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Above Kazan Falls (from L to R: George Luste, Mike Good, John Martin, John Blackborow)

Reindeer Lake to Baker Lake 1974

Following the 1894 route of Joseph Burr Tyrrell

Story by John Martin

Photos by John Martin and George Luste

In January 1974, George Luste walked into my office and proposed a canoe trip of over 800 miles, from Reindeer Lake on the Saskatchewan/Manitoba border to Baker Lake in the Barren Lands during the upcoming summer. While I had been paddling a canoe all my life, it had all been on lakes

and tame rivers in southern Ontario, so this opportunity was immediately intriguing and I soon agreed. I had only been at the University of Toronto for a year and it amazes me now that I got away with an eight-week absence from the lab so early in my career!



Leaving the Cochrane



George with a large collection of cameras, lenses, tripod and film

The idea was to follow a large part of the 1894 route of Joseph Burr Tyrrell, which, as far as we knew, had not been done by anyone since. As many readers will know, Tyrrell was an acclaimed larger-than-life Canadian who travelled vast regions of the prairies and Barrens as an explorer and geologist for the Canadian Geographic Survey in the 1880s and 90s. In 1893, after descending the Dubawnt to Baker Lake, his party paddled in appalling conditions in October down the coast of Hudson Bay and nearly perished not far north of Churchill. During this trip he had heard from his aboriginal guides of another great northern river, now known as the Kazan, and, undaunted, began to organize an expedition to find and explore it. The Survey was unable to come up with the necessary funding, but an independently wealthy aide-de-camp to the Governor General, Robert Munro Ferguson, agreed to help if he could come along. And thus Tyrrell and Ferguson set off with several canoeemen and a cook from Grand Rapids, up the Saskatchewan River on June 23, 1894 in one birchbark and two new 19' Peterborough canoes. They reached Cumberland House on July 2, went over Frog Portage on July 11 to the Churchill, paddled east until reaching the Reindeer, which they ascended to Reindeer Lake, reaching Du Brochet at the northern end on July 18. Here they hired two Chipewyans to guide them north to the Barrens via the Cochrane, Little Partridge and Kazan Rivers.

Our party of four had the relative luxury of driving in George's VW van to The Pas with gear and his 17' and 18' Grummans strapped to the roof. We then took the train to Lynn Lake and a hired truck to our starting point at Kinoosao, part way up Reindeer Lake, on June 27, 1974, 80 years after Tyrrell. John Blackborow, tall and very strong, who had been a student in George's physics class, was fortunately (for me!) assigned to the bow of my canoe, the 18-footer. George paddled with a cousin of John Bland, Mike Good, who had just finished high school. His mother was

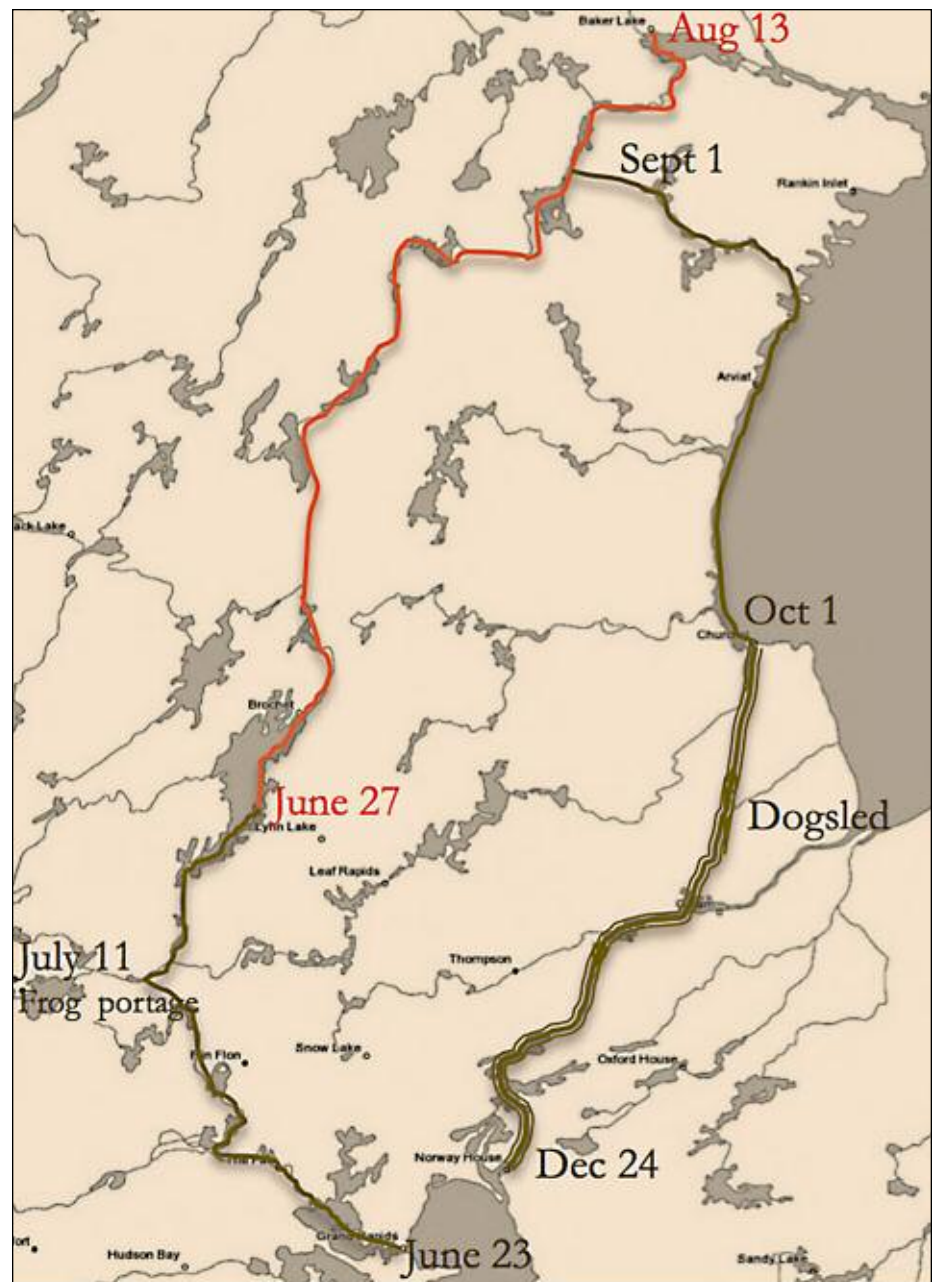
appreciative of how much he matured during our trip. Sadly, some years later Mike died in a hang-gliding accident in South Africa.

George was already a veteran of several arctic trips and had been down the Dubawnt in 1973. But I think he was a little worried about the rest of us, and took us on a weekend trip in May down the Petawawa in Algonquin Park just to reassure himself that we could handle ourselves! Meticulous preparation is an important part of George's approach to northern canoeing. I recall spending a couple of evenings at his house pre-packaging bread mix and other staples. Some of his notes show his large pre-order of food from the Lynn Lake Hudson Bay Company (HBC) store, including for example 14 pounds of canned butter and 34 pounds of dried fruit ("not too many prunes", it says in the margin ...). Thirty-two meals including fresh fish were counted on, but nevertheless eight weeks (seven for the planned trip and one extra) of the rest of our food was too much to carry, and George arranged for half to be flown to the Ennadai weather station, still in operation in 1974. He ordered all the appropriate maps, some aerial photographs of the tricky regions, and copied many of Tyrrell's notes, which were very helpful, from the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at U of T (It now has a wonderful website where anyone can view archival documents and information on Tyrrell's trips).

Our first-night-out feast included smoked oysters and plenty of steak, baked potatoes and wine. I know this from my log, in which I kept details of every meal with the intention of using the information for future trips, but, sadly, I have never managed another long northern expedition. We spent three days in wind, rain and finally sun on Reindeer Lake paddling to the small community of Brochet. George had made snap-on decking for his canoes, which allowed us to paddle safely, and to stay reasonably dry, in heavy wave action. Brochet had a Chipewyan population of perhaps 1,000 and appeared to

be generally thriving, with a HBC store, church and new school being built, plenty of boating and fishing activity, as well as some outdoor card games, and an NDP candidate campaigning for the federal election! We stayed a couple of hours to absorb the last human activity we expected to see until Ennadai station. At camp a few kilometres away at the mouth of the Cochrane River we swam, dined on pike chowder (George was proficient at grabbing these sharp-

teethed fish from his line by the eyeballs with thumb and forefinger) and were headed for bed when Mike suddenly yelled that a bear was swimming in. Fortunately it morphed into a hungry dog from a neighbouring island upon closer approach. We plopped it in a canoe and paddled it back, but it returned with a friend the next morning for some of our bacon scraps. Dogs are not much use in the summer and we passed a couple of islands where they



The Trips: 1974 (red line) – George/Mike, John/John, 2 Grumman canoes, maps, some aerial photos, Tyrrell's notes; 1894 (green line) – Tyrrell/ Ferguson, several canoeists and a cook, 2 Peterboroughs, 1 birchbark (to Brochet), Chipewyan, then Inuit guides



Grave of "old Kasmere" at narrows of Fort Hall Lake

had been left to fend for themselves and seemed to be starving.

Uphill on the Cochrane! Lots of lining up rapids, furious paddling and portaging. The initial portages were still being used and some even had laddered arrangements of logs over which to drag motorboats. At the top of one portage Mike accidentally lost his paddle and he and George were almost swept down a vicious rapid. Very fortunately we found the paddle far downstream caught on shore. We managed portages in two carries - six big packs and the two canoes, with paddles (two each), camera bags, etc. carried by hand, leaving us at the mercy of the bugs if our head-nets were not secure. Similarly when dragging canoes upriver. Having lots of experience with Ontario's black flies and mosquitoes, and having heard they were much worse up north (they are!), I had replaced all the buttons on my shirts with Velcro and sewn elasticized wrist coverings onto my gloves before the trip. Worked well and I highly recommend it. Nevertheless the ringing in my ears from blackfly bites early on was horrific, only subsiding after a few days with more careful use of my bug net. There is little respite - blackflies go to

bed around 9:30, but the mosquitoes work in shifts the whole 24 hours.

At one point, following Tyrrell's notes, we portaged through a series of small lakes and creeks to bypass a nasty stretch of the river and save much time and effort. P. G. Downes on his 1939 trip to Nueltin Lake (described in his splendid book *Sleeping Island*) followed the river, not knowing about this shortcut. The lake-to-lake portages were easy to follow, but hard to find from the water. On a barely submerged peninsula in the river bay leading to the lakes was a huge nesting area for gulls and terns, with many nests still full of eggs, some just hatching, lots of very young scrambling around, and parents wildly screaming overhead during our short visit.

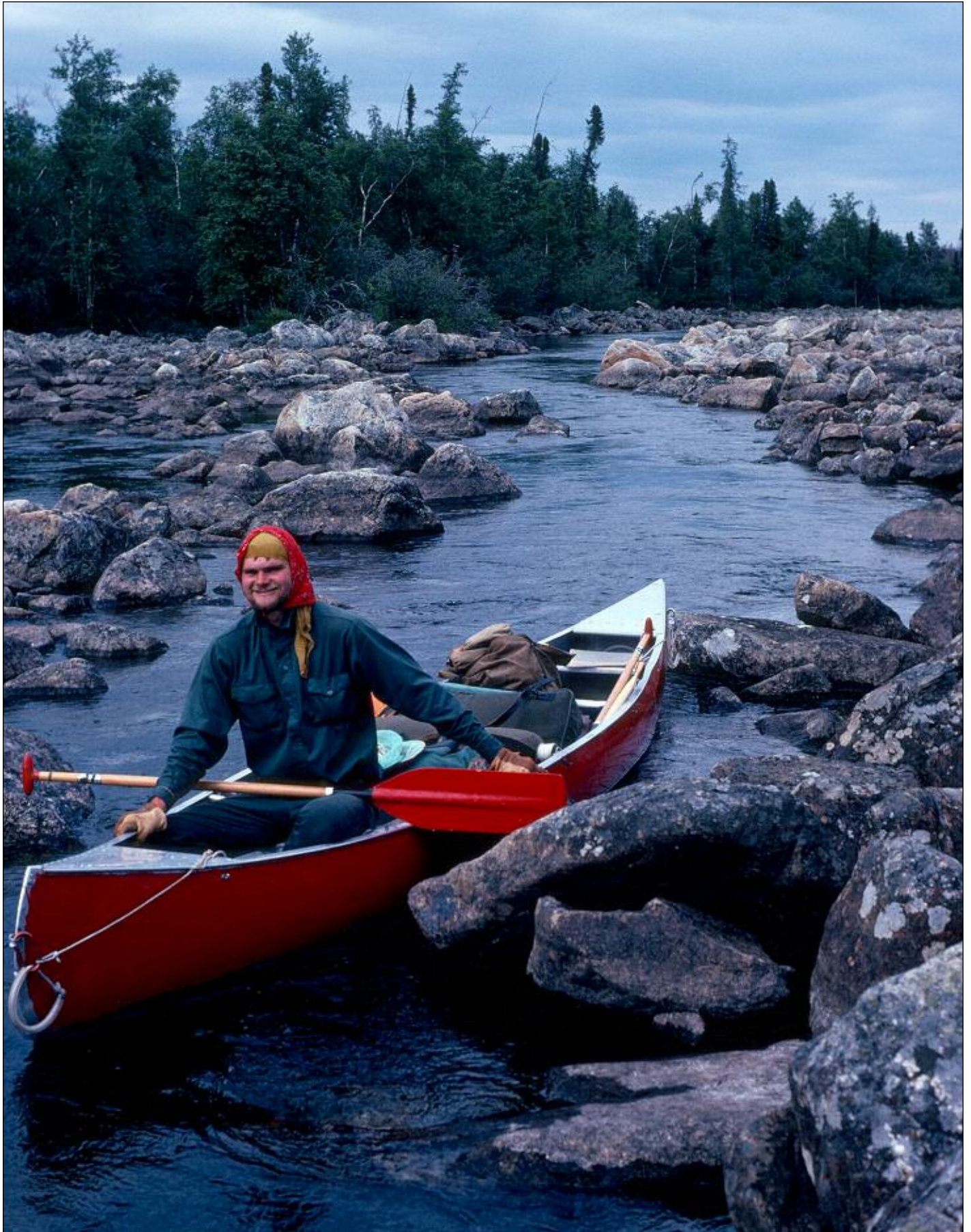
Back on the Cochrane we stopped at 9:30 that night quite worn out, but had a beautiful walk the next morning up a high hill on the esker behind our camp, finding the remains of a major aboriginal site. Our next campsite was at the scenic Chipewyan Falls with a dinner of delicious butter and breadcrumb fried pike with sour cream and not-so-appetizing freeze-dried chicken stew. We were generally in bed these nights by

11 p.m. or 12 a.m., depending on whether we were baking bread in our reflector oven for the next day's lunches and/or preparing fish.

Our first bad experience was the next day when we again tried to take a Tyrrell shortcut across a long U-bend in the river by a mile long portage, which we never really found in the boulder- and bushes-strewn terrain. John was slowed down by an old football injury to his knee, which was acting up, and George and Mike were nowhere to be seen when we got across. It took us some time to go back and find them - they had taken a classic circle route and ended up near the beginning of a rapid we had previously arduously portaged around. Even once we were all back on track we ended up at the wrong end of the final rapid and had to grunt our way up.

But this brought us into an idyllic paddle across the large Lac Brochet followed by a glorious sunset, with John sent out in the canoe to pose as a photographic silhouette. George had a large collection of Minolta and Rollei cameras and lenses and had brought 40 rolls of colour and 100 rolls of black and white 35 mm film (remember that technology?!). The rest of us also had cameras, mine the recently released Olympus OM-1, so photography was a big part of our trip. We had wind and rain the next day, with lunch in a storm of bugs, a tough pull up the Whitespruce Rapids, since we didn't find Tyrrell's portage, and a very wet paddle through the well-named Misty Lake. However, our last day on the Cochrane was magnificent, travelling through esker country. Loons, ducks, gulls, terns and eagles were much in evidence. Downes found this section the most beautiful of his trip. The aspen and pine trees, sculptured sand, moss, small ponds and wild flowers on the eskers present a park-like effect seemingly perfectly arranged for human enjoyment.

The Cochrane flows out of Wollaston Lake in a generally north-east direction like so many other rivers heading for Hudson Bay, but due to a quirk of localized geological uplift, is forced sud-



Many amazing boulder channels on the Little Partridge



Dragging upriver, strenuous work

denly back southwards on the 110 mile stretch to Reindeer Lake, which we had just ascended in six days. Much to our delight we found the old portage over the height of land into a string of eight narrow lakes and portages north-east to Kasmere Lake using Tyrrell's detailed notes, for which Downes spent a whole day searching and almost gave up in despair. These lovely lakes have rising shores of granite, sandy eskers or heavy woods with spruce and jack pine. The portages between, once found, had steep

entrances and exits, but on top followed magnificent moss-covered sandy ridges with widely spaced trees. Fabulous weather added to the enjoyment of this lake-hopping portion of the trip. At a narrows through a transverse esker in the final larger lake, Fort Hall Lake (Thanout Lake to Tyrrell), which is the start of the Thlewiaza or Kasmere watershed heading east to Nueltin Lake, we found what we think was the 1940 grave of Chipewyan chief Kasmere high on a sandy hill with a beautiful southern outlook. Legend says this was a conven-

ient spot for him to extract a toll from passers-by on the canoe route. A little further on we found a strange corral structure of spruce poles and galvanized fencing whose use we could only imagine, but disappointingly could not find the remains of the trading post Fort Hall, at least where we expected it. But we did find a pair of partially collapsed but beautifully constructed cabins near the end of the lake, which I'm thinking now may in fact have been the "two bent and staggering buildings" of Fort Hall reported by Downes, which he also said were "at the end of the lake". That day George lost a lure to a snag and my own incompetence led to me losing a lure to a pike, but Mike caught a good-sized lake trout, which George rendered into terrific chowder. Kasmere Falls and the long roaring steep rapid below had to be portaged by a difficult 1800 yard route up and then down through boulder clutter and swamps, but it seemed not as brutal as described by Tyrrell and Downes. We then shot down our first long rapids, arriving on July 9 at Kasmere Lake, back, alas, to same elevation as our starting point on Reindeer Lake!

From the north arm of Kasmere it was back to the slow going uphill on the Little Partridge River, paddling through small lakes and dragging or lining up many rapids and long narrow channels of rushing water with engineered-looking edges of beautifully piled boulders. Tyrrell used 32 portages on this river (and 44 in all from the Cochrane exit), but we found none of them and made our own where necessary. Several times the river disappeared under a vast field of boulders, bushes and reeds over which we made treacherous crossings, with many holes ready to trap an unsuspecting leg. Two moose were seen in this region. At one cool, wet and misty campsite, we had, ironically, a hard time finding two rocks to support our fire irons, but in the end managed an appropriate meal of Scotch broth and chili mac. The upper end of the Little Partridge hardly deserves so grand an adjective as "Little", and at one point



Rapid in Thlewiaza River, showing boulder-banks (Tyrrell)

three of us made a long portage with most of the gear and canoes to one spot, but George on his first crossing took a different course and left his pack at a place perhaps half a kilometre away, but after canoeing around to pick up his pack, we did not find it. With the help of our aerial photographs (the high tech before GPS) we eventually realized the two positions were on different lakes. George had originally gone to the right lake on the river, and we had to portage everything back over again! Soon after we chose to leave the river and pass through a more direct route via another string of narrow lakes to reach Roosevelt Hill, a great granite ridge which “soars” about 250’ above the surrounding terrain. It was named by Tyrrell’s companion Ferguson, who had been mountain climbing with Teddy Roosevelt. We spent a glorious day, July 14, camped near the summit far from firewood and water, but the spectacular view of the myriad surrounding lakes and sparsely treed hilltops was well worth it.

The sprawling Lake Roosevelt is the headwater of the Little Partridge, and the only way over the height of land (200’ above Kasmere Lake) to Kasba Lake is via some small lakes. We followed Tyrrell’s path on a ten-mile arc to the north and gradually west to a long lake running north-south about a mile and a half from Kasba. This was our most grueling day, navigating by compass since we found no trails early on, often picking a promising route, which ended up in a bog of fallen rotting trees. In the afternoon, however, in the middle of one of our portages we came across a trail with fairly recent tree blazes, probably from a trapper. Heartened, we spent more time looking for and usually finding the old trails on the remaining portages, which invariably followed sensible longer routes between lakes. The area had also been swept by fire recently, most trees still standing but black, the ground moss a carpet of soot and the remaining needles a reddish colour, lending a curious autumnal feel to the scene. We were all filthy by the



Camped high above Roosevelt Lake

end of the day, Mike in particular from occasionally stumbling and swatting bugs from his face with blackened hands. Our Converse running shoes had by now taken a severe beating (Mike’s were more a collage of holes held together with bits of cloth) and would not have lasted much more of the difficult portage and canoe-dragging treatment inflicted in the past two weeks. Upon

reaching the final lake, I still had the energy to run up the high western hill to catch the first glimpse of the great 50-mile-long Kasba Lake, for which a 25% increase in the celebratory Drambuie ration had been offered by George the previous night. On July 16 we made the long portage down to Kasba, past a steep gorge, over levels of ancient beaches and past the charred remains of



Lost on the way to Kasba – portaged into the wrong lake

wind and George went nearly up a huge hill nearby (a mile and a half to the top) to photograph an unfortunately disappointing sunset. In the morning today, July 16 after breakfast, John B and I climbed to the summit of the same hill, which rises about 450 feet above Kasba Lake. Indeed, it looks like a mountain in these surroundings, and the view to the south and north of Kasba Lake, which is fifty miles long and twenty miles across, was very fine. After this jaunt we portaged into a tiny lake, out of which a stream tumbles down a gorge then, across a flatter, broad boulder plain, ^{draining into} about 200 feet to the east shore of Kasba Lake. We portaged the mile down beside the stream, ~~over~~ across a sandy ridge, through a bit of burnt forest, ^{over} two ~~well~~ well preserved beds of ancient gravel beaches, past the charred remain of an old Indian gravesite, and across the plain to a sandy beach. At the end of the second trip down I threw the canoe into the water from my shoulders with great satisfaction. We had lunch here in a gay mood and then paddled off onto the calm lake. How marvellous to luxuriate in the vastness of this sea after the tiny puddles of previous days. We were soon

Fishing in the sun from each canoe George once again had the first bite and landed a 30 inch grayling (variety of lake trout). After a few miles of easy going, the sky began to cloud in from the southwest and we decided to camp on a peninsula esker, which resembles some miles out in the lake as a series of islands. The fish tasted extraordinarily good, after all the pike of late. We had it fried in butter, followed by a little spaghetti and meatballs and applesauce. There is a glorious sunset in the north west no spire this, but the rest of the sky is heavily overcast and a storm seems imminent.

ENNADAI LAKE

JUL 20 1974

AERADIO STATION

ENNADAI LAKE, N.W.T.

ENNADAI LAKE, N.W.T.

Well, it's official. We've made it to the half way point (415 miles to go) in three weeks and two days. Our remaining 250 pounds of food is here, which is a great relief; as there was considerable uncertainty as to whether it would make it free on the monthly flight July 7. ~~It would have cost as much as \$350. to arrange a special fly-in of this somewhat important item, had it not~~

John's canoe log pages

an aboriginal gravesite.

"How marvelous to luxuriate in the vastness of this sea after the tiny puddles of recent days," says my log. We camped in great spirits some miles to the north on a spectacular esker with an amazing sunset. An even more beautiful esker drew us in for lunch the next day before we finally entered the Kazan River. It was a great thrill to start running down so many rapids, some of which Tyrrell portaged, and paddle long stretches of swift current en route to Ennadai Lake. Again we passed bird-nesting grounds, including many of Canada geese, where we had a few "wild goose chases" to pick up some of the young, who seemed to enjoy being tickled on their necks. Trolling for fish was easy, although I still, annoyingly, had not managed to land one. At the esker peninsula at the entrance to the lake was a caribou crossing point that in

Tyrrell's time was a Chipewyan spearing site. We found only some oil drums and other garbage, I suppose left behind from a recent fishing camp - a rather shocking indictment of modernity thrust on this pristine environment. In fact, we passed two previous messes of abandoned geological camps en route to Kasba Lake, and later canoed past an active fly-in fishing camp on Ennadai, feeling rather superior. Unfavourable winds had us organizing food and baking bread, but at 9 pm we paddled on under the darkening sky until 11:30. The next day we were able to sail for many miles in three-foot waves using our large orange tarp rigged in a Rube Goldberg fashion on upright paddles as a sail, with the two canoes loosely tied together. That's the life! We stopped to eat high up on the peninsula marking the turning point of the lake to the north, but a squall drowned the second

half of our lunch. We sailed on in blustery weather, navigating miraculously through a series of islands to a campsite below a 400' hill, which rose mountain-like from the flat surroundings. A climb to the top, in a wind intent on flattening us, afforded a magnificent view to the horizon in all directions, with not a tree to be seen, confirming that we had by now entered the Great Barren Lands.

On July 20 we had a wild ride in a breaking sea, barely in control, into the Ennadai weather station, having sailed altogether 35 continuous miles. Our 250 pounds of food had made it on the July 7 scheduled flight into Ennadai weather station. Whew! One of the most remote places in Canada, the station was manned by four people volunteering for six months at a time. They fed us pork chops (!), but no dessert, since the cook, a reputed fine maker of pies, was away on leave.



Lunch at another beautiful esker

Upon reaching Ennadai Lake, Tyrrell's Chipewyan guides turned back, fearing to encroach on Inuit hunting territory owing to ancient rivalry, leaving him uncertain and fearful of how far north he was headed late in the season. But soon he started meeting Inuit on the water in their kayaks and at camps along the Kazan shores, most having never seen a white person, but nevertheless showing great curiosity and hospitality. A father and son agreed to guide him to Hudson Bay in exchange for a rifle and ammunition. We found our first of many long-abandoned Inuit camps at the north end of Ennadai Lake – tent poles and stone rings, scraps of weathered canvas, graves with collections of the deceaseds belongings, underground food caches, caribou bones,



Tyrrell's party on the shore of Theitaga Lake



Windswept evening lighting

sled runners and often metal pots, traps, etc. The encroachment of the outside world after 1900 led to a gradual decline of the vibrant civilization of inland Inuit encountered by Tyrrell, and its eventual starving denouement in the 1950s after the collapse of the white fox fur trade in the 1940s is a sad story. All that remained for us to see was tantamount to a 350-mile ghost town, dotted by lonely stone Inuksuks on our journey to the now-growing Baker Lake community of survivors and their descendants.

En route to Angikuni Lake we were seriously windbound going down rapids and were forced to camp. With the tents pitched in tandem for protection and the others asleep, I had a long tramp out on the Barrens in rain and cold, finding many parallel and criss-crossing lanes of caribou trails, and tiny ponds with nesting ducks. On my return a thin line

of brightness appeared on the west horizon and for the next hour, high on a hill, we snapped pictures of spectacular golden lighting effects sweeping across the terrain as clouds were driven past the nearly setting sun. Along here were birds and more birds, including three trumpeter swans, and we were periodically buzzed by curious flying ducks. We finally saw a few caribou, male, presumably straggling well behind the annual spring migration to the north. On July 22 we had our mid-trip feast: asparagus soup, shrimp creole and freeze-dried ice-cream, followed by tea and a snort of Benedictine and Brandy.

The variable weather in the Barrens is spectacular to observe, with the vast vistas of blue sky in one direction and billowing white clouds in thunderstorms passing at various distances in yet another. Once we were suddenly hit dead on by such a storm and suffered a long

period of high winds, torrential rain, thunder and lightning, with poor paddling visibility through foggy glasses. The canoe route through Angikuni, a maze of small islands and peninsulas, follows an overall Z-shaped course for thirty miles. Near the end we camped high on a large oval ridge with granite outcroppings nestling a small lake, very beautiful despite the grey weather that night. Blackflies were out in hordes, hundreds crawling around on George's dark blue pants. John picked that of all nights to burn a hole in his bug net while blowing on the fire this was frantically repaired with adhesive tape.

July 27 was a hard slog in strong, unfavourable wind, rain and mist back into the Kazan. Waves were forced upriver by the wind in one stretch, making paddling a tiring struggle with seemingly negative progress, but watching the bottom pass slowly by assured us that the

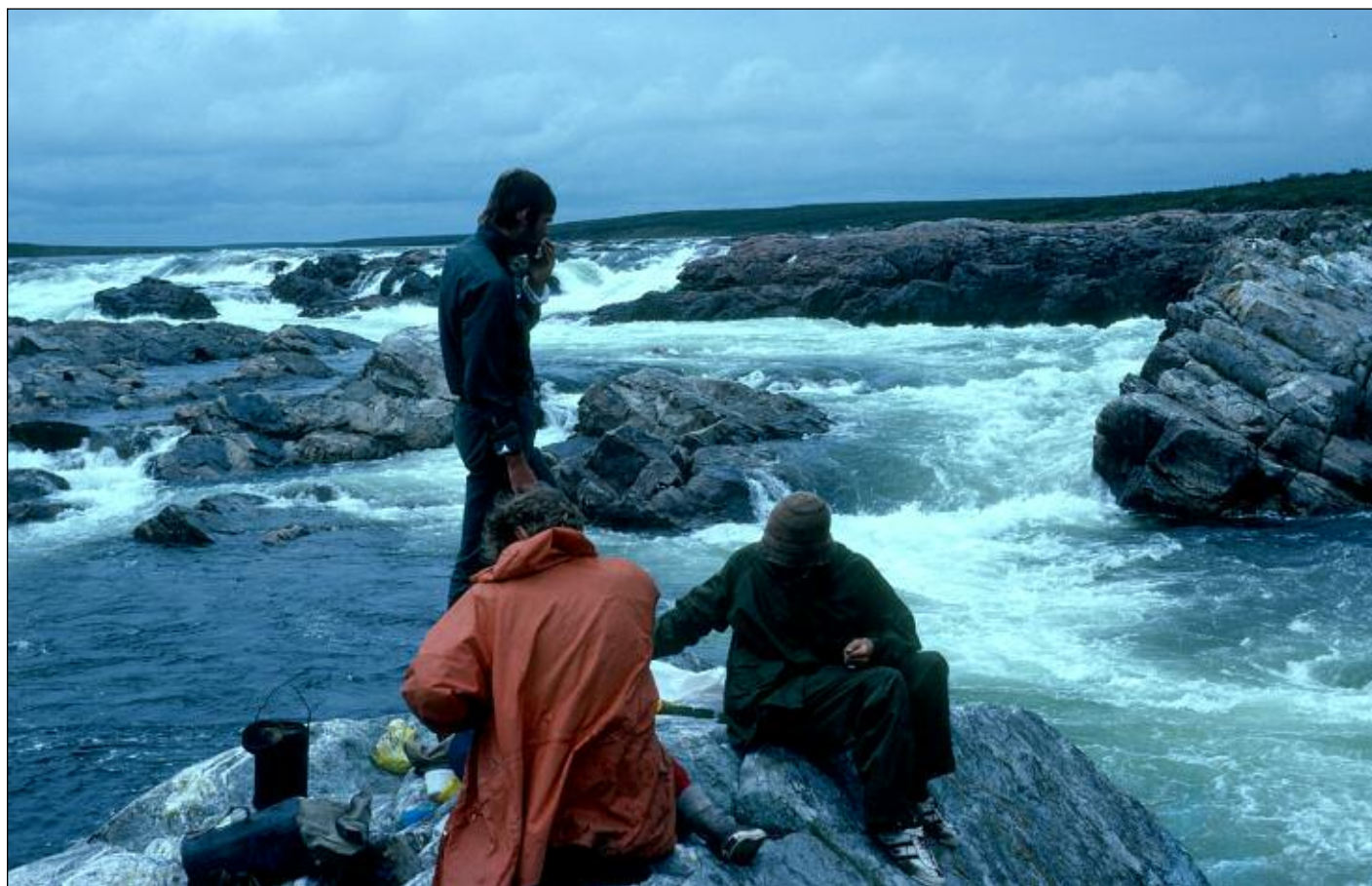
current was taking us inexorably on. That evening George and John pitched their tent low for wind protection, but a deluge of rain left them swimming inside most of the night. We took the next day off in improving weather, wood-firing eight loaves of bread, two with freshly collected blueberries, the rest with dried fruit, but all with loads of blackflies for added protein. By now we were accumulating firewood whenever we found it while paddling and carrying it on top of the canoe decking. A pair of peregrine falcons was nesting on a nearby cliff, and George managed to climb close enough to their ledge for some fine pictures of the youngsters in already fierce stances. We camped next at a mile-long stretch of the river with three gorgeous drops totaling 80 feet with tricky intervening rapids. The middle drop is the most spectacular, a wild, foaming falls through great masses of red granite. We hiked for a fine panorama of all three drops to a high



Peregrine falcon after Angikuni

hill, the south slope densely packed with small but old spruce, a forest in miniature. The sun later came out for the first time in five days, lifting our spirits on the journey downriver through many ex-

citing rapids and the odd portage, punctuated with several hikes to hilltop vistas, the last of which included our first view of the monstrous Yathkyed Lake. Somewhere around here Samuel Hearne



Lunch at second of the three scenic drops after Angikuni



First view of Yathkyed Lake

crossed the Kazan on his astonishing journey from Hudson Bay to the Coppermine River in 1771. At camp at the entrance to the lake, we prepared our sixth week's food, and repaired our remaining and by now broken, 18"-long fishing rods. More lures had been lost, most by me, unsuccessfully trying to land big fish.

Crossing Yathkyed to the north and then east was a thrill. At one point we set off for an island six miles away, but part way along, a ferocious wind rose in our face. When waves crashed over the bow of my canoe they left behind a few gallons of frigid water trapped on the loose decking in John's lap, which he had to dump over the side, slowing progress. We barely made it to the island, totally drained. A unanimous decision was made to stop for several hours,

baking bread and gobbling down a delicious meal of lake trout fried in butter. In reduced wind after sunset, with a full moon rising in the south-east, we set off for the northern shore in the descending twilight, and because the night was so pleasant, decided to paddle on until dawn. Navigating was not so easy in the semi-darkness and often, while crossing bays or skirting islands, we would suddenly find ourselves paddling among projecting rocks in shallow water, although seconds before the shore had seemed half a mile away. An extraordinary meteorite fell across the sky, first leaving a bright green trail, and then, after a brief moment of darkness, was consumed in a brilliant flash of white. During the darkest part of the night there was a startlingly eerie display of the aurora borealis with wildly darting

wide wispy ribbons of green. We camped about 4 am as the sun rose behind a flying carpet of pink, fleecy clouds, a magnificent sunset in reverse.

As Tyrrell travelled further north he eventually learned, to his great alarm, that the Kazan flowed all the way to Baker Lake rather than veering east to Hudson Bay as he'd hoped, and his party almost turned back. But at a large camp with seven tents with 55 inhabitants above Yathkyed, the Inuit Pasamut informed him of an alternate river to Hudson Bay, which could be reached by a chain of lakes and many arduous portages. Determined not to repeat the near disaster of the previous year, Tyrrell hired six more Inuit to help and guide, leaving the Kazan north of Yathkyed on September 1st. Although hit by many problems and periods of

bad weather with snow, they made it to the river, named it the Ferguson, followed it out to Hudson Bay and reached Churchill on October 1st. We left Yathkyed August 3rd in glorious weather and covered more than 35 miles down into Forde Lake. We climbed another huge hill (350') near camp the

next day for a superb view of the Barrens, with plains, hillocks, swamps and lakes stretching out in all directions. "Barren," in fact, is hardly an apt name for this terrain, for the vegetation is amazingly varied, although it has to be viewed from six inches above to be fully appreciated: multi-coloured lush

mosses, grasses, lichens, berries and all sorts of small bright flowers of incredible design.

After a choppy beginning to Thirty Mile Lake against a strong chilling wind, we passed the remains of the largest Inuit camp we saw, marked by a huge cylindrical stone cairn about eight



The evening meal, mostly caught by George – a proficient fisherman



Gorge below Kazan Falls

feet high, with many tent rings of different diameters. We saw our first arctic owl and ptarmigan in this vicinity. The continuing abundant bird life now included cranes, herons, loons and ducks, falcons and osprey, but many fewer terns than earlier. Other wildlife sightings in the last couple of weeks included more single and small groups of caribou, a white fox and many ground squirrels. The myriad islands on this long lake were all sprinkled with Inuksuks, one over life-size and of particular artistic beauty. Part way along, two peninsulas almost meet forming a narrows in the lake, which was piled high on either side with boulders at the upstream end, indicating how spectacular spring breakup must be, with a rising lake pushing through a huge ice dam. I trolled all day hoping finally to land a big fish, but only came up with a 12" trout. George, on the other hand,

caught a 36" whopper with another fish inside and belly full of roe. A picture records the embarrassing comparison!

On August 8th we reached Kazan Falls after a numbing day in a mini-gale of cold mist and rain. The falls and the region downstream are spectacular – the river cascades wildly over several parallel drops, then rushes on with great turbulence for two-thirds of a mile through a tall narrow gorge with walls of angular red granite. We camped here and photographed many peregrine and some gyrfalcons. We added a note inside a peanut can to a cairn with a stick carved with the names of a 1973 Kazan party. So many other notes have been left by others in subsequent years that a small booklet of them has actually been published. Below the gorge we suddenly came upon an immaculate mining camp with helicopter, which was being used by a team including university students from

Alberta to stake uranium claims within a 30-mile radius. Mile after mile of swift current took us down to a small bird-haven lake, followed by a long heavy rapid which felt like a toboggan chute, for we could see the quite steep downward incline in the river ahead. Soon after, we camped near a most impressive massive glob of granite 500' high, seemingly dumped on the flat landscape. As we climbed to the top just before sunset, the Barrens transformed into a beautiful green meadow bathed in a warm yellow glow, and we caught our first glimpse of Baker Lake far to the north.

The last miles to Baker Lake were a great joy ride, but strong winds forced an early wet and miserable camp on August 11. By this point we were eating double desserts, greatly appreciated in the cold weather, since the extra week of food we brought in case of delays could now plundered. The next day we struggled our

way 12 miles to the west in high wind and cold rain squalls, often losing ground in the tremendous gusts, landing at a hunting camp of three Inuit families out from the Baker Lake village for the weekend. Friendly, but mostly incomprehensible, communication ensued, until they disappeared suddenly inside their main tent. Somewhat bewildered, we stood about uncertainly until a hand beckoned us inside, and we all crowded in for a fantastic feast of fresh caribou, bubbling away on a Coleman stove. They welcomed us to pitch our tents nearby, and the one boy in camp, whose original shyness soon broke out into good English, took Mike and me out ptarmigan hunting with rocks – the kid had an amazing aim! We awoke early the next morning to the sound of them zooming off in their motorboats. We left immedi-

ately to try to make some progress, but the wind soon rose howling against us again. At our breakfast stop everyone was ice cold and I could hardly feel my feet. We plowed on slowly along the shore, George was tempted and once tried to take the crow-fly route across a large bay, but I decided it was not worth the risk, although probably small, of swamping far out in the frigid water. We managed with exhausting effort to get to the west shore, but then flew to the north-east in a fine tail wind in quickly improving weather. A few miles from the community we were obstructed by a massive sandbar not shown on the map between two islands and had to make a final long portage! A large group of excited children greeted our arrival at the village, and they grabbed our gear and rushed it up to our campsite behind the

HBC buildings – where were they on all our previous portages?! There was plenty of activity along the shoreline, which was jammed with motorboats, float planes, skidoos, komatiks, motorbikes, the odd bicycle and great piles of caribou bones. George persuaded the captain of an ocean vessel, which happened to be in harbor, to take the canoes back to Montreal. After camping overnight we flew out to Churchill, then took the slow train to The Pas the next day.

Eventually I made my way back to Ontario, to Georgian Bay. Here, everything seemed almost “closed in,” such is the wonderfully expanded visual perspective one gains from a protracted trip in the Barren Lands. We had been on the water for 49 days. Many thanks, George, for providing me and my companions with this fabulous experience.



Welcome to the Baker Lake community!



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Nastawgan is an Anishinabi word meaning "the way or route"

The WILDERNESS CANOE ASSOCIATION is a non-profit organization made up of individuals interested in wilderness travel, mainly by canoe and kayak, but also including backpacking and winter trips on both skis and snowshoes. The club publishes a quarterly journal,

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

With another successful **Wilderness and Canoe Symposium** behind us, search for the new location for future Symposiums continues. Forward your suggestions for both the potential locations and the presenters to aleks.gusev@gmail.com.

Lesser known, but much more intimate and very much loved paddlers gathering took place again this year at **Hulbert Outdoor Center** in Fairlee, Vermont. Kudos to Wendy Scott and the team for continuing the revered tradition started many years ago by Deb and Andy Williams, Seth Gibson and others. Nestled in the beautiful setting on the shores of Lake Morey, this event draws a full house twice a year for Snow Walkers' Rendezvous in November and Wilderness Paddlers' Gathering in early March.

Some WCA members have recently received the latest and perhaps last **Che-Mun Outfit 155**, an esteemed newsletter published by Michael Peake of Hide-Away Canoe Club. Michael's been "at it" for 30 years, sharing and educating us on a wide range of topics - always relevant and interesting. As we commiserate the loss of this wonderful resource, we wish Michael all the best in his Life 2.0, as he himself describes new and exciting chapter in his life.

A word about the upcoming major cleanup of **WCA website** members database. Becoming a WCA member online has always been a 2-step process. First, you create your profile including User Name and password. Then, you proceed to the online Store to purchase the annual membership. It's been noticed that some of us stop after the completion of the first step - not realizing that the actual purchase and payment is required to become a Member. As we contemplate ways to better streamline this process, check your online account status. Are you only Registered User or an actual Member? To check this, log into your account at www.wildernesscanoe.ca and open My Account Setting. Look for Expiring WCA Membership section at the top of the page - it will tell you when your membership expires. If you don't see it, you're not a member - or your membership lapsed. Consult Help section of the website or contact webmaster@wildernesscanoe.ca if any questions.

Recent passing of **Toni Harting**, long-time *Nastawgan* Editor, author, renowned photographer, and a dear friend is very much felt on those pages. Look for a story about Toni in the next issue of *Nastawgan*.

Contributors' Guidelines

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

WCA Activities

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

Deadlines

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



The Memory of Water

by Allen Smutylo

This author, adventurer spoke to us at the 2013 WCA Symposium. His intriguing paintings were displayed on the stage. If you missed your chance to buy his book at the symposium, may I suggest that that you rectify that, and travel with him from Tobermory, to the Arctic, and even Hawaii and India.

Each chapter is an armchair journey through the eyes of an artist who really sees and feels where he is. He has superlative paddling and tripping skills, and a risk calculator turned up beyond my comfort level. What a time I had experiencing these places through his poetic writing, and gazing at the paintings his great talent generated while there. This book was exciting and beautiful, a rare combination.

Thank you, Allen Smutylo, for the amazing adventures to the far corners of the earth.

Review by Cathryn Rees, whose trips are becoming less far and less strenuous these days, but whose spirit can still soar with the best.

Allen Smutylo's artwork and writing stems from over 30 years of traveling to some of the most remote regions of the

world, including: the Arctic, the Antarctic, the Amazon, the Himalaya, Patagonia and Rajasthan. His paintings and etchings are in over 300 corporate and public collections and have won numerous international awards. Winner of the Best Travel & Adventure Award at the Banff Book and Film Festival, *Wild Places Wild Hearts* was described by The Globe and Mail as "a profound and poignant meditation on the connection between landscape and culture." His newest book, *The Memory of Water* was released in Feb. '13. His website is www.allensmutylo.com.



Behind the Scenes with Peter Jaspert

I'm not sure how many members realize the amount of work that goes into making the *Nastawgan* such a wonderful newsletter. The editors' roles are probably the most understood, however the time commitment is almost certainly underestimated. But what exactly is a layout person? The layout person needs to know publishing software and also has to be available for many consecutive hours per issue to get the newsletter out to the members in a timely manner.

The WCA is blessed to have found a layout expert in Peter Jaspert. Peter owned a typesetting company in Toronto for many years and thus has the knowledge of layout from the days when typesetting was required. Peter uses Quark computer software but knowing the basics of layout from his former business has certainly been a huge help. Despite Peter's expertise it still requires many hours to get such a professional looking product.

Peter arrived in Canada from Germany in 1960. A year later with his Sears canoe he began paddling in Algonquin Park. A few years later, one of his business clients encouraged him to take up whitewater paddling. The Madawaska River became his home away from home for the next five years as Peter honed his whitewater skills. Since then, Peter has paddled many rivers throughout Canada. His favourite river is the Nahanni, which he has paddled three times; the first in 1985 and the last time this past summer.

With Peter's guidance I am learning the intricacies of the layout job so that we will have a backup person available when needed. It has been an eye opener discovering how difficult the job is and how much time is required. It has also been fun to get

to know Peter and to be able to swap canoe stories with a fellow paddler.

Thank you Peter, for all your hard work, dedication and patience with your student.

Barb Young



Churchill Falls

Story by Robert Kimber
Photos by Dick Irwin

This year's trip is over. Derek Morgan and his wife, Sondra, will drive us out the 115 miles of dirt road from Churchill Falls village to Esker, a whistle-stop on the Quebec North Shore and Labrador Railway. There we will load our outfit onto a southbound train that will take us back 286 miles to Sept-Îles on the St. Lawrence where we left our cars over two weeks ago.

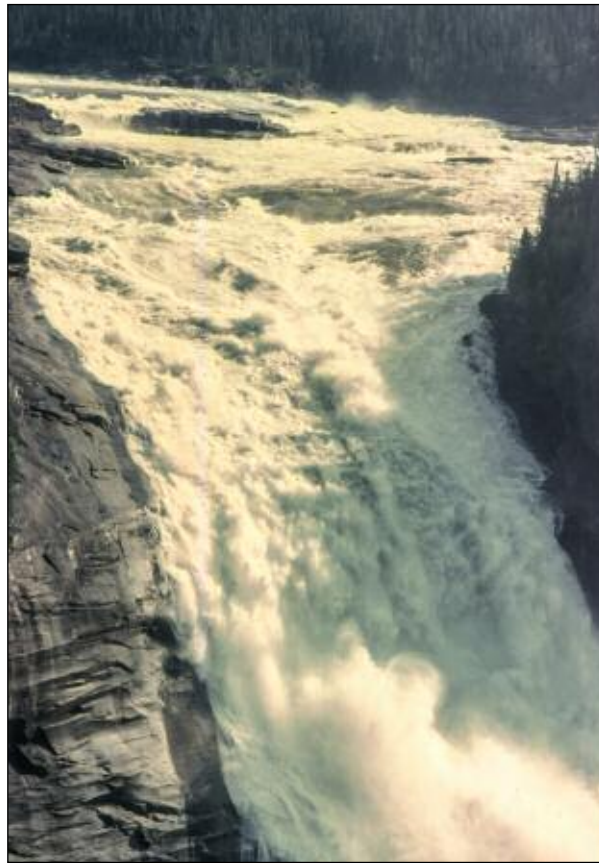
Our canoes are tied onto the racks of the pickup trucks, and we will take shifts riding in the cabs and the beds of the trucks. It's early September. White clouds, driven by a northwest wind, are scurrying across the huge, brilliantly blue sky of the Labrador plateau. Before too many more days have passed, there will be snow in the air. Those of us taking the first shift in the backs of the trucks will soon have to put on all the wool we have and then pull our raingear on over it to ward off, with only moderate success, the combined force of the wind in the air and the gale generated by the speed of the trucks.

But before we hunker down for that long, cold haul, we make a stop to visit what, for any river lover, has to be one of the saddest sights in North America. About twenty miles out of the village, the road crosses the river just above Churchill Falls, and we pull into a gravel pit on the west end of the bridge. From there it is not far to the falls, a quarter mile maybe, certainly no more than a half. As we set out on the well-worn path we know what we are going to see; and if we had forgotten for a moment, the dry, jumble of massive rock under the two-hundred-yard span of the bridge serves as a reminder. We are going to pay our respects to the mortal remains of a great waterfall.

Until 1965, when both the river and the falls were renamed in honor of Winston Churchill, these falls were known as Grand Falls. Surely they had to be counted among the grandest falls of this continent or any other. With all due respect for Mr. Churchill and, for that matter, for Sir Charles Hamilton, the first colonial governor of Newfoundland whose name the river bore from 1821 until Churchill displaced him, I would submit that even the most powerful of politicians, when set side by side with

this river, are mere twerps. The Grand River and its Grand Falls would be better served by the names the first explorers gave them.

Grandeur and beauty are inseparable in any great waterfall, but usually one quality or the other dominates. The world's very highest falls, which don't have large volumes of flow, are more beautiful than grand. Slim ribbons of water tumbling from high parapets, they have a delicacy about them that is often reflected in their names:



Angel, Fairy, Bridalveil. They soar as in a swan dive, and as they drop one thousand or three thousand feet, water dissipates into mist and cloud, like spirit freeing itself from flesh.

There is nothing ethereal about falls like Victoria and Churchill and Niagara. They measure only hundreds of feet in height, not thousands; but their volume is overwhelming. They come at you like a thundering herd, like elephants, buffalo and longhorns combined, like the ride of the Valkyries. Where a ribbon of water cascading out of the sky seems a gift from some airy divinity,

thirty- or forty- or fifty-thousand cubic feet of water per second roaring over a precipice and plunging into a canyon to boil and churn and smoke there inspire awe bordering on terror. The Indians of Labrador, understandably, gave the falls a wide berth; and their reluctance to go near either the falls or twelve-mile McLean Canyon below them – along with the incredible ruggedness of the Labrador interior – probably explains why so few white men ever reached Grand Falls until well into this century.

The number of recorded visits to the falls by whites in the 1800s can be counted on one hand, starting with John McLean of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1839. Another H.B.C. officer, named Kennedy, visited them again twenty years later; but the Bowdoin College expedition of 1891 was the first to photograph the falls and canyon and bring back even a rudimentary scientific description of them.

The construction first of the QNS and L Railway, built to bring out ore from the rich iron deposits of the central Quebec-Labrador peninsula, then of the haul road from Esker to the construction site of the Churchill Falls hydro-power plant changed all that. Churchill Falls did not become a tourist destination overnight, but it did become accessible to vastly larger numbers of people than it had ever been before. Edgar Corriveau, who runs an outfitting store in Sept-Îles and who saw the falls before the power plant was completed, tells a story of what could happen to gawkers and camera clickers who lacked the Indians' piety. Two sightseers, he recounts, went out to the falls in the spring to photograph them at high water. Intent on getting dramatic shots, they ventured out onto some rocks near the brink of the falls. The rocks, continuity drenched by the mist from the falls, still had a skim of ice on them. The two men slipped, fell, clutched frantically, for handholds, slid into the water, and were instantly lost to sight. "They didn't stand a chance," Edgar said.

Perhaps understatement is the only way one can begin to hint at what those men's deaths must have been like, the conscious-

ness, however briefly it lasted, of being a tiny speck of sentient life caught in the titanic grip of those falls where waters drawn from a 25,000-square-mile watershed are massed, squeezed together, and pushed through the eye of a needle to plunge some 250 feet into an immense scour basin the millennia have pummeled out of the rock below.

“Turbulence” is a phenomenon a physicist may analyze and experiment with, but the word doesn’t begin to comprehend what went on at the foot of Churchill Falls, much less hint at what it would be like to experience it on one’s own flesh. Yet I can’t help wondering whether those two men didn’t feel with their terror some lunatic exhilaration as well. Massive waterfall inspire a dangerous, hypnotizing fascination in people, drawing them closer and closer to the edge and planting question in the healthiest minds: “What *would* it be like to just step over?”

On that September afternoon when we visited the falls the answer was easy: It would have been like jumping into a rock pile. The river was dry, and at the falls only a pitiful dribble ran down the face of the rock. Churchill Falls had been reduced to a leaky faucet. There was no mist, no thundering roar. There was only the sound of the wind in the spruce. Austin Cary and Dennis Cole, the two men of the 1891 Bowdoin expedition who reached the falls, arrived there in late summer, too, and in what appears to have been an exceptionally dry year. But even so, the volume of the falls was so great that “the ground quaked with the shock of the descending stream.”

Where has all that water gone? Now it is fodder for the eleven turbines of the Churchill Falls hydroelectric plant, one of the world’s largest underground powerhouses with a generating capacity of 550 megawatts. But before it is sucked into the penstocks that will drop it about a thousand feet from the plateau down to the turbines and back into the river below McLean Canyon, it is stored in an immense reservoir. Unlike the American West, where hydropower storage is often accomplished by damming canyons and forming long, deep lakes, central Labrador is a huge tableland where water can be stored only by spreading it out, not by piling it up. Here, a system of low dikes built at strategic points has merged the great gangling lakes of the plateau-Lobstick, Michikamau, Windbound, Orma, Mackenzie, Vollant, and Kasheshibaw-into one huge beaver flowage a little over a third the size of Lake Ontario.

The day before our departure, we had toured the power plant that has drained

Churchill Falls dry and put 2,700 Square miles of Labrador under water. Newfoundland Hydro is proud of this plant, and even from people like me the place draws grudging admiration. It is something like the pyramids, a project so monumental in size and concept that one can’t but respect the human ingenuity and sweat that went into it: the huge galleries blasted, bored, and chipped out of solid rock, the transport of the turbines that were designed so they would fit-with clearance of only a few inches-through the tunnels on the QNS and L. But, as with the pyramids, I also can’t help asking: Is this something we really need? Granted, the Churchill Falls hydropower plant was not bought with the human suffering that went into the pyramids, and it is presumably of benefit to humankind. Yet on some level I wonder if it is really of all that much greater benefit than a pyramid, if it too isn’t as much a monument to the god-man of technology as the pyramids were to the god-man embodied in the pharaohs.

If Churchill Falls were the only project of its kind, we might be more inclined to give it the benefit of the doubt. But it seems instead to represent only one operation in an ongoing campaign to squeeze every last kilowatt out of the Quebec-Labrador peninsula. There is hardly a river in Labrador or Quebec that has not been surveyed for its hydropower potential, and the Lower Churchill Development Corporation, not content with Churchill Falls’ 550 megawatts, is planning two more hydropower plants on the lower Churchill, a 618-megawatt station at Muskrat Falls and a 1,698-megawatt one at Gull Island Rapids, plants that will dwarf the giant already in place at Churchill Falls. If and when these plans are carried out, the Grand River will not be so grand any more.

And this is in Labrador alone, on one river alone, chicken feed next to the James Bay project in Quebec where “LG2,” the largest underground powerhouse in the world, cranks out 5,238 megawatts on the La Grande River, where two other plants have capacities of 3,000 and 2,000 megawatts respectively, where hydropower reservoirs cover 4,600 square miles (not the mere 2,700 of Labrador’s ironically named Smallwood) with muck, stumps, and rapidly raising and falling waters, and where Phase 2 of the James Bay project is expected to raise total generating capacity to 25,000 megawatts.

We come back from our little detour to defunct Churchill Falls with no more factual information than we brought to it: We



knew the falls were dead, but now that knowledge is visceral. The sight of death is different from the knowledge of it. Nobody can sing the praises of “clean” hydropower to me any more, and nobody can tell me that the loss of Churchill Falls is a fair price to pay to warm our water beds, run our video games, and light up our shopping malls.

Robert Kimber is a writer, translator, and canoeist. He is the author of several books and numerous articles and columns for *Country Journal*, *Down East*, *Yankee*, and other magazines. He and his wife Rita live in Tempe, Maine. Bob recently shared some of his stories at the annual Paddlers Gathering at Hulbert Outdoor Centre in Fairlee, Vermont. “Churchill Falls” story is published in his book “A Canoeist’s Sketchbook” by Chelsea Green Publishing Co. in 1991.

Richard (Dick) Irwin first canoed Churchill River in 1967, when the photographs used in this article were taken. Dick recently celebrated his 75th birthday. He lives in Abercorn, Quebec.



Paddling in Gwich'in Country & Across the Great Divide

Story by Hugh Stewart

Photos by Kate Prince, Cathie Campbell and Karl Hartwick



From L to R: Karl, Ann, Bob, Kate, Hugh, Cathie

I'd like to start with an acknowledgement and a disclaimer at the very beginning of this story. By acknowledgement, I will say that I was fortunate to travel with a fine group of people: Bob Davis, Cathie Campbell, Karl Hartwick, Anne-Marie Phillips and Kate Prince. Although I myself have claimed authorship for this story, Kate and Cathie contributed to its shape and content significantly. The disclaimer is that this trip did not explore

new routes or cover ground that has not been covered many, many times.

So, where did we go? We started in the Mackenzie Mountains right near the Yukon and NWT border at about 4,000 feet altitude and came down the Snake River into the Peel River and on down to Fort McPherson close to sea level. About 30 miles below Fort McPherson, and on the edge of the Mackenzie Delta, we started up the Rat River, crossing from

the Arctic to the Pacific watershed at McDougall pass with an altitude of around 1,000 feet. Then it was down the Little Bell, the Bell and the Porcupine eventually finishing at the village of Old Crow at an altitude of 821 feet just about 8 weeks after we started.

We began with a rendezvous in Whitehorse and spent a wonderful week at the Vista Outdoor Learning Centre run by our friends Nansi Cunningham and Clayton White. Clayton and his sister, Val, drove us about 6 hours north to the base of Black Sheep Aviation on the Stewart River in the community of Mayo.

On June 28, Black Sheep dropped us off at Duo Lakes which drain west into the Bonnet Plume River. We spent three days wandering around the mountains, breathing in the spectacular vistas and getting things in perspective. Big country, big scenery, big power, big storms!

It still felt like spring, and every walk revealed something, a Willow Ptarmigan, a Wilson's Warbler, the Mountain Aven, official flower of the NWT, in bloom at lower levels but not yet flowering higher up. The good times did come to an end, however, and we portaged down to the Snake, heading for the black cliffs a mile or two away. We figured out a route and moved the canoes one afternoon and portaged the rest of our gear the next morning.

One of the main differences between canoe travel in Eastern North America and the mountain rivers of the west is the ever changing path of the rivers. Channels become blocked and new channels are made. The rivers become braided and there are always choices to be made on very short notice. Sometimes you pick a channel that works, sometimes one that does not. Shores are constantly eroding, with trees toppling into the river but remaining anchored to the bank by their roots. These sweepers become a major hazard to travel up or downstream especially on outside corners when you



Black Sheep Aviation in Mayo, loading the gear

are picking up speed. In fact, our only “incident” of the summer happened about a week down the Snake when Kate and I hit an immovable sweeper hidden in some overhanging willow and tipped over.

The Snake is steadily dropping without much straight paddling possible. You are lining, wading or back paddling, lots and lots of back paddling. Mental fatigue sets in before physical fatigue. On a few occasions a carry seemed like the best option especially at this location, the rapids of the Albino Porcupine.

We spent the next 10 days picking our way down the Snake en route to its confluence with the Peel. The Snake River is the eastern most major tributary of the Peel. The others working westward are the Bonnet Plume, the Wind and the Hart. In the last decade, the fate of the Peel watershed has become the subject of much controversy. Although all of the Yukon native peoples and some of the NWT groups have settled their land claims, there are big issues regarding mineral development in the watershed. The Peel River Planning Commission, which included all the affected native groups, worked for seven years to come up with a plan. Their conclusion was that 71% of the watershed should be protected. The Planning Commission Report seems to have been ignored after it was submitted to the Yukon Territorial Government. Earlier this winter the Yukon Government decided to open 79% of the watershed to claim staking and development. Some of the native people have retained the well-known jurist



Albino Porcupine on the portage on the upper Snake River



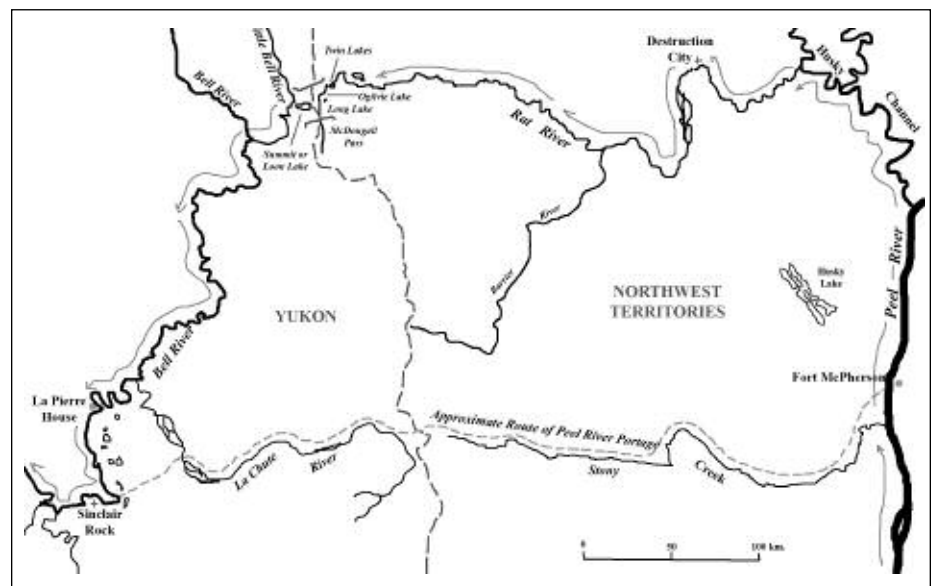
View from a hike above Duo Lakes, looking north and down the Snake River valley

Thomas Berger and are taking court action against the government on the grounds that obligations to consult with the natives under the land claim agreements have not been properly met. Stay tuned, it will be interesting.

One thing is very certain. The controversy has brought recreational canoeists in large numbers to the area. By virtue of its location in Mayo, Black Sheep Aviation has a virtual monopoly on access to the region. Darcy Drinnan told us that, as of the end of June, they had 340 people booked to fly in to the four rivers.

These numbers suggest about 50 canoe parties were on the watershed last summer. Many get flown back to Mayo from Taco Bar on the Peel, some proceed down to Fort McPherson and only a few have the time, interest, or craziness to travel upstream on the Rat.

A portage was necessary at this point to avoid a very large rapid. Moose are seen in this lower country. We watched the peregrine falcons that inhabited this cliff. A field of Arctic Cotton, which always looks like an inviting place to camp but actually flourishes in gravelly, un-



Map is inspired by the another map originally published in the *The Ladies, The Gwitch'in, and The Rat*



Portage around small canyon on the upper Snake River



Wading on the upper Snake River



Rapid on the upper Snake River

comfortable terrain. The Snake eventually slows down as it nears the Peel. Camping on the Peel often involves making the best of hard-packed mud, but the upside is easy paddling with the current.

About five days on the Peel brought us to Fort McPherson where we took a few days off, staying at the NWT official campground. Here we encountered Gabe Rivest and his friends whom we had met back in Whitehorse. They had come down the Hart and, like us, were headed up the Rat. The large numbers on the Peel watershed notwithstanding, this group was the only other canoe party we actually encountered all summer. Our visit to Fort McPherson coincided with a community feast to celebrate the opening of a new community centre. Three or four people very kindly invited us to join the festivities. We were helped in many ways by Robert Alexie, a local elder who ran the campground.

To avoid a fairly uninteresting paddle on the lower Peel and catch up a little on time, we hired Peter Snowshoe. He ferried us about three hours travel to the place on the lower Rat where motorized navigation ends, known as Destruction City. His boat is typical of river boats seen in the area: long and narrow, low sides and snub nosed, easy to land and load and unload on the muddy shorelines, perfectly suited for the terrain. The route up the Rat was one of the ways to get to the Klondike in the great gold rush of 1898. At Destruction City, people dismantled their large boats and built smaller boats to continue water travel or to use sleighs and toboggans to haul their gear in the late winter. The community at Destruction City in the winter of 1898-99 numbered about 42.

Now we began amphibious canoeing. Wading, tracking, poling and paddling but only when it was necessary to ferry to the other side of the river, which seemed easily to be 15 or 20 times a day. At times it was too swift and deep to work out in the stream so we had to work along the shore, not always that easily as seen here. In addition to braids and shifting channels, travelers must also be wary of dramatically fluctuating water levels. We went to bed on July 29 in a steady drizzle, but not an alarming downpour. When we awoke around 5.30 a.m. our canoes were afloat, though fortunately

tied to trees. We were lucky to lose only a lifejacket and a few paddles. Gabe Rivest and friends were not so lucky. They lost most of their paddles. The water continued to rise throughout the day. Not only was the water moving quickly, but a fair bit of debris was being carried along. We spent two more days at this location during which the water receded and rose a second time.

For a few days we played cat and mouse with Gabe Rivest's party. They were an interesting group making a movie to draw attention to the importance of keeping the Peel Watershed undeveloped. We were all interviewed and camped together one evening. They were a fine bunch, youthful and energetic with good values.

The scenery kept getting more spectacular as we moved up into the mountains toward the head of the Rat. Once back from the ribbon of trees along the shore, the scene is often one of open sphagnum meadows.

In the 1840s and 50s, the Hudson's Bay Company began to use the connection between the Mackenzie River watershed and the Yukon River watershed that we were travelling. Until then, access to Fort Selkirk on the Yukon River had been a very arduous route with many portages via the Upper Liard into the headwaters of the Pelly and down the Pelly to Fort Selkirk. A route down the Mackenzie, up the Rat and down the Bell and Porcupine Rivers to the Yukon was longer but only involved one real obstacle, the Rat. The solution was an overland trail directly from Fort McPherson to the Bell. The route varied from time to time, but all versions involved a trek of 75 to 90 miles depending on whose account you read. Trade goods and furs were moved by dog team in winter, unlike the rest of the HBC Empire where all the freighting was done by boat.

As we approached McDougall Pass, which is surprisingly wide and not at all constricting, we came through Ogilvie Lake and Twin Lakes, and after two portages, to Summit Lake. Those were the first lakes we had encountered since paddling Duo Lakes six weeks earlier. The small lakes seemed to us enormous. We camped on the shore of Summit Lake in McDougall Pass. A steel marker indicating the boundary between the Yukon



Lunch break on the upper Snake River

and NWT was about 25 yards from our fireplace. This pass is the northernmost and lowest in the Rockies at around 1,000 feet. By comparison, Yellowhead Pass is 3,711 feet, Kicking Horse is 5,338 feet, and Crowsnest is 4,455 feet high in elevation. All of these and the Donner pass in the United States, at 7,057 feet elevation, have highways and railroads through them. Coming up the Rat, you go from sea level to 1,000 feet in 75 miles. The Pacific side is much more gradual. It takes the Bell, Porcupine and Yukon a few thousand miles to get down to sea level at the Bering Sea. It is estimated that 400 Klondikers came over MacDougall Pass in 1898-99. There was a community here at Summit Lake that winter known as Shacktown, which housed 81 people. There is little evidence of this occupation today, although we did find rectangular



Anne overlooking Summit Lake



Lining canoes on the Snake River

shapes of flattened ground. We had a very relaxing, pleasant few days here while we waited for North Wright Air to fly in some food and Bob's stove and winter tent.

By the day we left Summit Lake, August 16, the summer had ended. Although the Bell was, as Anne put it, "mellow," the weather on the Little Bell, Bell and Porcupine was frequently damp, overcast and cold. Fortunately the winds were relatively quiet. We all pulled out gloves and dried them out each evening in Bob and Karl's tent with the wood-

stove. Spruce stands up the bank afforded us comfortable sheltered camping.

We were looking for the remnants of the trading post called LaPierre House, which the HBC had set up in the 1840's. LaPierre House was the terminus of the Peel Portage, as the land route from Fort McPherson was called. The hunting was good in the area and it also served as a "meat post" for Fort McPherson. Small motorized vessels could come up the Porcupine and Bell from Fort Yukon.

The approach of cooler weather also brought the caribou. Sightings became

frequent each day. These caribou are part of the Porcupine Herd, which Karsten Heuer and his wife Leanne Allison followed in their video and book *Being Caribou*.

We felt by now that fall was coming fast and the paddling season was drawing to a close. A few days' travel upstream from Old Crow we began to encounter active fishing and hunting camps of the Gwich'in. Joseph Kassi and his grandson were checking their nets when we passed them and they welcomed us to the community with a nice juicy Chub salmon and told us where to camp when we got to Old Crow.

Old Crow is the only community in the Yukon without all season road access and has only about 350 residents. Although everyone directed us to use this little building by the river as our kitchen and dining room, no one in the village knew where the key was. So with everyone's blessing, and within sight of the RCMP detachment, we unscrewed the hasp and broke in. We were camped right across the road from the Anglican Church. There was a constant flow of visitors to our campsite, including Bertha who brought a meal of whitefish and rice. Her grandson came by quite regularly. When we arrived, the first question asked of us was where and when we had seen caribou. Judging by what we told them, some of the locals anticipated where the caribou would now be and were off. By the next evening boats were returning to town with caribou. We were invited to a nearby home to see the caribou being carved up and given some tenderloin to cook for breakfast. Steven Frost, an elder and no longer a hunter, himself was given a caribou, which he cut up and began drying immediately.

Old Crow is a very together community with a wonderful library-visitors centre, with computer terminals and internet hookup which we were free to use. They value the old ways and were quite happy when we gave the community one of our 18-foot Prospectors. Air North, which is partially owned by the Gwich'in, is the only way out of town.

There are a few books I would suggest if you are interested in the history of this region:



On the trip to Destruction City with Peter Snowshoe



Visit with Gabe Rivest's party on the Rat River

- Wilson, Clifford. *Campbell of the Yukon*. MacMillan of Canada, Toronto, 1970. This is an account of the early HBC operations in the area.
- Wright, Allen. *Prelude to Bonanza*. Gray's Publishing Limited, 1976. This book has interesting details on the Russian occupancy of the area and pretty well everything else that happened before the gold rush. Remember until 1867 Alaska belonged to Russia.
- McAdam, Ebenezer. *From Duck Lake to Dawson City*. Western Producer Prairie Books, 1977. This is an account of getting to the Klondike by going up the Wind River in the winter.
- MacGregor, James Grierson. *The Klondike Rush Through Edmonton*. McClelland and Stewart, 1970. This book has wonderful detail on all of these interior routes to the goldfields.
- Vyvyan, Clara, I.S. MacLaren and Lisa LaFramboise. *The Ladies, the Gwich'in and the Rat*. The University of Alberta Press, 1998. This is the story of two British ladies who went from Aklavik to Fort Yukon in 1926.

Finally, no northern canoe journey should be undertaken without consulting the Geological Survey of Canada Annual Reports during the years from about 1885 to WWI.

Hugh Stewart has been canoe tripping for many years. He builds wooden canoes near Ottawa.

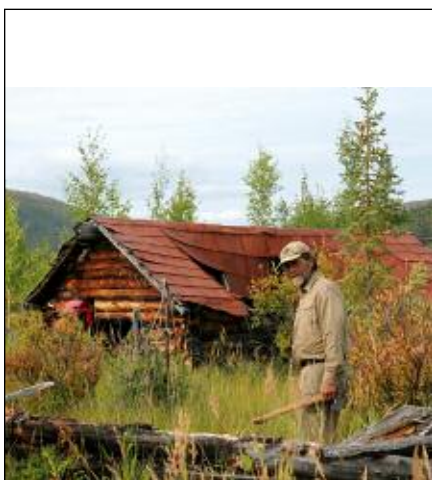
His current project is with McGahern Stewart Publishing, which specializes in

"Forgotten Northern Classics".

Kate Prince is a teacher, bird bander, canoe guide and canoe builder. She has bicycled her way through large portions of Western U.S. and Canada.



Anne cooking salmon just outside of Old Crow



Bob in front of LaPierre House

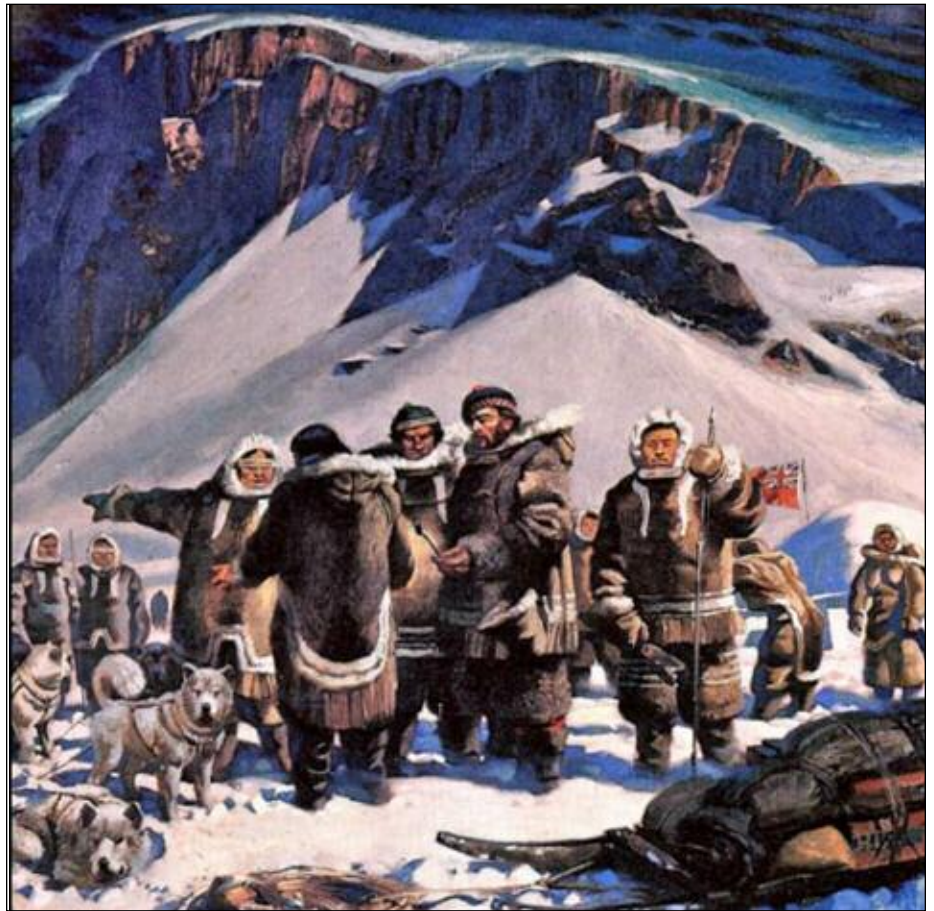
Return to Rae Strait...

By Ken McGoogan

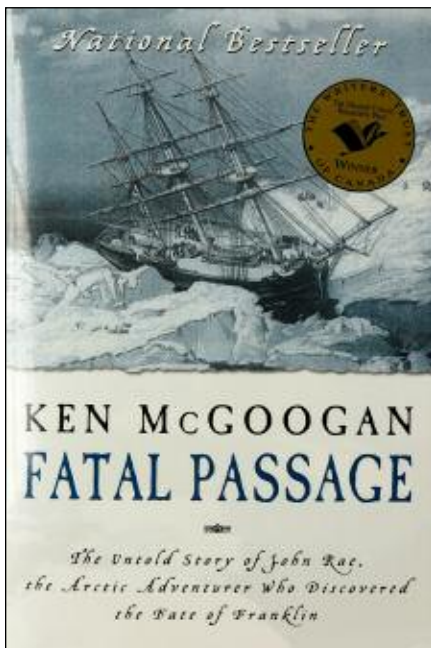
What if boulders or a heavy swell prevented us from landing? What if extreme weather had destroyed the memorial? What if someone had carried it off? We were in the Arctic, on the west coast of Boothia Peninsula, roaring towards shore in a Zodiac. A group of three men and one woman, we were on a scouting mission to locate a cairn and plaque dedicated to explorer John Rae. I kept my worries to myself. I wanted to establish this site as a viable historical destination in the Northwest Passage.

For years I have been urging people to stop obsessing about Sir John Franklin, that unfortunate Englishman, and instead to celebrate explorer John Rae, the Hudson's Bay Company explorer. In 1999, with two fellow adventurers - Cameron Treleavan, an Arctic antiquarian, and Louie Kamookak, an Inuit historian - I had set out to install a plaque at the site where, in 1854, Rae built a cairn to mark his discovery of the final link in the Northwest Passage.

Finding the cairn had not been easy. We pounded across Rae Strait from Gjoa Haven in a twenty-four-foot boat, and camped overnight in a dirt-floor tent. The following day we hiked for hours to reach



1854: Rae meets Inuit hunters who reveal Franklin's fate



Fatal Passage – Ken's book about John Rae

a longitude that had been recorded in the mid-1850s with unreliable instruments, and we ended up far inland. Returning due west towards the coast, we detoured south

around a freezing, rock-filled inlet, then followed the Boothia coast north. Finally, having trekked thirty kilometres across bog and tundra, on a ridge overlooking the



John Rae discovers final link in the Passage (map published in Sir John Franklin's Last Arctic Expedition by R.J. Cyriax and James Wordie)

water, we found the remains of the cairn.

The next day, lugging the plaque, we returned more directly, planted the metal base in the ground near the cairn and piled stones around it. We drank a toast to Rae and the two men who had reached this point with him, an Ojibwa named Thomas Mistegan and an Inuk called William Ouligbuck Jr. All this I described in the epilogue to my book *Fatal Passage: The Untold Story of John Rae, the Arctic Adventurer Who Discovered the Fate of Franklin*.

Born in Orkney, Scotland, on Sept. 30, 1813, John Rae solved the two enduring mysteries of nineteenth-century Arctic exploration: he discovered the fate of the 1845 Franklin expedition and he found that final link. But he received little credit because powerful Victorians — notably Jane, Lady Franklin and Charles Dickens — contrived to erase Rae from official history. He was the only major British explorer of his day never to receive a knighthood.

Rightly hailed as “a genius of Arctic travel” by later explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Dr. John Rae had learned much of what he knew from First Nations and Inuit experts while working for the Hudson’s Bay Company. Then, between 1846 and 1854, he led four major expeditions, travelling more than 37,000 kilometres. The chief hunter and food-supplier of every outing, he charted 2,475 kilometres of what is now Canadian coastline. A prodigy of endurance, resilience, and resourcefulness, Rae trekked 10,470 kilometres in the Arctic alone, mostly on snowshoes, and travelled 10,680 kilometres in canoes and small boats.

In 1999, in an attempt to commemorate this peerless explorer at the site of his greatest achievement, Treleaven and I built a plaque in Calgary. We used a sheet of anodized aluminum and screwed it onto a slab of Honduran mahogany. In Gjoa Haven, an Inuit community on King William Island, Kamookak attached the plaque to a waist-high stand of welded steel.

Now, arriving by motorized rubber dinghy thirteen years later, with four of us eagerly scanning the horizon, finally we spotted it: the John Rae Memorial Plaque. We drove the Zodiac onto the sand beach. On reaching the ridge overlooking Rae Strait, we found the mahogany greying nicely, and the memorial in superb condition.

On May 6, 1854, Rae reached this spot, looked out over a channel covered by “young ice,” and realized that this waterway would be ice-free during summer. This was it, the missing north-south waterway between channels from the east and west. Here, Rae built a cairn.

In August 2012, I returned to the site with Adventure Canada, travelling as a staff historian and author aboard a 120-passenger ship. Since more and more history buffs are visiting the Arctic on touring ships, I hoped to establish the John Rae memorial as a place to visit. Rae Strait is only twenty-four kilometres across, but its edges remain uncharted. Our captain got us within two kilometres of shore, and from there, in Zodiacs, we had cruised ashore. While gun-bearers wandered afield to check for polar bears, I examined the ruins of Rae’s cairn and the plaque.

We gathered eighty or ninety voyagers into a circle around the plaque. I said a few words about John Rae and his two men, and what their discovery meant to Arctic exploration history. Three Inuit travelling with us marked the occasion with a song of celebration. Another Inuk staffer, Jenna Andersen of Labrador, did what was probably the first-ever handstand at this location. And why wouldn’t we celebrate? The site, a crucial location in Arctic exploration history, had proven readily accessible. Back on the ship, I visited the bridge and thanked the captain: “Mission accomplished.”

Since we had installed the plaque, the



Author at the plaque & cairn in 2012

struggle to gain recognition for John Rae has gathered momentum. *Fatal Passage*, published in 2001, won several awards. Seven years later, a docudrama based on the book, called *Passage*, aired on BBC and History Channel and also won several awards. In September 2013, to mark the bicentennial of Rae’s birth, his native Orkney, played host to an international conference and erected a statue to commemorate the explorer.

Besides *Fatal Passage*, Ken McGoogan’s Arctic works include *Ancient Mariner*, *Lady Franklin’s Revenge*, and *Race to the Polar Sea*. His latest book is *50 Canadians Who Changed the World*.



Rae Strait: Three at the plaque in 1999

The Brent Run

Story by Bob Henderson
Photo by George Quinby

It was pitch black on the water at 2:00 a.m. when Tom Hawks and I headed away from a Camp Ahmek dock on Canoe Lake, Algonquin Park. That was 1976, close to 40 years ago. Our plan was to paddle to Brent (a Cedar Lake train stop at the north end of the park) and back in 24 hours or less. The total distance is 160 kms. We left at 2:00 a.m. with the intention of paddling the Otterslides (five portages in a marshy creek system) in the early waning light up and back. This would also allow us to do the Catfish Lake 2,345 m portage in the light both ways. All that worked out as planned. Memorable moments included bumping into a moose ... almost ... straddling a portage in early light and stopping to repair our wood-canvas canoe from a tear on Perley Lake. Head winds on Cedar Lake frustrated our return trip.

We were in Brent making a triumphant phone call 13 hours later; a 24-hour run seemed within reach. However, that celebration was premature, like winning a first round of the playoffs. On our return, put simply, we couldn't stay awake and got a bit mixed up on our map reading on Burntroot Lake. As I'd read the map on the water, Tom would fall asleep. Then

he'd take the map to the bow of the canoe and I would fall asleep. We thought it shifted from a fun challenge to a dangerous outing. We packed it in and pulled into a campsite, turned over the canoe by the shore and lay under it for a few hours of sleep. We woke to people whispering from an all-too-close tent; "hey, there are people out there." We jumped in the canoe and paddled back more leisurely to Canoe Lake in 30 plus total hours. I honestly cannot remember the total time because once we stopped paddling, the time clock turned off in our heads and the Brent Run became more a "day off" activity from our camp counsellor jobs.

We told next to no one of our outing at the time for fear of reprisal from our camp superiors who, rightly so, might have wondered how well we would perform our jobs the next day. But there is also a glowing pride from these same superiors that here is a canoe event or a canoe race (against yourself) that is steeped in tradition. We certainly were pleased to have had a good go at exploring this rumoured/revered tradition.

Here is the tradition. Two of the Stringer brothers were rumoured to have paddled to Brent and back from their

Canoe Lake home in 24 hours. Rumour, fact or canoe lore waggery: it planted a compelling itch in the minds of Camp Ahmek staff. Recorded history has Bill Little and Bill Stoqua in 1934 challenging the Stringer 24-hour Brent Run. Their time was 32 hours, given they were slowed down and lost for a while by fog on Big Trout Lake on their return. Next in 1948, Carl and Hank Laurier, former Camp Ahmek staff and now Canoe Lake cottagers recorded a time of 27 hours which set a "confirmed" record for 1948. Reportedly, others between 1934 and 1948 had tried the Brent Run but their times and stories were not recorded. The Laurier's were closest to the now legendary 24-hour Stringer mark.

The Laurier family had a prominent presence on Canoe Lake. The Brent Run would come up in conversations from time to time. Hank's son, Paul Laurier, told me about the history and his family's story. Between 1948 and my effort with Tom Hawks in 1976, I am unaware of anyone trying, indeed reviving The Brent Run. Tom and I were simply curious and doubted the original 24-hour up and back time. We were not keen to "revive" the idea of the Brent Run challenge. We figured we'd be in trouble for trying it out. It was a fun challenge on a day off for us. It was soon out-of-mind for us.

Sometime in the late 1980s, I believe a few teams tried it. In 1990 Chuck Beamish and Bob Anglin completed the trip in 23 hours. Wow, beyond a summer of canoeing fitness, you need conditions to all come together for a time like that. You need a steady pace, nonstop too. Congrats to those guys. Remember all these efforts were completed in a wood canvas 16-foot canoe. In another Algonquin canoe race as part of the 100-year celebrations of the Park, I paddled in an 18'6" racing canoe from Brent (Cedar Lake) to Canoe Lake in 9 hours, morning to evening. That's a different activity for sure.

Well, what compels me to write about the Brent Run now is that somehow in the early 2000s to the present the Brent Run



has been truly revived from a previous 1940s “heyday”, one might say. I have sought out recorded and oral telling. Here is a non-comprehensive list:

Camp Ahmek Staff:

Wayne Gregory and Michael Gregory (son) - 2001, 25 hours

Wayne Gregory and Michael Gregory (son) – 2003, 23 hours, 30 minutes

Adam Newton and Ivan Lapczak – 2003, 33 hours

Nick Best and Mike Dobson, 2008, 26 hours, 32 hours

Rory Weston and Bill McGowan, 2011, 29 hours

Portage Store Staff (Canoe Lake):

George Quinby and Johnny Miglin, 2011, 31 hours

George Quinby and Aiden Keiffer, 2012, 31 hours

Francis Quinby and Holly Hagerman, 2012, 33 hours

George Quinby and Francis Quinby, 2013, 30 hours

Rachel Quinby and Quinn Cathcart, 2013, 43 hours

There are many stories associated with each of these “runs” for sure. Rory Weston told me about planning the trip to coincide with a late summer’s full moon, but getting 30C temperatures. Rory’s advice: this is an “end of summer activity” when one is at their best paddling and strongest shape. You have to be “head strong to do this”.

George Quinby, a Brent Run keener for sure, told me about a pattern of “falling apart at Big Trout Lake on the return run”. He, like the Lauriers in the 1940s didn’t need a map by 2013.

The Portage Store Brent Runners are less concerned about the Camp’s traditions of wood canvas canoes and straight shaft paddles. They are now using ultra light canoes and a bent shaft blade for the bow paddler.

Rachel Quinby and Quinn Cathcart told their story to a local historian, author Gay Clemson. Gay reports on this first all-girl team that map reading “on the fly” troubles underscore the value in knowing the route well. My own memory of misplacing myself on Burntroot Lake in 1976 confirms that, as this was the beginning of my and Tom’s loss of heart.

So the tradition of the Brent Run is now in its second ‘heyday’. But, is this sort of canoe event to garner popular at-



Lake Wonder, painting by Roderick McIver

tention? In my camp staff days (1970s) it was attempted largely in secret. The attempt would raise concern for not just safety but the day’s job that follows. Indeed a camp that gives valour to tradition is in a bit of a bind. In some years, I was told, some groups were not given permission to do the long paddle.

The Canoe Lake youthful community has, it appears, embraced the challenge and mostly takes the necessary measures to safely take up the Stringer-Laurier and later, Beamish/Anglin 23-hour record. Route knowledge, wise food/fuel intake and fitness that are up for the task are first essentials. Still, I can’t help think the Brent Run is best considered as a very local tradition quietly done in respect of those early 1930-40 accounts.

Beyond the Canoe Lake community, marathon paddlers are entering the fray. A marathon paddler veteran plans to do it in 2014. Wayne Gregory, both a marathon paddler and a former Camp Ahmek staffer, has paddled the Brent Run solo (a first, I assume) in 2012; his time was 32 hours. He reports in the summer issue of HUT! (*The Newsletter of the Ontario Marathon Canoe and Kayak Recreation Association*) that he saw 18 moose and almost no people. He clearly enjoyed those special moments of sunrise and twilight paddling.

Perhaps that’s it! It isn’t about record attempting rigour or debates about bent

shaft or more traditional paddles or about canoe types to maintain a spirit of the original idea; what matters always is the joy of the experience of a long – very long – steady time with paddle in hand and canoe over head. The team bond is to be celebrated too. Mostly tho’ the beauty of Algonquin sings out if you have the mental and physical conditioning to head up to Brent and back from Algonquin’s home base of Canoe Lake.

Truth is, it is not to be easily recommended and best not to be organized with rules. Rather, and I quote Chuck Beamish, “the Brent Run is not done for mass recognition. It’s a race that you do for yourself.” I will add it is one heck of a way to see lots of Algonquin Park’s beauty quickly and at some special times of the day. I think Paul Laurier deserves credit for keeping the trickle of a tradition alive in the 1970s. Tom and I are proud to have been a part of it all as I am sure all those listed above would also agree.

A few route details:

- The route is via Burnt Island, Big Trout to Catfish Lake, (No Sunbeam Lake possible short cut – it likely isn’t)
- 160 kms total distance
- Starting elevation 449 m, max elevation 487 m, total elevation gain 171 m
- 21 portages totalling approximately 9,000 m the longest portage is 2,345 m
- 5 lakes at least 6 kms in length.

Peel under Pressure

Story by Genesee Keevil

Photo by Peter Mather

North America's largest constellation of wild mountain rivers has just been opened to mining, oil and gas.

Tucked in the northeast corner of the Yukon, comprising an area roughly the size of Scotland, the Peel River Watershed is rich in rare species that have flourished in these unspoiled waterways and mountains since long before the last ice age. It's also rich in oil and gas, coal, uranium and gold, placing it at the heart of a far too familiar fight over resources and wild spaces.

Roads filled with rumbling mining trucks have yet to mar the Peel – North America's largest intact wilderness ecosystem – but with economic development driving the Yukon government's agenda, gravel and graders could soon overwhelm the caribou and canoes.

Jimmy Johnny grew up in the Peel River Watershed, visiting the gravesites of ancestors, drinking the water, and living off the land, as his people have done for generations.

For him, protecting the watershed means protecting home.

"The Peel is too important," says the Nacho Nyak Dun First Nation elder. "I'm afraid if mining ever started in the watershed it would be really bad for the down-

stream people, the water and the fish ... No matter how much money you spend you can't heal the land and make people healthy after you poison them."

Despite seven years of consultation-driven land-use planning and widespread public support for Peel protection, the territorial government recently announced its own unilaterally-developed plan to open this vast web of pristine waterways, wetlands and wildlife to mining, oil and gas, and roads – a decision that has kicked off what promises to be a precedent setting legal battle.

Represented by aboriginal rights lawyer Thomas Berger, CPAWS Yukon, together with two affected First Nations with the largest traditional territory in the Peel and the Yukon Conservation Society, filed a case against Yukon government in the Yukon Supreme Court on January 27, asking the court to declare the Peel Planning Commission's Final Recommended Plan be upheld.

The arm's length commission recommended permanently protecting 55 percent of the watershed, with a further 25 percent protected in the interim to be reviewed over time, leaving only 20 percent open to industry and roads.

Johnny participated in these consultations, a thorough transparent process that took seven years. He drove through blinding snow, braved 40 below, tirelessly calling for protection of the Peel. "I worked pretty hard showing the planning commission all the places that need to be protected: minerals licks, fish lakes, moose lakes, important places for all kinds of animals," he says.

Johnny was not alone. A whopping 94 percent of all the feedback during the final public consultations on the future of the watershed supported the commission's land use plan and/or Peel protection.

But on January 21, the Yukon government tossed out the commission's plan to protect more than 80% of the watershed, and is moving forward with its own rogue agenda, promising to open more than 70% of the watershed to industrial development and roads.

"We told you how our ancestors lived throughout the Peel: where they hunted and fished, their campsites, their gravesites, and the many trails out there that they walked on," wrote Johnny in a February 2014 letter to Yukon premier Darrell Pasloski. "Now you have opened it up.

"You are going to destroy our history. You are going to pollute the pure water, and make people sick who live downstream ... this leaves a legacy of destruction and goes against what the people have said to you and your government over and over again."

Donations supporting the legal case to protect the Peel can be made at <http://bit.ly/19XFS9U>. Supporters can also sign an Avaaz petition calling for protection at <http://bit.ly/1hGAgjJ>.

Genesee Keevil is a Whitehorse-based journalist who has spent time paddling and mushing sled dogs in the Peel River Watershed. Her work has appeared in the *Globe and Mail*, *National Post* and *Readers Digest*, among other publications.



The End

Some day I will have to write this article. And it will be one of the hardest things that I will have to do in my life. Ever. I'll write it when I am sure that I won't be doing another wilderness canoe trip. When there is not the slightest sliver of doubt that one more trip could possibly be left. I'll write the article when I know that "it" is over.

And what is "it"? "It" is the years of wilderness canoe trips that involved fighting cold, portages, rapids, big lakes, wind, time, and bugs. And then making secret plans the rest of the year to do "it" all again the following year.

And will I miss "it"? Without a doubt. Wilderness canoe country is tough to travel in. Takes a great deal of effort to move through "it". But wilderness canoe trips also awaken senses that cities do their best to bury deep. You forever understand what is real and what is not. You realize that what you have inside of you is more important than what you have that surrounds you. Wilderness canoe trips let you know beyond a doubt what your limits are. How well you can deal with cold, portages, rapids, big lakes, wind, time, and bugs.

And how will I cope without "it"? The big difficulty will be with the memories. Used to be that I had a memory about wilderness canoe trips working in my mind at all times. Now they come and they go. When the memories are particularly strong I try to stop whatever I am doing and concentrate fully on them. The memories don't last long, and if you don't concentrate fully you may miss the message that comes with the memory. You may think that you can put the memories aside and call them back later when you have more time, but you can't. I'm afraid that without "it", the memories may fade completely away. Just one more hard thing that I will have to live with for the rest of my life.

My mind tells me that I could still do wilderness canoeing for a long time, even though my body says that the time has come to move on to the next stage of my life. I'm back in the city now where everything is warm and safe and half

Food for Paddlers

One of the WCA's most well known members is Kevin Callan. Kevin's enthusiasm for paddling is infectious and he has been a great support to the WCA. After seeing him recently at the Wilderness Canoe Symposium I asked him if he would share a recipe. Here is his all-time favorite dessert from his recently published book *The New Trailside Cookbook*, published by Firefly Books. Kevin notes that this dessert contains everything needed on an extended wilderness canoe trip: calories, nutrition, long shelf-life and great taste.

Logan Bread derived from an expedition team who set out to summit Mount Logan, Alaska, in 1950. Rather than the usual hardtack, the climbers created a kind of do-it-yourself energy-bar. Like any recipe, however, there's some debate over what were the initial ingredients used in the founding recipe. However, the common components stayed the same. It's the added bonuses like raisins vs. chocolate chips that have been altered.

Logan Bread

1 & 1/2 cups whole wheat flour
1 & 1/2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour (rye-flour was thought to be what was originally used)
1 & 1/4 cups rolled oats
3/4 cup lightly packed brown sugar
1 & 1/2 tsp baking powder
1 tsp salt
2 eggs
1 cup applesauce
1/2 cup liquid honey
1/2 cup canola oil
1/4 cup molasses
1 cup raisins
2/3 cup sunflower seeds

dead and strangely, I feel only half alive. I'm trying to adjust to life without wilderness canoe trips, but no luck yet. With time, maybe I can adjust. Maybe. All I really do know is that we played at being Alexander Mackenzie for a long time, and "it" was good.

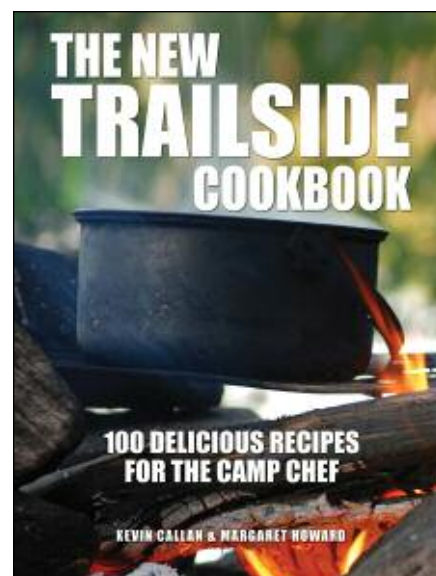
Greg Went

Most prepare this at home, taking advantage of using the fresh ingredients (eggs) and not have the hassle of carrying separate containers of the liquid ingredients (honey, molasses, apple sauce). It's a wise choice, and the bread has a long shelf-life. But it's all still doable to make it fresh while in the interior. Here's how:

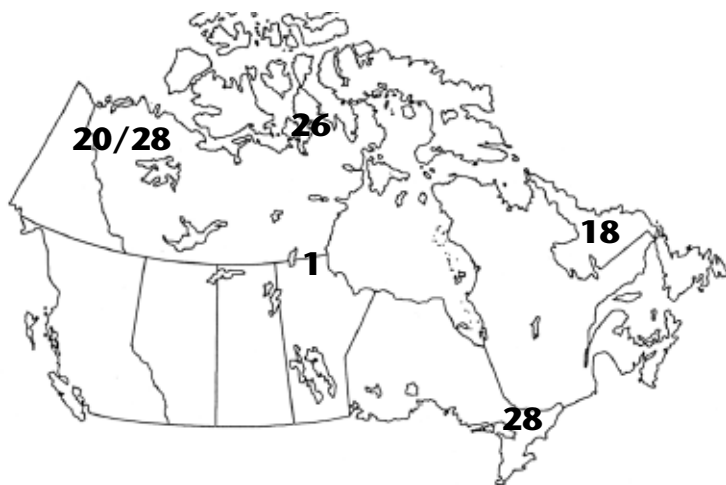
In a large pot, combine flours, rolled oats, sugar, baking powder and salt. In a second pot, stir together eggs (powdered eggs will do or substitute with 1/2 cup of powdered milk), applesauce, honey, oil and molasses. Pour liquid ingredients into dry ingredients; stir just until well blended. Stir in raisins and sunflower seeds. Divide batter into two greased 9 inch (23 cm) square pans. Bake in a reflector oven, against hot coals, or use a Dutch Oven. Bake for 45 minutes or until the top springs back when lightly pressed. Remove and allow to cool for 10 minutes before cutting into squares or bars.

Dare to be different: rather than add raisins or sunflower seeds, add cranberries, almonds, walnuts or chocolate chips. Try substituting canola oil with coconut oil.

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



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