RETURN UNDELIVERABLE
ITEMS TO:
The Wilderness Canoe Association
12 Erindale Crescent
Brampton, Ontario
Canada
L6W 1B5

NASTAWGAN

The Journal of the Wilderness Canoe Association

CPM #40015547

SUMMER 2024

Discover the potential for adventure
with a Black Feather guided canoe trip.

Explore. Experience. Grow.

Black Feather
the wilderness adventure company

www.blackfeather.com 1-888-849-7668 info@blackfeather.com

wilderness canoe association

nastawgan

Summer 2024 Vol. 51 No. 2 Journal of the Wilderness Canoe Association

Bloodvein River at sunset past Kakasannapeekak Rapids #73

The River that Gives Life: A Journey Down the Bloodvein River

Story and Photos by Erik Thomsen

East of Lake Winnipeg and north of Lake Superior, in the central boreal uplands of the Canadian Shield, runs an ancient wilderness river of incredible natural beauty and great human heritage. Over its course of more than 300 kilometres (km), the Bloodvein River surges over more than 100 rocky rapids and waterfalls as it passes through a forest landscape of extreme contrast: rich, green and verdant swaths of jack pine and black spruce; black and barren expanses of land ravaged by fire. Eagles and osprey

Via train stopped at Armstrong Station, en route to Red Lake

drift over this lonely land in abundance, while black bear and woodland caribou ramble through its mossy rockscapes and shadowy recesses. Red ochre pictographs on the river's innumerable cliffs - the bison, the war canoe, the shaman – shed an aura of mystery and sanctitude, and remind the traveler of the old traditions born here in a far distant time.

Legends suggest that the waterway's traditional name, Miskweyaabiziibee in Anishinaabemowin, the Blood River, originated from a large tribal battle waged at the river's mouth, that tinged the waters red with the blood of fallen warriors. The name "Bloodvein", however, gained prominence during the fur trade era, in supposed reference to the red veins of granite that can often be found running through the dark rock at riverside.

The Bloodvein watershed is the homeland of several Anishinaabe communities including the Bloodvein River First Nation, Little Grand Rapids First Nation, Pikangikum First Nation and Lac Seul First Nation. These communities and their ancestors have long acted as stewards of this land and have historically used the river for trade, food harvest, transportation and spiritual purposes. Archaeological records – artifacts, graves, village sites – suggest that human habitation of the region extends back as far as 9,000 years, corresponding with the retreat of the glaciers and drainage of Lake Agassiz – North America's largest prehistoric glacial lake. Many of the pictographs of the region date back as far as 3,000 years, with the site on Artery Lake considered a site of national significance.

Departing from Red Lake, Ontario

In the era of the fur trade, the land encompassing the Bloodvein became known by the voyageurs as Le Petit Nord – the Little North; a place they viewed as distinct from "Le Grand Nord" which contained the vast lands north and west of Lake Winnipeg. In the late 1700s and early 1800s the river itself became a significant transportation and supply route for the fur trade, linking Lake Winnipeg with interior trapping and hunting grounds. Innumerable trading posts and trapping cabins were established in the region, including posts erected by the Hudson Bay Company and North West Company. Supposedly, the remnants of some of these structures may still be found at the river's confluence with tributaries such as the Gammon and the Sasaginnigak Rivers.

Today, the Bloodvein is recognized as a Canadian Heritage River and is permanently protected in both Ontario and Manitoba within the respective boundaries of Woodland Caribou Provincial Park and Atikaki Provincial Wilderness Park. These large protected areas aim to conserve not only the historical and cultural heritage features of the area, but also the region's outstanding natural heritage features. Notably, the parks preserve the largest and most intact example of boreal shield on the continent and the habitat of several rare or threatened species such as the woodland caribou, wolverine, lake sturgeon, chestnut lamprey and bank swallow.

In 2018, in acknowledgement of the natural and cultural importance of the vast wilderness that encompasses the Bloodvein and other watersheds, UNESCO designated the region as a World Heritage site called Pimachiowin Aki — "The Land that Gives Life". Pimachiowin Aki is the only site of Canada's 20 World Heritage sites to be recognized for both its cultural and natural significance. The site is particularly noted for the longstanding tradition practiced by Indigenous peoples called, Jiganawendamang Gidakiiminaan —

"keeping the land" — which pays respect to all life forms and seeks the preservation of harmony between creatures.

In its description of this tradition, UNESCO states that this principle "guides relations between Anishinaabeg and the land; it is the framework through which the cultural landscape of Pimachiowin Aki is perceived, given meaning, used and sustained across the generations. Widely dispersed across the landscape are ancient and contemporary livelihood sites, sacred sites and named places, most linked by waterways that are tangible reflections of Ji-ganawendamang Gidakiiminaan."

Trip Report

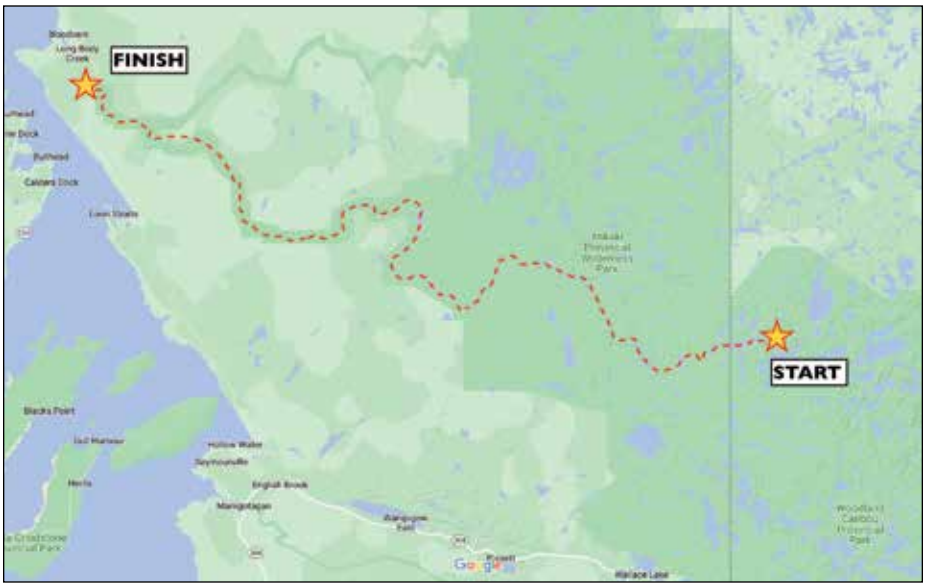
On July 23, 2023, our party of four (Jono Kuketz, Kevin Groombridge, Lachlan McVie and myself) met at Union Station in Toronto and boarded a Via train destined for Red Lake Road in northwestern Ontario. Following the 29-hour train ride, we were shuttled an additional two hours north to the town of Red Lake, by Albert Rogalinski of Goldseekers Canoe Outfitting, where we stayed the night.

Our plan was to depart Red Lake in the morning by floatplane and land on Artery Lake at the western edge of the Ontario border in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. From here we would paddle a 230-kilometre stretch of the Bloodvein River over 13 days through Atikaki Provincial Wilderness Park in Manitoba, egressing at the Bloodvein River bridge – approximately 10 km from Bloodvein River First Nation on Lake Winnipeg.

Day 1: Artery Lake to Moosebone Rapids (14 km)

The morning was cool, calm and clear – a vibrant sunrise cast a strong orange hue over the town of Red Lake as we prepared for our departure at the docks of Superior Airways. To access the park, we would rely on a double 30-minute flight aboard a 1950s de Havilland Beaver. Jono and Lachlan boarded the first flight and took off at around 7 a.m. as Kevin and I looked on from the dock.

After spending some time in Red Lake's Norseman Park – a municipal park that honours Red Lake's aviation heritage and the legendary Noorduyn

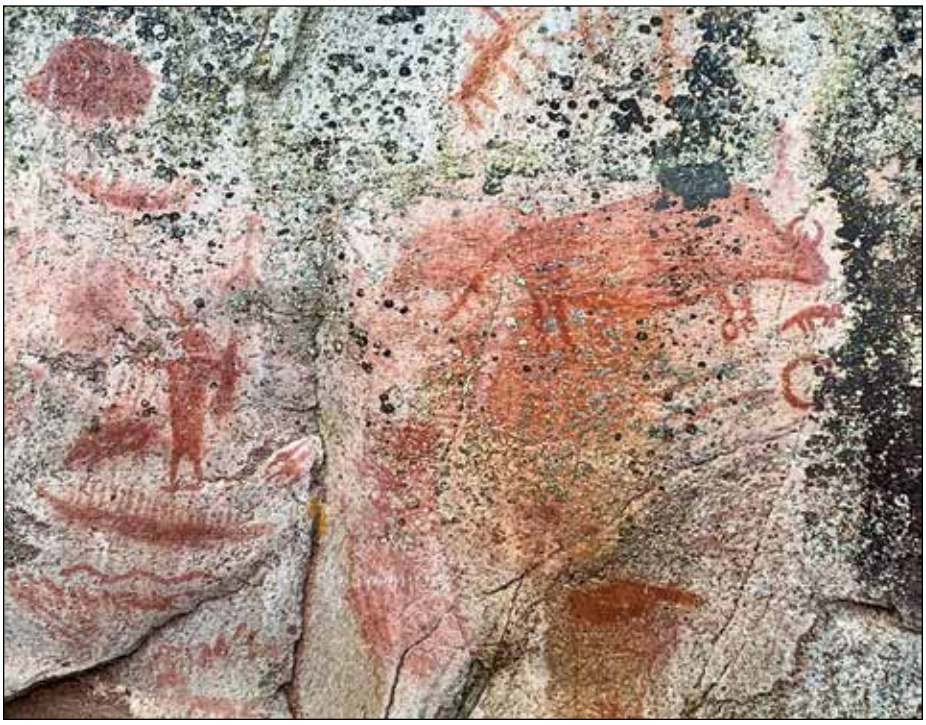


Map of the route – Artery Lake to Bloodvein Bridge

Norseman bushplane – Kevin and I took our seats in the Beaver and set off to the west as well.

With the plane at altitude, we quickly passed into the boundary of Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. Though a blanket of haze from northern fires hung thick over the landscape, the view of the boreal was remarkable with an array of sparkling lakes and rivers, lush peatlands and rugged rock barrens stretching endlessly in all directions. The flight also provided a unique vantage of the devastation caused by the 2021 wildfires that charred almost 800,000 hectares of land surrounding Red Lake.

We soon touched down on Artery Lake and taxied to a sandy peninsula where we unloaded and bid farewell to our pilot. Before turning west toward the Manitoba-Ontario boundary line and our first campsite, we opted to paddle ~3 km



Artery Lake Pictograph site

Pulling over the Artery Lake canoe ladder

Campfire at Moosebone Rapids

to the east to visit the famous Artery Lake pictograph site.

In his well-known 1962 work, *"Indian Rock Paintings of the Great Lakes"*, Canadian artist and Indigenous rock art expert, Selwyn Dewdney referred to the Artery Lake site as "one of those rare experiences that are the supreme reward of pictograph-hunting."

The site is indeed impressive — the best I have yet seen in my travels — owing to its size, condition, detail and diversity of subject matter, which includes fascinating depictions of a figure paddling a canoe, a thunderbird, a shaman, medicine serpents, a canoe brigade, a porcupine, a large bison, and various other images. As we admired and attempted to decipher the images, Jono produced tobacco and we each made an offering to pay respect to this sacred place.

Pimachiowin Aki holds over 30 known pictograph sites with hundreds of collective images — the largest collection of pictograph sites in all of Canada. Artery Lake is but one very special site. Some of the expressions that appear on the rock here seem clear — the bison or the war canoe, for instance. Many others, whether due to their fading condition or unknown meaning, emanate a true sense of mystery.

In his essay, *"Lessons on Stone"*, Hap Wilson writes: "The Bloodvein River conveys a message understood by very few. I resign myself to that place of bewilderment, like most others who travel its waters, play in the rapids and walk the nastawgan trails, getting caught up in the waterplay and the landscape and the camaraderie, and such vain pleasures that appease the physical senses. But I hope, as I visit these places and revel in the sanctity of ancient wisdom, that I may someday understand more about what went on here, in the mind of the teacher who left us such cryptic lessons on stone."

We now moved to the west and would generally follow that trajectory, toward Lake Winnipeg, for the remainder of our journey.

Soon we encountered the first of the 77 rapids found along the portion of the river we planned to paddle. This rapid, marked as rapid #10 in Hap Wilson's definitive guide to the river, *"Wilderness*

Rivers of Manitoba",[1] bears the unique feature of a boat ladder. The contraption, which includes a series of rollers spanning a steel rail, is designed to assist patrons of a nearby fly-in fishing outpost for transporting their tin vessels downstream. We happily made good use of the ladder to avoid the carryover.

A kilometre or so past rapid #10 we approached a sign marking the Manitoba-Ontario border and stopped here to savour the relatively rare experience of paddling across a major jurisdictional boundary.

Having now passed into Atikaki Provincial Wilderness Park, we discovered a plaque at the bottom of the next rapid (#11), celebrating the designation of the Bloodvein as a Canadian Heritage River. The plaque read: "Over 100 rapids and falls, cryptic pictographs on silent rock faces and a profound sense of wilderness – these are the contributions of Manitoba's portion of the Bloodvein River to the Canadian Heritage Rivers System. The Bloodvein's unique natural values are enhanced by the opportunity its timeless setting provides to recreate the feelings and challenges which faced early Canadians long ago. The perspective gained through experiencing the

Chute at Stonehouse Rapids

[1] *Note: this trip report frequently references rapids using the number system established in "Wilderness Rivers of Manitoba" (2003) by Hap Wilson.*

Eagle's Nest at Stonehouse Rapids

After the storm at Stonehouse Rapids

natural forces of wind and rapid, and the gentler force of constancy within renewal, bring sharply into focus the priceless heritage the Bloodvein River holds in trust for the nation."

As we read the plaque, a deep tremble of thunder rumbled in the grey distance behind us, and we decided to move onward.

We paddled quickly to Moosebone Rapids (#14), passing by river otters playing in the water and bald eagles drifting in the sky. Though the thunder seemed to loom in the distance without advancing, we opted to set up camp here to avoid the risk of getting caught in the storm. We spent the remainder of the afternoon paddling and fishing the rapid, catching a walleye on virtually every cast.

Late in the day, the slow-moving thunderstorm finally caught up to us and sat over our campsite for several hours, well into the night.

Day 2: Moosebone Rapids to Stonehouse Rapids (23.5 km)

In the morning, with puffy grey and white clouds dispersed across the sky, we set off down river. We first paddled an easy class I rapid (#15) and portaged and lined two more (#16-17) marked as do not run (DNR) on our map, before arriving at Nut Cracker Falls (#18). The land opens up at the bottom of this picturesque falls as the river enters Bushey Lake, the first of three remaining lakes on our route.

One of the primary characteristics of the Bloodvein is the quantity and frequency of its rapids, which span the full spectrum of difficulty. However, the consistent presence of portage trails, opportunities to line/wade and 'pool and drop' nature of the river, mean that the route can generally be paddled by those with any level of whitewater experience.

By the end of our journey, we had run approximately 40 rapids along the route and likely would have opted to run an additional five or six, had we used plastic whitewater boats as opposed to the less rigid, but lighter kevlar boats supplied by our outfitter. In time, we would generally agree that the trade-off of skipping a few runnable rocky rapids for easier overall portaging was acceptable given the sheer number of portages on the river.

After portaging another DNR, known as Bruise Easy Falls (#19), we spotted a number of pictographs on the cliff face to our right, including thunderbirds, a snake, a figure in a canoe, and what

Dewdney refers to as a "bird man" – an interesting humanoid figure with outstretched arms and a triangular body.

The river soon widened again into a long channel speckled with islands, known as Stonehouse Lake, where we encountered several pelicans and bald eagles.

At the lake's northwest end is Stonehouse Rapids (#21-23) – a series of two impressive waterfalls that cut dramatically through the shield followed by a class III rapid, where we pitched our tents atop a broad flat, pine-speckled outcrop. In one of the trees here, we found a large eagle's nest occupied by mother and her fledgling.

As we ate dinner, thunder once again crept over our campsite and we were suddenly hit by strong, swirling gusts. Lightning flashed constantly overhead and a torrential rain pummeled our camp.

By 9 p.m. the sun had emerged to yield a pale sunset that tinted the air orange and painted a faint rainbow on the southern sky.

Day 3: Stonehouse Rapids to South of Gooseneck Rapids (29 km)

The morning changed rapidly from calm and clear to overcast with relentless headwinds from the west. These winds, which blow hard off of Lake Winnipeg, are common impediments to travel on all the boreal rivers in this region.

Past rapid #24 we entered into a large burn for the first time on the trip. Open rolling white rock barrens, stripped clean of foliage by the prior years' fires, were the dominant feature of the landscape. The portage around rapid #25 brought us sharply up to a scorched plateau above the river. Lush, green shrubs under the dead trees of the plateau endowed the otherwise colourless grey landscape with colour and life.

After stopping briefly for lunch at X-Rock Rapids (#26) we set off again into strong mid-day headwinds that we would battle for the remainder of the afternoon.

With evening approaching and our energy spent, we found a viable site on a burnt island south of Gooseneck (Nekesepe) Rapids. The site was flat and grassy, but covered with blackened trees, which would have provided a significant deadfall hazard in high winds. Given the lack of alternatives we settled for the site, though placed our tents away from the worst-looking trees.

Rainbow at campsite near Gooseneck Rapids

At dinner, as I cooked bannock over the fire, another late day rainfall swept over our campsite, leaving behind a brilliant rainbow before sundown. This colourful spectrum of light arced delicately over the largely blackened landscape, illustrating the contrasting sources of beauty that are so present this land.

Day 4: South of Gooseneck Rapids to Red Rock Café (18.6 km)

Downstream from our campsite lay Gooseneck Rapids (#29), a stretch of water that takes the distinct form of goose's neck as it curls around a bend in the river. The 450 metre (m) trail around the rapids – one of the longest of the route – cuts through a tangled mess of burnt trees, over rock barrens and past clusters of multi-coloured wildflowers before meeting back with the river.

Further along we opted to paddle a thrilling class III chute (#31) and lengthy class II rapid (#33), before arriving at the "Red Rock Café" campsite, where we would stay for the evening. This campsite, which lies at the junction of the Gammon River, is named for the red granite cliff face that sits over the river from the campsite.

As dusk fell, with a campfire ablaze and the cliff face across the river

Portaging through burned area, Gooseneck Rapids

shrouded in darkness, a remarkable scene unfolded. Thousands of white mayflies emerged to float silently through the air over the river like fluffy snowflakes. In time, fish noticed the presence of these creatures and a frenzy of splashes erupted wherever the insects drifted too close to the water's surface. Above, swallows acrobatically snagged the hovering insects in mid-flight. As we observed this sudden feeding frenzy, a deep swooshing of wings sounded through the air above us, just out of arm's reach – a squadron of pelicans had cruised over our heads in formation and were now quickly making their way up river.

Red Rock Cafe campsite

Day 5: Red Rock Café to Okeegee Falls (27 km)

We started a sunny day of paddling by running Rapid #34 and soon arrived at the Bennet trapper's cabin, also known as the "Stagger Inn", as suggested by the beautifully painted sign that adorns the cabin's exterior.

Up until very recently, the cabin had been kept in immaculate condition, provisioned with everything needed for an extended stay in any season (wood stove, snowshoes, ice auger, lanterns, traps and snares – even a generator to operate basic electronics).

Unfortunately, the contents of the cabin were in disarray owing to the work of a bear or other wild animal that had somehow gained access to the dwelling. We found that a tree had also fallen and struck the cabin, though apparently had not significantly damaged its structure. Before leaving, we signed a guestbook and noted that a few other groups had paddled the river this season.

Past Rapid #37, the land transitions briefly from a rocky, winding and narrow river to a broad, grassy and prairie-like marshland. Here, about half way through the marsh we found evidence of an old structure on the shore, as well as mooring rings and bundled beams.

At rapid #38 we successfully paddled a large wave train then proceeded down a northern fork in the river toward Rapid #39, where Lachlan would bag his first channel catfish of the trip.

Prior to emerging from the northern fork and rejoining the main river, we also came to a large chute with a five-foot drop (Rapid #40) that was too tempting to avoid. Despite taking on a lot of water, both boats were able to emerge from the run without swamping.

We soon reached our campsite, "The Overlook", at Okeegee (Eddying) Falls (#46), which afforded a terrific east facing vista atop a large open clearing in the forest.

Day 6: Okeegee Falls to Chap Falls (22km)

For the first time on the trip, we awoke to a thick, sun-obscuring haze caused by distant fires. The day offered a break from rapids with over 20 km of flat water, including a 1.5 km crossing of Kautunigan (Perch Dish) Lake, en route

to camp at Chap Falls. Luckily, for much of the day the northwestern winds maintained a tame demeanour and we took advantage of the calm conditions to explore this interesting portion of the route.

At the northern end of Kautunigan we spotted some faded pictographs and searched, in vain, for the supposed ruins of a fur era trading post at the confluence of the Sasaginnigak River. Shortly past this tributary, we came upon an old fly-in hunt camp on the river's north shore accompanied by a few make-shift moose hangs further down river.

We arrived at picturesque Chap Falls late in the afternoon. Though the campsite here was of high quality, recent fires had effectively killed its trees and we hesitantly pitched our tents amongst a patch of dead, fire-blistered pines.

Stagger Inn trapper's cabin from the water

Day 7: Chap Falls to Dancing Fire Rapids (21 km)

We departed Chap Falls at mid-morning opting to run the lower half of the rapid. Evidently, the grey haze of the prior day had not lifted and we resigned ourselves to another day of paddling through smoke. This would be offset by relatively fair conditions and excellent whitewater canoeing.

Our first test was an easy centre run through Rapid #49 followed by a massive, high-volume class III at Sekak (Skunk) Rapids (#50). Kevin and I scouted the run from the right before making the decision to give it a shot, knowing that the rapids' central standing waves could well swamp us. After taking a slight angle to the approach from river right, we blasted through the chaos of the centre and slayed any nerves we held at the top.

We now entered the Omacheetayshemowin (Dancing Fire) Rapids section of the trip, which spans rapids #53 to #58 and is known for the beautiful stretches of red granite that line this serpentine portion of the Bloodvein. Here we ran rapids #53 to #56, before pulling off the river to scout #57 (class III) from an island in the middle of the river. In preparation for our trip down the Bloodvein, I had read many journals and trip reports of the route and recalled this rapid well, with its broad width and long, devilish tongue. We determined that we would not let the opportunity to challenge this run pass and dashed off the island into the middle of the tongue and through its large standing waves to emerge victorious in the eddy below.

Toward the end of the day, we found an excellent campsite atop rapid #58 and settled in for the night under a smokey orange moon.

Day 8: Dancing Fire Rapids to North of Kakasannapeekak Rapids (24 km)

The group was somewhat surprised to awake to an early morning thunderstorm that struck our camp with a good deal of rain. Fortunately, the storm had the effect of clearing the haze from the sky and improving our air quality.

Within the first few kilometres of the day we encountered an additional six rapids that we variously paddled or portaged. After emerging from the last set of this section we were greeted by a large female moose and her calf grazing peacefully along the north bank of the river.

Lachlan and Jono paddling Rapid #40

Paddling Rapid #50

Past rapid #65 the river forks around a large island. Here we opted to diverge from the river's main channel and take the northern fork where we bumped and scraped our canoe on the river's bottom while negotiating two class I rapids (#69 and #70). Ultimately, we made it through and rejoined the main river on approach of Manitou (Gods) Rapids (#71).

The river here veers to the northwest and holds this general trajectory through scorched barrens for much of its final ~80 km. Judging by the lack of vegetation and stripped, bare rock, the fires through this section of the river must have been especially extreme.

In the case of Kashaweposenatak "Unloading" Rapids (#72), which appeared to be the nastiest rapid on the river, the fires had destroyed the portage trail on the western shore. This relegated us to clambering over rocks on the river's eastern side, as the thunderous torrent roared its mighty song feet away.

Past Kakasannapeekak "Sharp Rock" Rapids (#73) we were able to find an overgrown, west-facing campsite that we quickly revitalized.

Before sundown, Lachlan and I paddled across the river to explore the broad, open, fire-ravaged landscape that sat adjacent to our site. Here we found rippling hills of ravaged brown and grey rock, almost entirely devoid of trees, with only a few tall, defiant, limbless trunks sporadically dotting the landscape. To many this landscape would have appeared desolate.

Northern fork of river past Rapid #50

However, tremendous signs of rebirth persisted. Green brush enveloped the black logs that littered the ground in all directions. Countless bees and other pollinators hummed through the pale late afternoon air, passing from flower to flower in a boundless, multi-coloured field. Trumpeter swans floated slowly in the waters nearby. On returning to our site, the sun dropped low on the horizon and cast a pastel light over the burnt barrens – the land was very much alive.

Days 9-10: North of Kakasannapeekak Rapids to Namay Falls (27 km)
Though we were in no hurry to make distance, we established a tentative objective of reaching Namay Falls – some 25 km away – and set off through the burnt land under a blistering sun.

The river's apparent low water levels were evident at Kineewi (Golden Eagle) Rapids (#74) as we noticed driftwood perched on rocks several feet above the water.

On exploring Little Birch Falls (#76) at lunch, we found a weather-beaten federal survey marker from 1925, embedded in the granite near the falls. The marker read: "Dominion of Canada – 7 years Imprisonment for Removal". Such surveyor markers were placed throughout the country in the decades following confederation to establish a system for land description in Canada.

Beyond Little Birch Falls, the Bloodvein merges with a minor tributary known as the Kapeeskeekwaytekwayak Creek before moving through a grassy pasture-like landscape on approach of Ankuasi Falls (#79) – a picturesque DNR waterfall that splits an island.

We reached Namay Falls (#80) late in the day and with less than 30 km remaining and time to spare we decided that we would use a rest day here. The large, flat and open site is perched high above the falls on a bluff and provides an excellent vantage of the flowing river.

Our rest day at Namay was spent swimming in the eddies below the falls and exploring the burned forests around the camp, where we found the bones of a small teepee and a fire ring. In the evening, Lachlan caught a smallmouth bass, that we breaded and deep-fried in oil as a supplement to dinner.

Day 11: Namay Falls to Lagoon Run (18 km)
Upon waking up to a light rain with the rumble of with thunder in the distance we agreed to paddle as far as the conditions would allow. The Bloodvein River Bridge – our takeout point – was about 25 km away now. We aimed to put ourselves

Sunset from campsite past Kakasannapeekak Rapids #73

Paddling rapids past Namay Falls

close enough to the bridge to get there easily in the event we faced weather delays or other externalities.

Past the first bend from Namay Falls we took the east channel at the fork in the river toward the Leyond River confluence. Given the low water conditions, we believed that this channel was preferrable over the shorter, but shallower, western fork.

On the eastern fork, we ran class I and II rapids (#81 and #82), then traversed a western fork around another large island and paddled the bottom half of Namay Rapids (#83 – class III) and ran rapid #84 (class II).

Final campsite on the Bloodvein River

Given bursts of thunder in the grey distance behind us we opted to skip Akeeko Rapids (#85) and paddled quickly to Lagoon Run (#86). With gusts of wind slashing the trees above our site, we were each able to pitch our tents just as a brief, but hard, storm rolled in.

Day 12-13: Lagoon Run to the Bloodvein River Bridge (7 km)

With only 7 km and one rapid to go, we moved off from Lagoon Run late in the morning, with clear skies overhead.

Slightly past Kaneeshotekwayak Creek we came upon the Bloodvein River hydrometric station – the chief source for gaining information on water levels for the route.[2]

Soon we approached and paddled a fun curling rapid (#87) – the last of the trip – and found a campsite 600 m from the Bloodvein bridge, which could be seen from our site's rocky shoreline.

In the early evening, we heard the yelping of coyotes over the river; a beaver swam through the placid waters of the Bloodvein; an eagle – perhaps the seventh we had spotted that day – flew overhead.

In the morning we packed up and loaded our boats as Goldseekers Outfitters arrived across the river. As we approached the bridge, we noticed beautifully illustrated plaques on its abutments. On one plaque was the head of an eagle emerging through the clouds and into the rays of the sun cast over the land. On another, a collage with two eagles, a large wing, a teepee, a sun and a moon over a wild landscape. A third plaque reads:

"Welcome to the Bloodvein River
Deep in the Heart of the Land
Canadian Heritage River – Designated 1987
Home to Bald Eagles, Black Bears, Walleye, and Sturgeon".

[2] *Note: the "low" water levels we experienced over the course of our journey had averaged approximately 29.2 m with a discharge rate of 33 m3/s based on data from this station.*

Left to right: Erik Thomsen, Jono Kuketz, Lachlan McVie, Kevin Groombridge

Epilogue

During our trip down the Bloodvein I read a collection of essays by the late nature writer, Barry Lopez, entitled, *"Embrace Fearlessly the Burning World."* This posthumous compilation spans an array of themes, but is often bound by a message that would resonate well with those who find meaning in exploring wild places; be fully attentive in the land, embrace its creatures, its histories, its stories – pursue its infinite secrets. Listen carefully.

In one of his essays, Lopez writes about the life of rivers and their mysteries – rivers wild and free – just like the Bloodvein:

"The bass voice of the river can be found in the cataract, the plunge of a waterfall, and in the hollow cavitation of a rapids; but the river speaks, too, with the susurrations, the gurgle and the delicate seethe of the narrower and shallower runs of water.

[This] is to say nothing of the beings living comfortably in the river – trout, caddisfly larva, behemoth sturgeon (a kind of once-upon-a-time-fish)… or those who fish in them like the merganser and the great blue heron…

It is to say nothing of how darkness does not stem their flow, for they are sleepless, or how sunlight lambent on the surface strains the human eye, which can find no detail in the molten light. It is to say nothing of the sudden clack of cobbles shifting on the river's bed in the middle of the night, of the way rain hammers the surface flatter, or how soundlessly it accepts the fall of snow…

This is to say that it is kind of an animal itself, containing other animals, and abetting lives of still others, like the osprey and the mountain lion sipping at its bank. It is to point out that rivers are older than humans… it is to say that despite our charts of cubic feet of flow per second, our topographic maps of the precise extent of their watersheds, our catalogs of their aquatic, avian and terrestrial denizens, we hardly know them."

I will always remember the strange figures etched on the walls of Artery Lake, wondering who placed them there (the meaning of some will always be a mystery); the searing rainbow hanging over the charred landscape near Gooseneck Rapids; the silent flock of the shadowy pelicans drifting over our heads at dusk as the mayflies floated ever-presently in a soft flurry like snow; the boneshaking rumble of Kashaweposenatak Rapids; the bees buzzing between the wildflowers in the scorched barrens before sundown, slowly playing their role in rebuilding the forest on the ancient shores of the river that gives life.

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.

2024 Wilderness Canoe Symposium Review

We have fond memories of many symposiums at Monarch Park Collegiate. When Covid hit, we had mixed feelings about on-line and hybrid symposiums. We realized that we missed interacting with other paddlers but, on the other hand, it saved the trek from Cobourg into the heart of Toronto.

This year was our first time attending the symposium at York University. What a pleasant experience it was!

The parking was convenient (even if the app required a bit of head-scratching), the auditorium was comfortable, and there was a good choice of eating establishments on campus within easy walking distance.

The theme of a couple of the memorable presentations was "lessons learned." The Robinsons' description of how they got into trouble at Swallow Falls reinforced a basic tenet: always know where you are. Their remarkable recovery and ability to complete the trip successfully was a perfect example that it's all about the repair kit…and having a nail! And from Pat Lewtas we learned that it just might be a good idea to have two adults along when taking children into the wilderness.

David Pelly's and Dan Wong's presentations meshed well. And we got an update regarding the opening of the Canadian Canoe Museum at their new site from Carolyn Hyslop and Jeremy Ward.

All of the presentations were enjoyable. Live music by Jerry Vandiver and Caitlin Evanson was another highlight.

While the online may have been easier, we really appreciated the enriched experience of attending the 2024 symposium in person: it reminded us of the importance of mingling with other paddlers and catching up with colleagues you only see occasionally.

If you have not yet attended a WCS symposium at York, we highly recommend giving it a try in 2025.

Bruce and Beth Bellaire

Paddler Co-op Fund Raiser a Success

Paddler Co-op has been successul in raising the necessary $300,000 for the mortgage on the riverside property at Palmer Rapids. This was a major achievement. Their fundraising consultants said that this was one of the most positive grassroots fundraisers they have ever seen.

As you know the WCA was a major contributor. Thank you to all WCA members who contributed and made this endeavour so successful.

Upcoming Events

2024 Fall Gathering

Our Fall Gathering this year will take place at Paddler Co-op near Palmer Rapids. We will meet **Sept 13th-15th**. All are welcome. A variety of outings are planned.

Mike Wevrick Annual Wine & Cheese

The Annual Mike Wevrick Wine & Cheese will take place on **Dec 7th, 2024** at the Toronto Sailing and Canoe Club in Toronto. Adam Shoalts will speak about his journey from Lake Erie to Ungava Bay.

WCA YouTube Channel Makes Money

A big thank you to Matt Eberly who has worked to monetize the WCA YouTube Channel. We recently received our first payment. This is based on numbers of views. Thanks to everyone who has contributed to the content and also to our viewers.

Where the Falcon Flies

Book Review by Iori Miller

There was a time when the map of Canada only showed a vague outline of Newfoundland and a bit of the Labrador/Quebec eastern shore. Back then, this new world needed explorers. Today every single kilometer of Canada is mapped, and some might argue there's no need for more Explorers. Satellites can spill geographic data out of the sky with the flick of a switch, or, at least, a stroke on a keyboard.

So, are explorers on Earth a thing of the past? Elon Musk might argue today's explorers must go to Mars. And further. So, are today's explorers only the rich billionaires with awesome space rocket toys, like Elon, or Jeff Bezos?

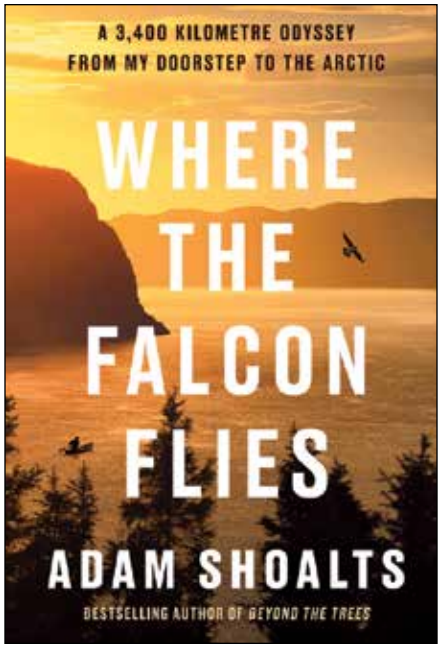
Adam Shoalts is an explorer, and he pilots a donated red canoe. When he goes exploring, he fills his canoe with enough gear and food to last him a few months, and he explores routes that few would dare to try. In fact, few in the history of Canada have seen as much of the country from the seat of a canoe, as Adam Shoalts. He embodies the very definition of an explorer spirit.

Adam has written several books all of which are non-fiction. Personally, I think his best was *A History of Canada in Ten Maps*. It describes how the modern map of Canada grew from great explorers who undertook epic journeys filled with hardship, all to find new routes across a land spreading endlessly west from today's Quebec/Labrador shoreline. In this book Adam tells the tales of other explorers with wit and depth, but in his other books he tells the stories of his own epic adventures. Most of which were undertaken from the seat of his red canoe (generously provided by the Nova Craft Canoe Company).

In his most recent book, Adam looked out a window of his house on a fine spring morning and spotted a peregrine falcon flying over his piece of Lake Erie shoreline. It struck him immediately to follow, to make his way across Canada to the Torngat mountains of Labrador, to emulate their great migrations to the rocky ledges where they raise their young. Like a real explorer of a bygone past, Adam didn't have a safe plan all worked out to explore this route. He did make maps, he had his trusty canoe to begin the journey, but he knew that he'd have to stitch together a lot of the fine details along the way. It was an epic 3,400 km odyssey — easily more that most canoeists accomplish in a lifetime. Three months for Adam. One book to tell the tale.

The recent tale is told in: *Where the Falcon Flies*. One reviewer summarized it far better than I could: "Along the way, he faces a huge variety of challenges and obstacles, including storms on the Great Lakes, finding campsites in the urban wilderness of Toronto and Montreal, avoiding busy commercial freighter traffic, gale force winds, massive hydro electric dams, bushwhacking without trails, dealing with hunger, multiple bear encounters, and navigating white-water rapids on icy northern rivers far from any help."

I found Adam's recent book different. When many wilderness paddlers find a notion to explore a route, they research numerous trip reports, gather as many maps as they can, and then spend countless days planning out the minutiae to ensure all the food, tea, medical materials, repair wire and duct tape that ever could be needed is carefully stowed aboard. Yet in this book it is so very obvious that Adam is traveling spartan. He has a route carefully planned, for sure, but he knows he will have to improvise a LOT along the way. As I have personally traveled a few small portions of the route he took, I had a little understanding of what he went through to undertake this journey. While I appreciated his reflections on the natural environments, the indigenous peoples who lived there past and present, and the recent histories of settlement since European colonisation, he also describes how he copes with all the unforseen challenges he could never have predicted when planning.



Never a dull page, the momentum he maintains to propel himself to his final takeout is so vividly felt in his writing, that the book itself a real page turner.

Post Script: If you have read one of Adam Shoalts' books, and better still, this one, then you'll be pleased to learn that Adam is to be the guest speaker at this year's WCA Mike Wevrick 'Wine and Cheese' on December 7th, at the Toronto Sailing and Canoe Club, in Toronto. He will be speaking about this journey from Lake Erie to Ungava Bay, and maybe sharing about his most recent exploratory adventure.

Goodbye Aleks Gusev

Our Illustrious Editor of Nastawgan is Retiring

I first met Aleks on a WCA spring outing on the Queensborough Black River. He was paddling solo and at the canyon rapid there was a lot of scouting and discussion. I can't remember if Aleks ran the rapid or not but my husband Dave and I did successfully (much to our surprise). However, the thing that sticks in my memory was how charismatic Aleks was. He had a bottle of a red pickle that he was sharing with everyone as we scouted the rapid. Now we all know that WCA members are friendly and outgoing for the most part but this new member Aleks with the pickle jar stood out. Dave and I had the good fortune of paddling with Aleks several times over the next few years. We noticed how quickly he became an expert paddler. Our daughter Carolyn was with us on some of these occasions and Aleks was very good about encouraging her solo paddling. We never failed to enjoy the time we spent together. I attended my first WCA Annual General Meeting at Mountsberg Conservation Area in 2007. Aleks, who was the new WCA chairperson, organized the meeting. Was that why I attended or was it that the meeting sounded like it would be lots of fun? There was a guest speaker (Robert Perkins) and cross-country skiing to follow. I couldn't resist. During the business portion of the meeting there was lots of heated discussion about whether the Canadian Canoe Routes website should be purchased. This was eventually approved. A new treasurer was needed. I volunteered. I don't normally volunteer so easily but I knew Aleks would be fun to work with and he certainly has been.

According to Aleks (*Nastawgan, Winter 2011* – go back and read this very well written piece) he arrived in Canada in 1989 from Yugoslavia (Serbia). Fifteen years later in 2004 he discovered paddling and went from a novice paddler (on the White River with Scott Card in 2005) to an ORCA & PC whitewater instructor in 2009. His involvement with the Wilderness Canoe Association and other paddling communities was exponential as well. He became the illustrations editor for the *Nastawgan* in 2005, a WCA board director in 2006, Chair of the WCA in 2007 and after a year of apprenticing with Toni Harting he became editor of the *Nastawgan* in 2012. Under his leadership the WCA entered the 21st century with a website, *Nastawgan* in colour and much much more. Even with all that he had already accomplished he then took on the Wilderness Canoe Symposium when George Luste became ill. Well done Aleks. I believe the paddling community owes you a huge debt of gratitude. It has been a pleasure to have worked with you and I wish you all the best.

Barb Young

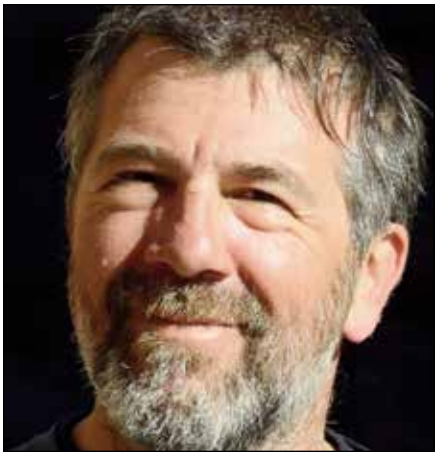


photo courtesy of Zoran Cerovic

Alsec-Tateshini Rafting Trip 2015 - photos courtesy of Barb Burton

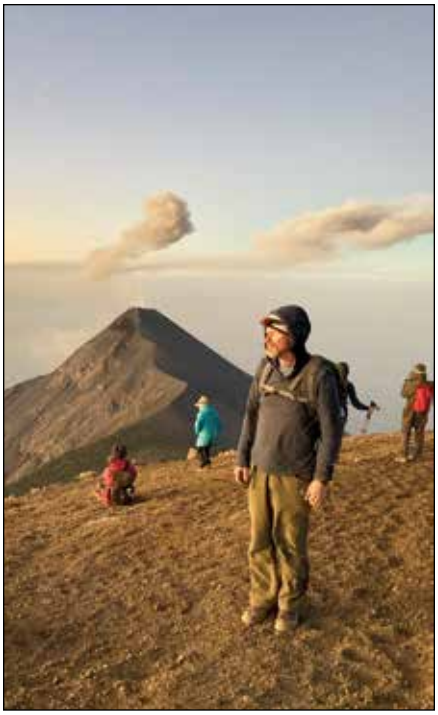
Hello Iori Miller
New Editor of Nastawgan

It was in January 2017 that I first interacted with Aleks Gusev. I was recently retired, in Guatemala studying Spanish and hiking volcanoes. While online and planning to come home I stumbled, somehow, onto an advertisement for the WCA Canoe symposium. I emailed Aleks and begged him to let me enrol late at the 'early bird' price. I was newly retired and without a lot of cash. He responded with a 'sure why not', and the rest is history. I went to the symposium, discovered the WCA and signed up to be a member, joined two 2-week trips that summer, and within the year I actually was on the Board! Alek's welcome and generosity has led me to organizing many WCA trips since, and somewhere along the way I wrote a few articles for *Nastawgan*.

I grew up in Markham on a horse farm in the 1960s and spent a lot of time running around in the bush. Years later, I earned a BSc in Biology in Virginia, did a Masters in Geology at Queens, in Kingston, and then somehow found myself in the Outdoor and Experiential Ed. program at the Teachers College at Queens. There I first discovered canoeing, first paddled parts of the Rideau Canal, volunteered at a canoe conference held at the same teachers college, and afterward went through the internship program with the Canadian Outward Bound School at Black Sturgeon Lake near Thunder Bay. I wasn't much of canoeist in those days, but I was hooked.

Over the years, while working as a science teacher for the Toronto District School Board, I took many kids on outdoor adventure trips. Some of them involved canoeing. Somewhere in there I acquired my first canoe at a yard sale, and I paddled the Grand River often because it was so easy to access on my own. I also ended up north for a few longer trips, mostly with MHO (Missinaibi Headwaters Outfitters). It was then that I began to think I'd do more backcountry tripping when I retired. Little did I know that canoeing would take over my life after teaching.

But why take on the job of editing *Nastawgan*? Sure, there is that thing about 'paying it back', or being told that maybe I am the best guy for the job (or . the only guy who has the TIME to do the job). The fact is that I do love words, I do love stories of adventure, and I also inherited an innate ability to spot spelling errors and awkward sentences from my editor mother. What do I intend to bring to this position? Most of all I want to see *Nastawgan* continue to tell the great stories of our members as they embrace what it means to be a canoeist — exploring rivers, lakes, trails, wherever they may be. I don't have plans to change much, but hope to continue the excellent product we've all become used to while Aleks was at the helm. I encourage all our readers, if you have a story or idea to share, no matter how short or long, to contact me and let's see if we can bring it to our pages.



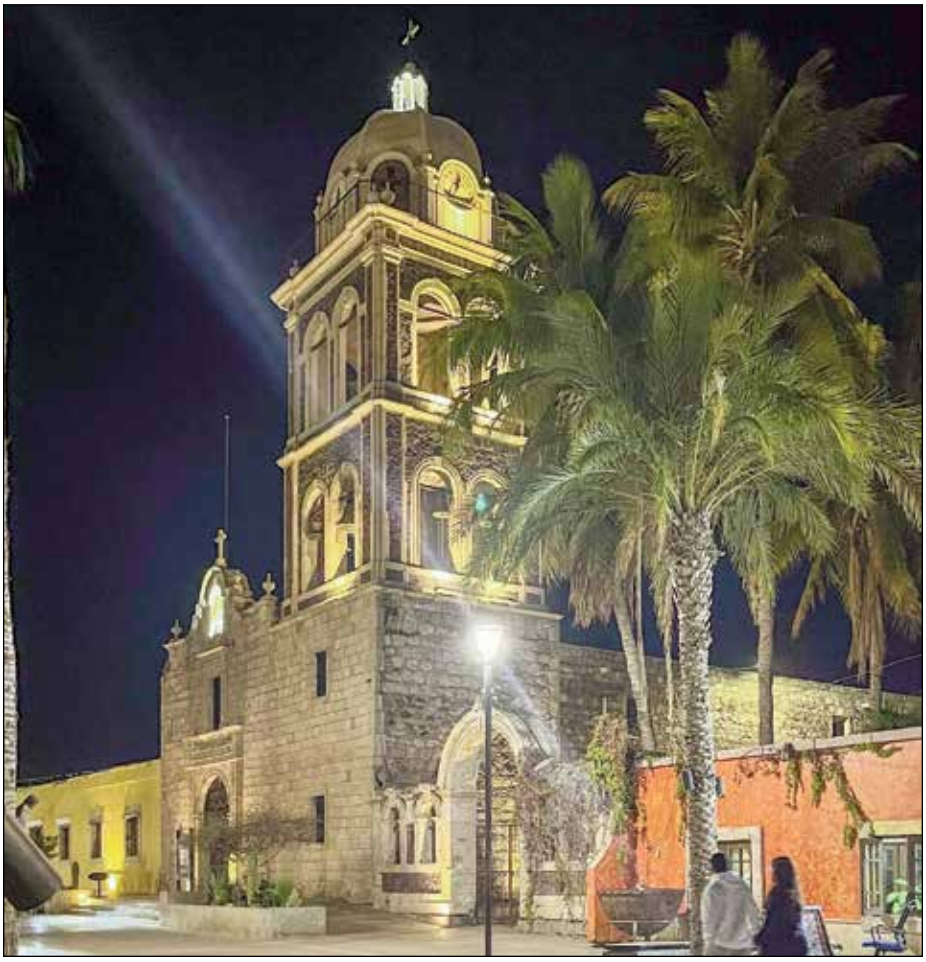
Volcan de Fuego, Guatemala

Rideau Canal Trip (2023), center of photo

Sea Kayaking in the Baja

Story by Heather Ataman

Photos provided by various group members.



Mision de Nuestra Senora de Loreto, established in 1697

"Buenos Dias," was the friendly greeting by our Mexican guide Ramon each morning as we arose to another glorious day in the Baja. We filled our mugs and planted ourselves in our camp chairs to watch the sunrise in the east. We knew it wouldn't be long before the procession of bottlenosed dolphins made their way up the coast to feast on the bounty of fish in the Sea of Cortez. How did such an idyllic setting come about? Well to be honest, it was an idea hatched in the Yukon after a sixteen-day paddle on the Wind River. Dave had wanted to kayak in the Baja, and managed (easily) to sell the idea to five of us. Personally, I was also motivated by the bonus of escaping winter for a couple of weeks, the first time since the pandemic!

The members of the group were: Mike Visschedyk, Sandra Rutherford, John O'Grady, Gary Ataman, Heather Ataman, Dave Leigh and our guide, Ramon Alvarado.

The Baja California Sur (BCS) is a Mexican State in the southern portion of Baja California. The entire peninsula is engulfed by the Sea of Cortez on the east coast and the Pacific Ocean on the western side. Flying into Loreto, a small greenish patch, literally an oasis in the desert, was a reassuring sight. For most of the flight south it was an arid landscape dotted with cacti and other small shrubs and trees that can withstand the lack of water for most of each year. The rainy season is considered to be from July to October when hurricanes can form, however, September is the wettest month on average. These rains must sustain all life on the Baja during a persistent period of drought.

Because of the lack of natural freshwater, it was necessary to carry all the water we need for cooking and drinking. Everyone has heard of a food drop, but we had a water drop halfway into our eight-day kayak adventure. This was a phenomenon that seemed foreign to paddlers, or at least to our group of six. All the freshwater we consumed came from a purification plant in nearby Loreto. We contemplated whether it would be advisable to treat this water, just to be on

Pedestrian walkway shaded by beautifully trained fig trees

Baja California Sur, our route and key points

the safe side, but were assured by Ramon it wasn't necessary. I'm happy to report his assessment was correct and the water was perfectly safe to drink as is.

Before we began our kayak trip, we spent a few days doing the touristy thing in and around Loreto, a small, picturesque town on the sea with a dramatic backdrop of the Sierra La Giganta mountains. One of the oldest buildings in the town is the Misión de Nuestra Señora de Loreto, established in 1697 by the Spanish and completed in 1744. The historic town centre features a public square lined on all sides with original Spanish architecture. Adjacent, is a pedestrian walkway shaded by beautifully trained fig trees. We enjoyed the local cuisine, particularly all the Mexican favourites, and of course the Margaritas!

Ramon offered us a private whale watching excursion in an area on the Sea of Cortez known as 'the blue triangle'. Renowned for its abundance of krill (a tiny crustacean), it attracts the largest animal on Earth, the blue whale. We were fortunate to observe two blues as they were feeding. I t was a magnificent sight, and such a privilege to witness these enormous creatures manoeuvre gracefully in the sea as they breathe and subsequently dive to the depths to feed on the schools of krill. The whales weren't the only marine life we saw, there were numerous dolphins playfully following our boat, and a manta ray with its 'wings' breaking the surface. It is no surprise why famed French environmentalist Jacques Cousteau described Mexico's Sea of Cortez as "the world's aquarium."

Freshly made tamales wrapped in corn husks

Stingray Beach Camp

Having satisfied our desire to explore Loreto, and still awe-struck by the blue whales, we eagerly packed up our gear and left our comfy vacation rental. We were shuttled 115 km to our put-in, just south of the town of Mulegé. We had a lunch of freshly made tamales wrapped in corn husks before we set off.

Our plan for the day was to cross Bahía Concepción and camp on the east side of this deep bay. It was a lovely day with a brisk wind, but we were protected from any serious waves. We reached our site, set up camp and explored the beach. Nearby there was an abandoned beach shack. According to Ramon, a man lived there in solitude all his life. There is plenty of uninhabited space in the Baja, perfect for those who choose to shun society. The only deterrent is the lack of freshwater, which has kept the Baja free from overdevelopment.

We contended with windy, wavy conditions for the next two days as we left the protection of the bay behind and began to paddle in the Sea of Cortez. It was imperative that we got a reasonably early start before the

Camp 1 Sunset on Conception Bay

Sharing a coffee and a sunrise every morning

winds picked up and made it too risky to paddle the rising sea swells. On average we paddled about ten kilometres a day. Other than the wind, the weather was fine, and we enjoyed roaming around our private beach sites, going for a dip or just hanging out.

Our second camp was located at the site of an abandoned Manganese mine. Pulling up to shore, the crumbling buildings were perched above us and set back from the water a short distance. We followed a trail uphill to the mine, and the views up and down the coastline were stunning from this vantage point. We were able to walk around the various buildings, trying to imagine how these men were able to work, especially in the extreme heat of summer. After the hike Gary and I went snorkelling and I saw a stingray and it reminded me of Ramon's warning to us about avoiding them. More to come on this subject later.

The following four days were calm and much warmer, climbing to the mid-twenties The experience of kayaking shifted as well, with the smooth seas we could observe the pods of dolphins travelling up and down the coastline. They were generally indifferent about our presence, even when only metres away, but there always seemed to be a couple of showoffs in each pod. They would put on a display that could rival any marine park!

The tame seas allowed us to fish, and Ramon is a commercial fisherman, so he had the perfect gear with him. In total we caught and ate two groupers

Dolphins swimming under and around us

Catching a Grouper

Pelican at Stingray Bay

and two barracudas over the next few days. Keep in mind we were close to shore, so these were not big fish, maybe a couple of kilos each. Ramon used them to make ceviche and fish tacos. What a delicious treat, there is no comparison to freshly caught fish.

On the topic of food, it should be noted that Ramon provided all the food for our trip, and the preparation too. To help, we pitched in for cleanup and other tasks around camp. Each kayak, five singles and a tandem carried a portion of the rations. Gary and I were in the tandem, with the largest hatch, so we had mesh bags full of fruits and vegetables. Needless to say, we ate well. Ramon whipped up traditional Mexican dishes such as burritos, tostados, tacos, guacamole, as well as oodles of cut up fruit and green salads. For breakfasts he'd make Mexican style scrambled eggs and bacon or perhaps pancakes or a simple oatmeal. At the put-in we were each handed a small drybag of a variety of snack foods to enjoy during stops along the way, and that was much appreciated.

Blue-Footed Booby

At our next camp Ramon guided us on a hike in the desert. We followed a dry riverbed for much of our walk which made it easier to avoid contact with the prickly cacti. The Baja is Ramon's backyard, so he has a wealth of knowledge to share about the history of the area, its plant life, and the animals on land or sea. I found the desert hike particularly fascinating since the variety of plants were so foreign to us. Ramon explained how adaptations were made by different species in orderto survive the Baja's harsh environment. Also, he pointed out the plants that can be used for medicinal purposes.

On day five we picked up our freshwater re-supply. It was a bit comical to be in the middle of nowhere, and suddenly a Subaru Outback pulled up out of the desert. Gregory, a friend of Ramon's, kindly supplied us with water and we all enjoyed a brief time socialising together. We packed up our kayaks and off we went to our next camp which happened to be in a pristine, white sandy cove. Little did we know that the natural beauty of our camp would be overshadowed by an unfortunate incident.

Sandra and I decided to go snorkelling, and as we walked into the water I thought again about Ramon's warning regarding stingrays lurking in the sand. Then the unthinkable happened, a stingray barb gashed Sandra's foot. In an instant, our tight knit group jumped into action and provided all the care and support we could. Dave, John and Mike stayed by Sandra's side while Gary and I helped boil water and provided assistance when needed. Ramon had experience with stingray encounters, having had several himself. He used natural remedies by soaking her foot in the torn leaves of the White Sage plant or Roma Parda as it is locally known, as it provides traditional pain relief. Happily, a few hours later Sandra would feel much better, and she was able to cope with

the discomfort. It certainly shook us up and we were thankful that Ramon had the expertise to treat the wound and the pain.

The next morning, we left what we now informally called 'Stingray Bay' and headed for our next camp at San Sebastian Cove. Sandra joined me in the tandem as her foot was too sore to work the rudder pedals of a solo Kayak

It was another spectacular day for wildlife sightings. The Sea of Cortez is home to a wide array of birds, and from our camp or when paddling we always spotted birds in the air or perched on rocky outcrops on the coastline. Most seen were pelicans and gulls, but we also saw herons, cormorants, ospreys, frigatebirds, turkey vultures and most notably the unusual and aptly named blue-footed booby. I was able to get close enough to see those blue feet. Apparently, their diet of fish and squid is what gives them that blue hue and the bluer their feet the healthier they are.

Continuing our way south along the coast we were beginning to see more signs of human activity. We saw a small upscale vacation community nestled in a protected bay. Further along we stopped at a very small fishing village called San Nicolas. Originally, we were going to visit and move on, but the winds picked up, so the decision was made to camp on the village's beach for our last night. As usual, Ramon knows everyone, and he took us to see a local farm. The owners, an elderly couple, Francisco and Francesca graciously allowed us to wander around their property and take in their tropical fruit trees, herbs, glorious flowering shrubs and of course the farm animals. Another villager, Pancho, invited our group to come and sit on his porch. The village homes were very rustic from the exterior, often incorporating found items from the sea into their decor. Many displayed shells, rocks, and even fish skeletons.

Citlalic Torres, Ramon's wife, arrived at San Nicolas that afternoon and she brought fresh shrimp for tacos, homemade guacamole, and a cooler full of cold drinks. That evening we cleaned out the kayaks in preparation for our shuttle back to Loreto. One quirky thing about this tiny fishing village were the wild horses. They grazed on the only greenery they could find, the seaweed growing in the brackish waters of a small pond. Just like the plants in the Baja, animals have adapted as well.

The morning of the shuttle, we packed up our gear one last time. Pancho had kindly invited us back to enjoy our breakfast and last trip meal on his porch. He let Cali use his kitchen to prepare a buffet of Mexican eggs, and warm tortillas. Shortly after, we said our goodbyes and prepared for the hour-long drive on a meandering dirt road to the highway. The undisturbed landscape featured cacti and various shrubs, all spaced out as if someone had intentionally planted them. It was an unusual but impressive forest. Also, we could clearly see where repairs were made to the road after the rainy season deluge of water. No doubt there are times when San Nicolas is only accessible by water, and I have a feeling the villagers don't mind at all.

I've had several months to reflect on our Baja adventure. After a trip I always ask myself the question, would I go back? In this case I most certainly would. The Baja offers so much to its visitors, a sea teeming with marine life, the remoteness of a desert setting, and its kind and humble people.

Organ Pipe Cactus

Check out the WCA YouTube channel for posted videos about this trip.

The switch-back road out from the coast to Highway #1 paved road

…in this issue

WCA Postal Address
12 Erindale Crescent
Brampton, ON, Canada
L6W 1B5
For general information:
info@wildernesscanoe.ca

http://www.wildernesscanoe.ca

wilderness canoe association
nastawgan

Hiking the World's Longest Esker

Story and photos by Dwayne Wahlgenmoth

wilderness canoe association
nastawgan

Thlewiaza 2017: Exploring Sleeping Island and No-Man's River

Part II

Story by Chris Rush

Photos by Chris Rush and Jonny Johnson

wilderness canoe association
nastawgan

Thlewiaza 2017: Exploring Sleeping Island and No-Man's River

Part I

Story by Chris Rush

Photos by Chris Rush and Jonny Johnson

wilderness canoe association
nastawgan

Cat River Canoe Trip

Story and Sketches by Joe Berger

wilderness canoe association
nastawgan

The River Of A Hundred Ghosts

The Mistengi River from Spanish Lake to Aubrey Falls

Story and photos by Erik Thomsen

wilderness canoe association
nastawgan

A Winter Ski Crossing of Algonquin Park

Story by Mark Miller

Photos by Eric Barry

wilderness canoe association
nastawgan

Discovering Alex Hall's Secret and Favourite River

Lorne Fitch, P.Eng.

wilderness canoe association
nastawgan

A Letter To My Son: The Hayes River

By Noar Pauksa

wilderness canoe association
nastawgan

Bon Aventure!

by Isadora van Rietveldjk

wilderness canoe association
nastawgan

The Kattawagami River – A Best Kept Secret Shared

Story by Jon Miller

wilderness canoe association
nastawgan

Hugh P. MacMillan's 1970 Canoe Brigade: The Intractable Retracing of a Fur Trade Route

Story by Mark Stiles

wilderness canoe association
nastawgan

The South Nahanni River By Canoe: Into The Land Of Dreams

Story and photos by Erik Thomsen

wilderness canoe association
nastawgan

The South Nahanni River By Canoe: Into The Land Of Dreams

Story and photos by Erik Thomsen

wilderness canoe association
nastawgan

Paddling the Bloodvein River

Story and photos by Cindy Chandler

wilderness canoe association
nastawgan

Wandering the Tundra

Dwayne Wahlgenmoth

nastawgan

Chapleau River 2013

by Richard Griffith