeal – an understatement. Returning home after the distressing trip, Lieutenant Back told fur trader Wentzel at Fort Chipewyan that, “To tell the truth, Wentzel, things have taken place which must not be known.” Wentzel had already suspected as much. He had a year earlier written to his superiors that, “It is doubtful whether, from the distant scene of their transactions, an authentic account of their operations will ever meet the public eye in England.”

Reading all four officers’ accounts, Franklin’s, Richardson’s, Back’s, and Hood’s, impressed on me less the role of these men and more the role of interpreters, voyageurs, and Yellowknife hunters (Akaicho’s Indians, as they were sometimes called). In particular, Pierre St-Germain stands out. While St-Germain was at times a “ringleader of discontent” (looking back, who could blame him for that – I’m reminded of *Yossarian’s plea in Catch 22*, “The enemy is anyone who is going to get me killed”). How could St-Germain not voice concern about Franklin’s obsession to press on beyond the reaches of food and native hunter support while travelling in ever-more leaky birch-bark canoes, ever further along the stormy September Arctic Coast? Taking in views of the Arctic coast from the mouths of the Burnside and Horton rivers provides a bit of perspective on

what the coast might have been like to paddle in a stormy September season. I, for one, will stick to the rivers, particularly as the early autumn season kicks in.

But let’s get back to St. Germain. So while this skilled hunter and interpreter had his request to abandon the expedition denied at the mouth of the Coppermine, he soon became its most indispensable member. One would be right to marvel at Pierre St-Germain’s determination on the return overland walk with two major river crossings. First at the Burnside River crossing, St-Germain was prominent in ferrying the party across at great hardships to himself. But the big story was at Obstruction Rapids on the Coppermine. Here, without any watercraft to exact a crossing, St-Germain spent four days searching unsuccessfully for wood to make a raft. He did scrounge enough river willow to fashion a “cockleshell” out of the fragments of canvas available. All relied completely on the ingenuity and stamina of St-Germain at a time of heightened starvation. This crossing was *the* critical moment of failure or success to the already wretched return to Fort Enterprise. St-Germain had found the way.

But how did he do it? How exactly can one man build a craft to cross a wide river with a strong current with such meager resources? And what exactly is/was a “cockleshell” water-

craft anyway?

Enter my friend, André-Francois Bourbeau. I’ll let André pick up the narrative – his story meshes with St-Germain’s – from here.

Funny how reading the same passage of a historical document sends my friend Bob Henderson and me off into different directions. Whereas he has the uncanny ability to see the whole picture, I’m focusing on specific techniques in the hope of adding to the wilderness survival knowledge base. Reading the four versions of the Franklin expedition sent me into the wilds to feed exclusively on boiled rock tripe for a few days and incited me to crush frozen bones to find out how difficult it was to extract the marrow. Not many surprises here. But when I read about Pierre St-Germain’s life-saving canoe-building endeavour, and then attempted to duplicate it, I was astounded by my repeated failures. How in the world did St-Germain manage to build a canoe big enough to carry man and gear from willow sticks and “fragments of painted canvas in which we wrapped our bedding”? Especially when so weak from starvation and during a violent storm which dumped half a metre of fresh snow on the ground!

Here’s the narrative of my attempts. I had hired a research assistant one summer and we went off into the woods of the Laurentides Wildlife Reserve for a week of experimentation. We started our testing with a 12 by 9 foot (about 4 by 3 metres) polyethylene tarp and some twine. I wanted to limit myself to these dimensions under the assumption that if I were to cut up a scrap piece of canvas to wrap my own belongings, I would do so in the smallest size possible due to weight considerations. At the same time, I would like it to double as a ground sheet, which means slightly more than two metres long by one metre wide (based on my personal experimentation during a 40-day historical re-enactment in birchbark canoes and period gear). If this were the case, Pierre St-Germain would have had to sew six such pieces together, a most arduous task under the circumstances. Plus, the sewing had to be sealed by collecting “pitch amongst the small pines that grew there to pay over the seams of the canoe.” Having personally struggled at sewing sailcloth



by hand and gathering pitch for sealing purposes, I concluded that the canoe would have been built to minimum functional size, probably less than four metres long. The fact that they could not gather pitch at all (not surprising on such stunted trees) further justified my vision of a small craft to minimize sewing leaks.

Influenced by prior experiences with bullboats, we initially tried making an elliptical version of this historic craft, first by drawing two adjacent circles with a piece of string, then by building a framework around pegs planted along those lines. Like when constructing a wigwam frame, we completed a rough structure and then proceeded to painstakingly attach the tarp to it using the old wrap-around-a-rock-and-tie trick. Our first stab was a disastrous failure. Contrary to when a tough skin is used for the bullboat, water would cave in between the wide framework pieces due to the non-structural plastic sheet, drastically reducing flotation volume. After two more failed attempts the next day for the same reason, we realized that for this to work we would have to build the framework much tighter, with squares no more than 15 centimetres. The next morning we started bright and early, and by evening we finally obtained an elongated bullboat which floated once several patches of duct tape had been applied to the holes caused by some poorly trimmed willow branches. Nevertheless, we were never able to cross a small river with minimal current. The shape of a bullboat makes it tend to turn around in circles when paddling, preventing substantial forward movement. The only way to somewhat advance seemed to be to scull in front, far away from one's body, where the substantially reduced leverage limits progress. We concluded that bullboats must have been used only for fishing on calm waters, perhaps with a rope tied to shore to pull oneself back in. Or perhaps to test the parameters of one's sanity. Clearly this was not the method St-Germain used.

We thus went on to try a pointy canoe shape. We secured two long green poles at the ends and spread them into gunnels by tying a thwart amidships. To this frame we lashed a strong rounded cen-



*My first successful emergency canoe*

tral rib and an additional three poles placed lengthwise. We covered this with plastic sheeting for a quick try. But when in the water, the plastic simply stretched out of shape and got pushed up between the poles.

Clearly the framework for the canoe had to be built tight, without leaving any significant area unsupported. We proceeded to lash willow ribs to our preceding structure every 15 cm or so and stretched on a new poly tarp, which left us hopeful. However, we had built the very short canoe too rounded, and it tossed us into the drink very quickly, having neither sufficient volume nor stability. It seemed apparent that I had miscalculated: we needed a bigger tarp.

Our research time was over and we returned to town and other obligations. When I pursued my experimentation alone two weeks later I had to admit to stubbornness, since I arrived at the lake's edge once again with the same-sized tarp: 12 feet by 9 feet. My motivation wasn't just St-Germain, I wanted to see if it was possible to cross a lake with the common tarp many carried on outdoor trips, or with a two person tent fly which is no larger.

I gathered materials all morning, intending to make a wider and shallower canoe. During my time off, I had mulled over the project and had reflected that St-Germain had no expertise with canvas-covered canoes (which appeared several decades later), but rather with birchbark canoes. Having built a couple

of the latter, I knew the fundamental difference between the two: in a birchbark canoe, the shell is built first, and then stretched by the ribs. So my friend Pierre (by now we were intimate) must have built his emergency canoe in this manner, not by creating a frame first and then covering it as we had been doing. This is what I was about to try, but it was time for lunch.

I was lying down on the beach relaxing a bit, with the tarp spread out on the ground in front of me. As luck would have it, the angle between the tarp and me was such that I saw them: the corners. Yes, the corners were the points of the canoe. Eureka! On the diagonal, the tarp was five metres (15 feet) long; why had I not thought of that before?

I fashioned my gunnels to produce a 14-foot canoe and tied on one central rib and three longitudinal poles as before. Then I lay the structure on the tarp and pulled the edges up and over the gunnels, which fit so much easier now that I was matching the corners to the bow and stern; it was easy to simply tuck the excess material under the poles. Now encouraged by my progress, I decided to save time by using the fir branches I had tossed down as a bed as ribs. This was a second stroke of luck, because as I weaved the conifer boughs under the poles, the wide branches stretched the tarp into shape and actually helped hold it in place. In fact, there was so much friction I didn't even have to tie the tarp onto the gunnels. After hunting for a few



*St-Germain's cockleshell in my dreams*

extra boughs, I was soon done.

I had brought along the octagonal spruce pole I had previously fashioned to practise traditional upstream travelling in my regular canoe and used it in the manner of a kayak paddle to try out my improvised canoe. I was amazed at how smoothly and easily I was able to glide across the lake and back. It wasn't pretty, but it did the job. After this try out, the slippery tarp had hardly budged.

Since then, I have built several such canoes to perfect the technique. Bushy willow saplings work nearly as well as fir boughs, but the collection time doubles. With practice, the entire process becomes faster. On the last occasion, I had found an old painter's tarp underneath a

chalet and after less than two hours of toil had saved myself a long hike around an expansive lake. But most importantly, I have taught how to build this type of emergency craft to many who canoe far away lands, and if they ever lose their boat this skill may be invaluable to them. My buddy Pierre St-Germain knew he had saved members of the Franklin expedition, but he surely didn't realize that he might also save lives in the future.

When in dire straits, such as the survival situation the starving Franklin expedition faced, human beings most often cannot think straight, and they mostly rely on instinct based on previous experience. One thing is for sure: Pierre St-Germain had built a great many canoes before.

Having come full circle, although from different directions, I must come to the same conclusions as Bob. The importance of St-Germain's skill and knowledge has never been sufficiently underlined.

Thank you, André, for this fascinating and revealing information. I, Bob, will now again take over the narrative.

In the end, we should remember we read the writings of the officers who do less of the work. Bil Gilbert in the excellent essay titled "After Franklin" in his book *Our Nature* captures this well. He notes that after three weeks his hard-working companions had covered what the Franklin party, (read: Franklin's voyageurs) had completed in thirteen days.

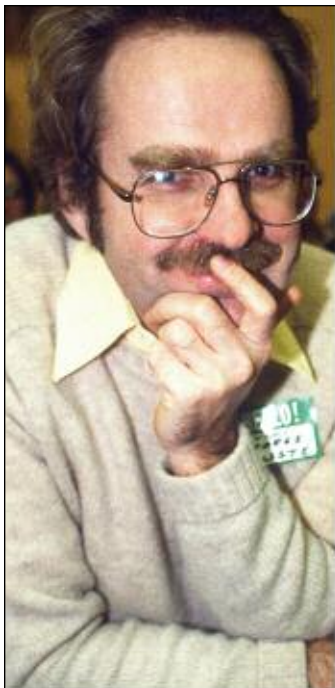
On the up-river, portage-intense Yellowknife River, Gilbert and partners realized, "We are the men he [Franklin] is talking about." Franklin had written, "We crossed five portages, passing over a very bad road. The men were quite exhausted." Bil and company were emulating the hardworking voyageurs but reading the early accounts of officers. Galley slaves compared to overseers, perhaps. The point is, St-Germain and his ilk on this expedition deserve the attention André gives him as a survival expert, and I give him with a second read of the journals.

Building that "cockleshell" is one of the truly amazing stories from an expedition unparalleled for storytelling today. André's curiosity and tenacity add wisely to the Obstruction Rapids story which showcases Pierre St-Germain, the expedition's Copper Inuit Interpreter. Without our hero Pierre, the details of Franklin's trip might never have made history.

Bob Henderson is a retired professor at McMaster University and has travelled a great many of Canada's Arctic rivers by canoe to study historical routes. He has authored the book *Every trail has a story*.

André-François Bourbeau is professor emeritus at the University of Quebec at Chicoutimi and has dedicated most of his career to the study of wilderness survival. His most recent book is entitled *Wilderness Secrets Revealed*.





# GEORGE LUSTE

WILDERNESS CANOE SYMPOSIUM LEGACY

*Since 1986*



Dear George:

I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank you and your team for the many years of putting together the WCA Symposium. This year, a recent attendee asked me why I come. My response was it provided me with a sense of place and getting to know one's own country from a different perspective which could be environmental, historical, geographical, artistic, etc. It also gave me a sense of community of fellow like-minded people who were willing to share their experiences and knowledge. The symposium delivered valuable learning moments and sometimes these were communicated in a very entertaining manner. It has been a privilege to be tuned in and turned on.

Earl Silver





2013 Wilderness and Canoe Symposium was attended by almost 600 faithful paddlers. Photo credit: John Yip

# 2013 Wilderness and Canoe Symposium

By Bill King

On February 15 and 16, 2013, approximately 600 WCA members and future WCA members passed an exhausting, entertaining, educational, exhilarating 15 hours at the Canoeing and Wilderness Symposium, "Northern Travels and Northern Perspectives XII." A wide range of topics was covered including: a video of the steel canoe created by sculptor John McEwen which actually floated, a presentation by Dave Freeman concerning his 11,700 mile journey with his wife Amy across North America by kayak, canoe and dogsled and an exhibit of paintings created by artist, Allen Smutylo, while kayaking in East Greenland. The highlight was a presentation by the organizer, George Luste, a retrospective look at his 50 years of wilderness experiences.

George was very open with the attendees about the fact that he has health issues which may prevent him from attend-

ing another Symposium. The organizers were anxious not to let the opportunity pass to publicly express their appreciation to George for the enormous time, skill, and effort which he has put in, organizing this annual Symposium for the last 28 years.

This appreciation took several forms.

Former *Nastawgan* Editor, Sandy Richardson, and Robin Hadfield *compiled a collection of the music* heard over the years at the Symposia which, with the permission of the artists, was made into a CD, "Northern Perspectives," the proceeds of whose sale will go towards creating a lasting memorial to George and the Symposium. Those who were unable to attend this year's event will be pleased to hear that some copies are left over and will be offered for sale at future events such as the AGM and the Wine & Cheese Evening.

Further, through the good offices of

the Canadian Canoe Museum, a *George Luste Fund* is being created to which people can make tax-deductible donations under the Museum's charitable umbrella. The funds will be used, at least in part, to sponsor an annual George Luste Lecture, to be held at the Museum.

Lastly, we wanted something tangible, something which George could hold in his hands. Aleks Gusev, who inherits the enormous task of chief Symposium organizer, has been compiling a *book containing selections from the past 28 years of Symposia*. While the actual book could not be ready in time, Aleks presented George with a plaque showing a collection of photos, which will form the cover when the book is complete. The central photo shows the attendees at the first Symposium, held at George's home. (Were we ever really that young?!)

We wish Aleks every future success – the shoes are the size of canoes!





## 28th Annual Wilderness and Canoeing Symposium

The audience of almost 600 paddlers and outdoor enthusiasts, largest in recent years, were delighted by 18 content-rich and varied presentations. The live music played by Dave Hatfield and tunes from the “Northern Perspectives” compilation CD added immensely to the jovial atmosphere. The Symposium, sponsored by the Wilderness Canoe Association, was wrapped up with George Luste’s reflections on his 50 years of wilderness canoeing. The following presentations were made:

Mart Gross – *Arctic Biodiversity: past, present and future*

Allen Smutylo – *Sea kayaking in East Greenland*

Dave Freeman – *Across Canada by Canoe, Kayak and Dogsled*

Andy Thomson – *Pogamasing, the story of a northern lake*

Erhard Kraus – *Exploring the Spanish River area*

Michael Mitchell – *John McEwen’s canoe: sculpture on Georgian Bay*

Bill Pollock – *Canoe Travels in Richmond Gulf*

Ryan Arthurs – *George River: Smallwood Reservoir to Ungava Bay*

Philip Schubert & Amy McKendy – *Biography on Dillon Wallace of the Labrador wild*

Fred (Skip) Pessl – *Dubawnt journals: readings from 1955 accounts*

John Martin – *Following Tyrrell:*

*Reindeer to Baker Lake 1974*

John McInnes – *Two Tlico trails: old roads to the Barrens*

Dwayne Wohlgenuth – *Canoeing and harvesting from the land*

Zabe MacEachren – *Paddling in and out of the landscape*

Arnold Zageris – *Labrador experience – with large format camera*

Iva Kinclova – *Embracing darkness: teaching on Victoria Island*

Wendy Cecil – *Far out? No. Far NORTH!*

George Luste – *Retrospect from 50 years of wilderness experiences*

# Northern Perspectives: Symposium Compilation CD

By Sandy Richardson

The playing of music during the breaks at the Wilderness and Canoe Symposium came about purely by chance. Sometime back in the '90s, a student who had borrowed a couple of my cassette tapes of folk music returned them to me in the projection booth during the symposium. Since I then had the tapes with me, I decided to play them over the auditorium sound system during the breaks that year, unsure what people would think. A number of people liked it and asked what the music was and how they might get it. At their urging I wrote a brief article about the music for the next issue of *Nastawgan*. I was then asked if I could include music notes in the WCS programme, so folks could connect the music they were hearing with the titles. This I have been doing ever since.

I also started looking for songs and music appropriate to the programme each year, as much as possible, and created compilation tapes to play. This is now what I do each year; the tapes, however, have been replaced with compilation CDs. The notes have become a bit more detailed so that people who wanted to could find the source CDs.

Symposium participants have often asked the staff at the Book Table if they could buy the music that was being played in the auditorium. We brought in a few CDs to sell, but they did not cover the whole range of music played. A few years ago, when Dave Hadfield was performing at a symposium and Robin Hadfield was helping with CD sales, Robin suggested that we should make a symposium compilation CD. I liked the idea but the logistics of it were not clear to me. Robin came to the rescue; she has a small business, Ditto Disc, which manufactures CDs and DVDs. We talked to George Luste and received his blessing – as long as

it didn't mean more work for him. We decided to do it, but didn't get around to doing anything for a couple of years.

When George told me about his illness we decided that if we were ever going to do a compilation CD, now was the time. At first there was no clear idea on our parts what the CD would be like or what the proceeds would go to, but I began selecting possible tunes to include. In the fall, Aleks Gusev approached me, as someone who has known George for nearly 40 years and who has been on a number of canoe trips with him, for ideas of what we might do to honour George at this year's symposium. At that point the idea of making the CD itself a tribute of sorts, and using the proceeds to help fund a lasting memorial to George was born.

I approached the musicians who had created the music we wanted to use, and as soon as I explained the project they generously allowed us to use their music and waive any royalties, even though at this point no decision had been made as to what the lasting memorial might be. We then went ahead and produced a master, prepared notes about the music and looked for the appropriate photographs for the covers.

I searched through many slides from trips I had been on with George. We eventually decided on the photos you see on the CD cover – all from a canoe trip on the Stikine River. The cover shot is our campsite at the headwaters of the Stikine; that's George bending over in the centre of the campsite. The inside cover is George in the stern paddling by a glacier on the lower Stikine. The back cover is George, with cameras around his neck, at the top of a mountain we hiked up near the source of the Stikine. (The photo used on the CD itself and as the background to the

liner notes is a sunrise over a wetland on the Bruce Peninsula; George is not in it.)

Robin then went about designing the CD and covers, and after much discussion and tweaking she came up with design you see. We decided to produce 200 copies and placed the production in the hands of Ditto Disc. Robin and Dave picked up the finished product on the way down to the symposium on Friday. I first saw the CDs there, and presented George with the first copy.

Robin and a number of MPC alumni, as well as the Book Table, looked after selling the CDs; we intentionally kept the promotion low key. Sales went very well, exceeding our expectations. Since the musicians donated the use of their music and we worked as volunteers, we were able to keep production costs to a minimum – slightly over \$3 per CD; this means that over \$16 from each CD sale goes to the George Luste Fund being set up at the Canadian Canoe Museum, which, as Bill King announced at the end of the symposium, will fund an annual George Luste Lecture at the museum.

We sold about half of the production run of the CDs at this year's symposium. By lunchtime on Saturday we had sold enough copies to pay the production costs. By the end of the symposium we had made about \$1,200; a good start to setting up the George Luste Fund. The remaining CDs will be available for sale at future symposia and other WCA events.

We hope that everyone who buys the CD will enjoy it, and that when you listen it will bring back fond memories of the Wilderness Canoe Symposium that George has organized for 28 years.



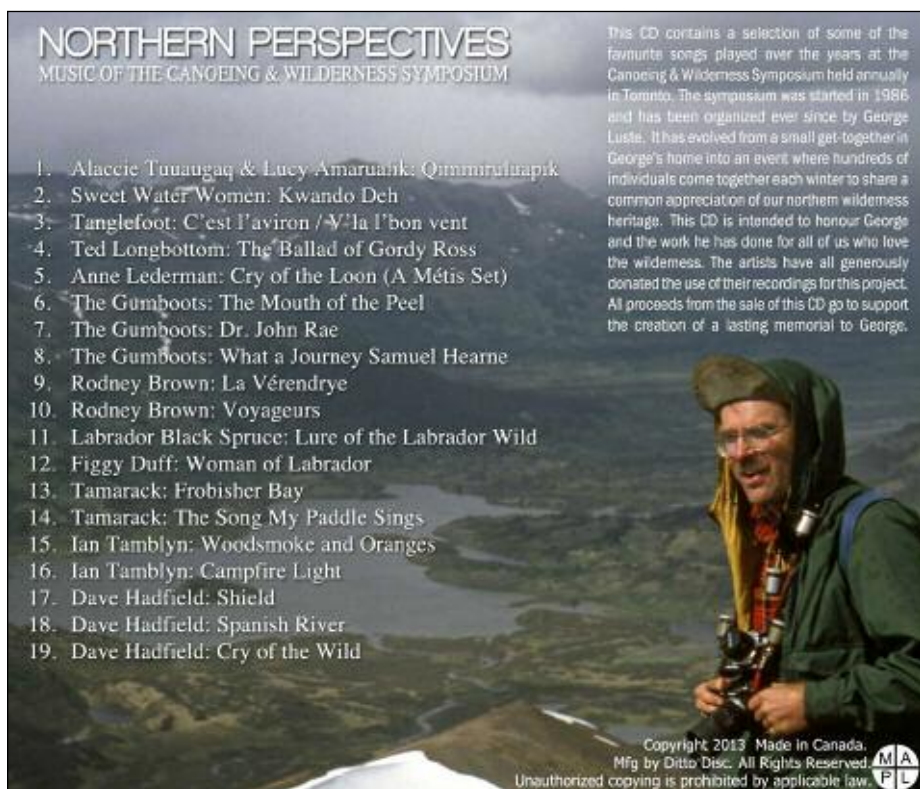
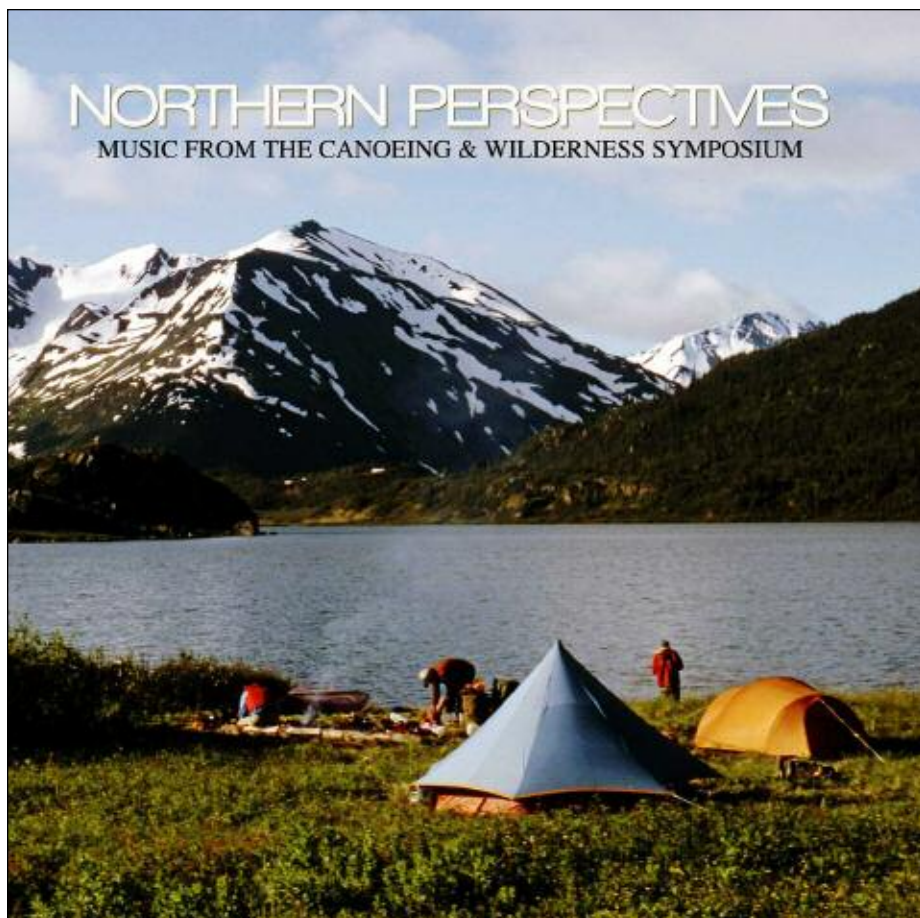
## Book Review

**Bound for the Barrens** edited by Jean Sanford Replinger, published by Mallard Island Books, 300 North Hill Street, Marshall, Minnesota 56258-1441, soft-cover, 248 pages, 2012, \$19.95.

Review by Toni Harting.

The subtitle of this extraordinary book, **Journal of the Ernest Oberholtzer & Billy Magee 2,000-mile Canoe Voyage to Hudson Bay in 1912**, introduces the reader to the day-to-day journal written by Oberholtzer while on an exceptionally long trip in an 18-foot Chestnut Guide Special canoe, taking the two men through Manitoba, Saskatchewan, the N-W Territories, and again Manitoba. The trip took place in a 600 (N-S) by 400 (E-W) miles region that no white person had penetrated since the Samuel Hearne expedition of 1770. Oberholtzer's famous canoe trip started one hundred years ago in Le Pas, Manitoba, on June 26, 1912, following several rivers and lakes to the north till they reached Nueltin Lake, and then went east down the Thlewiaza River to Hudson Bay, south along the Bay coast to York Factory, then up the Hayes River to Lake Winnipeg, and finally south on Lake Winnipeg, arriving in Gimli on November 5 for a total of about 2,000 miles. The journal tells us the many ups and downs of the trip in direct, down-to-earth language that manages very well to convey the experiences and thoughts of the author. The book presents several maps and also a number of photographs, which often depict members of the local native population. What makes this book especially interesting for modern paddlers is the remarkable and detailed information on the gear and provisions used by the two travellers on their amazingly long, unguided trip that took more than four months to complete. No waterproof clothing here, no freeze-dried food, no GPS or satellite phone, no modern-day miracles at all. Instead they used technology common one hundred years ago, teaching us, modern paddlers, some valuable lessons about canoe-tripping in the Canadian wilderness.

(See also the reviews of related books: *Toward Magnetic North*, in *Nastawgan* 2001-Spring, and *The Old Way North*, in *Nastawgan* 2008-Fall.)





# A Journey on the French River

From the heart and through the eyes  
of Hiroaki Nakashima, a nineteen year old Japanese student  
Photos by Gary James and Donna Carter



to answer his challenging questions about Canadian history, canoeing, and “roughing it.” But most of all it was interesting to hear him talk about life in Japan and the differences between the two countries. Because he was required to write a report about his journey to Canada, I asked him to also write a trip report about his adventure on the French River for publication in Nastawgan.

## Hiro's report

I came to Canada in June 2012 to learn English so that I might be admitted to a Canadian university. This was my first visit to a foreign country. When the opportunity came up to go on a canoe adventure on the famous French River, I was not confident that I would do well with nine English-speaking strangers in the deep forest, but now that the trip is over, I am happy that I was brave enough to go.

My host Nancy Lee has a cousin Donna Carter who lives in Kitchener, a two-hour bus journey from London, Ontario. At her home, Donna taught me about the personal equipment I would need and how to pack it. We also checked off lists of group items as we packed the food barrel and equipment bag and loaded the car. The next morning we met up with Donna's daughter Andrea Fulton in Toronto and we headed north in a big truck with two canoes on the roof-rack for the five-hour trip. They wanted me to sit in the front seat so I could begin listening and speaking in English and there was much to see and talk about. I saw many stacked stone statues called Inuksuk along the highway. Originally First Nations built them as guide posts pointing the direction to turn. These statues showed me that this

## Introduction by Gary James

In August 2012, our plan was to circle Eighteen Mile Island of the French River clock-wise, putting in and taking out at Loon's Landing on the west shore of Dry Pine Bay. The WCA party consisted of Anne Bradley; Andrea Fulton and her mother Donna Carter; Bill and Hsioh-fan Stevenson; Gary and Heather Ataman along with their dog Misty; and Larry Hick and me. We had a last-minute cancellation and the call went out for a replacement. Donna suggested we bring a visitor from Japan, Hiro (Hiroaki Nakashima), a young man who wanted to explore and learn about Canada, and also learn to speak English. He apparently was able to carry a canoe, so what more could you ask for! It was interesting to watch Hiro explore this new land of his, and







area is a rich original forest as well as a great historical site.

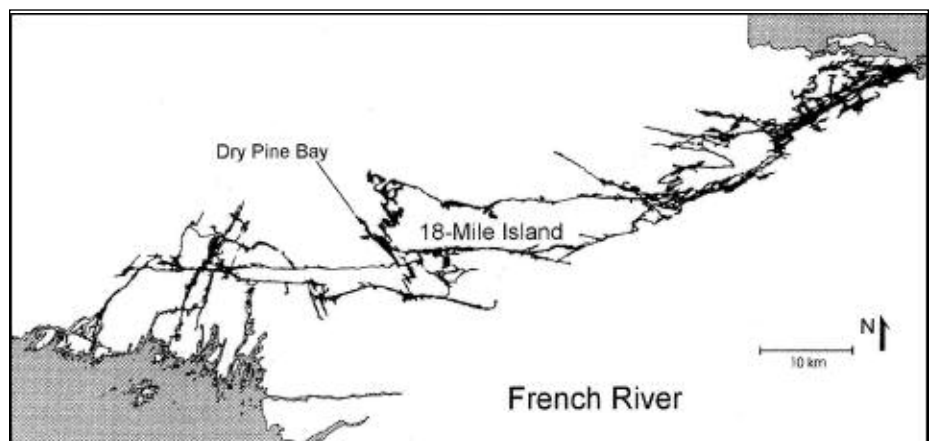
The trip members gathered at a campsite named Loon's Landing and had a meeting. Since I am shy and I have trouble with English, I was stiff with them at first. But the members accepted me warmly. Especially the older couple, Bill and Hsioh-Fan Stevenson (she is from Taiwan) were very friendly and talked about their trip to Japan. I became more comfortable with the members because of their kindness.

The next morning, we left the campsite. This was my first experience canoeing. I think canoeing is not popular in Japan because our islands are small and 60 percent of the land is mountains, so big rivers suitable for canoeing don't exist; there are a lot of rapids and narrow rivers which have many mossed rocks under the water. Compared with my home country's rivers, the French River is so huge that it looked like a lake. We had nice calm weather, the best for my first voyage. At first I sat at the front of the canoe called the bow. The canoe was more stable than I had expected. I paddled

with Andrea the first day. She is a very bright woman who has two daughters and the younger one is 19, the same as my age. Andrea often cared for me during the trip. It was very comfortable to canoe on a big channel and feeling a gentle wind. At this time I thought canoeing was to be joyful and easy.

Forests around the French River are different from forests in Japan. Japanese forests are mainly composed of broadleaf trees and are high density, dark and humid. But the mysterious atmosphere and the beautiful green

scenery made by various types of trees and mosses are attractive. I like broadleaf trees because they give me peaceful oasis. At the French River, I saw quite a different landscape. It is mainly composed of evergreens and rusty-coloured big stones. The trees stand orderly and straight and the forest is filled with sunshine. The blue sky, bright forest, huge rocks, and deep water contrasted vividly, and they impressed me. Above all, everything is big! Sometimes I felt loneliness and fear, maybe because I was just over-







whelmed by this magnificent nature.

One of my greatest pleasures of the canoeing trip was camping in a tent. I enjoyed finding the best place for putting up my tent, remembering the days I played in a secret place with my friends. It's important to choose a proper place carefully to enjoy being in the tent. The third day, I tented on a big rock because it was flat with a nice view. But unfortunately, we had terri-

ble rain with winds and thunder. The winds and rain hit my tent directly and the tent leaked. By contrast, when we stayed on a small comfortable island, I slept well and I could see the beautiful sunrise when I woke up. The sunlight was shining on the mist which floated silently over the clear water. It was just stunning. I am happy that I experienced these different weather conditions and they made a strong impression on me.



Every morning and night, we had delicious meals. Each member served unique menus by rotation. For example, one night we ate Sushi. The Sushi and Sake and Miso soup were so nice that I recalled my home country. It was interesting that I ate a Japanese traditional meal in the middle of the Canadian big forest. I liked dinner times. We spent comfortable time talking with each other. Each night, Ann Bradley read a paper about the French River for us. She knows about the First Nations very well and she told me interesting stories. Larry gave me wine and a big peace of smoked meat and these were very delicious. These peaceful times enabled me to get back my strength. Time passed slowly during the trip because canoes travel slowly and we took time to enjoy landscapes and the atmosphere. Japanese people are very strict about time. Trains and buses rarely delay. Being late for an appointment is regarded as one of the bad manners. People are pressed for time every day; it was a very valuable experience for me to spend long and quiet leisure time on the canoe. Canoeing was a good opportunity to improve my English. Each day we changed paddling partners, so that I could learn about the trip members. Though I had trouble with English, I tried to listen and understand when they talked and my English improved as a result of the trip.

If the whole journey was calm with easy swift water, it would have been a little bit boring. But since this is a river and not a lake, we faced some rapids. Rapids were exciting because often we could swim in the current and enjoy the natural water slide. It was fun to float through the swift with Heather Ataman, Bill, and Andrea. But at the same time, the rapids can be an obstacle for canoes. One day, we went through a whitewater rapid. We tried tracking the canoes using ropes but when I pulled my rope, the canoe was turned over by the strong water and the packs were swept away. I was upset and felt responsible so I dove into the rapids. Of course, I wore a lifejacket but the swift current was stronger than I expected and it was very hard to swim. I managed to retrieve two pad-









dles. Gary Ataman, the next youngest paddler (except me), recovered the other packs. Finally, we were back on safe ground after other fellows retrieved me. Of the five canoes, two were whitewater boats and were tracked successfully. But after two of

the keeled canoes swamped, the third one was portaged along the side of the river.

When I first paddled a canoe it was easy. But day by day, I felt tired and my shoulders and the back ached. To be frank, canoeing is a hard work. We pad-

dled for many hours and for many days. The third day, when we went up the river, I asked Gary James if paddling down the river is easier. "Yes, it will be much easier the next two days" he said. But what we faced the next two days were strong head winds and surging white waves. I paddled with Donna on these days and it was hard to paddle against the winds and waves and we lost control of the canoe several times. The winds pushed me especially when I was carrying a canoe over my shoulders at a portage. Since canoes, which are made of plastic, are not so heavy and they are flat, they are easily affected by the winds. "You see? I said it would be better," Gary was kidding. I am told that this was one of the windiest days the veteran members have ever experienced. Indeed it was tough to paddle against the wind but I was happy to get this hard and exciting experience. It was thrilling to get over white waves and because of these trials I grew up both physically and mentally.

Unfortunately, I didn't see any big animals like bears, deer, or moose. Surprisingly I found jelly fish near the

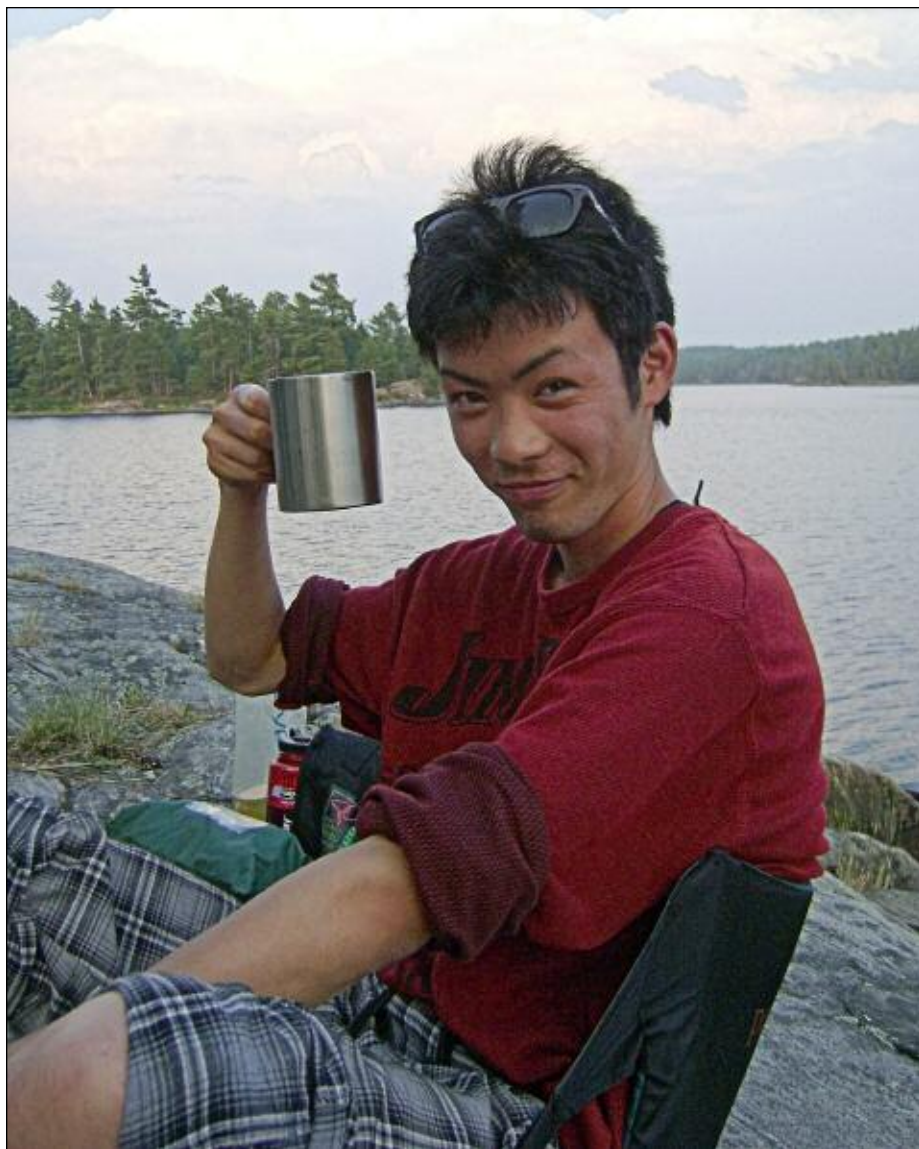




beautiful shore. It was the fifth day and after we had a lunch I explored the shore filled with flowers. Gary and Heather brought their dog Misty on the trip with them. She likes to look for things in the water so I looked into the water by following her way. Then I found tiny jelly fish. I was surprised and excited and I told Donna about it, but she looked to be half in doubt. Result of my after investigation, it seems that there is a type of jelly fish which lives in fresh water. I also saw loons, beavers, and chaser bugs. This area is a treasure of life, animals and plants live freely. It was impressive that members put a great deal of effort into protecting the environment. For example, they used eco-friendly soap and they never left any garbage. They observed rules and morals as responsible paddlers.

During this trip, I felt as if I were in another world. I didn't use any information technology devices and I spoke only in English surrounded by magnificent nature. It is true sometimes I felt tired and suffered sore muscles. On the last morning of our trip it was calmer and I paddled stern (the back of the canoe) and we kept up with the other canoes. When we arrived at the goal, I didn't feel any tiredness because I was full of a sense of achievement. Through this opportunity, I learned not only English skill and how to paddle a canoe, but also about the First Nations culture and history, geography, poison ivy, ecology, endurance, environment, wisdom of living, and so on. The best thing is that I feel I grew through the experience.

Before the trip I didn't like to talk with someone in English because I had no confidence in my English before. But after the adventure, I was no longer afraid to speak to people. I didn't study many words or difficult grammar at all during the canoe trip. Then what was changed? I think the experience that I spent in such a fulfilling time with the others gave me confidence. This was truly a special experience for me because I could never have had it in Japan. I'm sure that this experience will give me a strong assistance to my further life. Thanks to all the people who helped me on this trip. I continue studying English and to get into a university in Canada.







(Photo: Mary-Bernadette Farley)

## WCA AGM at Evergreen Brick Works

### By Geri James

On Saturday March 2, 2013, WCA members met at the Evergreen Brick Works in Toronto for our Annual General Meeting. WCA Chair David Young started the meeting with a review of the WCA's activities in 2012, including our booth at the Outdoor Adventure Show and the Wilderness & Canoe Symposium in February, last year's AGM at the Koffler Scientific Reserve in March, our "Weir Watcher" support of Canoe the Don in May, the Fall Meeting at MKC in September, our presence at Palmer River Fest, and the Wine and Cheese Party in November, with our first Mike Wevrick speaker Max Finklestein. Dave also reviewed the status of membership and the CCR website. Dave was followed by reports from various chairs and committees, including Treasurer Barb Young and reports from the Outings (Mary Perkins), Communications (Dave Young) and Conservation (Jeff McColl) committees. The meeting ended with the appointment of Gary Ataman as our newest Board

member, replacing Mary Perkins whose term ended (thank you Mary). Geri James is staying on for an additional term, and David Young, Diane Lukas, Mary Bernadette Farley, Dave Cunningham continued their terms as Board members.

Following the formal business meeting, we adjourned for a tour of the Brickworks site with our guide Bruce (a museum studies major). From 1889 to the 1980s, the Don Valley Brick Works was one of Canada's pre-eminent brickyards, producing at its peak more than 43 million bricks a year for use in the construction of homes and buildings across Canada. Many of Toronto's most prominent buildings – including Massey Hall and Old City Hall – were made from Don Valley brick. It was a fascinating look back at Toronto history.

In the late 1980s, the site was expropriated for public use because of its geological and brick-making heritage, and because of its place in the lower Don

River watershed. The site's quarry was recognized as an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest. In 2002, the site's buildings were designated under the Ontario Heritage Act. In the 1990s, the site's quarry was restored as a park and natural area and a haven for wildlife and naturalists in the heart of Toronto's ravines. After our tour, two groups headed out to lunch at the Factory Girl restaurant on the Danforth. One hearty group hiked three km through the ravine and across the Bloor viaduct to reach the restaurant, while the other group took a free shuttle bus (guess which group arrived first!). Lunch provided a great opportunity to catch up and share ideas with friends old and new.

Although it wasn't exactly the "wilderness" we usually seek, our day in the urban wilderness of Toronto's Don Valley ravine was a great success. Thanks to everyone who helped make the day so enjoyable.



# FOOD FOR PADDLERS

As promised in the last issue, we now present part two of the Doug Ashton feature. The Mango Salad recipe below accompanied Pork Satay served at Doug and Lisa's home following the Grand River outing last June. If you would like to contact Doug regarding the recipe, his email is: [doug.ashton@rogers.com](mailto:doug.ashton@rogers.com).

Mango Salad with Cherry Tomatoes, Green Beans, and Tamarind

## Dressing:

- 1/4 cup lime juice
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1/4 cup palm sugar
- 1 teaspoon fish sauce
- 1 tablespoon tamarind paste
- 1/2-inch piece of fresh ginger, peeled and sliced
- 1 teaspoon chili bean sauce
- 3 tablespoons olive oil

## Salad:

- 1 teaspoon grape seed oil
- 8 Chinese long beans, trimmed and cut into small pieces
- 1 small green mango, cut into thick julienne
- 1/2 small ripe mango, cut into thick julienne
- 1 cup bean sprouts, trimmed
- 12 small cherry tomatoes cut in quarters
- 1/2 cup coriander leaves
- 2 tablespoons tamarind candy, torn into small pieces (optional)
- 1/4 cup cashews, toasted and cut in half

## Preparing the Dressing:

In a blender combine lime juice, lemon juice, palm sugar, fish sauce, tamarind, ginger, chili sauce, and blend until smooth. With the machine running, add the olive oil in a slow steady stream. Blend until completely emulsified. Reserve.

## Preparing the Salad:

In a large skillet, warm oil over high heat. Add long beans and cook, stirring occasionally, until charred and wrinkled. Transfer to a mixing bowl. Add the mangoes, bean sprouts, tomatoes, coriander, and enough dressing to lightly coat. Sprinkle the tamarind candy and cashews on top.

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

## Letter to WCA members

As many of you are aware, the WCA acquired the Canadian Canoe Routes website about five years ago. Since then, much work has been done to clean up the site and redesign it to better meet the needs of our members and the canoeing public. Marilyn Sprissler, Allan Jacobs, and two volunteer moderators have done yeoman work, and with the help of a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, much progress has been made and the conclusion is now in sight!

Advertisers have effectively funded the operating expenses for the site. Recently, with the harsher economic climate, our advertisers are cutting back on their spending, and support for the site is less than we would like. With that in mind, there are a number of things that we (as members of the WCA) can do to help out. Potential advertisers look for maximum traffic on the site, so the first thing that you can do is to make use of the CCR site on a regular basis for trip planning or to join discussions in the Forums. Secondly, you can contribute to the database by adding write-ups of your canoe trips. Many of us, myself included, have been on many canoe trips and have never added the descriptions to the database. With more descriptions to offer, more traffic will be directed to the site. More than one trip description for a particular river/route is also desirable because, as you know, rivers look different at different water levels. Thirdly, if you require any of the services that our advertisers provide, access their website or contact them through the ad which appears on the CCR website, rather than going to their website directly.

Some of you may know potential clients who might be willing to advertise on the CCR website. Please let me know of any of these potential clients so that we can follow-up with offers of advertising to them. Also, if you have an advertising/marketing background your help with selling advertising for CCR would be most appreciated.

Dave Young  
WCA chair  
[chair@wildernesscanoe.ca](mailto:chair@wildernesscanoe.ca)

# Communication and Back-Ferrying

By Bill Pollock

*It is so gratifying to canoe a class 2 or class 3 rapid without touching a rock.*

## Communication is essential

Most canoe accidents in rapids occur because of a lack of communication between the bow person and the stern person. It is essential for safety purposes that one person in the canoe is the designated captain and decides which side of the rock he or she wants to take the canoe around. It can be either person, but should be the better whitewater paddler and that person should give all the orders.

I believe there are only four paddle

strokes required by the captain's assistant to keep the canoe on course. These are: forward paddle, back paddle, draw stroke, and cross-draw stroke. And, of course, we know that the cross-draw stroke is done without changing your hands on the paddle. These are the only four strokes that the captain should call for. Although a pry may be used by either paddler, I do not include it because a draw or cross-draw will accomplish the same thing and it becomes less confusing in serious rapids.

With respect to communication, it isn't necessary to say, "We'll take it on

the right," or "We'll go left here," because you probably don't have the time and we all get confused between our right and left. Don't we? Well, I do. It is much easier if the captain calls for a back paddle (to slow the boat down), draw or cross-draw (to help set, increase or decrease, the angle of the boat to the current), or forward (at the end of the rapid to get over steep standing waves).

## Back-ferrying

I strongly believe in moving slowly down a set of rapids. Back ferrying is often the safest way and the best way to manoeuvre down through boulder fields and rock gardens in class 2 and 3 rapids to avoid touching rocks.

Here are few pointers on back ferrying:

First of all, both paddlers never switch canoe sides in whitewater. One hand is on the paddle grip and the other on the shaft and they don't change even while cross-drawing. There often isn't time to switch and you may drop your paddle in the process.

Although back ferrying can be carried out when the captain is the bow person, it is often better that the captain be in the stern because he or she can better see the angle of the canoe with the current, which is crucial.

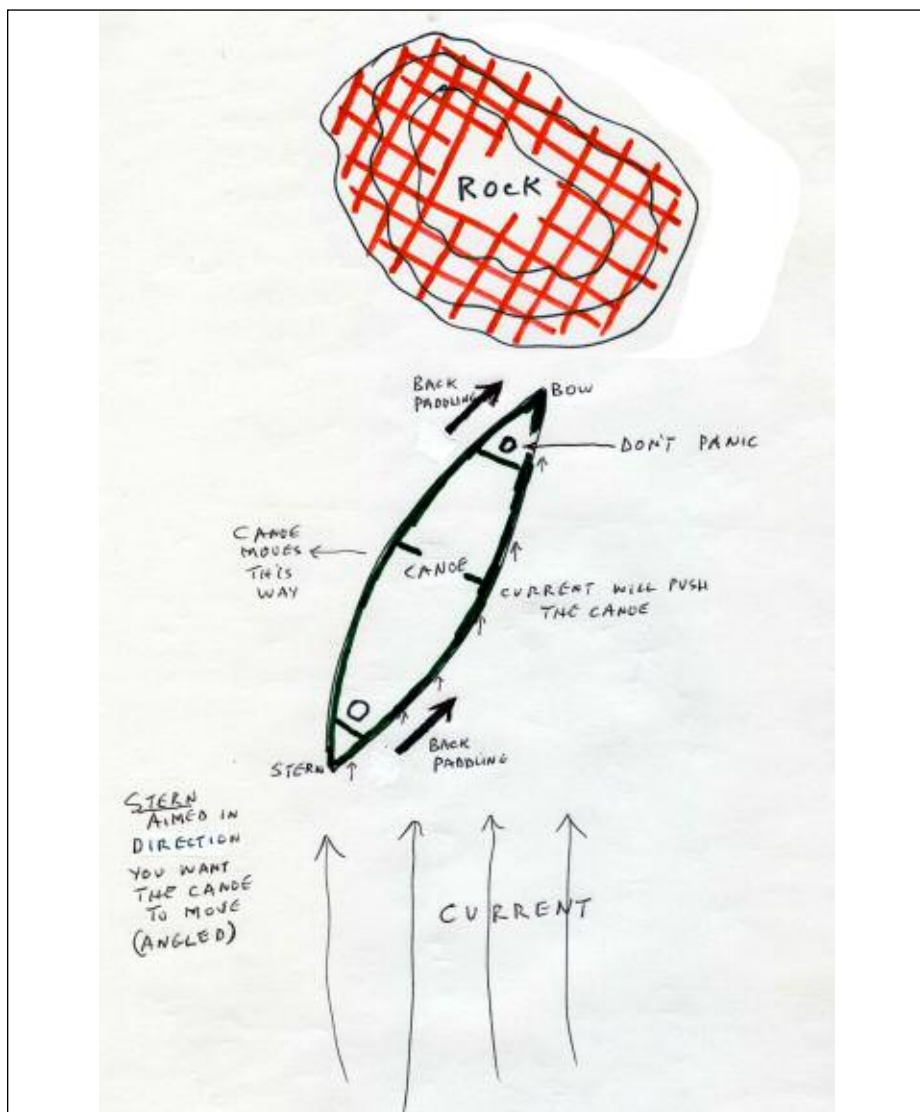
In order to back ferry, your canoe must be going slower than the current. This requires back paddling and may be required by both paddlers.

The canoe is steered by angling the stern of the canoe to the shore you want to move towards. This sets the canoe angle with the current. (This is the opposite of regular canoeing where you aim the bow in the direction you want to go.)

The angle should be set by the captain, but he or she may require assistance from the captain's assistant in the form of a draw or cross-draw to accomplish.

The angle you need depends on the speed of the current. You will need a greater angle in a slow current and a very slight angle in a strong current.

If you don't have enough angle, the canoe will not ferry in the direction you





intend. If you have too much, your canoe may turn completely and you may end up going down the rapid stern first.

If you have the proper canoe angle for the speed of the current and you are moving slower than the current (back paddling), your canoe will be pushed sideways by the current in the direction that you angled the stern as in 3 above.

Once you are away from the rock you can reduce the canoe angle (straighten the canoe out with the current) and float down beside the rock.

Setting the proper angle of the canoe with the speed of the current takes practice.

This is really important! While setting a back ferry angle to avoid a rock, the bow person may think that the canoe is aimed directly at the rock and that a collision is inevitable. Rather than drawing or cross drawing away from the rock, the bow person should back paddle – harder. If the canoe fails to ferry (move sideways away from the rock), then the canoe angle to the current needs to be sharper. The bow (or stern) person can improve that angle with a draw or cross draw, which will aim the canoe toward the rock or boulder. But, if the canoe is going slower than the current, it will slip sideways away from the rock. Many a bow person has panicked when they see the canoe aimed and heading for that rock. Don't panic! It will get you nowhere except maybe on the rock. Just back paddle harder and, if necessary, increase the canoe angle with the current.

It is a combination of the speed of the boat in relation to the speed of the current and angle of the canoe to the current that are crucial to back ferrying. But does it ever feel good when it works!

Bill Pollock is a semi-retired forest engineer and owner of Tuckamor Trips ([www.tuckamor.ca](http://www.tuckamor.ca)). He has canoed on the Richmond Gulf three times and considers it to be one of the most awesome paddling environments because of its topography, wildlife, archaeological sites, history, and the presence of the Inuit people who are so helpful and sharing. His most recent project was a history book on the Canadian Ski Marathon. He can be reached by e-mail at [bill@tuckamor.ca](mailto:bill@tuckamor.ca)



*Photo: Toni Harting*

## Names on the Wall

**By Greg Went**

Did you ever repeat a river? That is, did you ever canoe the same stretch of a wilderness river a second time? We have. And now we've made a promise to ourselves to never do it again.

Not because the scenery wasn't spectacular. It was. Not because the fishing wasn't fabulous. It was. Not because the second trip wasn't enjoyable. It was.

It was the Nottaway River in Quebec that we canoed twice. Everywhere we went, we had gone before. Everything we saw, we had seen before. Everywhere we camped, we had camped before. Rapids and waterfalls hold less thrills for those who have already passed by once.

A look at a map will show an incredible number of rivers with wilderness canoeing potential. So many rivers to see. So much planning necessary to do a wilderness canoe trip. So little time.

Have always had this resolve to canoe wild rivers. To get to the rivers before the roads get to them. Reducing the number of possible river trips by one by repeating a river seems wasteful when you have already come so far.

At one spot on the Nottaway River we saw names carved in a cabin wall. Our names. And dates. Our dates. The carving was three years old. It was like looking at history. Our history. Stopped us in our tracks. Stood there and kept staring at the names. Even ran my fingers over the letters. As if I had to trace my history.

Was mesmerized there for quite a while. Finally, the buddy called me back. Said it was time to move on. It probably was, but I wasn't ready. You see, I was still visiting with those wilderness canoeists from three years ago. I wanted to find out what they knew about what was up ahead.

## Where it is...



## ...in this issue

- |   |                                       |                          |
|---|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Embracing Darkness: Teaching on Victoria Island | 8 Nastawgan Text Editor(s) Wanted     | 24 AGM                   |
| 8 Contributors' Guidelines                        | 9 Pierre St-Germain's miracle canoe   | 25 Food for Paddlers     |
| 8 Correction                                      | 13 Wilderness and Canoe Symposium     | 25 Letter to WCA Members |
| 8 Deadlines                                       | 16 Northern Perspectives: Symposium   | 27 Back-ferrying         |
| 8 Events Calendar                                 | Compilation CD                        | 28 Names on the Wall     |
| 8 Facebook  | 17 Book Review: Bound for the Barrens |                          |
|   | 18 A Journey on the French River      |                          |

### WCA Postal Address

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

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dave Young  
(Chair)  
chair@wildernesscanoe.ca  
416-457-7937

Mary Perkins  
mary.perkins@sympatico.ca  
905-725-2874

Geri James  
Geri.james@blackrock.com  
416-512-6690

Diane Lucas  
lucasde@yahoo.com  
905-826-0875

Dave Cunningham  
DBCunningham-Appraisals  
@rogers.com  
905-863-2865

Bernadette Farley  
mbernadette.farley  
@gmail.com  
416-762-8073

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

#### Secretary

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

#### WCA Outings

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

#### Editor

Aleksandar Gusev  
8 Valiant Road  
Etobicoke, ON M8X 1P4  
416-236-7079  
aleks.gusev@gmail.com

#### Treasurer

Barb Young  
youngjdavid@rogers.com

#### Webmaster

Jeff Haymer  
Toronto, ON  
416-635-5801  
jhaymer@primus.ca

#### Membership and Computer Records

Emmy Hendrickx  
emmy.hendrickx@bell.net

#### Conservation

Jeff McColl  
mccolls@sympatico.ca

### Editorial Team:

Aleks Gusev: Editor-in-Chief  
Pegi Dover: Text Editor  
Barb Young: Food Editor  
Bill Ness: Outings Editor  
Bob Henderson: Resource Editor  
Toni Harting: Photo Editor  
Peter Jaspert: Layout

