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The Journal of the Wilderness Canoe Association

CPM #40015547

SUMMER/FALL 2023

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Summer/Fall 2023 Vol. 50 No. 2/3 Journal of the Wilderness Canoe Association

Emile and Aleksi paddle their own canoes

Wandering the Tundra

Dwayne Wohlgemuth

The sun is just below the horizon and the sky is blue even though it's the middle of the night. The bugs are thick but not at their worst. Leanne, Emile, and I each take our turns rushing out of the tent onto the toe-tickling matt of cranberry and Arctic bearberry, but not to enjoy the view of the long arcing sand beach. We have all the signs and symptoms of giardia, and the diarrhea is further complicated by rain in the morning. We almost never carry a water filter, and the consequence is that we've all had giardia before. We know that Emile, at age 7, will be over it in a day or two. Aleksi, age 4, has somehow avoided it. As for ourselves, the tried and tested method for curing giardia is to fast for a minimum of 24 hours. With the malaise and rain we spend the early morning under the bug tent playing games, reading, and occasionally exiting to visit the woods. By

Aleksi enjoying the view of Yamba Lake

11 a.m. our intestines are empty, visits to the woods are less frequent, and the rain has stopped. It's time to put the boat in the water. We began canoeing 8 days ago on a route from Behchoko, NWT, northeast to the treeline and beyond to spend a couple months on the tundra. Finding caribou, eating fresh fish and berries, visiting the Daring Lake Tundra Ecosystem Research Station, and enjoying fall colours on the tundra are a few of the priorities for the summer.

The first leg of our trip follows the traditional Tlicho route up the Snare River from Behchoko to Wekweeti, a journey of some 260 km. The route is more lakes than river. There is a 30-km mess of rapids and hydro dams only a few days from Behchoko, but the Northwest Territories Power Corporation staff gave us a ride around that on their service road. There's no warning when they might choose to spill water and flood your campsite or make the rapids impossible to ascend. The Tlicho groups paddling this route nowadays also get rides around this section, and evidence suggests that portage trails may be nonexistent or overgrown.

We say goodbye to giardia beach and continue following the Snare River until we depart east through Wijinnedi, Daran, and Cotterill Lakes. We were

The team on an esker near Point Lake

An erratic near the Daring River

told these portages might be in horrible shape due to a recent burn, but we are rewarded with completely clear trails. The Tlicho have a program called *Trails of Our Ancestors* that includes trips every year along their traditional paddling routes, and they've obviously cleared this route since the burn.

Aleksi is potty trained and we had eagerly looked forward to a trip without diaper washing. However, two weeks into the trip he pees his sleeping bag two nights in a row. Luckily, both days are sunny and we dry the sleeping bag in the sun and the breeze. Why is he peeing his bed now? We decide that we need to wake him in the night to pee from now on. Ouch. At least we brought the boys a potty for the tent. We might even use the potty ourselves on occasion when the bugs are thick.

After 17 days and 18 portages, we arrive at Wekweeti on Aboriginal Day – June 21st – just in time to join the community feast. We meet a few locals, eagerly listen to many stories, and learn that the few people we know in the community are away for a Hand Games tournament. We meet Nora, a sweet lady who works for Air Tindi and who has our food drop. She hadn't recognized the names on the boxes shipped to Wekweeti, so she was planning to send the boxes back to Yellowknife! Next time, we'll contact Nora in advance and put notes on the boxes to say that they're for canoeists passing through!

We take a day off in Wekweeti to organize our food drop, explore the town, and make sure all is well with our rental house in Yellowknife. Organizing life to be away from home for 3 months is a challenge, and our tenants announced that they had bought their own home just before we left. We had just enough time to advertise and find new tenants, but there were maintenance items that needed to be completed between tenants. Yellowknife is not the easiest place to find contractors, and so I chose to hire a couple friends to do the necessary inspection and maintenance items. Nowadays, with an InReach we can organize and check on things even while we're on the land. One couple bought a house by InReach while they were on a trip with us a few years ago!

With our new food supply organized and packed in the barrels, we prepare to depart. We are eager for this less-traveled section and for the upcoming transition to the tundra. We had contemplated various routes and in the end chose to follow the Winter River upstream, cross to Big Lake and Starvation Lake, and follow the Starvation River down to Point Lake. I had seen the Starvation River when I crossed it and hiked alongside it for part of a day during my Thelon Esker hike in 2020, so I had a good idea of its size. From Point Lake we'll travel up the Coppermine River past Obstruction Rapids to Lake Providence and up the unnamed river that drains Yamba and Daring Lakes. After Daring Lake, we'll return to Point Lake with a primary

Aleksi gathers Arctic Cotton

objective of finding caribou.

The wind, the sun, and the bugs are kind to us as we paddle northeast from Wekweeti on Snare and Roundrock Lakes. We swim at the beaches, we heave our heavy barrels in and out of the canoe, and Emile revels in his ability to catch trout from shore. I begin reading Franklin's journal as we pass the site of Fort Enterprise near the western end of Winter Lake. This is where Franklin's first overland expedition overwintered in 1820/21 before departing for the coast, and where starvation forced a few remaining members to pound bones for soup and eat scraps of rawhide the following winter. Fort Enterprise was a site of starvation and death, and the locals from Wekweeti say they avoid the location. Reading these journals is only possible thanks to an e-reader, a technology that we had previously shunned but now treasure.

A day after passing Fort Enterprise I lift our canoe out of Winter Lake and feel the transition to a new phase of the trip. We leave behind the Snare River and aim north to follow the Winter River. Dwarf Birch slowly replaces the black spruce and extends its tangled branches sideways to trip us and frustrate little Aleksi. The occasional interwoven and 3-meter-tall willow forest completely bars his path and requires us to carry him. Our campfires extend north beyond Last Fire Lake. These shrubs and trees must have been much shorter and less dense 200 years ago when Franklin and his team walked through this country.

The put-ins and take-outs are often shallow and studded with sharp boulders. We balance on slippery rocks, one leg knee-deep in water, to remove the still-heavy barrels. At one portage, we carry half our gear to the far end only to realize the entire shoreline is choked with willows and then studded with boulders for 20 meters out into the water. We carry our gear back, reload the canoe, and cross over to portage on the river's opposite shore. We had become lazy, and we choose to be more diligent in the future, scouting the full portage before we shoulder our loads.

Aleksi walks the portages but not always without a fight. He's building strength, character, and resilience but he's slower than the rest of us. We carry short distances at a time, playing hopscotch with him, and he and his brother stick together and only walk the portages once while Leanne and I do two trips each. The hard rule is that he's always in sight of us. We lift him through occasional dense mazes of willows and dwarf birch, and over the odd stream or patch of jumbled boulders. Our two trips are slower than the boys' single trip, so they take breaks on top of tall rocks or in the middle of berry patches or wherever Aleksi taps out.

We've been canoeing for nearly a month, long enough to appreciate a good meal, when the Winter River provides a stellar fishing hole. A deep, fast rapid at the south end of Little Marten Lake ends in a large pool with a strong eddy, and I quickly have 4 Arctic grayling in the bucket and decide that

Caribou south of Itchen Lake

there must be trout here too. I switch to a spoon, and soon land a Lake Trout and a Pike. The 11-liter fish bucket is full to the brim with little effort. The wind is strong from the north so we clean the fish, portage the rapid, paddle a short distance to where we have to turn directly into the wind, and pull out for a fish feast. Leanne and the boys begin gathering twigs while I find a semi-sheltered location for our home-made twig stove and prepare flour, spices, and oil. Our dog Kulu eats steamed pike while we feast on fried trout. We cook the grayling and put it in a container for tomorrow's lunch. By the time we finish our fish supper the wind has calmed, so we put the boys to bed in the canoe and proceed to paddle the 12-km length of Little Marten Lake. In the glare of a midnight sun, and without a watch, I'm forced to use the compass to make sure we're going the right direction. Distances and shoreline features on the tundra are difficult enough to judge even in the best light conditions.

The next day we scout routes north out of Little Marten Lake. We pull ashore and I hike to the top of a nearby hill. Our first choice based on maps and satellite images passes through a lake that I now see is shallow and studded with sharp boulders. It might be possible, but the canoe will have a few new scars and the paddle will be slow. Perhaps there's a better way. I return to the canoe, and Leanne and I discuss other options. To the east, there's a longer potential portage that skips that lake. We paddle over and all go ashore to once again hike a nearby hill. The route looks gentle, the shoreline of the next lake appears friendly, and we soon find a few .303 British shell casings on the ground. They were probably fired from an old Canadian Ranger Rifle, most likely by someone hunting

Cloudberry jam

Crazy red trout of Point Lake

caribou. That's evidence that maybe we're on the best path. We take a break halfway through the portage, pitch the bug tent, and enjoy a relaxing lunch. When we finally reach the next shore, we find an old plywood skiff. It was likely used by hunters traveling this way in the fall looking for caribou. We paddle across the lake to camp on a sandy beach at the foot of an esker complex with multiple ridges, ponds, and spectacular views.

With a couple more days of intense portaging we reach Big Lake on a sunny, calm day. I drop a line to troll, and we are rewarded with a catch of 4 gorgeous trout. A huge fish catch requires lots of twigs for cooking, but there's no mistaking that we're on the tundra here. A small line of shrubs hugs the shoreline, but inland the ground is dominated by rocks, lichen, and peat moss. Supper becomes a long and delicious affair of gathering twigs, constantly feeding the stove, and eating trout straight out of the pan. Kulu also enjoys a large fillet, a treat reserved for times when the fish are easy and plentiful. When the fishing isn't so easy, she eats only steamed heads and backbones.

Under a burning sun and a suffocating heat we portage slowly over two days towards Starvation Lake. On the longest portage I feel the signs of heat exhaustion and lay down on the bedrock for an hour to cool. Leanne and the boys continue and carry a load for me. It seems even too hot for black flies, and their numbers are quite tolerable. Swims are mandatory a few times a day to stay cool.

Our muscles instantly relax as we step onto a small sandy beach at Starvation Lake. We will take a day off here to celebrate and enjoy this milestone. We quickly remove socks and enjoy the feel of the sand on our bare feet. In 2020 I hiked along the north side of this lake during my Thelon Esker hike and it's a treat to revisit such a remote location on the tundra with my family this time. We paddle lazily, catch a few trout, and find a splendid arcing beach half a kilometer long. The late evening sun broils us with its reflection off the mirror-calm water.

We take a day off and swim every hour to stay cool. Avery, a fellow Canadian Ranger, sends a message saying that there's a forest fire near our cabin north of Yellowknife. This worries us greatly, and we wonder if we should immediately book a plane to fly home and do what we can to protect our home. Avery can't reach the Environment and Natural Resources office on the phone, so he drives to their office to obtain the latest news on the fire. By mid-afternoon, he confirms that the fire has already been put out. Hooray! We had passed a few stressful hours wondering if our trip might be over. Emile is still sad, lamenting that even if our cabin is okay, the land around will be scarred and black for many years.

The smothering heat continues as we reset our brains from worrying about our cabin and prepare for an entirely new adventure down the Starvation River. We camp one night near the waterfall where the Starvation River leaves the Lake. The bugs certainly appear to be starving as they're nearly the thickest I've ever seen. We wear bug jackets inside the bug tent. By the time the black flies dissipate in the late evening, the mosquitoes are out twice as thick. In the morning Aleksi has his first total and complete meltdown due to the bugs. We unanimously decide to

Emile and Aleksi hold antler

travel quickly so we can reach Point Lake where the open water and the breeze will certainly mean fewer of these blood-sucking menaces. At least we wouldn't starve here: a simple net could catch enough black flies or mosquitoes for a good meal.

We portage on top of the Thelon Esker around the cascading waterfall, float over calm water in a small canyon, and gaze at dozens of graylings in the glassy water. We keep our eyes peeled for the odd shallow rock, startle a couple bull moose as we round the corners obscured by tall willow and dwarf birch, and make camp on rocky outcrops that provide a view of the river. We portage wherever seems most efficient and on high ground wherever possible to avoid the shrubs and have a view of what lies ahead. The Starvation River is small and narrow with a continuous mild gradient interrupted by the odd rocky rapid. Water levels are nice for canoeing, but the rapids are generally too shallow, and we portage nearly all of them. After two and half days and 8 portages we arrive with glee at Deèzàatì (Point Lake). The river was gorgeous but we're happy to be out of the sheltered buggy valley.

As we paddle away from the river's mouth we note the sudden transition from shrubby protected river valley to the windy and bare bedrock slopes of Deèzàatì. It's like we've stepped north 100 kilometres. The water is cold, the lake is deep, and the shrubs are scattered and thin. We find an exposed peninsula with plenty of smooth bedrock and the camp deal is sealed when we encounter two rocks with perfectly flat surfaces at a nearly ideal countertop height. I am delighted to have a couple tables after more than a month in the wilderness. I pulled a muscle in my back less than a week before we departed on this trip. The bending and crouching on the trip included a lot of pain and a lot of aspirin, and though my back is slowly healing, the pain will be lessened by this table's presence.

We stay 4 nights here with the bedrock tables, alternately sharing the site with the wind and pleasantly few black flies. The mosquitoes are gone. The weather is no longer dreadfully hot, but we still swim a couple times a day. Friends of ours, Jacob and Giselle who also have two children, fly from Yellowknife to join us here with the plan to paddle with us to Daring Lake. The day after they arrive, however, their oldest child falls and injures his wrist. He refuses to use that arm and requires painkillers for anyone in their tent to sleep. The next day, his parents decide the injury is serious enough that they'll fly home again to have it

Emile's pike

checked.

We have two other friends, Miriam and Myra (M&M), who will join us on Daring Lake and who plan to use Jacob and Giselle's canoe. So now there's a moment of logistical vomit, a natural consequence to be expected now and then from the complicated logistics that we normally avoid like the plague. M&M plan to share a flight from Yellowknife to Daring Lake and can't bring a canoe on the plane. So after much conversation and coercion, we convince Jacob and Giselle's pilot that he can be later – he's already late – for his next scheduled flight and can make a short side trip and drop the canoe at Daring Lake. We have enjoyed every moment we can with Jacob and Giselle and their two children, and we say goodbye after their short and expensive picnic on the tundra with us.

Our sadness from losing our friends lingers as we paddle south towards the Coppermine River. Wonder and joy overtake those emotions as we portage around Obstruction Rapids and marvel at the mighty Coppermine, a river that nearly stopped Franklin's team some 200 years ago during their hike back from the Arctic Ocean. In early October, they eventually succeeded in building a willow and canvas canoe and were able, one by one, to cross the river upstream of these rapids. They were already severely malnourished and often fasting or subsisting on nothing more than tripe de roche lichen.

As we paddle southeast on Lake Providence we puzzle and celebrate the rapid disappearance of the black flies and mosquitoes. Under the intense sun of late July, and occasionally on glassy dead-calm water, our lunch breaks become lazy, near-naked, lounging affairs interrupted by swims and a few casts for fish. Without a breeze, we still can't find a black fly. Somehow, we've chanced upon a rare and unseasonal disappearance of the black flies. This might become a once-in-a-lifetime bug-free August on the tundra.

We continue to read Franklin's journal and are astounded by the quantity of names on the map in this area and on the Arctic coast that come from that single European expedition. How was this one European man who caused the death of so many, and eventually his own as well, able to impose his names on so much of the map? Thankfully, there are numerous efforts to restore aboriginal place names to official maps.

The unnamed river draining Yamba and Daring Lakes is our next adventure, which we refer to as the Daring River. I craft a crude doll for each of the boys from a 2x4 board we found, and they carry the dolls over all the portages. The willow and dwarf birch are occasionally tall and thick along this shallow, crystal clear, rocky, and relatively warm river. We're approaching a waterfall where an esker crosses the river when Leanne spots an animal mostly hidden in the bushes. It's a bull moose

Google Earth overview map

Hiking an esker near Point Lake

The Daring River

busy grazing on willows, often with only his antlers visible, so we quietly come ashore, pull up the canoe, and climb the esker, monocular in hand. While we are watching, the moose lays down for its afternoon nap, completely hidden in the willows only 75 meters away. Emile and I eventually decide to hike around downwind of the moose where we are graced with a close-up view an hour later when it finally rises, spots Leanne on the esker, and trots away.

This esker crossing is a gem of a spot, one of those you might not tell anyone about. But alas it's too remote to ever have many visitors. The river travels a loop, falling over several ledges and leaving a cool, misty bedrock peninsula inside the loop. We have extra time and spend four days here, hiking the esker in both directions, lounging on the rocky peninsula, and picking blueberries and raven-black Arctic Bearberries. The boys build a tiny series of dams in a trickle of water flowing over the peninsula, and just below the waterfall is a deep pool filled with hungry lake trout and even an occasional northern pike. Emile catches the biggest pike of the trip so far. With much persistence and persuasion from his father he finally overcomes his slime phobia and musters his strength to lift it long enough for a good photo. The camera is filled with grimaces and groans but when he's older he'll be glad he held the fish for that photo.

The Starvation River

We eventually break camp and continue to the Tundra Ecosystem Research Station where our friends M&M will join us and where our next food drop awaits us. We stay there a few days along with students who are part of a science camp, and Emile donates a few feathers from his collection to students who are building and experimenting with an Atlatl dart. We organize our food, welcome our friends, make new friends, and then say goodbye to return to Deèzàatì on a caribou-viewing mission.

On August 20th we reach the northeastern tip of Deèzàatì, a location where we think we're likely to spot caribou traveling south from Itchen Lake. On cue, we see more than a dozen caribou, including numerous calves, just after we arrive at the river that drains Itchen Lake. A cold wind is blowing from the north so we choose a campsite in the lee of an esker, and a few caribou wander by in the evening. We've miraculously arrived upon the migration of what remains of the Bluenose-East caribou herd, which has fallen from an estimated 120,000 animals to 23,000 now.

We enjoy three days of hiking, watching caribou, picking berries, and marveling at our luck. A bull moose, many dozens of caribou, and a couple wolves pass by our camp and swim the river. There are hordes of calves, which boosts our hope that maybe the caribou can recover. During our last evening here, I stay out late to tidy camp, to

enjoy the silence, and to watch the fading light. The sun is down and the air is chilly. I'm putting a few last items in the barrels when I notice a group of caribou walking south past our camp. I tiptoe partway up the low esker just north of camp, sit down beside Kulu, and gaze through the monocular as the 10 caribou pass by about 100 meters from camp and then turn to swim across a calm stretch of the river. I whistle to catch Leanne's attention; perhaps she'll come out to see them. A couple seconds later the sound of the zipper alerts me to Leanne's return from the bubble of our 4-season tent. I point to the river and we both watch them for a minute. As they reach the far shore they shake off the water and fade into the darkness of the dwarf birch. Leanne looks back at me and quickly puts her arms in the air like antlers, but I don't understand the signal until too late. By the time I turn around, the animal has trotted away. Leanne tells me there was a cow and calf caribou 3 meters behind me on top of the esker, silhouetted against the still-blue sky.

We cherish another 10 days traveling on Deèzàatì. We stop to hike eskers, pick berries, and absorb all the bright fall tundra colours. The boys play in the small groves of spruce and run their toy wooden canoes down little streams. We arranged to return to Yellowknife on a shared charter flight so we have a precise location and date where we need to be. We arrive with plenty of time and head off hiking and swimming in a tiny lake nearby until the plane arrives. Suddenly, gunshots and a distant hum alert us that the plane is arriving early. We're still swimming 1.5 km away over some difficult terrain. We rush to dress, find our socks, and slip on our shoes. The plane is nearly here. I toss Aleksi on my shoulders and we all run as quickly as we can. We watch the plane land and people begin unloading it as we're running and already out of breath. Aleksi is laughing while I'm completely winded, but we arrive just as the plane is fully unloaded and ready for us to load. We've seen plenty of caribou, eaten our fill of fish and berries, and enjoyed the fall colours. Neither Aleksi nor Emile are upset that we're going home already, so the timing feels right. It's September 2nd, 90 days since we left Behchoko.

The Team at Daring Lake

CPM #40015547
ISSN 1828-1327

Published by the Wilderness and 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 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.

WCA Board Update

In this latest issue you'll notice a few small changes which we hope you'll both appreciate and understand. The first and most obvious is the addition of a photo on our front cover – we thought this would be a great way to freshen up the image of the journal, while providing our contributors another prominent spot to showcase their photography. We're always looking for content, and hope this encourages new and old members alike to send us their stories, reviews, articles, trip reports and photos to be included here. The second change was one out of necessity. As I'm sure you're aware, the costs of nearly everything have increased over the past several years, printing & postage included. In light of rising publication costs we have, for the first time ever, begun to include advertisements in Nastawgan. Our hope is that by partnering with a small handful of highly relevant paddling industry brands that we can generate sufficient revenue to maintain our current membership fees and quarterly printing frequency. Our promise to you is that we will only include advertisers of relevance to the club, and that we'll limit them to the bare minimum required to cover our printing costs. We do not want the journal to be overrun with ads from unrelated businesses, and will work hard to partner only with those which we know, trust and would recommend to our friends and family. With that in mind, please do us a favour and be sure to mention the WCA if using the services of our advertisers – it will help us ensure they buy in for future ads, and ultimately sustain this truly special publication which has been in continuous production for 50 years.

Thanks for your understanding & support

WCA Board of Directors

David Pelly on "70 Minutes"

David is a good friend of WCA and an occasional contributor to *"Nastawgan."* We are looking forward to reading his story about Thelon River and Alex Hall in the next issue! Many of us know David personally from his many presentations at the Wilderness & Canoe Symposium.

In 2023, David Pelly was asked by his university graduating class (5 decades ago!) to share with them the story of his career in the Arctic. Classmate John Hills produced an excellent 36-minute video featuring some of the stories and lessons learned along the way. David describes how he came to the Far North, why he stayed, his work with Inuit, how it became his life, and how it changed him forever. After watching the video, another classmate, former astronaut Marc Garneau, said "Your story is inspiring." You can watch the video titled *"Into the Arctic"* on YouTube – it's a worthy investment of your time.

You can find more about David and the books he wrote at www.david-pelly.com

Barren Grounds

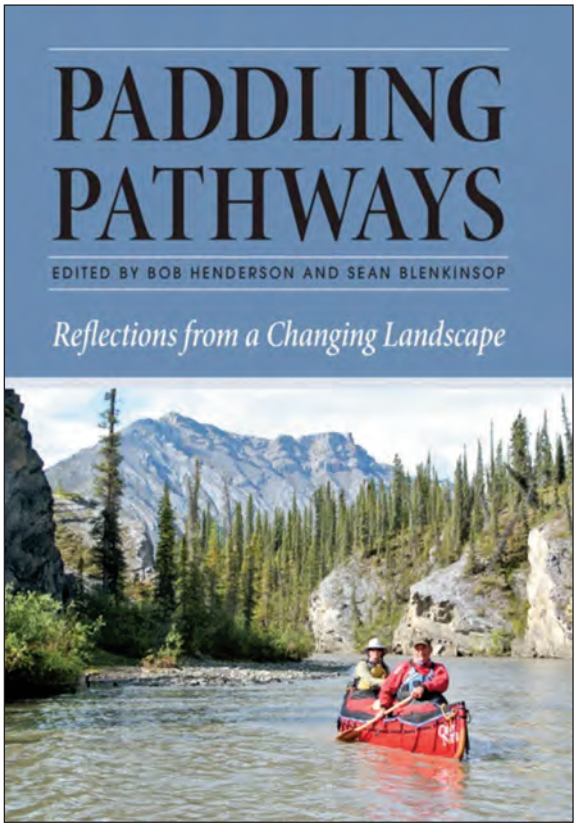
Documentary Film by Matthew Boyd

You may have learned about Matthew Boyd's documentary *"Barren Grounds"* in the follow-up email to 2023 Wilderness & Canoe Symposium. Matthew recently wrote to tell me that the film is currently mid-production. Original 16mm film has been transferred to 5K HDR format. Preliminary interviews with surviving expedition members, Creigh Moffat and other principal cast are completed. Matthew Boyd, Fred Pessl and Creigh Moffatt traveled to Baker Lake in August 2023, reconnecting with the Inuit community and rehabilitating Moffatt's gravesite. Matthew and Fred followed the final path of the journey by prop-plane. A journey to Stoney Rapids, Saskatchewan is in the planning phase. You can follow this story and learn more about the project at www.barrengrounds.com website.

Paddling Pathways: Reflections from a Changing Landscape

Book Review by Shelley A. Leedahl

This beautifully-bound anthology of 21 essays written by paddlers and edited by educators – and intrepid canoeists and guides – Bob Henderson (ON) and Sean Blenkinsop (BC) deserves a much longer review than this 500-word assessment. In short: it's extraordinary.



Paddling Pathways: Reflections from a Changing Landscape contains a wealth of thought-provoking essays on the rivers, lakes, and oceans the diverse contributors have navigated via canoe or kayak – often in groups but sometimes solo – and it examines the paddlers' interior worlds as they contemplate being present; history; culture; relationships with plants, animals and other creatures; Indigenous Canada (land and territorial acknowledgements and "Settler Responsibilities" are included); ecology; climate change; and, as Bruce Cockburn contributes in his Foreword, the "soul-expanding space" where one can get "a glimpse of the world as it was made." Maps, black and white photos, and the editors' numerous "Suggested Reading" lists are superb accompaniments to the layered essays.

Henderson has previously published books on heritage travel and outdoor life, and Blenkinsop, a professor at Simon Fraser University who writes about "wild pedagogies" and "ecologizing education," agree that as travelers on land and water, they/we need to "shift pathways and create narratives that no longer focus on *competing, completing, and conquering*" re: our understanding of the natural world and, indeed, human culture. They invited contributors to select a "special paddling place/route" and a "personally significant theme," and the result is this compendium of erudite, entertaining, often philosophical and political essays that are delightful to sink into.

Several writers discuss the "gifts to be found in slowing down," ie: the discoveries of cranberries (Anjeanette LeMay) and the "orangish glow of cloudberries" (Beth Foster). Foster writes that wind and rain altered her group's 9-day paddle plans, but the rewards of "focus[ing] on the present" included "an unclouded blue-sky panoramic vista" and "the profound joy of stillness."

Greg Scutt ponders Settler history and the connection between river canoeing and fly-fishing in his second-person piece set it Stikine country, "the largest wilderness area in British Columbia."

Michael Paul Samson recounts his kayak trip around Newfoundland at age 22, a pre-wedding adventure down the Ohio River and into the Mississippi, and "the resilience of the human race."

Ric Driediger, a guide for Churchill River Canoe Outfitters, was seeking relaxation on his solo trip. He considers that he's perhaps "so addicted to being busy, [he] can't just sit," and he desires to "be lost in time and place and imagination." Success! At one point he can't even remember how long he's been out. This essay's brilliant surprise ending left me gasping.

Kayaker Fiona Hough speaks honestly of the joys and challenges of taking youth with mental health issues on a two-week trip in Clayoquet Sound, and how one completes the trip "freshly clothed in an ocean skin."

Gratitude's braided through these essays. Zabe MacEachren writes: "I also like to kiss the palm of my hand and then place it flat on the ground wherever I have slept."

This book's a major achievement. Please read it.

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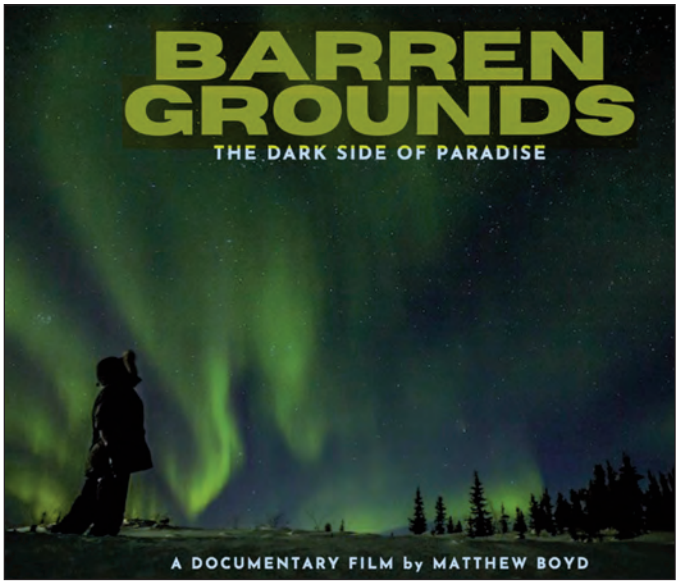


What the Puk?! Did We Have Fun Yet?

Three Canoemen Take On the Pukaskwa Coastal Trail

by Gary Storr

An upland stretch of sandy till, photo by Gary Storr

Hideaway Lake camp, photo by Gary Storr

"Are you having fun?" Old Mr. Dunn's greeting always made me smile and I always answered in the affirmative.

"Good," he said, nodding his head. "I like to see the young fellas have fun."

Mr. Dunn had been incarcerated in a prisoner of war camp for more than 1,000 days during the Second World War. If anyone knew what fun wasn't, it was he.

When he passed away I decided to pick up the ball and run with it. Now I ask the young people around me, "Are you having fun?" The response is usually a quizzical smile followed quickly by a genuine one. They get it, and now I enjoy the same payoff as Mr. Dunn for inspiring a light-hearted moment.

The trip to Pukaskwa was Iori's brainchild. A sometime canoeing partner, I had invited him to attend the last of our pre-pandemic chili-dog-beer-walks, an annual gathering of our paddling tribe, the Canoeing Legends. The event itself was designed to fill the post-holiday void and was simply a New Year's romp in the snow with our dogs followed by a banquet of chili, beer and wine. Iori was there to present a slideshow about a river trip I'd set my sights on. I needed him to help me enlist a crew. Later, as our friends departed, Iori made his pitch. Would I be interested in backpacking the 60-kilometre Pukaskwa Coastal Trail on the northeast shore of Lake Superior in Pukaskwa National Park?

I was gobsmacked. "Look at me," I protested. I was well into my seventh decade, a featherweight even when fished dripping wet from a rapid, and I wobbled under the weight of a fanny pack. Bullies kicked sand on me. I was better suited to life in a canoe…or holding down a bar stool.

"Would it be enjoyable? It doesn't sound enjoyable," I worried. As a seeker of instant gratification, I couldn't commit to an outing that to me, was the singular definition of hell. We might as well go backpacking across red hot coals

in our bare feet. There had to be a fun factor.

Iori let it go...for now.

Eighteen pages fluttered off the calendar before I met fellow Legends Dan Bell and Graham Bryan at the campground in Pukaskwa National Park. They had glommed onto the idea when it was scarcely out of my mouth. I couldn't renege now. Dan's husky malamute, Nikita, was there too. Iori wasn't. Iori's new team was fitter and faster. We agreed to go our separate ways for this challenge.

Our Pukaskwa visitor services rep, Serafina, contacted Doug of North Shore Adventures to confirm that the boat shuttle to North Swallow Harbour would leave as scheduled. Gale force winds had whipped up along the coast putting our departure in doubt. Word came. The winds were offshore: it was a go.

Serafina sat us down outside the office for the orientation lecture – mandatory for everyone hiking the coastal trail.

"There's a bear at Hook Falls. Are you camping there? Yes, I see you are," she affirmed, checking our reservation. "There's a dead moose lodged in the waterfall – its head is missing – and there are signs of bear activity on it. There's scat in the vicinity, too."

"If the moose is still in reasonable condition in a few days, there might be some human activity on it," I speculated. Freeze-dried food stays "fresh" forever in a package but a slab of moose meat might pair well with, say, a three-cheese lasagna. Serafina smiled patiently.

Dan asked if there had been any serious incidents, bear or otherwise.

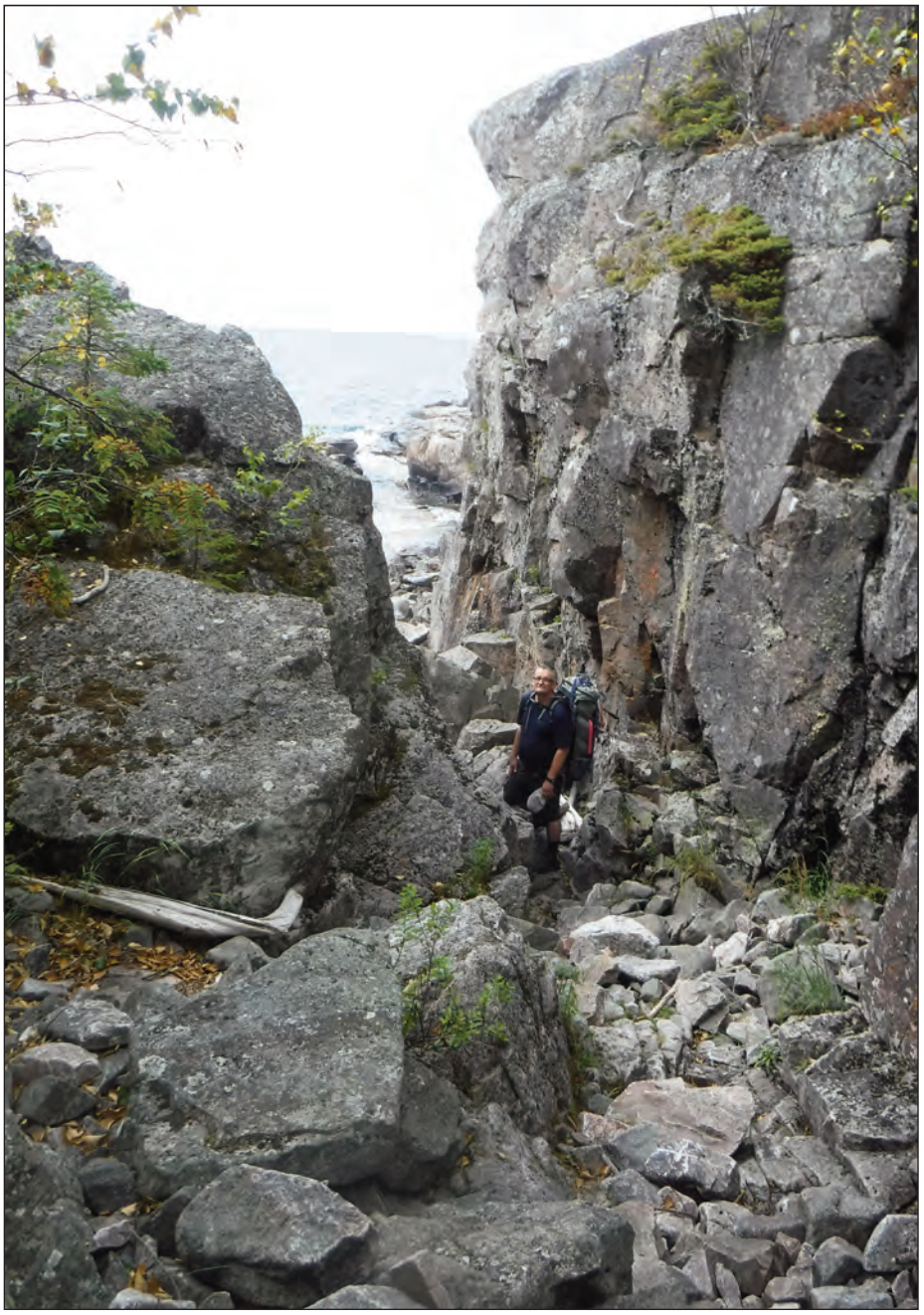
"No," she responded. "The only injury happened to me...and that was during a rescue."

"That's not reassuring," I said.

"What hours do you work?" demanded Graham.

"Yes, I know," laughed Serafina. "Stay away from me!"

The hull of our shuttle slammed over rollers while I stared at the most rugged coastline I had ever seen: deep coves backed variously by beaches of fine sand, smooth boulders and jagged rock; steep forested inclines leading to Precambrian outlooks that promised inspiring views...should we reach them. The descents warned of strained knees.



A new challenge at every turn, photo by Gary Storr

Serafina had impressed on us that Pukaskwa demanded the same tenacity as the West Coast Trail on Vancouver Island. Was this her adroit manner, having eyeballed me, of compelling me to second-guess my machismo? I puffed out my chest a little, more for me than her.

We beached at North Swallow Harbour and Doug jumped out to steady the boat. We lowered our packs onto the sand and climbed down after them. A waiting group of weary backpackers nodded and lifted their packs onto the boat for the return trip. They had hiked the trail in the opposite direction, erasing any doubt in our minds about its feasibility. It was 6:30 p.m. We waved as the boat shrank from sight, then hoisted our packs and set out.

In the first half hour we lost the trail twice. Graham and I tramped through a campsite before realizing our path would get us no farther than the outhouse. Dan shouted from the beach and pointed to a large information board

Taking one of many breathers, photo by Graham Bryan

marking the trailhead. How had we missed that? Soon it became necessary to ford our first river. Missing the cutoff, we backtracked down to North Swallow River and devised a route. Here we performed ably...if without dignity. Opting not to remove our boots, we crawled on all fours over slippery boulders, straining to keep our packs centred above us like chimps carrying their young. No one toppled in.

Our first campsite was fronted by Lake Superior, backed by Hideaway Lake and already occupied. Two young women had claimed the best real estate for their tent.

The older of the two stepped forward, apologizing profusely. "We're sorry, we're sorry. Do you want us to leave?"

The first rule of trail etiquette is to be accommodating. Stuff happens. Being new to this gig, it was, in fact, the only rule I knew of. "No, no, stay." It was well past eight and getting dark. "Where would you go?"

"Thank you so much. We took the shuttle yesterday and got lost. We followed the wrong cairn and came to a rise at the edge of the water. We heard the trail was rough so we thought we were okay but when we tried to go around, my sister fell in the lake."

Lake Superior rarely warms above 16°C. The icy dunking had stunned her like a body slam and the will to carry on whooshed out. Dry now, she stood glumly and uttered not a sound. Her complete persona radiated defeat. My immediate inclination was to keep all sharp objects out of reach.

We pitched our tents in the surrounding trenches, inhaled a quick supper and called it a day. The sisters had already retired.

In the morning they were gone.

Along the trail, vibrant green mosses cascaded over moist rocks like spring freshets. Mushrooms bloomed: white, brown, yellow and red. As we stood on the highest reaches of shield, eagles soared below. The waves of Gitche Gumee crashed onto beaches and exploded against cliffs. Superior wielded unfathomable power; she heaved like an ocean, vast, cold and deep. Some 550 known shipwrecks lie on the bottom, the Edmund Fitzgerald and its crew of 29, the last to join them.

We emerged from the forest onto a sprawling granite shelf at water's edge. It was strewn with rock debris, as if flung there by a giant hand. We would have to do some scrambling here. Ahead we could see the sisters, one giving the other a boost onto a ledge. They turned and waved, then disappeared into the woods.

Wide swaths of smooth boulders hindered our progress on the high plateaus. Down below, while treading an earthen path in the woods, two young fellows approached us from the north. One sported a kilt. Cheerful but succinct, they paused long enough to report that they were hiking the trail both ways in eight days from Hattie Cove and had to make North Swallow Harbour by nightfall. I did a quick cipher. "We'll see you

Negotiating a field of glacial detritus, photo by Gary Storr

again on Saturday when you pass us going the other way." I sighed, suddenly feeling my age.

"See you then," they smiled and they were gone.

Three women were huddled on the beach at White Gravel River when we arrived. We saluted, recognizing the younger two. Negotiating the shifting cobblestones underfoot, we accessed a short path into the woods. There, in the clearing, stood a tent surrounded by scattered miscellany. My shoulders drooped a little. Again? Then she was there, apologizing, collapsing her tent and scooping up clothing as if tidying a room for guests. She had been deposited at White Gravel River by Doug to wait for her daughters to arrive from the south. When they failed to show up she had grown concerned.

She was the mother of the sisters with whom we'd shared our camp the night before. I heard their story again but now it was unabridged, peppered with anecdotes about great aunts and cousins who were not even there. Each breath carried with it a torrent of words; she discoursed as though it were the sustenance of life. I nodded meekly whenever it seemed appropriate. Dan, meanwhile, had wisely reclined on the beach with Niki, who snoozed unperturbed on the rocks.

After a while Graham appeared and gallantly offered to carry the woman's shopping bags to her new digs. My ears had been soundly boxed.

On his website, mountaineer and author Kelly Cordes discusses the Fun Scale: "Type 1 Fun is true fun, enjoyable while it's happening." Through the lens of the Canoeing Legends, this could be an evening of camaraderie at a campfire or shooting an easy set of rapids. "Type 2 Fun," Mr. Cordes continues, is "fun only in retrospect, hateful while it's happening." Things like portaging the dreaded Threenarrows "pig" in Killarney Provincial Park, or prying your bent canoe off a rock in a rapid you had no business running in the first place. "Type 3 Fun – not fun at all, not even in retrospect. As in, 'What the hell was I thinking? If I ever even consider doing that again, somebody slap some sense into me."

The third day was the hardest. As we willed ourselves onward I knew that philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, himself an avid walker, had gotten it wrong. His famous adage ought to have read: "That which does not kill us makes us candy-ass," not stronger. We climbed to the highest elevation on the trail and near the peak encountered a woman of ethereal temperament. She sat blissfully, allowing the grandeur of her universe to waft over her, seemingly unaware of time and place. She was accompanied by a dog and carried minimal gear. She had a smashed lip. She told us of places she'd seen: the Appalachian Trail, the West Coast Trail, the Pacific Crest Trail. As if trying to leave behind an unwanted truth, she walked and walked, never stopping and always alone. She, too, was crossing the trail both ways and her destination for today seemed impossibly far. We bade her farewell and left her to her meditations.

Oiseau Bay, photo by Graham Bryan

Taking a break on a sandy beach, we were joined by a couple of female twenty-somethings who settled in for lunch. The raven-haired girl pulled sporkfuls of tuna from a pouch and masticated contentedly. We exchanged dehydrated food recipes with them and then lifted on our packs. They were having a short day followed by a long one. "This is adios then," I said. "We won't cross paths again...unless I fall down."

"I'll carry you," promised the raven-haired girl, taking another bite of tuna. "I'm strong."

Suppertime came and went and we still hadn't reached our campsite. Emerging from the trail onto a broad, sandy sweep we determined to set up camp whether or not this was Oiseau Bay. An onshore gale bent the sedges, pointing them inland. The surf pounded

Pumping water, photo by Graham Bryan

Willow River suspension bridge, photo by Gary Storr

the beach. The landscape was primal and desolate and our small group left a trail of smudges across the sand.

Soon a signpost appeared at the back of the beach where the sand met the tree line. "OB1," it read. Oiseau Bay. We were home. We poured boiling water into our food pouches, watched a crimson sunset, and then fell into our tents.

Dan later observed: "We've done some pretty grueling trips throughout our years of paddling together but I don't believe we ever reached the level of exhaustion that we did on that day. Staggering like extras from a Walking Dead set I sensed a previously unknown feeling among us – a feeling that we may have bitten off more than we could chew."

We had inadvertently expanded the fun scale to embrace a new type of pleasure: Type 4 Fun, as in, "Kneecap me now. Please."

After that the days became easier. Cobblestone beaches housed Pukaskwa pits – man-made depressions in the rocks whose purpose remains a mystery. Estimated to be anywhere from 500 to 10,000 years old, they are thought to be either vision pits, food storage units or hunting blinds. The largest of them, called lodges, may have been roofed dwellings. Pukaskwa National Park was established in 1978, in part, to protect these pits.

That night we camped at Morrison Harbour. The long, sandy beach seduced us with its tropical allure. In the lee of an island, it was shielded from Superior's histrionics. We swam in the shallow water and, at dusk, waved as two Asian backpackers passed by on the main trail. Before long, two more floated by. Where could they be going this late in the evening? Minutes later a lone hiker nodded and evaporated into the forest like a ghost. The nearest campsite was a day's trek to the south. I had a creeping suspicion that we'd somehow hiked into Aokigahara, the Suicide Forest below Mount Fuji in Japan. "It was twilight-zoney weird," agreed Graham.

Later the next day, we traipsed past Hook Falls. The path to our campsite was presaged by a sign on a tree – a bear warning. Farther along I noticed a second sign facing the other way. I trotted ahead to have a look. Sure enough, the identical warning. So...only our campsite. Serafina had warned us.

There were two tent pads, one adjacent to the fire ring, the other beside the bear-proof food locker. Dan blanched when he saw the pad's proximity to the bin so I manned up and claimed it for myself. Dan and Graham pitched their tents side by side on what was, to their reckoning, safe ground. The brute would have to nosh through me to get to them.

Before dinner an elderly backpacker found his way down the path to our campsite. "Have you seen a group of 15 or 20 young people?" he asked. "I'm their chaperone."

We shook our heads.

"Oh dear," he said. "I've been searching high and low. Where could they be?"

He climbed back up the path and we didn't see him again.

A short time later, a boisterous band

of young men and women called down to ask if they could visit our campsite. They wanted to see the dead moose.

"There's no dead moose here," we assured them.

They wandered back to the pool below the waterfall and stripped down to their swimsuits. There the boys swaggered, performing backflips and cannonballs to the girls' feigned amazement. Then they pulled on their shorts and T-shirts and headed off in a different direction from their chaperone.

We had neither the trail savvy nor the logistical tools in our belts to make sense of any of it so we sat down to eat.

During dinner, I spied movement among the trees. I jumped up and crept toward the tents, bowl in hand. On seeing me, the bear started and about-faced, springing back up the hill. I lay in my sleeping bag next to our food that night, eyes wide, while my "buds" slept like babies. Soon after leaving Hook Falls we approached the new and much ballyhooed White River suspension bridge. The prospect of crossing suspension bridges had haunted Dan. There were two, one over Willow River and this longer, higher bridge spanning White River at Chigamiwinigum Falls. Dan was a self-professed Luddite whose fear of flying stemmed from his refusal to accept the laws of aerodynamics. He put his faith in the law of gravity. He simply couldn't see how so many tonnes of metal could stay aloft without plummeting back to earth. He also possessed a similar reticence when it came to negotiating suspension bridges although, in defense of bridges, neither end actually left the ground. His trepidation on this front may have been rooted in acrophobia.

Dan had asked Serafina during our orientation if she knew of any dogs that liked suspension bridges. "No," she had responded.

"None?"

"None," she stated unequivocally.

Dan joked that his only solution was to blindfold himself and carry Niki across.

When the time came, Dan marched smartly over the Willow River bridge glancing down only once. Niki followed reluctantly. Now, at White River, Niki trailed her master part way and then turned back, fearful of the raging waters below. Quickly I blocked her way and slowly herded her across, coaxing her gently. Dan encouraged her from the other side. When we were all safely across, Graham signed the guest register and Niki turned to go back, wagging her tail. Often, anticipation looms large and becomes more terrifying than the act itself.

The trail now bustled with activity as day-trippers from Hattie Cove hiked out to the bridge and back. Spandex-clad ironmen and women clutching trekking poles zipped past, eyes front, focused solely on their objective. They never turned their heads and rarely acknowledged us in passing. Families with children and dogs stampeded by, curious smiles directed our way. This crowd stood in stark contrast to the mystics, hobos and multifarious misfits we'd encountered in the backcountry. We counted ourselves among the latter.

An hour later the young fellows of skirt notoriety caught up to us. It was our final morning on the trail. Now they stopped to address Graham's curiosity about the garment. Not only did it offer greater freedom of movement, extolled its wearer, but it was easier to pee. Unfortunately it had to be removed to poop. I privately wondered if it might be cooler too, allowing an occasional, startling updraft.

Our young friends had a hunger for grease and were anxious to go to Marathon for burgers. Our craving was identical but wider reaching. There would also be a stop for beer.

After the trip Graham and Dan enthused of having tried something new. Graham admitted that bragging rights were nonexistent: "It seems few people have heard of the trail, let alone the huge national park it's in. It means there isn't really anyone to brag to about completing the trail – you gotta go for yourself cuz no one else is gonna care you did it. I won't be able to name-drop Pukaskwa Coastal Trail like when people talk about the West Coast Trail. And no one can pronounce or spell Pukaskwa anyway."

Graham offered this insight in the context of having had Type 2 Fun. Pukaskwa was a bitch, but one he remembered fondly. Type 3, I corrected him. My attitude toward Puk was still firmly mired in the spectrum of meh. I hadn't had fun yet. But I'm slowly coming around, tightroping the scale from Type 3 to 2. What's next, I find myself musing? The West Coast Trail?

But there are a lot of ladders there. And I'm afraid of heights.

We made it!, photo by Graham Bryan

The Final Chapter

From the Atlantic to the Pacific by Canoe Along the Fur Trade River Routes of the Hudson Bay Company & North West Company

By Herman Perry

Numbered and colored legs of the canoe route for my North American Paddling Odyssey.

Introduction

After a two-year delay due to the Corona Virus, by early 2022 the canoe trip was back on track for the 5th and final leg of this "North American Paddling Odyssey". My three paddling buddies for leg 5 included Paul Snow, my brother-in-law from St. John's, Gerry Coleman, an old friend from Saskatoon and Rick Canavan, an old classmate of Paul's from Oklahoma. With everything ready we were now prepared to depart for the remote Northwest. This paddling odyssey had already taken me across northern Canada from Rigolet on the Labrador Sea to the foot of the Rockies and leg 5 would just be a continuation of that.

Paul and I drove first from Newfoundland to Saskatoon where we picked up Gerry and my brother Larry, who would shuttle the truck. We picked up Rick who flew in to Whitehorse and then we airfreighted our food for the second half of the trip from there to Old Crow. We had earlier decided to spend several days in the historic Klondike at Dawson City. Larry and Paul actually met and chatted with Tony Beets from the TV Series "Gold Rush". He mines gold just outside of Dawson City. We then drove on to Fort McPherson in the NWT and put in the canoes at the boat launch just outside of town the next morning. We then paddled across the delta to the Rat River while Larry drove my truck to Anchorage for our later pickup and he then flew home to Saskatoon. Unfortunately, Rick Canavan "tapped

Herman, Paul, Gerry & Rick preparing to commence their canoe trip from Fort McPherson, NWT across the Mackenzie River Delta & up the Rat River.

We found ourselves having to lay sticks on the many mudflats to be able to carry our gear to and from the canoes and campsites.

Paul & Rick paddling up the Rat River towards a site named Destruction City where 125 years ago many of the Klondiker's in route to Dawson City spent the winter of 1898.

In the top left of the photo there is a wolf that had been stalking a caribou.

out" with an injury after a week of paddling and lining the Rat. We tried on short notice with the Sat phone to find another partner for Paul who was devastated by this turn of events but it wasn't to be. Without a partner he could not continue so a chopper was flown in and used to airlift Paul & Rick as well as the canoe and gear out to Inuvik / Fort McPherson. For the next 65 days / 2500 km of paddling, it was just Gerry and I as we paddled, portaged, tracked and lined the Rat River and others up and over the Rockies at MacDougal Pass / Summit Lake then down the Bell, Porcupine and Yukon Rivers to Emmonak, Alaska.

Planning, preparation and en-route activities

At seventy-two, I still enjoy those extended expedition canoe trips in the North. My interest in the old fur trade

After a week of paddling and lining the Rat River Rick Canavan decided to tap out. A chopper was brought in to transport him and Paul & their gear & canoe out to Inuvik.

This cabin is located on East Bear Creek & was a pleasant rest stop & mosquito refuge for us along the Rat River. We took a two-day break here. The local folks traveling on snow machines between Old Crow & Fort McPherson stay in it & they use the guest book to record their travel details as did previous paddlers. We recorded our journal paddling details in the guest book.

We lined around many obstructions on the Rat River such as this mass of trees, roots and other debris. Much of it comes down the river each spring in runoff.

We encountered ice and snow at several locations along the Rat River such as this as we got closer to the rivers source in the Richardson Mountains.

activities has already helped inspire me to paddle some of those waterways used extensively by the voyageurs and the various indigenous tribes in the 18th, 19th, and 20th. centuries. You may wonder what inspired me to take on this challenge. It so happened that I had whet my appetite for expedition canoeing as a teenager in Labrador in 1970 when a friend of mine, Cecil Reid agreed to join me on a three-week / 300-mile canoe trip from Wabush, Labrador to Sept Isle, Quebec via the Aushuanipi, Capacho and Moisie Rivers I was hooked. While I had worked and paddled in unusual places such as the Kopi River in eastern Indonesia which was rife with crocodiles and rumored to have cannibals in the area, I looked forward to paddling adventures back in Canada with people and

At the little no-name lake beside Ogilvie Lake in MacDougal Pass. Note Mount Russell in the background. We had originally planned to climb the mountain but because we were behind schedule we decided to paddle on.

Herman portaging food and gear between the little pond at Ogilvie Lake across to Summit Lake, which sits on the height of land at around 1000'. The tundra and marsh in this area had lots of tussocks and was unstable for walking on.

Portaging a canoe to Summit Lake. We took turns dragging and carrying it but after taking several stumbles on the uneven tussock covered tundra, we elected to drag it across with one of us at the front and one at the back.

wildlife I was familiar with and at the same time see and experience more of the north country. Combined with an interest in maps and the old Hudson Bay Company fur trade, my map research resulted in canoe trips along many of the fur trade routes across the country. My canoe trips en route to James Bay and Hudson Bay have enabled me to appreciate the legendary Hudson Bay Company Fur Trade activities during that era by visiting some of the locations of those old trading posts. Presentations at PNL events and articles in the Ebb and Flow Magazine have shared with members my view of the historical, cultural and physical geography of those trade routes.

We had worked out much of the planning and scheduling such as maps, routes, food and gear content earlier. Again, we encountered numerous wildlife such as moose, caribou, bears, wolves, porcupines, eagles, herons, swans and others, including a stare-down with a large black bear on the Methey Portage in Saskatchewan and with a

Willows and shrubbery around Summit Creek had grown right across the creek bottom, making it impossible to continue without chopping out this brush.

grizzly bear on the Mckenzie River on earlier legs. One day we saw a caribou grazing not far from the river so we stopped the canoe as I tried to creep closer. As I approached the caribou, I saw movement close by. This was a wolf that was already stalking the caribou and when it saw me, they both dashed off into the woods. I did however get a picture of the wolf. We often had to deal with inclement weather and fought nasty waves on some of the lakes, rivers and rapids en route.

The Rat River was high and muddy, and we had to sometimes make walkways of sticks across the mud flats to get to and from the canoe and the campsites. High water in the Rat dictated hundreds of ferry crossings and wading through cold, waist high water while ice still remained in places along the Rat in mid-July. There were numerous beaver dams that had to be pulled up over or portaged around. As the Rat narrowed, we found that much of the creek channel was overgrown with willows and trees up to 5 inches in diameter. This dictated time and effort chopping to get the canoe through this dense undergrowth. At the same time mosquito hordes were biting us mercilessly. At some locations the spring runoff had left the river channel blocked with debris up to 6 feet deep. We spent time clearing each mess only to get around the next bend in the creek and face the same thing again. Countering that extreme were the strikingly beautiful views of the rugged Richardson Mountains in this area. We discovered from the guest book in the cabin at East Bear Creek that the last canoe group paddling through here was many years earlier which explains why the rivers and creeks were overgrown from lack of usage.

We have been constantly amazed by the generosity and friendliness of the many people met en route. We were often given smoked whitefish, fresh inconnu and smoked moose meat by villagers along the various waterways in earlier legs of the Canoe Odyssey. The folks from Porcupine Enterprises in Old Crow, Yukon were very helpful in picking up and storing the food and gear airfreighted in from Whitehorse. Friends, Dona and Bernie in Whitehorse picked up and held the excess gear airfreighted

Camp beside Summit Creek on a little dry knob, which rose about 3' above the surrounding marsh. Summit creek is immediately behind us and Summit Lake is to the right, with Mount Russell in the background.

After setting up camp we went out on the little marsh beside Summit Lake and picked some bakeapples/cloudberries for dessert.

The only paddler we met along the way was Gary, here on the Porcupine River a day or so upriver from Old Crow. He had put in at the Eagle River at Eagle Plains, Yukon and traveled with his dog for company.

to them. The owners of the Bed & Breakfast in Fort Yukon Alaska, Virginia and Clarence Alexander were concerned about our clothing being too light as the temperature would be dropping below zero before we reached Emmonak and so they gave us some lined pants and thick shirts. While having a drink at the Galena Tavern, we met a friendly fellow by the name of Duane. When we told him that we had been paddling for 52 days already and had about another 20 to go he said just a minute and immediately went to his house across the street and returned with two large bowls of stew for us. We ate it all and it was delicious. In Mountain Village we met Doug Lee who gave us a drive into town for shopping and helped us find waterproof gloves as the weather was getting colder. He then explained how and where to follow a 25-mile-long slough parallel with but separate from the Yukon River and with unlocked cabins that would provide us with

This is a group of Firefighters that we met along the Porcupine River, Alaska. They were friendly young men that offered us coffee and snacks when we stopped for a visit. The tent used such bright colors I presume to help ensure the planes and choppers didn't drop water on them by mistake.

shelter during the coming storm. One evening Dean Painter and his wife who were heading down river by boat quickly turned their boat into the shoreline where we had set up camp. They stopped and urged us to move to another location because there was a lot of grizzlys seen in this area and they felt we were in danger. It had been a long day paddling into headwinds so we thanked them and told them we would be vigilant and keep our weapons handy but we would be staying put. When we met them three days later in Grayling, they were happy to see us and gave us some smoked moose sausage. While camped beside the Fish and Wildlife Federal building in Galena the officers, when they became aware of Gerry's leaky air mattress, provided him with one of their own. Just above the village of Russian Mission we stopped for lunch at a small cluster of cabins and were invited in for coffee by John Dementiev. We had a great chat with John about the Russian history of the area over coffee and lunch. He tried to convince us to spend the night but it was early in the day and we were trying to get back on schedule so we kept going. We pulled in and stopped at the Research Station for Alaska Fish and Game just upriver from Pilot Station. We had been fighting cold headwinds and drizzle all morning so this sheltered spot was a very welcome reprieve. Ryan Merrill, the Site Manager invited us into their camp for coffee and stew, introduced us to the rest of the friendly folks and gave us a tour of their unique facilities. He explained how the gear worked with counting the salmon. Now well rested and warmed up with our bellies full, we departed their camp. It had been a couple of months since I had last spoken on the phone to the Emmonak hotel staff about accommodations. It was now Saturday and I knew from previous phone calls to the Emmonak Hotel that the office was closed on the weekend. As we approached the town of Emmonak, a speedboat was departing the dock area so I decided to wave them down and ask a few questions about the town – where best to offload the canoe, etc. As we talked, I noticed that the lady on board was using a cell phone so when she finished, I asked if she could try to contact the Hotel Manager and see if she could

This is Clarence Anderson taken at the bed & breakfast in Fort Yukon. Him and his wife Virginia treated us very well during our two-day stopover. Clarence was concerned about us making it to Emmonak before the cold weather set in, so he gave us some lined pants and thick wool shirts to use.

This couple had earlier tried to get us to relocate our camp along the Yukon River because the area we had camped in had a large population of grizzly bears. When we met them downriver several days later they were happy to see us and gave us some moose sausage!

A couple of young men from the town of Marshall stopped to visit us. They had been out duck hunting and offered us a duck as they were leaving. We politely refused since it was out of season for us but it was a very nice gesture for us strangers.

We found ourselves sometimes having to build walkways of driftwood across the mud-flats to get to and from the canoes and our campsites.

Leg #	Number of Trading Posts	Years the Posts were in operation
1	13	1750 – 1844
2	4	1805 – 1810
3	18	1668 – 1836
4	22	1778 – 1891
5	15	1835 - 1898
		Grand Total: 68 Fur Trading Posts

have the office opened for us to check in. She agreed to try and contact the hotel representative, Teresa Mark on their way upriver. Shortly after we arrived at the dock, we met Michael Jimmy who agreed to show us where the hotel was so we walked over to the place and the Hotel Manager arrived there just as we did. She checked us in and we had a relaxing two days before we departed for Anchorage with our gear and canoe. Thanks to all you friendly and helpful folks above who welcomed us into your space and helped make our canoe trip such a success.

By completion of this paddling odyssey, we had visited the locations of 68 former fur trading posts from Labrador to Alaska. Data was provided from the "Posts of the Canadian Fur Trade" The map was prepared by the National Atlas of Canada. Most trading posts on the lower Yukon River were Russian.

It should be noted that most of those old Post facilities have long since decayed and disappeared from view, but in a few villages some of the old fur trade posts were still standing unused or reworked into small museums, display centers, sheds and café's, a testament to the creativity of the people living there.

On July 1st, 2022 my fellow paddlers and I had started the 2600 km canoe trip from Fort McPherson, NWT. Gerry Coleman and I finished the canoe trip on September 10th at Emmonak, Alaska just 12 km from where the Yukon River flows into the Bering Sea. The route involved paddling across the Mackenzie River delta, via the Peel and the Husky Channel then up the Rat River to Ogilvie and Summit Lakes and through the Rockies at McDougald Pass. We then portaged, lined and paddled down the Little Bell, the Bell, the Porcupine and Yukon Rivers. Early in the trip we rose most mornings at 4:30 AM and were

Leg #	Year	Paddling	Paddling	Days
1	2015	Menihek Landing to Rigolet on the Labrador Sea	982 km	21
2	2017	Menihek Landing to Chisasibi, Quebec on James Bay	1208 km	36
3	2018	La Loche, Saskatchewan to York Factory, Hudson Bay	1921 km	54
4	2019	La Loche, Sask to Tsiigehtchec / Fort McPherson, NWT	2752 km	53
5	2022	Fort McPherson, NWT to Emmonak, Alaska	2755 km	72
		Grand Total	**9618 km**	**236**

Lunch on a Yukon River shoreline laced with dead trees and other debris from the Upper Yukon.

paddling by 5:30 AM. Then we would start to look for a campsite around 5:30 PM. As the days got shorter in late August and September, we had to rise a little later because daylight came later. We met one other canoeist on the trip by the name of Gary who was paddling the Porcupine River. He had started his canoe trip at Eagle Plains in the Yukon and was on his way to Old Crow. Gerry and I provided SPOT and Inreach updates to friends & family as we paddled so they knew where we were. After paddling 12-hour days for much of the trip we arrived back home about 15 pounds lighter but we thoroughly enjoyed the canoe trip and were really no worse for wear. Someone asked me what was learned from this canoe trip. I have to say that all of the people we met along the way were inherently good, friendly and wanted to be helpful. This of course was especially exemplified in the north.

A local event at the conference hall of the hotel where we stayed. A friendly and helpful local Yupik Michael Jimmy with other participants in the background.

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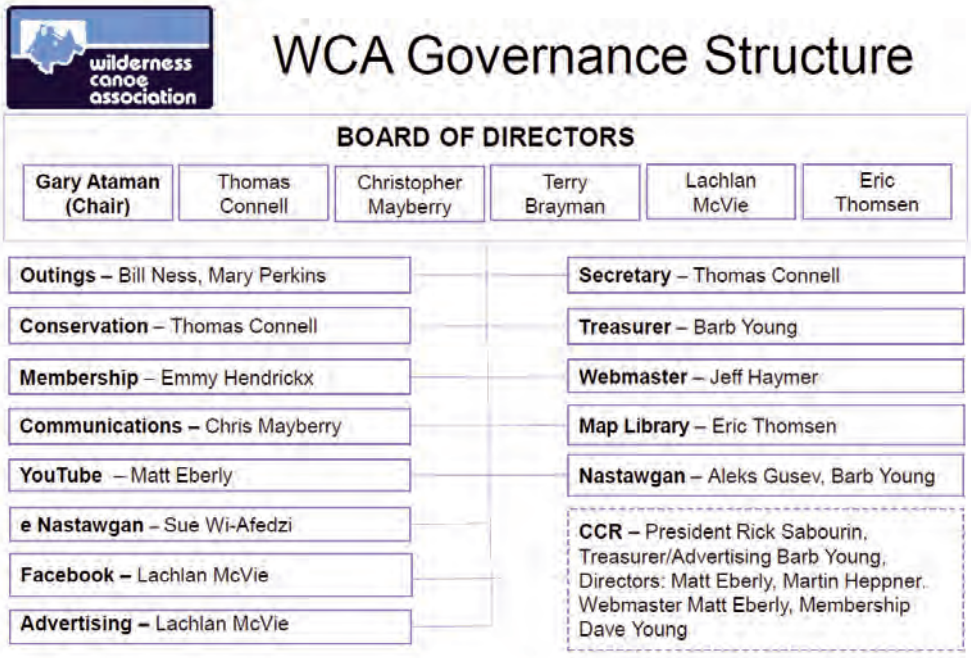

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