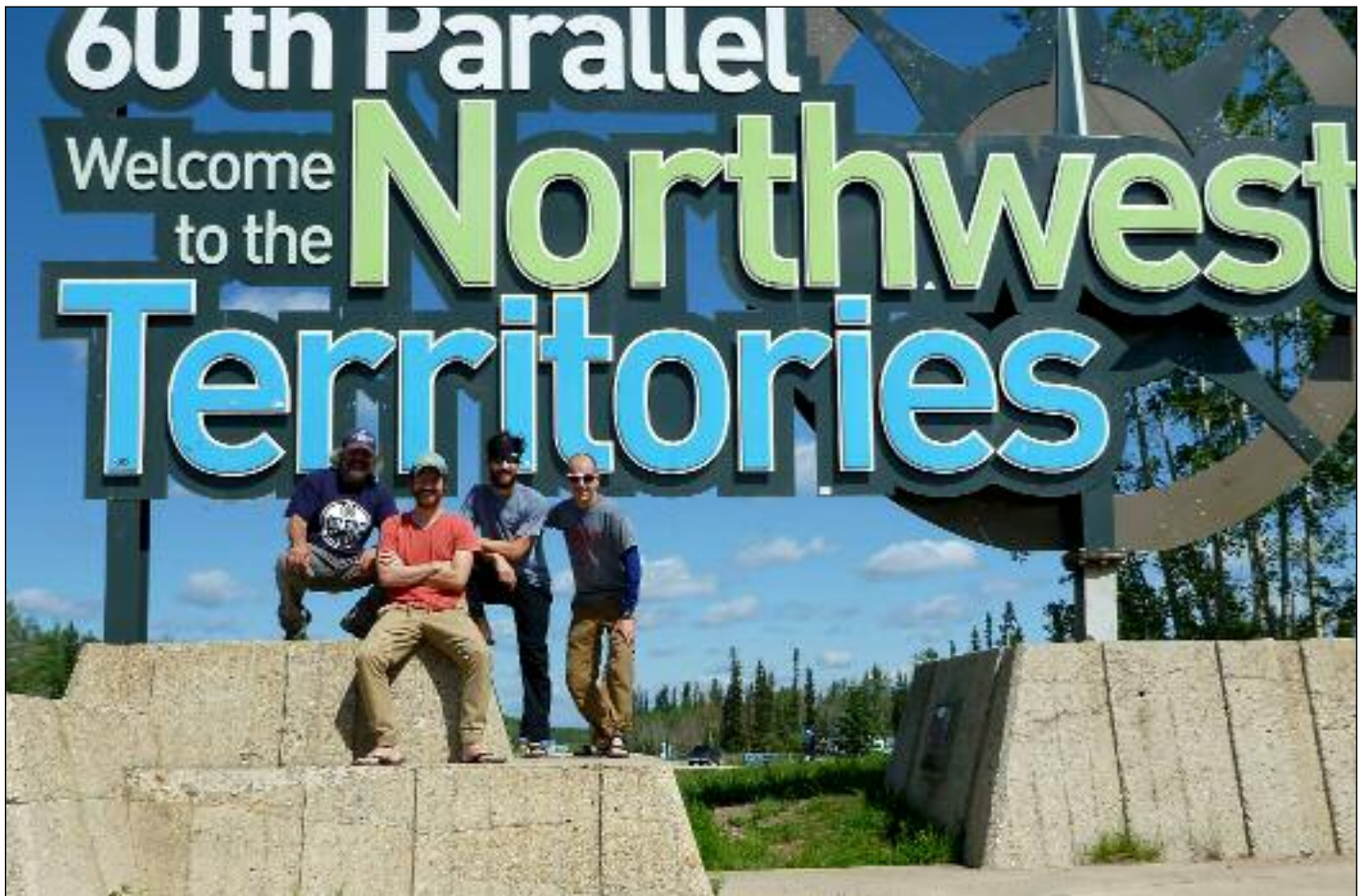




nastawgan

Summer 2017 Vol. 44 No. 2

Quarterly Journal of the Wilderness Canoe Association



*Our group (Carmine, Mike, Colin, Tom)*

## **Lockhart River – Pike's Portage Canoe Trip**

**Journal Excerpts: July 15-August 8, 2015**

**Story by Carmine Minutillo**

**Photos by Carmine Minutillo, Colin Phillips and Tom Glassco**

### **Day 1-3 The Drive**

After many years of waiting and many months of planning, we were ready to leave for our 2015 Pike's Portage canoe trip in the Northwest Territories. Scotty and I had spawned the idea for this trip at the Canadian Canoe Symposium in Toronto about five years ago. We saw a presentation where

a party went north on Artillery Lake and we figured that we could do a trip like that someday. After a few more challenging river trips and some extended trips to James Bay and Northern Ontario, we decided that this would be the year. I spoke to Bob Henderson about Pike's Portage and he gave me his book and later traveled to Kingston to

mark up my maps. Likewise Morten Asfeldt, who co-authored the book with Bob, was also kind enough to mark up my maps, which got me really excited about the forthcoming trip. Although, in the end, Scotty was not able to go, Mike was in. We needed to find two more paddlers and Colin and Tom jumped in just before crunch time. In my trip planning, I had read books on Pike's Portage and the north by Warburton Pike, James William Tyrrell, Bob and Morten's book, a book about Guy Blanchet and books by Seton. I had spent many hours trying to find historical places that were referenced in these books on my maps and marked things up as much as I could. By the 15th of July, we were ready to go.

#### **Day 4 July 18, 2015 In the Barrens at Last**

We woke up in the morning to a north-east wind. It was cloudy from Yellowknife and cold, possibly 13 to 15°C. The Air Tindi beaver was loaded up with gear and we took off at 8:15 am. It was about an hour and 30 minute plane ride to McKay Lake, which is northeast from Yellowknife. The float-plane pilot was having trouble finding a good landing spot, as McKay Lake was rocky and shallow in many places. We ended up landing a little further southeast than I would have preferred, which made for a longer paddle to start the day. To get to the mouth of the Lockhart River, we were dropped off along a rocky ridge where there were some old, empty aviation fuel barrels

and some survey stakes. We put both pack canoes together with no issues. They fit together much better this time as we had already practiced a couple times at the house before leaving on the trip.

When launching our canoes early in the day, we had to get our feet wet. There were lots of rocks in the shallows and we would have become stuck on the rocks and shallow rapids. We also had to line the canoes by hand a few times on this portion of the Lockhart River, as it had lots of small sets of rapids with lots of rocks. The canoes were great for sliding over the rocks and in shallow areas, sliding over easily instead of gripping and catching. We had the wind at our back on McKay Lake, which helped. It was a cool day. I



*Carmine with a big Lake Trout on Clinton-Colden Lake.*



*Carmine and Mike determining the best route through rapids on the Lockhart River between McKay Lake and the Outram Lakes.*

was wearing a long-sleeved shirt, a T-shirt, a hooded sweatshirt, my raincoat, my lifejacket, long johns and pants, and a toque and it was still cool at times, even though I was paddling. Having my feet in the cold water didn't help warm things up.

The fishing was great at the end of the first portage, but the wind pushed us down the lake pretty quickly after each cast. My first fish was a two and a half pound arctic grayling with beautiful bluish gray colours and the large dorsal fin. My second fish was about a three pound lake trout, again with beautiful colours. That day I caught 10 fish in total, consisting of eight lake trout and two arctic grayling. The fight on these fish was incredible, much more than any of those caught in any part of Ontario. The largest fish was

over 20 pounds, maybe 30 pounds. I caught my biggest lake trout at the campsite that night. It was an old one with a hooked mouth. By the end of the day, we had traveled about 21 km with one 800 m portage. Everything seemed different here. The plants were all different and nothing was familiar with the exception of some cloudberry or bake apple plants, which reminded me of Wabakimi. The bugs at the campsite were bearable, but they were horrible on McKay Lake. Our first campsite was on the Lockhart River, about 10 km south of McKay Lake along a set of small rapids. Finding a campsite seemed easy as there were many places where we could have set up our tents. Moss made the ground soft and easy to sleep on, although there were some rocky bumps. We had turkey dinner for

supper, which included turkey and gravy, mashed potatoes, stuffing, and carrots. Most notably here at the campsite is that there are no trees at all. The largest plants or shrubs of any kind don't really go much higher than my hips. Mike caught one grayling today and two lake trout. Tom caught one grayling. Mike is really hoping to catch a trophy fish at some point during this trip. As we were all feeling pretty tired from the day's travel and the last few days of driving, we retired to our tents early and went to bed. We were all in our tents by nine o'clock and sleeping by 10 o'clock.

#### **Day 5 July 19, 2015**

##### **The Grizzly Bears**

While lining the Lockhart River, I heard Colin yell back to us. The river



***Mother Grizzly Bear with her two cubs on the Lockhart River southeast of McKay Lake.***

was only about 75 feet wide and when I looked up, we saw three grizzly bears on the opposite shore – a mom and two cubs. I wasn't concerned at that moment, but the cubs definitely seemed interested in us and were looking to cross the river. I was concerned that if the cubs did cross the river with mom on the other side, this would alarm her as the cubs would be on the same side of the river as us. Fortunately, mom also felt uncomfortable with the situation and urged her cubs to move along. They scampered away with the cubs standing on two legs and looking back frequently. Their mom had to keep nudging them along and they left over a hill after a few minutes. We also saw three bald eagles, which I thought was odd as there are no trees. We saw lots of ducks too. We went over an esker near where the Lockhart River empties

into the Outram Lakes. We could see eskers from the plane, which looked a lot like dirt roads winding through the landscape. The eskers were big and sandy and were elevated from most of the other terrain. We got to our campsite around 8:00. In total, we traveled 37 km today with four portages totalling about 3 km. We were all asleep by 11:00.

#### **Day 7 July 21, 2015**

##### **Sharks and Surveys**

We found a rock cairn on Aylmer Lake with a survey stake marking from 1924, which I believe may have been put in by Guy Blanchett's team. It was exciting to find as I had read about Blanchett's travels in the north. I walked to the top of the hill near our campsite, which had a great view. There were lots of bone fragments

around.

As we were paddling, we could see fins and swirls in the water. We weren't sure what they were at first, but we took a few casts and started catching lake trout. As it turns out, the lake trout tend to swim close to the surface of the water and skim the surface for small minnows and bugs. We ended up catching some of those lake trout, with many in the 10 pound range. I had seen lake trout in the water before, but never skimming the surface like a shark while looking for food. The water in Aylmer Lake was really cold and crystal clear, making it easy to see the rocky bottom many metres down.

#### **Day 8 July 22, 2015**

##### **Musk Ox, Monuments, and Views**

I noticed something small and black at the top of a ridge in the distance. I took

out my binoculars, but could not make out what it was. I figured it was an animal of some sort as it seemed to be moving. After about an hour of paddling, it became evident that it was a musk ox. We eventually got close enough to see it, but it went over the ridge to the other side of the hill. It looked like there may have been two others as well. Our paddling path also took us around the same hill. When we turned the corner, we noticed that our musk ox was really one in a herd of 11. It was a pretty thrilling sight as musk ox had been something that I had hoped to see in the wild for many years. We looked at the musk ox for about 15 to 20 minutes. The wind pushed us toward shore right where the musk ox were grazing. They looked at us, but did not seem alarmed at all. They were grazing on the nearby grass and shrubs. Three large musk ox came down to the shoreline to look at us and started to make a peculiar sound. They sounded a lot like lions purring. The

growling or purring was deep and loud. Three musk ox came closer to us along the point of the arm on which we were beached and stared at us for about 5 minutes. It afforded us a close-up look at them, which I was glad to have. They purred some more, which you could almost feel reverberating as it was such a loud and deep sound. We looked at the herd for about a half an hour and then went across the bay to find a campsite. There was a large hill with a monument on it in the Thanakoie Narrows, which I believed was Seton's monument that he and his crew constructed, as it was the most logical place. Seton identifies the monument as being located at an island in the Thanakoie Narrows on a sandy hill. He identifies it as four large stones piled on top of each other. Tom brought his book along and there happened to be a sketch of the monument in question. This had to be it! I was thankful and relieved to have found something of historical significance as this was a gen-

uine draw for me during the trip planning.

We decided to portage our things up to the top of the hill, which was a heavy carry up a long, steep hill, but the reward was a spectacular view and less bugs. It was a steep climb up to the campsite of about 150 to 200 M. The herd of musk ox across the narrows didn't move the whole time. We were able to watch them all night long from our campsite on the big, sandy hill. We could hear them grumbling all evening and all night long. They were still there when we woke up in the morning. They seemed to bed down there for the night as well. From our high campsite, we could also see a group of three musk ox off in the distance. One joined the herd of 11 and the other two went over the ridge and out of sight. Despite the wind at the top of our campsite, the bugs were insane and we had to wear our bug nets again.

Tom caught a couple lake trout for supper as we had fish and quinoa. The



*Hornby Monument in the Thanakoie Narrows.*

lake trout flesh is dark orange up here, much like salmon. They are delicious with fish crisp and hot sauce. I caught a 20+ pound lake trout while trolling earlier in the morning. While I was cleaning the fish, blackflies chewed up my forearms. We all shared some Tequila Rose, bourbon, and rye to celebrate the musk ox sightings, finding Seton's monument, and to celebrate the view from our campsite, which offered us a 360° panorama from high above all of the surrounding topography and into Clinton-Colden Lake. In total, we travelled about 21 km today. To end the day, we played euchre in the tent.

**Day 9 July 23, 2015**

**Lake Trout Oasis**

There was hardly any wind to speak of at all when we paddled through a fairly

open section of Clinton-Colden Lake about one to two and a half km away from shore. We noticed a rocky reef maybe 20 to 30 feet down as the lake water was crystal clear here as well. We seemed to be able to catch lake trout there almost at will. It seemed odd that we would be catching lake trout so far out from shore in this shallow rocky outpost. The best lures for catching lake trout here seems to be silver spinners. In particular, Mepps #4 worked best for me.

There was lots of open water paddling today, but fortunately, the lake was like glass. When it became time to look for camp, we checked a few campsites, but many of them were too rocky. While paddling along, Mike and I could hear Tom and Colin making up words to other songs like "Leaving on

a Jet Plane". It was fun to chuckle at their efforts. In all today, we travelled 41 km in big, open water, but fortunately the wind was barely noticeable at times, which made the lake appear like glass and made for easy paddling. At the end of the day, we ended up camping on Clinton-Colden Lake. We had barley bacon soup for supper with a three pound lake trout that I cleaned and filleted and put into the soup. Tom caught the fish for tonight's supper. As always, it seemed that the bugs were crazy at this campsite. Towards the end of the day, the wind picked up and it did get quite cool. We played some more euchre and we went to bed at 11:00.

**Day 10 July 24, 2015**

**Don't Bend the Map**



*The Musk Ox on Aylmer Lake in the Thanakoie Narrows.*



*Colin and Mike negotiating some rapids on the Lockhart River between Ptarmigan and Artillery Lakes.*

Towards midday, I thought we had seen a herd of caribou along a point on Clinton-Colden Lake, but it turned out to be an abandoned site with lots of rusting fuel barrels and debris. We saw stovepipes, dishes, plywood, pots, an auger, rope, etc. I figured it was likely an abandoned mining prospector's camp of some sort. I also spotted an island that Seton refers to in his book as lookout point on a prominent island as we approached Tyrrell's Point. It stands in an open section of the lake that makes sense as the best lookout point. Although it rises 50 or 60 m, the island lookout is only half a kilometer wide at any point. The lookout faded in and out of sight for about two hours while passing it due to the rain and fog. We arrived at camp at 4:30 due to the wind and good progress. We camped at Tyrrell's Point. I found a monument about an hour after setting up camp with another survey marker that was dated 1924. It was still quite windy, so

there were no bugs until about 9:00. We had tortillas, cheese, and salami for supper and played more euchre. No fishing today due to the wind. We traveled 47 km.

#### **Day 11 July 25, 2015 Lake Trout Heaven**

Today was arguably the best fishing that I have ever had on a canoe trip and I've had a lot of good days. On past canoe trips, we have caught a lot of pickerel, sometimes over 100 in a day, but I have never seen lake trout like this. We had paddled to the end Clinton-Colden Lake to the bottom section of the Caribou Narrows. Just before the Lockhart River opens up into Ptarmigan Lake, there is a set of level I rapids and swifts that we paddled. The fishing was incredible in that spot. I caught 23 lake trout and most were over 10 pounds. Mike caught the biggest fish of his life, likely around 30 pounds. I also landed the biggest fish

of my life there. I'm guessing 30 to 35 pounds. I also had a lake trout on after catching many big fish and had my drag set high. I saw a monster laker hit the lure, a big spoon, and he took off, zinging my drag. I realized quickly that I was about to get spooled, so I tightened up my drag. It didn't slow the trout's progress at all and my line snapped after I was spooled. Fortunately, the line broke at the lure instead of the reel, so I didn't have to reline the rod. Had I been able to land that fish, I would guess that it would have weighed in at over 40 pounds. Nevertheless, the fishing was fantastic. Mike and I had a doubleheader on in lake trout and we were able to get both fish in. Both fish were over 20 pounds. I helped Mike get his lure out of his trout's mouth and the hook was completely bent out of shape due to the fight. Tom also caught the biggest fish of his life in the Narrows today, likely around 30 pounds as well. I snapped



*Walking along the esker on the north end of Artillery Lake in search of Hornby's Cave.*

my line four times today, as I was only using 12 lb test. I had to let the trout play out in the water because if I tried to horse them in, my line would certainly snap.

#### **Day 12 July 26, 2015**

##### **Cones and Trees**

Seton talks about five conical stone piles in his book with a six-foot monument that they built nearby. We found the conical stone piles. We walked in about a half a kilometer and stood on top of one which was about 50 or 60 feet high. We could see several others but no monument. We also got a good view of some of the back lakes from the top of the stone piles. They looked much like rounded pyramids among the tundra. After leaving the glacial deposits, I caught three more lake trout, bringing my total to 52, I believe. Today, we camped on the Lockhart River about 5 km south of Ptarmigan Lake. We lined some rapids when we

got back into the river and ran some others. While running one of the rapids, we hit some big waves and took on some water. We hit a haystack dead-on when we couldn't get left fast enough. Fortunately, we kept the open side up and were close to the campsite, so we were able to dry off soon afterwards. Tom and Colin ran one set of the rapids that Mike and I lined. There were no rocks to hit, but the water was fairly big and I felt it was risky due to the cold. In any case, they made it through without incident.

#### **Day 13 July 27, 2015**

##### **Hornby's Cave**

Today turned out to be another of the most memorable days that I have ever had on a canoe trip. It was a short paddle to start the day, consisting of 12 km from our campsite on the island to the beginning of Artillery Lake where the Lockhart River flows in. The plan was to camp early and paddle to the north

end of Artillery Lake and walk down an esker to see if we could find Hornby's cave site that Morten marked on my map with some information that Roger Catling gave to him. Roger used to hunt wolves in the area and knew about the possible cave site, although I don't believe it had previously been formally documented.

While paddling to the north end of Artillery Lake, we found 15 caribou antlers scattered along the shoreline! Mike spotted three, I spotted nine, and Colin spotted three. As we approached the north end of Artillery Lake, we could easily see the giant sand Esker, as it stood out many feet above the water level. I'm guessing it stood about 150 feet high in some places. We made our way north to the Esker and headed west. The plan was to walk to the esker much further east than we knew the cave might be and walk west along the esker to avoid any chance of overshooting it. It was easy walking as the sandy



and rocky esker was hard-packed. We spotted an arctic fox running ahead of us while walking along the esker and we had some spectacular views of Artillery Lake and some of the back lakes. We could also see small pockets of dwarf spruce trees in certain areas. There were lots of bones and bone fragments all over the place, some caribou and some from other animals. We walked down the esker about five or six km. While walking along the esker, Colin found a caribou skull with both antlers attached and intact – a great find. It was at the bottom of the Esker where we needed to cross a small stream and was resting in the taller grass. I wasn't sure how at that point, but I had hoped to bring back some caribou antlers for myself and some friends if I could, knowing that Pike's Portage was still to come.

Morten had Hornby's cave marked on my maps on the esker just as it hit a small creek. I was starting to think we were not going to find it when I looked down and saw a rock wall right at my feet built into the ground. It looked similar to the rock house remnants across the street from my house at home in Parham, so I was sure it was built quite some time ago. You could see three walls with a sloping floor that led inside towards the back wall. There was also ledge built into the wall near the bottom, again much like the old wall across our road at home. The wall was about a foot or so thick. The grass and dirt had grown up inside the cave, which at this point didn't have a roof anymore and was filled in. It seemed like a good location due to the stream beside the esker and the access to Artillery Lake. Just before noticing the rock wall, we did see lots of bones and bone fragments all over the place. I was wondering why there were so many bones in this area leading up to finding the cave. I figured they must have been discarded from Hornby who decided to over-winter in the barrens by digging a hole in the side of the esker and camping out there. It was a crazy scheme that made for a good story. He and a companion ended up making it out alive. There were lots of cans, glass, stove pipes, and bones and

teeth in the sand and shrubs around the cave.

The wind was slightly at our back while walking out, which made for some terrible mosquitoes and black flies. It was even hard to breathe without sucking in the bugs. I tried to keep my bug net off for a while as I could see better and it was not as hot, but the bugs continuously flew into my eyes. There must have been hundreds of them flying around me. By the time we got back to the canoe, which was about an hour or so later, they were totally insane. I have never seen bugs anything

like that in my life. There was no wind at all and Artillery Lake was like a sheet of graphite. It was magnificent paddling, but it meant the bugs stayed with us as we paddled along for about an hour and a half. Looking ahead to Mike in bow, there were not hundreds, but thousands of mosquitos and black-flies around him. There were so many that at times it was difficult to even see past Mike. When Tom and Colin got back to the campsite, they went straight into their tents to get away from the bugs. They had arrived back at the campsite about a half an hour earlier



*Investigating one of the walls of Hornby's Cave.*

than Mike and I. They neglected to bring their bug nets with them to Hornby's cave, as it was windy when we left. The gravelly regretted that on the paddle home as the bugs ravished them all the way. Tom said he almost went insane and Colin just ended up turtling at times. Mike and I were late getting back to camp at about 9:00. Tom and I each caught a six or seven pound lake trout, which we needed for supper. I cleaned the fish along the side of the river and stuffed them with oil and spices, wrapped them in foil,

and cooked them over the fire with real firewood that was around the campsite. I also tried to have a bath tonight in the river. The water was absolutely freezing, but it felt good to clean up a little. I suffered a few million bug bites while scurrying to clean myself as well. It was probably not the best night for a cleaning. Everyone was pretty tired by the end of the day. After what was supposed to be an easy day, we were looking forward to paddling the bigger, more open waters of Artillery Lake tomorrow.

## **Day 14 July 28, 2015**

### **Artillery Lake**

We ended up travelling about 32 km today down the west side of Artillery Lake. We didn't get up and out until 10:30, a very late start. The wind was at our back to start the day, but died right down by lunchtime. Artillery Lake is huge, but it was very calm paddling. I was relieved as this was going to be the biggest lake we were to paddle outside of Great Slave Lake. So far we had been really lucky with the wind, having very calm weather or mostly favourable wind to paddle with on the larger lakes. With lots of open water, it seemed like we were going nowhere a lot of the time despite knowing we were moving well. There were some larger bays along the west side of the lake that we had to cross, so I was grateful for calm, despite the feeling that upcoming landmarks in the distance were not getting any closer. We could look down the lake and see incredible reflections of the opposite shoreline or faraway islands. In many places, it looked like the islands were square due to the reflection off the water.

## **Day 15 July 29, 2015**

### **Rat Lodge, and Roger's Cabin**

Tonight, we ended up camping near Rat Lodge and Roger Catling's outpost cabin. Rat Lodge and Beaver Lodge, located on the other side of Artillery Lake, were significant places where native travellers heading north made offerings for safe passage up the lake. Rat Lodge is at the end of a big C-shaped esker. It is noticeable for many km up and down the lake. It looks as though someone was building a huge highway on-ramp in the middle of the lake. We camped not far from Roger's cabin and went and looked around his place. He has an incredible view from his outpost. Theresa Catling's grave was also there, with an impressive round-shaped stone cairn built near its side. It has a spectacular view of Artillery Lake facing north. The grave site is rimmed with some of the more impressive and cooler looking rocks that dotted the shoreline.



*Calm Paddling on Artillery Lake.*



*Calm paddling on Artillery Lake.*

#### **Day 16 July 30, 2015**

##### **Welcome to Pike's Portage**

Towards the end of Artillery Lake, the shoreline comes together and is much narrower with lots of big cliffs and rocky hills that contain lots of bare rock. The other three guys said they felt much like they were in the Lord of the Rings movie while journeying down the narrow, southern extreme of Artillery Lake. The scenery was amazing. It was exciting to see the north side of Pike's Portage as we approached the terminus of Artillery Lake. It felt very much like we were entering a new phase of our trip, leaving the big lake travel behind and now heading down a series of smaller lakes and portages. At the very end of Artillery Lake, we noticed two metal barrels that belonged to Dave Oleson.

We decided on keeping seven cari-

bou antlers and Colin's skull with the antlers. I said I would portage them over Pike's Portage. In total, they were heavy, weighing maybe 25 or so pounds and I tied them all tightly together for the carries. Morten had indicated an alternate portage trail on the map and that was the one that looked easiest. We followed it to the first unnamed Lake. We ended up portaging to the first unnamed lake and found two old campsites that had not been used for many years. While beginning the portage, the view back onto Artillery Lake was outstanding.

#### **Day 17 July 31, 2015**

##### **Portaging and Bushwacking**

Today turned out to be the toughest day so far for me. The day started as being sunny with good wind in the same direction as our travel again. We started

with a short paddle to the end of the unnamed Lake and an 800 m portage to a second unnamed lake. The scenery was very beautiful here with lots of hills and cliffs and big rocks. It reminded me of traveling down the Grand (Churchill) River in Labrador. We then had a 3 km paddle to the end of Toura Lake with a good portage that was about 1 km long to Burr Lake. The path was easy to follow due to last year's forest fire, which cleared out much of the area. The first signs of the fire were at Toura Lake, with lots of burned trees on the north side of the lake. The ground was still black, but we could see the vegetation regenerating already. The forest fire had burned up much of Pike's Portage last year, so we weren't sure what to expect in terms of trail conditions. We were also offered some great views of the sur-



*Evening view from Rat Lodge on Artillery Lake.*

rounding terrain as we could see quite far through the burned up forest.

It was hard to find the trail from Burr to Kipling Lake. At one point, Tom said he had found the trail on the north side of a stream, but it ended up being a caribou trail. Unfortunately, we had carried all of our gear over to where Tom said he had found the trail. That burned an extra hour of carrying and time that we didn't need. We couldn't find an established trail much of the way and did a lot of bushwhacking. We ended up using Morten's alternate route again that he indicated on my maps as we could not find the main trail. Morten indicated on my maps that he had never been able to find the main trail either. It was the same for us. We ended up doing a series of four carries over three lakes and a small, marshy pond. It ended up being about two km of portaging in total with a lot of bushwhacking. It was hard to find any trail or stay on a

trail once we did find something. I'm sure we were likely following animal paths instead of real trails. Towards the end of the day, I was getting tired and was happy to see the beginning of Kipling Lake.

Morten had marked a great campsite on our map which ended up being a large sand spit near the center of Kipling Lake. Just before hitting Kipling Lake, I found a patch of caribou fur where an unfortunate animal must have recently died. We were also finding the occasional rifle shells. For supper, we had mashed potatoes and gravy and two lake trout that we caught in Kipling Lake. Tom caught one and I caught one. We hadn't planned to eat so much fish, but Colin and Tom were taking a toll on our food supplies, so we often supplemented our planned meal with some fish as well. Those guys can eat! Again, we had a nice campfire and a great view of the lake from the raised

sand spit campsite. Between Toura and Burr Lakes, we found a small stream that dropped maybe 10 m over a 50 m span. The stream was perfect for our annual stick race. Everyone picks their own stick and drops it in the stream at the same time at the top of the stream. After 10 minutes, we see whose stick was able to travel the furthest down the stream. I won again this year, Tom came second, Mike in third, while Colin was never able to even see his stick after the first mini-waterfall. In total, we travelled 11 km of paddling and about 4 km of portaging/ bushwhacking and I was pretty tired by the end of the day. Tomorrow will be another long day on the portage trail.

#### **Day 19 August 2, 2015**

##### **The Big Portage**

Our plan was to make it as far as we could down the portage without stopping as I knew from experience that

after the first stop, it just gets harder to keep going. We ended up doing the complete five km portage in one go, which didn't seem to be as hard as I expected. There was a significant drop from where we were on Harry Lake to the beach at Great Slave Lake at the end of Pike's Portage, which meant most of our travel was downhill. There were two large swampy areas that we had to go through and in the middle of the second marshy section, Mike found another set of caribou antlers with the skull attached. He decided to take it and added it to his repertoire of antlers. For the most part, the trail was great. The majority of it was through the burnout, which really helped seeing where to go while walking. The trail was pretty straight as well, with the exception of a switchback section near the beginning of the portage that went down a steeper hill and around some fallen trees from the fire. The two

portage trips took about 3 1/2 hours to complete. We walked about 15 km in total with 10 of those km carrying heavier loads. There were several great views heading towards Great Slave Lake. Likewise, the beach at the end of Pike's Portage was big and great for camping. There was lots of wood and unfortunately more refuse from travelers passed.

**Day 20 August 3, 2015**  
**Old Fort Reliance**

Today was sunny, possibly 25°C, with no clouds at all and no wind at all. Throughout the entire trip, the wind and weather had been cooperative for the most part. During the second half of the trip thus far, the wind and weather had been almost perfect. We paddled north along the east side of Charlton Bay on Great Slave Lake to location where there is a native spiritual gathering place about 12 km down

the Lake from the residents of Lutsel K'e, a small mostly native community situated on the south shore of Great Slave Lake southeast of the Taltheilei Narrows. We fished along the way, looking for fins and swirls on the top of the clear, smooth water. There was a large, hand painted sign that marked the beginning of the spiritual gathering place with a painting of Mary that said "The Lady of the Falls". I believe the falls they are referring to is Tyrrell Falls, which is further up the Lockhart River. There were lots of skeletons of smaller buildings and places for teepees and a fair bit of garbage lying around. We noticed that an old bell from the 1960s was erected and was part of some sort of commemoration for the place. The end section of the spiritual gathering place backed onto a smaller river with a wonderful view atop a cliff.

We looked around for a while then



*Our burned-out campsite at the west end of Harry Lake and the beginning of the last leg of Pike's Portage heading west.*



*Walking the final 5.2 km leg of Pike's Portage from Great Slave Lake to Harry Lake through one of the burned-out sections.*

paddled about another kilometer to Old Fort Reliance. I was surprised to see a territorial plaque there commemorating the place. Old Fort Reliance never became much of settlement as Reliance was built sometime later on the end of Fairchild Point. There were still some chimneys in place that were restored by a government archaeological crew and some holes where some buildings may have been could also be seen. I really wanted to see Old Fort Reliance because of its historical significance. Hornby, Buffalo Jones, and Seton all stopped there before making the trip north from Great Slave Lake to the barrens. Buffalo Jones had even built some log cabins on to some of the existing chimneys to make a makeshift building. Fortunately, the forest fires in the area missed both the spiritual gath-

ering place and Old Fort Reliance, but not by much.

#### **Day 21 August 4, 2015 Meeting the Olesons**

Estimating distances in the North can be tricky, especially on the big lakes like Great Slave Lake. You can see so far that what you think might be less than 10 km may actually be over 20 km. This happened to us. We travelled the north shore of Great Slave Lake, which was ravaged by the forest fires last year. The views remained totally incredible. Morten recommended making the paddle if we had time. The extra day afforded us that ability. Our goal was to get to the mouth of the Hoarfrost River about 20 or so kilometers away. I had hoped to see if Dave Oleson was home, a bush pilot, musher, and homesteader

whose books I had read and who Morten and Bob had talked about and knew. Before the trip, I said that I would like to stop in and see if he was there if we had the time and ability to do so. We ended up paddling about 25 km in total today. The journey on Great Slave Lake was incredible with the lake once again being as clear as glass almost all day long. In all my time paddling, I don't think I've ever seen such an extended stretch where so many big lakes were like glass. On many occasions, I recalled thinking about how fortunate we were with the weather and how it could have been a much different scenario if the wind was less cooperative. Just before getting to our campsite, we stopped at a high, rocky peak and climbed to the top where the view was superb. Looking at the clear, blue

lake and the Peninsula in the distance was one of the most beautiful views I have ever seen. Mike and I each caught our last fishes there, two lake trout that were about 3 or 4 pounds each.

When leaving Fairchild Point, we aimed for a prominent, rocky knoll that popped up above the other hills. We figured it was about 10 km away, but ended up being several km behind the Oleson's homestead, a distance of about 36 km! By about 4:00, we had camp set up on a beach at the mouth of the Hoarfrost River, about 500 m across a small bay from where we saw the Oleson's homestead. After setting up camp, Tom, Mike, and I paddled over and were lucky enough to see Dave walking along the beach. We made our introductions and he kindly offered to give us a tour of the place. It was clear that he still was rattled by the

forest fires from last year, which burned his home and some of the other outbuildings. His daughters had an impressive garden there, planting potatoes and other vegetables. Dave had been cutting and milling logs that were still salvageable from the fires to rebuild the buildings that they had lost last year, including the guest house and the main house. He had 40 sled dogs, which he showed us, as well as workshop, which was now serving as a house. We also got to meet his wife Kristin and his two daughters, Liv and Annika. They were cooking fish outside in a woodstove while Dave walked around with us and talked a bit about the north and about how our trip was going. We told him that tomorrow would be our last day and that we intended to fly out from our campsite across the bay. Kristen offered to allow

us to use their phone in the morning to make sure that our arranged flight was ready to come. We appreciated the offer. They were the only people that we had seen in 18 days. After visiting the Oleson's for about a half hour, we paddled back to our tents and had a campfire. We had poutine for supper tonight, which was always a meal that we saved for the last day. We brought real potatoes, which were a bugger to carry on the portages, but it was worth it for a last meal. We got somewhat organized for tomorrow's departure and played our last game of euchre. There was another great sunset with the lake being totally smooth.

#### **Day 23-25 August 6-8**

#### **The Drive Home and the Detainment**

All went well until we arrived in Wawa, Ontario. While we were at the Tim



*Metal refuse exposed when the underbrush was burned out (wood stove, stove pipe, and cans).*



*Sunset at Pike's Portage Campsite on Great Slave Lake.*



Horton's, a conservation officer from the Ministry of Natural Resources approached us about the caribou antlers. He had been tipped off by a retired conservation officer on the highway and was concerned that we had hunted caribou illegally in Ontario as they are an endangered species here. We explained our canoe trip scenario, but he was also concerned about chronic waste disease in the skullcaps on the two of our full antlers and was also wondering if we had export permits that allowed us to take them out of the Northwest Territories. We didn't have anything as we just collected them along our canoe trip. He tried to get in touch with local Northwest Territories conservation officials, but was not able to do so as they were busy looking after the forest fire situation up there. He was able to make contact with two Nunavut conservation officers who said that we did require export permits for that territory. He instructed us to follow him to the Ministry of Natural Resources office where he was going to confiscate all of our antlers until he could find out whether not we are allowed to have them. We were disappointed and frustrated at the news as it was quite an adventure and a lot of hard work to get them home. Likewise, there were RCMP officers behind us at a gas station in northern Alberta that didn't seem to care at all about the antlers. In any case, we untied the antlers and left them all at the Ministry of Natural Resources office in Wawa and disappointedly continued our drive. About a half an hour south of Wawa, near Pancake Bay, we were pulled over by an OPP cruiser. Just as we were being pulled over, a second police cruiser, a canine unit, pulled over too with the dog. I knew this was not a routine traffic stop as I wasn't really speeding that much. The police officer had said that although they could not make out all the call due to bad reception, the Ministry of Natural Resources had alerted them to our travels and asked them to pull us over. The police officer stated that on those grounds, we were being detained by the Ontario Provincial Police until further notice. I wasn't sure what that meant, but, in any case, we had to stay put until the Ministry of Natural Resources officials arrived. About a half an hour later,



*Exploring the chimney remnants at Fort Reliance.*



*Skeleton of structure at Fort Hornby.*

the same conservation officer that we had spoken to in Wawa arrived. He mentioned that he was able to get in touch with a conservation officer from the Northwest Territories and that export permits were required to take caribou antlers out of the territories. The good news was that this regulation only applied to hunting. Seeing as we gathered

all of the antlers along our canoe trip, he said we were good to go and had all of our antlers in the back of his truck, which he gave back to us. It turned out to be a happy ending, but used up about 2 1/2 hours of our time and a lot of worrying. We said farewell to the conservation officer and to the police officers and again started our way.



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.

## More Articles Wanted

Lead story in this issue comes to us courtesy of Bob Henderson, who connected the dots between Carmine and your editor. Thanks, Bob! In the opening paragraph, Carmine acknowledges Wilderness and Canoe Symposium presentation that provided the seed that “spawned” the idea about their trip. Thank you, George Luste! I hope you enjoyed reading “*Close Shave*” by Rob Perkins’s as much as I did. Rob’s on a roll, with his third story “*The Absence of Witch*” scheduled to appear in the Fall issue. It was George Drought who first brought Rob into my world, at the AGM many years ago. In the ensuing years, we kept in touch regularly. “*Against Straight Lines*” remains one of my favourite books. If you like solitude and travelling alone, check out Rob’s project “*Going Solo*”. Look for Rob as one of the WCS speakers in February!

Consider submitting your story – they are all worth sharing, no matter how “big” or “small” your trip was. Glad to help, if help is needed. Reach out to Aleks Gusev, Editor, for encouragement, tips & tricks!

## 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)

## How to Post an Event on the WCA Website

By Gary Ataman, WCA Director

One of the benefits of WCA membership is having the ability to post a WCA event and finding people to join you. Most WCA members live in Canada, with some from the United States and a handful from Europe. The second, sometimes overlooked, benefit is that you, as a WCA event organizer, will be covered with the WCA liability insurance policy for the running of the event.

Any member can post an event on the WCA website. It is an excellent way to find fellow paddlers and kindred spirits in your area of the country. It could also be used initially to assess interest in a potential event “I am thinking about canoeing in Algonquin Park in July 2017 and looking for some people to join me.” If the interest is there, you could develop a posted WCA outing.

The events are generally geared around spring, summer and fall paddle sports like canoeing and kayaking, both flat and white water. Members have also posted events based on skiing, snowshoeing, snowboarding, hiking, bird watching, sea kayaking, social gatherings

and educational outings. The general guideline is any event is acceptable if the membership sees it as a worthy event and people sign up for it. However, there are a few events that are not covered by our insurance company and the outing committee chair would not be able to approve them. Some examples include; rafting, zip lining, alpine skiing, snowboarding, rock climbing, cycling, horse riding, dog sledding, high ropes, tubing to name a few of the 23 activities listed.

For complete step-by-step instructions on how to post an event, please visit the “Outings” section of WCA website. If you have any questions, you can contact the WCA Outings Committee at [outings@wildernesscanoe.ca](mailto:outings@wildernesscanoe.ca)

## Events Calendar

**WCA Fall Meeting** will take place at Cedar Ridge, September 29 to October 1, 2017-03-29

**Wilderness and Canoe Symposium** is planned for 23-24 February, 2018



# Two Outstanding Volunteers

Allan Jacobs and Doug Read have been WCA members for a long time. Allan has been a huge proponent of and a contributor to the Canadian Canoe Routes website since the WCA acquired it in 2007. He recently stepped down from his position as a CCR Board Director. Allan has been responsible for documenting and detailing thousands of canoe routes for the CCR website, as well as reorganizing the Routes section. Doug Read has looked after the CCR advertising sales for the last five years, and is now leaving this position to hit the road and realize all of his retirement dreams. Allan actually recruited Doug for the job. Doug's amazing sales ability has helped to keep the website financially viable.

## Allan Jacobs

by Linda Gordon

Allan Jacobs was introduced to canoeing in the early 1980s by one of his University of Toronto graduate students and has never looked back. After numerous trips in Southern and Northern Ontario in the 1980s where he gained experience in paddling and trip planning, he felt ready to head North. His first truly northern trip was down the South Nahanni river in 1992. In the summers that followed, majority of his trips were in the Yukon Territory, Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Always a glutton for punishment, he did a great deal of trip preparation, renting from outfitters, preparing routes, planning menus, and recruiting his fellow paddlers. Most of his 2-3 weeks trips saw a meaner, leaner Al upon his return! Always interested in pursuing his love of the outdoors and canoeing, he has been a faithful attendee of and volunteer for the annual Wilderness Canoe Symposium. When Canadian Canoe Routes was acquired by the WCA, he was one of the mainstays of the new website, looking to improve an immense data bank of canoe routes and information to be shared with fellow canoeists. Though rather reticent to boast about his efforts, Allan is truly proud of his accomplishments, on the water and on the Web. Bravo, Allan!

## Doug Read

Edited by Barb Young

Doug took his first canoe trip in Algonquin Park in 1972. He was absolutely 'green' back then, to the extent he carried water on his first trip! One storm early on nearly did him in, and he decided he needed help. Doug honed his skills through the Humber College Outdoor Education Centre and ORCK. He went on numerous canoe trips in northern Ontario but Algonquin Park remaining his favourite. He became a member of The Friends of Algonquin Park nearly 25 years ago and has enjoyed the many benefits of that organization since then. Due to his employment in the hotel management industry, he was restricted both by time and money to join the big northern whitewater river trips but has been able to enjoy them vicariously through the annual

Wilderness Canoe Symposium.

Doug retired in 2015 and has since acquired a travel trailer and a kayak, to complement his flatwater Swift Osprey. His adventure starts this July, as he works his way out to Newfoundland with the hopes of doing some serious ocean kayaking. He plans to head south in the winter to the area around the Rio Grande to try a different type of paddling. The bucket list is full for the near future, including the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone and all of northwestern Canada.

This year marks 45 years in a paddle craft for Doug and he exclaims: "It has been the most rewarding and gratifying pastime that anyone could hope for." He offers many thanks to all the wonderful people he has met along the way, including those 20-minute conversations on the portage trails.

---

My blog In Defence of Arthur Moffatt is now open.

Summary: The most vilified person in all the paddling literature is innocent of all charges.

Readers might start with the main text

<http://defence-arthurmoffatt.ca/2016/08/19/main/>

then follow their noses; lists of Internal URLs are provided at the end of the main text and elsewhere.

Comments may be posted at the blog or in the thread

<http://www.myccr.com/phpbbforum/viewtopic.php?f=16&t=45362> at Canadian Canoe Routes.

Yours in paddling, Allan

### The accusations.

The myth of Moffatt's incompetence is a conglomerate of eight submyths.

1. The Moffatt party did not *lose sense of reality*.

2. The party took not a single holiday in the too-lazy-to-paddle sense.

It did not take *holidays on more than half the days of the trip*.

There was no *inquest* into Moffatt's death.

3. *Lack of... proper equipment* did not contribute to *his demise*.

4. The party was not *a group of novices*.

5. The pace was not *plodding*; this was not *a slow and undisciplined trip*; neither did the party panic and race to Baker Lake in order to escape freeze-up.

6. *Lack of food* did not contribute to *his demise*.

*Game* did not grow *scarce*.

The caribou were not *long gone*.

7. *Lack of... a planned itinerary* did not contribute to *his demise*.

8. The fatal rapids were not run in desperate haste.

The party did not take an ultimate chance.

The party did not take risks to catchup on time.

The men did not take more risks.

### The cause of Moffatt's death.

He followed J B Tyrrell's description of the rapids on the Dubawnt.

That description had proved accurate for the first two months on the Dubawnt, but it failed him on 14 September.

Evidence that he had followed Tyrrell's guide was redacted by two of his accusers.

# Padding the Fabled South Nahanni

by Frank de Jong



*Mt. Wilson*

A year after moving to the tiny town of Faro in the middle of Yukon it dawned on me one day that the South Nahanni headwaters were only a short distance away. After hearing about this remote, fabled river all my Ontario life and jeal-

ously thinking that it was exclusive purview of the canoeing aristocracy, now was my chance.

Bryan Clubbe, a colleague from the next town over, Ross River, put the idea in my head and suggested not only pad-

dling the river, but also avoiding the costs of flying by getting to the headwaters from the Yukon side via the overland route and portaging the continental divide. The whole trip would last a month. This was getting interesting.



*Mt. Wilson*



*Cirque of the Unclimbables*

Thinking it would be more fun and safer to paddle with 2 or 4 others, we put out the word on the WCA website and the Yukon Canoe Facebook group. We interviewed about a dozen interested paddlers and picked Eliane Roy and Dave Swinson, both experienced whitewater canoeists and seasoned wilderness travellers.

The Nahanni is a legend because it's a legend. But for us, would it be just another river to bag or would it be a sacred pilgrimage? The Nahanni watershed is protected as Canada's third largest national park and it is inscribed on the World Heritage List. Were we whitewater thrill seekers or would we be ecotourists marvelling at the geology, biology and ecology? Were we 21st century global adventurers, or would we see the Nahanni through the eyes of first nations people, or would we empathize and wonder at the lives of the early prospectors and trappers?

Which Nahanni would we be paddling? The river that is famous for being famous, boasting more lore per kilometer than most rivers of the world courtesy of its rouges gallery of gnarled, villainous and eccentric characters? Or the geologically significant Nahanni that hurtles over the falls that dwarfs Niagara, that began life a billion years ago as a meandering river on a plain, but maintained its meandering ways as it eroded down while mountains rose around it creating spectacular, straight-walled, snaking canyons? Or would we be paddling the Nahanni that flows from glaciers and snow pack onto grassy plateaus, through beaver lakes, down boiling boulder gardens and canoe-eating rapids, hot springs, tufa mounds, towering mountains, past stately Nahanni Butte, to finally break its spell by disappearing anti-climatically into the lazy Liard?

Four hours northeast of Whitehorse, leaving the pavement behind in Ross River, we took the cable ferry across the Pelly and then drove 230 km up the historical North Canol, one of the loneliest roads on the planet. We drove past the famous US Army truck graveyards, into the Selwyn Range, stopping just shy of the NWT border where we camped beside the put-in, at the 4th bridge over the west-flowing South MacMillan River.

We awoke to find that a porcupine had disabled our vehicle by chewing through one of the front rubber brake hoses so that depressing the brake pedal resulted only in a depressing geyser of red brake fluid. With quick Leatherman and rock action, we bashed the steel part of the brake line until it ceased to squirt, allowing our driver to get back to Whitehorse – with three brakes and no master cylinder. (The warranty covered the repair job; seems Yukoners are indemnified against porcupines.)

The 60 km overland route begins with an exciting 15 km westward paddle down the rapids on the sparkling upper South Mac. A hard left at Whitham Creek marks the beginning of six days of ecstatic work lining, dragging and portaging up to Willow Lake, and then over a height of land along moose trail portages into the Ross River watershed. Half a day of lining up the Ross followed by more moose



*Hike to the Cirque*



*Rapids*



*Canyon entrance*



Canyon



The Gates



Pulpit Rock

trail portaging got us over the Continental Divide into the NWT to the base of Mt Wilson and the Moose Ponds — the unassuming headwaters of the South Nahanni. The overland route is as beautiful as it is challenging, a week of hard work you won't soon forget.

***What we didn't do and what didn't happen to us on the way down the South Nahanni in July 2016:***

- *We didn't get scurvy and pull out loose teeth with a pair of pliers or wear red pants like Albert Faille,*
- *We didn't pole and portage and use "kickers" to go up river to Virginia Falls and write books with titles like "The Dangerous River" like Raymond M. Patterson,*
- *We didn't spend a lifetime prospecting for gold and trapping like Gus Kraus,*
- *We didn't homestead and raise four children like Dick and Vera Turner,*
- *We didn't have a year-long honeymoon at a cabin like Joanne Ronan Moore and her husband,*
- *No one suffered a concussion during lunch at the Broken Skull confluence,*
- *There were no deaths in Deadman Valley and no heads severed in Headless Range,*
- *We didn't technical climb the Cirque of the Unclimbables,*
- *We didn't build our canoes and sled them over late winter snow to the Moose Ponds like*

Debbie Ladouceur and David Salayka,

- We didn't paddle, pole and line up the Canyons to Virginia Falls like Judy McNiece's group in 1976,
- We didn't find the tropical Shangri-La (but there was cow-parsnip around the hot springs),
- We didn't help George Luste and others successfully lobby to extend the park to Mount Wilson and include the headwater streams.

Our trip down the river was sublime, but uneventful. Are my friends and I now members of the fraternity (and sorority) of Nahanni voyageurs? I suppose so. But did we paddle the river of Kraus, Faille, Patterson and Turner, or was it the river of the Nah a Dehé? Or was it a river in one of the last intact watersheds on a planet besieged by reckless development and anthropocentric climate change?

In the 21st century, do we paddle for different reasons – with different sensibilities – than people in past centuries? Has the mystique gone out of wild northern rivers? Have GPSs, sat phones, Gore-Tex, Royalex, fleece, airplanes and outfitters ruined the Nahanni? Is it still wilderness when you can remotely update your Facebook page with an InReach? Are we envious and nostalgic for the past? Should we be embarrassed by today's relative ease of "conquering" rivers like the South Nahanni?

No, we weren't "escaping feeling stifled by what we perceived as the encroaching encumbrances of so-called civilized society with its laws, regulations, and order," we were just paddling a great river. Did we paddle the storied and spectacular Nahanni for its inherent value, or, like Justin somebody who paddled it in 2009 – for the photo-ops and selfies?

Exhausted upon reaching the Moose Ponds, we managed, on the following rest day, to climb only 1/3rd of the way up Mt. Wilson. Once past the exciting boulder garden we scouted every named rapid in advance, and – equipped with spray decks and dry suits – we shot all with only a few minor upsets.

We hiked stunningly beautiful side canyons, climbed to the Cirque base camp, up Pulpit Rock and to the top of Sunblood mountain. We spent two surreal days *bouche bée* at Victoria Falls, raising a toast at Mason Rock. Over the next several days bobbleheaded the indescribably beautiful canyons, camped and took the waters at the Kraus hot springs and the last night on the river stayed at the hospitable First Nations community under the beautiful Nahanni Butte.

On the final day, we drifted and paddled in the sunshine with a slow current and a lovely tail breeze until we met the Liard which took us to the take-out at Blackstone Territorial Park. The next morning, we zombied the 1100 km drive home.



Gravel bar



Virginia Falls

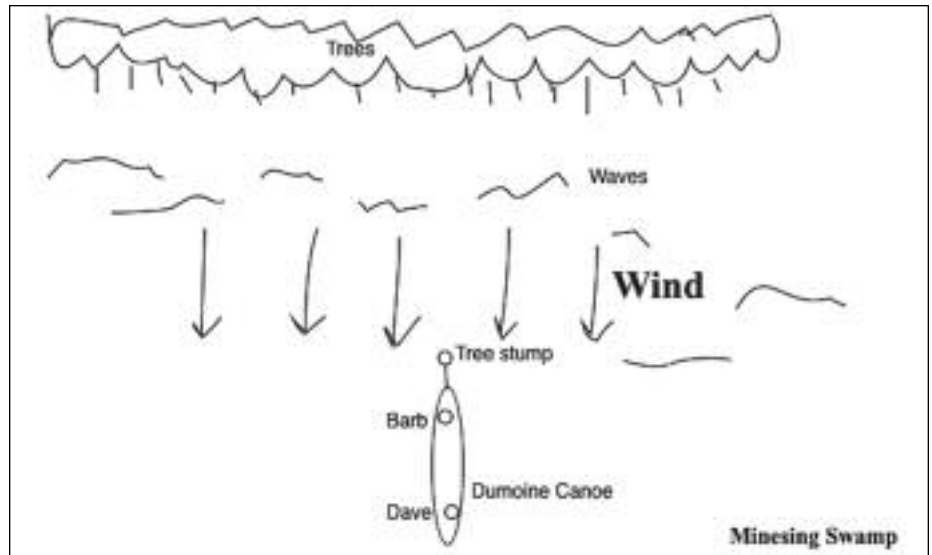


Nahanni Butte

# A Cautionary Tale or What Not to do on Mother's Day

Story, Drawing and Photo by Barb and Dave Young

My husband Dave and I have paddled Minesing Swamp annually for many years. This year the gentle, meandering, peaceful paddle became the paddle from hell. We made the decision to paddle on May 13th (Mother's Day), sort of last minute based on the forecast that called for sun and a high of 13 degrees. Unfortunately, I didn't check the wind velocity. We have paddled the swamp in the windy conditions before, but those paddles were a piece of cake in comparison. As we made the hour-long drive to the put-in at Willow Creek on George Johnson Road, raindrops started to appear on the windshield. The forecast definitely did not call for rain. I had thrown a raincoat into the car at the last minute, along with gloves, but really didn't think I would need them. Dave had not. We needed them. Fortunately, the rain was light although the sky at times looked like it was going to unloose some major wetness. We unloaded the car and got everything ready, including paying for the parking by using our stupid phone (be aware that this is now required and that stupid phones aren't that easy to use in this situation). We didn't mind paying since there's a portapotty at the put-in, which is much appreciated. There were two other cars in the parking lot and another couple was launching two kayaks as we were finishing our preparations. I noted that water level at the launch site was high. I also heard from a friend who had paddled the swamp a few weeks earlier that the swamp had been flooded. We launched at 10 am. The initial part of the paddle was very familiar, with lots of tree swallows flitting about, over and into the water. We soon caught up with the kayakers who asked us about how difficult it was to find a way through the swamp. We told them that usually there were some markers to show the way, however, the high water might make navigation more difficult. That was the last we saw of them so I concluded that they turned back at some point. Dave wanted to stop and take some pictures of birds, which we did, but I was a little anxious about going too slow. I noticed that the



wind seemed to be pretty strong, which would make paddling the flooded swamp a bit of a struggle. I didn't voice those concerns at the time and Dave decided to put his camera away as we got into the jiggly part of the creek. That section was an easy paddle in the high water and we soon came into the main part of the swamp. The reeds in this section were definitely shorter than usual, but they still helped define the channel. Another canoe heading in the opposite direction approached us, with a solo paddler. He was quite cheerful and unconcerned about the weather and wind. I presume he continued paddling against the current, back to where we launched from. I don't imagine this was very easy as the current was quite strong. Well, things were okay for a bit longer, the channel was obvious and the reeds high enough to block the wind most of the time. We did hear my favourite bird, sora rail, and we saw some large white birds fly overhead, which we recognized as trumpeter swans we have seen here before. As we continued, the reeds disappeared and the wind started to roar. We started to think we might be in some trouble. At around 1 pm we needed a break from paddling into the nonstop wind so I tied the canoe to a dead tree and we each ate half a sandwich. Neither of us was hungry since our anxiety had trumped our

appetite but I thought if we were going to get out of our predicament we would need some energy. Also, my bladder was full and I think I could have waited longer but I felt I needed full brain power without distractions to help get us figure out what to do, so in this situation the bailer came in handy. We really didn't know where to head. We did see an orange tape around another dead tree so we aimed for that but when we got there it wasn't clear where to go next. We discussed whether we should turn back or proceed. I was of the opinion we should proceed since I wasn't sure how easy it was going to be to return the way we came paddling against the current. Now we decided to go backwards a bit to find the channel we had been on to see if was any clearer about where to go from there. That really wasn't any help although it had been nice not to paddle into the wind for a few minutes. Okay, now we bit the bullet and decided just to aim straight into the wind and head for the trees we could see in the distance. We were paddling mostly through submerged vegetation, which is slower, but I think it helped in preventing us from being blown backwards. Slowly we made our way and eventually got to the trees we had aimed for and out of the wind. Yeah!! But, now what? I could see clear water to the right of us so I



suggested we paddle through the trees going in an easterly direction. Paddling through the trees was quite pleasant and would have been enjoyable if we actually knew we would get into the Nottawasaga River at some point. The easterly direction was not really working so Dave suggested going left towards the west. We eventually found the river. It wasn't completely obvious at first but became more so as we went along. Hallelujah, we were saved. This part of the paddle was very beautiful, the trees blocked that nasty wind, we heard and saw some birds and I suggested to Dave he could take his camera out again and take some pictures now that we were safely on our way. This idyll however did not last long enough. Soon we were approaching part of the river where the trees on the west side disappeared and where wind raised its ugly head again. We had eaten some more food before we got to this section so we had some energy, but we were tired from the previous battle. This part seemed even tougher. The farmland on the west side of the river was extensively flooded; the wind was blowing unhindered, hitting the river and causing waves. I suggested we try to paddle to the land we could see and get out and somehow go from there. We almost got there but then a gust blew us backward and we had to abandon that idea. I should say that whenever we were struggling the most there was a lot of cursing from the

back of the boat. We had to paddle with the boat on an angle facing the wind and waves and hope that the current would push us in the right direction. I was paddling on the right and Dave asked me to lean to the left as much as possible to help stabilize the boat. At one point we got blown back into the trees on the east side of the river. At another point I called out that I thought there was a flock of Sandhill Cranes on the shore - it was hard to tell at first but then we got close enough to see them clearly. Finally, we made it through that section and into another part where trees once again blocked the wind. This part allowed us a bit of a rest before once again we were going to face another wind battle. I asked to land the boat - I needed a break and I didn't think I could handle another round of extreme paddling. Dave agreed and we ended up lining the boat for a little way, slipping in the mud, dodging some young evergreen trees and getting our feet wet. There was some more cursing at this point. We could see the bridge now over Highway 26 so Dave wanted to get back in the boat. It didn't look like it would be very easy to extricate ourselves before the bridge since there was a fence and rocks and a lot of cows staring at us. We got back in the boat and paddled under the bridge. Now there was an added obstacle - the wind was now blowing across the river, hitting the bank on the east side and

blowing back at us. This made for very tricky paddling and it was here that we had a very close call. A gust, which turned the boat, hit us and if I hadn't quickly leaned to the left we would have been in the drink. I was surprised we stayed upright since my lean is not the best. Dave, I said, let's get to shore ASAP. We did and we managed to get out just before the usual takeout, which was flooded. We were both hugely relieved to see the park at Edenvale. It took us a few minutes to realize our ordeal was over. Dave also noted that his camera was okay, he had put it back in its case earlier but had not closed the case. When we had our close call, the gunnel had dipped into the water and the water was sloshing around the bottom of the pelican case. Luckily, his camera was dry.

It was now just after 4 pm and we called our friends who live in Wasaga Beach who came to pick us up. We had organized this with them ahead of time and the rest of the day was wonderfully pleasant.

The next day at home I was curious about what the wind velocity had been the day before. I found 30 kph in Barrie for May 13th, which I would assume, was close enough to Minesing. Both Dave and I agreed that we were through with paddling Minesing which we have renamed Menacing Swamp. Be warned! Check the wind velocity before paddling in the swamp when it is flooded.



# The Close Shave

By Robert Perkins



Canoeing. Going north. A river. A love. Obsession. Passion. Release. Dream about it. Do it again. I know the theory: moderation. An ancient Chinese philosopher wisely said this was how to live a life: moderation in all things. Obviously, he had never been on a long canoe trip in the arctic, by himself. Had he done, he 'd have known.

In another tradition, it 's called the Diamond Way. By not excluding anything, by experiencing everything, you don 't shy away. The desire is to stop the endless cycle of reincarnation in this life and become enlightened. Good luck. Even if you could achieve this state, nothing changes, but you 'd gain a purpose: to stick around until everyone and everything else was free.

The third dictum: "Living by the rules is another way of hoping that the future will be like the past." This from Adam Phillips in his small book called Darwin 's Worms. I read that sentence and many aspects of my life fell into place, on both sides of that fence. As a younger man, I tried so hard: to get good grades, to fit in, to marry, to have a steady job, to love, to be responsible. Wait, a little; there is a point to all this, although this may seem odd.

I am not going to write a word about a river, or the endless light of mid-summer,

the quiet before a loon calls, and the quiet after, or the softness of the moss, or the fresh taste of a drink from the river, or the tingle of diving into a cold northern river and then climbing out to stand in the warm sun. Not a word. This is about returning and a personal discovery.

How did you find it when you came back? Feel fine? A little overwhelmed by the noise, the constant movement, and the physical desires? The opportunity to endlessly abuse yourself? Often, too often, I over ate, and drank too much, way too much, and was mute, stymied by how to translate the experience of a long canoe trip into life at home. The contrast was severe, yet I loved the contrast. Made me feel alive.

Being inside a building where the air didn't move, even that was upsetting, not to feel connected to the wind. Once, in Baker Lake, I met a man who had been a young child living on Gary Lake while Father Buliard had his mission there (early 1950s). He made this comment: "visiting the missionary in his cabin was the first time I heard my voice come back to me." What did he mean? "Held in my father 's arms; when I spoke, the sound of my voice went out and hit the cabin walls and came back to me. Not like speaking in a tent, or outside where your voice goes on forever."

This is only a recommendation, but it 's what I do now when I return from a long canoe trip. Be kind to yourself, instead of all those other things. Women know a lot more about taking care of their bodies, their skin, their vessel, than men do.

I envy them. What do men do for themselves? Cut their fingernails? Brush their teeth? Get a haircut? Go to the gym and knock themselves out? Peddle a 100 miles? Enter a triathlon? There is very little pampering, and they make a virtue out of it.

Get a shave. You don't even have to talk. You sit in the chair. If you 've come with a beard, the barber cuts it short. You lie back. The barber places a hot towel on your face, leaves it there. You 're being taken care of. The heat soaks in. After he removes the towel, he swirls up the

cream and with a soft brush lathers your face. It feels good. Then, with a straight razor, he shaves. You feel the hairs being cut, and hear the sound as he scrapes your cheek, moves around your lips and across your chin. You 're vulnerable. Another hot towel. The heat 's tingle, not only from the towel, but the alcohol in the aftershave he rubs on your face. He puts a cream on. He massages your shoulders. Where I go, it 's half price on a Sunday.

## The Lodge

By Greg Went

*Some dictionary definitions for lodge.*  
1--a small makeshift or crude shelter or habitation, as of boughs, poles, skins, earth, or rough boards; cabin or hut.  
2--the main building of a camp, resort hotel, or the like.  
3--any of North American Indian dwellings, as a tepee or long house.  
4--the Indians who live in such a dwelling or a family or unit of North American Indians.

Our river trip this year took us down a long lake. The lake was the first of four that we had to paddle on our wilderness sojourn. We knew a lodge for sport fishermen was on the west side of this lake so we paddled on the east side to hopefully avoid running into Lund motor boats charging up and down the lake. We figured if we could canoe past the lodge and continue on our journey, the reverie that is the wilderness would keep growing within us. Our trip notes say that there are no other lodges for the rest of our journey. Even on the three lakes that we have yet to canoe.

We don't begrudge the fishermen from the lodge for their enjoyment of the wilderness. What causes the pain is that so much is already available for them and so little for wilderness canoeists.

At the end of this first lake there was a short portage connecting it to the second lake. The start of the portage had three boats moored there. When we carried gear to the end of the portage, we

# Minesing Wetlands with WCA

By: Avery, Sidney and Nicole

When we got to the parking lot there were a lot of people and canoes. We were worried that we were going to be the only kids on the trip but as we were parking we saw that there was a boy about our age, his name was Curtis. We put our stuff in the canoe near the water it was really crowded! We were so excited to get going and Uncle Adam seemed to take forever getting back from shuttling the car. Avery and I did cartwheels and walkovers in the grass to pass the time. Finally we were off! There were a lot of birds and the creek was very winding, so it was slow going at first but Sidney was really excited because she saw a turtle in the water. Uncle Adam and Aunt Nicole had to get out and walk for part of the way and Aunt Nicole got

her foot stuck and fell in the water, it was pretty funny. We ended up in a swamp where we took a nap...there was just a bunch of dead trees. We woke up in time to see the huge birds nest and stop for some more snacks. Then we got to our favourite part, going through the forest filled with water! The trees were really cool. We stopped for lunch and there was a ton of mosquitoes we couldn't wait to get back in the canoe! The creek turned into a river and the rest of the trip went by quickly. We both got to take turns helping Uncle Adam and Aunt Nicole paddle the canoe. There were a couple of scary parts where lots of trees were jammed up and there was only a narrow spot to get around but Uncle Adam and Aunt Nicole did a



good job steering. Near the end of the trip we went under a bridge that had a whole bunch of birds nests made out of mud with a little hole near the bottom. Finally we were at the end of the trip and it was time to pack our car back up and head home.

---

saw two boats parked there. That sight told us that the second lake would also be heavily used by the sport fishermen coming down from the lodge. They would motor to the beginning of the portage, take their fishing gear and lunch, walk to the other end, and reload into the boats waiting there.

We were on our annual wilderness canoe trip and had to make the best of it. As we carried the last of our gear and canoes over the portage, we ran into a fishing group returning to the first lake. Pleasant enough chaps. One lawyer, two business men, one doctor, and two guides. They talked about the fishing and their experience of being in the Canadian north. They asked us about our trip and were amazed when we told them that we still had close to four hundred kilometers yet to go. That we were going all the way to Hudson Bay and the village situated at the mouth of the river.

We said our goodbyes. They were on their way back to dinner at the lodge and I could tell they were anxious to be on their way. They gave us two apples (the remains of their lunch) and wished us luck. I could tell though that they didn't comprehend what we were doing, canoeing all that way, through wilderness.

I knew why they didn't understand. Their tribe was not from our lodge.



# Where it is...



## ...in this issue

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 Lockhart River – Pike’s Portage Canoe Trip | 24 A Cautionary Tale or What Not to Do on Mother’s Day |
| 19 MyCCR Volunteers                          | 26 The Close Shave                                     |
| 20 Paddling the Fabled South Nahanni         | 26 The Lodge   |
|  | 27 Minesing Wetlands with WCA                          |

### WCA Postal Address

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

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Geri James  
(Chair)  
Geri.James@bell.net  
416-512-6690

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

Larry Durst  
ldurst@rogers.com  
905-415-1152

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

Gary Ataman  
Gary.Ataman@safranmbd.com  
905-683-3100 ext.1286

Arthur McLuhan  
arthurmcluhan@hotmail.com

### 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**  
Aleksandar Gusev  
Etobicoke, ON  
647-932-2136  
webmaster@wildernesscanoe.ca

**Membership and Computer Records**  
Emmy Hendrickx  
emmy.hendrickx@bell.net

**Conservation**  
Jeff McColl  
mccolls@sympatico.ca

### Editorial Team:

Aleks Gusev: Editor-in-Chief  
Bob Henderson: Resource Editor  
Dave Brown: Text Editor  
Barb Young: Food Editor  
Aleks Gusev: Photo Editor  
Peter Jaspert: Layout

