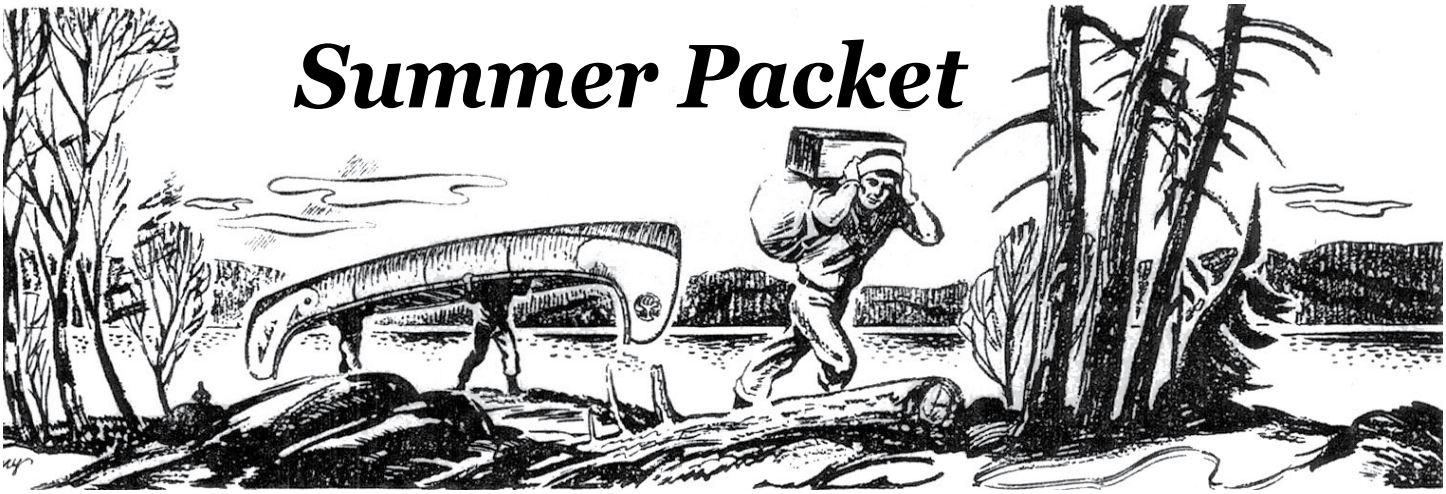
Summer 2005 **The Journal of Canadian Wilderness Canoeing** **Outfit 121**

photo: Eric W. Morse

1955: *It was 50 summers ago along the banks of the then-remote Churchill River in northern Saskatchewan. Sig Olson (centre) and his 'Voyageurs' undertook a 500 mile long trip that would endure in history though his book The Lonely Land. And it was 50 summers before that when the widow Mina Hubbard and guide George Elson would undertaken another enduring a legendary trip to Ungava Bay. Che-Mun reflects on these great journeys on their anniversaries beginning on Page Six.*

Summer Packet



It was quite an interesting summer for northern trips and adventures. We will highlight a few of the more interesting trips that we know about both here and elsewhere in this Outfit.

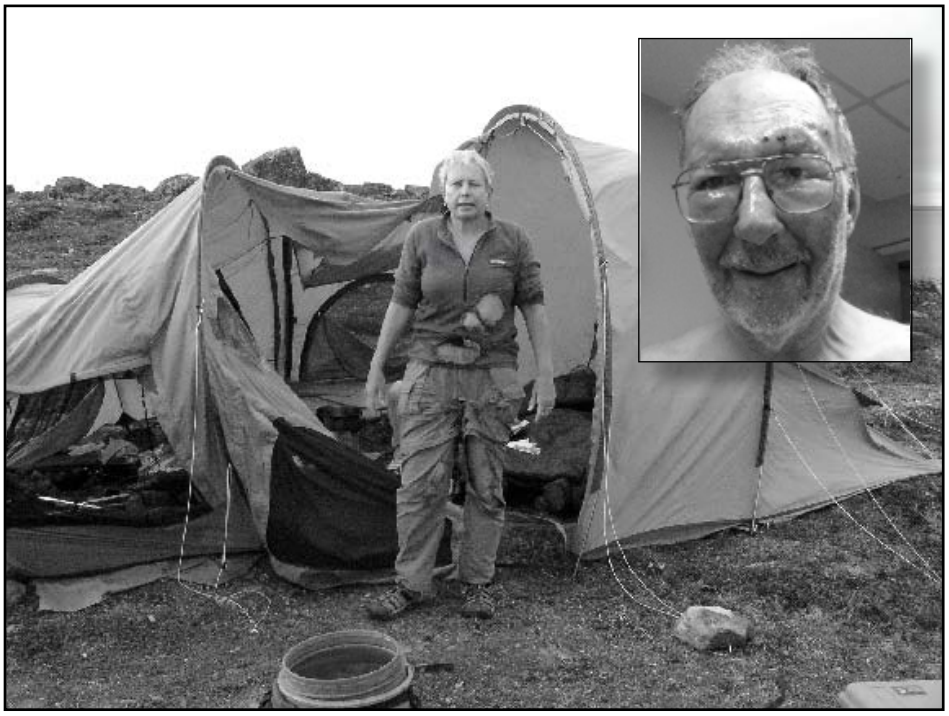
Veteran paddlers George Drought and Barbara Burton of *Wilderness Bound* outfitters found themselves in an explosive situation near the mouth of the Back River. On August 1, while preparing a meal at the large lake expansion 20 miles from the small rapids that mark the end of the Back into Chantrey Inlet, their MSR Dragonfly stove exploded engulfing them both in flame and fuel. To top it off they were inside their Eureka Tundra Tent at the time.

Being a well-prepared sort of person George was able to arrange a medevac flight out into Baker Lake where he was treated for burns on his arms and face not to mention removal of eyebrows and lashes but not too much of the famous Drought beard.

Barbara was more seriously injured with second degree burns on her left arm and others on her thigh. They are both recovering well at home in Hamilton, Ont.

George reports that both Eureka and MSR have been extremely helpful in the aftermath, replacing lost equipment and listening to their recommendations. George was cooking a very large pot on the stove and believes that too much heat was thrown back onto the attached fuel canister. He suggested to MSR they lengthen the fuel cord. And the Eureka tent, which does not carry special fire retardant, actually completely melted right away causing no problem.

George also reported on another Back River incident. A party of two men were doing the river and one was attacked by a grizzly while walking. His partner saved his fellow paddler's life when he began beating the bruin with his tough Pelican waterproof case. They, too, were mede-vaced out. Also along the Back River was a group of girls from a camp in Minnesota. They had one canoe dump in a rapid and pulled their ELT. Apparently they had a satphone but could not locate it quickly. There seem to be two things wrong here. First of all, dumping in a rapid, with no serious injury is no reason to call for help. There were other boats along and no one was seriously hurt. Second, an Emergency Locating Transmitter is licensed only for aircraft.



A singed George Drought (inset) and burned Barbara Burton with their exploded tent on Back River.

An EPIRB (Emergency Personal Indicating Radio Beacon is licensed for people and even canoes. So the Hercules aircraft that was scrambled out of Edmonton was looking for a downed aircraft and not a dumped canoe with some wet paddlers. They were eventually "rescued" by a mining company helicopter.

Another group of women were more fortunate – and tough. The Borealis Paddling Expedition traveled from Wollaston Lake, Saskatchewan to the mouth of the Back River in 90 days. That's a long haul. The five, Meg Casey, Nina Emery, Beth Halley, Karen Stanley and Emily Stirr, ages 21-23, are from Camp Manito-Wish in Wisconsin. Emily had contacted *Che-Mun* for info on routes from the Thelon to Back earlier this year as part of their pre-trip research.

It seems attractive, healthy young women also get extra special treatment – as they should. The gang was airlifted to the old Chantrey Inlet Lodge location at the last big drop on the Back for a fine dinner with a diverse group of pilots who were using the old lodge for a base on their northern seaplane trek. It gave the five a chance to get a look at the formidable rapids leading into that spot which lay ahead of them. Their Web site and links can be found at www.borealispaddlinexpedition.com.

You can read their tale of different twist on a Back River adventure on Page 5. Congratulations ladies on a job well done!

☛*Packet continues on Page 10*

Editor's Notebook

Welcome to a bit of a new look for *Che-Mun*. Nothing radically different but we have been try to make the reading experience a bit more pleasant, all the while remembering it's content over looks!

We have switched over to Adobe's InDesign CS2 layout program, part of a formidably integrated set of programs that I can only hope to master one day.

Thankfully, I have no more tragic news to report and despite not canoeing this summer, my nine-year-old son Tom and I were able to spend some quality time once again at our rented cottage in gorgeous Georgian Bay, in central Ontario. While there we had a quorum of HACC members visiting (whew!) and we discussed possible future trips. Our twice-planned Methye Portage trip appears to be off the table as we now believed it is jinxed! So we will be setting sights further north it seems for next year, with no clear contender in sight.

Though without a regular Internet connection, I was able to keep an occasional eye on the travels of Bill Layman, who always manages to get out each year. Bill and his amazing wife Lynda Holland did the Hanbury and Thelon rivers this summer and we have a small report on their trip and where to still find it.

Another online trip which was quite different was the re-creation of the 1933 Eric Sevareid trip to Hudson Bay from Minnesota. They had to change paddlers part way through when one of them got sore wrists!

I hope you will be able to check out the October issue of *Canoe & Kayak* magazine. Brother Geoff wrote up our Labrador Odyssey trip for them along with some of my photos. I have fallen out of the habit of reading that publication – that's why I publish my own.

And finally, we're trying hard to get back to a more regular publication schedule - and life!

Michael Peake.

Che-Mun is produced by the Hide-Away Canoe Club and published four times annually. We acknowledge the help of the Publications Assistance Plan in defraying some postage costs in issues mailed to Canadian subscribers. We also note that Canada Post makes this help as difficult as possible to obtain due to their arcane and highly bureaucratic mailing requirements.

Of Governors & Graves

We just KNEW that one (or more) of you enlightened Che-Mun readers could shed some light on the matter of the grave site of HBC Governor George Simpson as posed in Outfit 120 during a visit to Mount Royal Cemetery in Montreal. Well, Jim Raffan, noted essayist and scribe of all things canoeing, just happened to have the answer. And he generously shares his impressive research with Che-Mun readers in some detail. As always, JR, many thanks.

By JAMES RAFFAN

About the mystery of Sir George's grave, funny you should ask. My next book with Phyllis Bruce at HarperCollins (if it ever gets finished) is a biography of Sir George and, to the best of my knowledge, when Frances died (at 39 years old, not 40, as the stone attests because she died in March 1853 and was born on August 29, 1813), she was buried in a nicely fenced plot in the Mount Royal Cemetery. A large sandstone monument was raised when she died, on which Sir George's name was also carved, when he passed on seven years later. By the late 1920s, however, the wrought-iron fencing was broken, brush covered the site, and the stone itself was weathered but still serviceable. The Hudson's Bay Company paid to have the site restored in the early 1930s (there's a photo of this restoration in the December 1934 edition of the Beaver, p 51). By the early 1950s, the sandstone monument was more or less done, and it was replaced by the simple granite marker you found on your explorations last summer. According to one of his great grandsons, arrangements were made when the stone was replaced for perpetual care of the site by the Mount Royal Cemetery.

Interestingly, the pictures on p.10 of Outfit 120 indicate that One-Pound-One's carved granite stone is likely not original either (maybe it was made of sandstone too) while Thompson's (made of Alabaster?) probably is the real thing--or certainly closer to the real thing than either of his fur trade confreres). If you don't already know this story, you might take some solace in a canoe pageant Sir George organized at Lachine scarcely a week before he died, proving that he was a canoeophile and showman right to the end.

It was summer 1960 and the Prince of Wales was visiting Montreal (to inaugurate the Victoria Bridge). On August 29th, he was to visit Simpson's summer place on Dorval Island, off Lachine, where he was treated to a display choreographed by an ailing Simpson and performed by some of his best Mohawk paddlers.

Here's how it was described by a correspondent to the Toronto *Weekly Globe*: "The Prince had just embarked, and was on his way to Isle Dorval, the property of Sir George Simpson ... the distance from the main shore to the island was less than a mile. When about halfway across his Royal Highness was met by ten large canoes, each one filled with twelve stalwart Indians. They advanced in a line, and then, by sudden sweep of their paddles, divided and ranged themselves on each side with startling rapidity. They then commenced a boat-song, which, as it floated over the water to the shore, sounded exceedingly musical (sounds like the HACC, n'est ce pas?)"

The account continues with the details of who ate cucumber sandwiches with whom etc. etc. But then the Prince left Simpson's place and got back on the water.

Here's more of the actual account: "[They] took their seats in a large bark canoe and made a tour of the island. They then proceeded by the north channel down the stream, direct for the wharf, which was crowded with people. The appearance was very beautiful. The sun, rapidly setting in the west, tinged with fleecy clouds which hung upon the mighty river, marking a glorious pathway on the blue waves for the Royal Prince. The paddles of the Indians glistened at each of the quick strokes which they have, as, aided by the rapid currents, they strained every nerve to propel their canoes swiftly along the stream. The dark foliage upon the surrounding banks, the glittering white houses peeping out from among the trees, the shining spires of the village churches (shades of la chasse galerie!), all combined, produced a scene of exceeding splendour ... As they neared the wharf the rapid action of the paddles glittered the sunlight like showers of sparkling pearls. The Indians themselves were all dressed in red flannel shirts. Their canoes were also painted of the same colour: in fact, what with their red faces, red clothes, and red boots, they were one mass of red varied only by their feathery headdresses of various colours and by a broad streak of white which ran around their frail crafts. On

Continues on Page 11

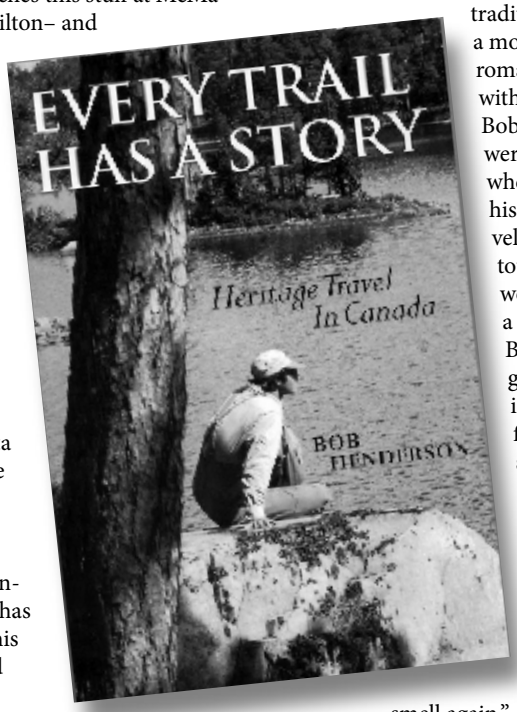
Every Trail Has a Story

Heritage Travel in Canada
312 pp 83 photos 17 maps
Natural Heritage Books
Toronto 2005
ISBN: 1-896219-97-7

So much of what Che-Mun is all about is the story behind the route one is traveling. And that is precisely what Bob Henderson has done, in great detail, in Every Trail Has a Story.

In fact, what Professor Henderson has done here is rip open that bibliography that lies largely unread at the end of many a great book. There are the seeds of discovery that will sprout into a memorable trip.

Bob Henderson teaches this stuff at McMaster University in Hamilton– and clearly lives it. His bright and breezy writing style serves him well in clambouring over an impressive number of often little known northern travellers and sources. The book has a foreword by fellow outdoor-educator turned author James Raffan and is dedicated to the late Stuart Mackinnon, the Alberta historian who has done so much to bring our stories past to life with books like *Arctic Artist* and others. A great mentor to be sure and Bob has done him proud with his insatiable curiosity and peripatetic ways.



This is not a canoeing book *per se*, though it plays a large part for sure. Bob skis, hikes, snowshoes, dogsled's and horseback's his way along many great trails and their stories.

The book is divided into three sections; *Places*, *Practices* and *People*. He was also inspired by two canoeing greats; Eric Morse and Sigurd Olson, and he's not alone there! Henderson is able to cast a very wide net of resources from 14th century Japanese texts to Ian Tamblyn, modern songwriter. He is immersed in the academic world of the outdoors and shares generously.

Henderson tackles the tricky and ethereal nature of humankind's relationship to the wild. The very subject is like trying to remember a dream. You recall certain hints of it, a flavour but like try to bite a tomato seed – it's elusive.

This is a solid book with many, many references and it is not light reading in that sense. Some of the areas covered include; The Labrador, Algonquin Park, Notakwanon River, Nueltin Lake, Milk River, Teslin River, and the Churchill River among many others.

Bob examines the routes and the people who lived there, those who travelled there and the many traces left behind.

To me, one of the most interesting exchanges in the book is a meeting with legendary northern Manitoba trapper Ragnar Jonsson who lived in the bush for more than 60 years until he was 84. He was famous for his solitude, known for journeying 200 miles by dogsled to Churchill for food and leaving within the hour. Surely, such people are the overlaps of history, clinging to a classic traditional existence in a modern world, a great romantic figure. So it was with some delusion that Bob and his companion were greeted by Ragnar when they paddled into his odiferous, dishe-veled camp with "Ahh, tourists." I think it would be hard for such a character to insult Bob, for such is his generous nature and intellect, he would find a way to make some understanding of it. But it seemed to me, he truly fulfilled the book's later quotation of Canadian historian Michael Bliss who said, "We have to find a way to make history smell again,"

The book is a trade 6 by 9 inch paperback with many, grayish illustrations of some very fine photos that would have cried out for better reproduction. The numerous maps are clean and informative. One picky point, that appeared also showed up in Raffan's books, why do they always display the distances in both metric and Imperial. Pick one and stick with it, I think we can all figure it out by now.

One of my all time favourite northern books is *Exploration of Northern Canada* which is simply (!) a listing of every modern northern canoe trip in Canada up until 1920. This seminal work contains no prose just people, dates and locations. Every trail seems to be halfway to that and a traditional northern book. There are so many directions you can take off into thanks to Bob generous directions.

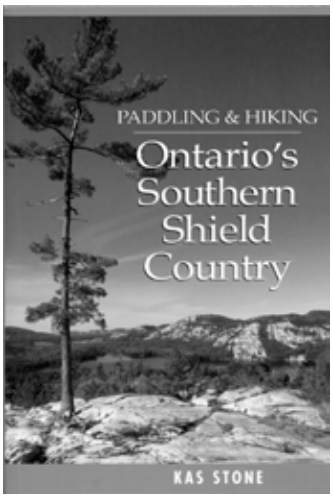
Like a fine malt whisky, this book should be sipped slowly, give time for the taste of the heather to spread and finish. It's one of the many trips worth taking.

Paddling & Hiking Ontario's Southern Shield Country

By Kas Stone
Boston Mills Press
208 pp 100 photos and maps
Toronto 2005
ISBN: 1-55046-437-X

At first glace one might think this was a book by Kevin Callan, it certainly is based on Mr. Callan's neighbourhood. But Kas Stone, wisely does not try to be Callan and she has produced a well-illustrated and fact-loaded book about destinations that are practical for the large number of people who love in southern Ontario - and that numbers some six million.

The areas covered are among the most popular destinations for paddlers and hikers and include; Algonquin, Killarney, Grundy Lake and Mississaugi and Massasauga Provincial Parks. Also featured are Lake Superior, Silent Lake, Bon Echo, Achray, Frontenac, Petroglyphs and the Frost Centre.



This is a perfect companion book to take along with maps and clear concise route descriptions and some really lovely photos taken by the author and the reporduction is good. It all works because it knows what kind of book it is - not literature - but some beautifully delivered information.

"They came from the sky!," was the cry of the ladies of the Borealis Canoe Expedition who were delivered a personal airmail drop 86 days into their epic northern trip. Boreal expedition member Emily Stirr penned these thoughts on their unique adventure's unique adventure.

Only moments before, the Cessna 185 had come over the ridge behind us, almost without a noise and had circled a few times before landing away on the glassy waters of Franklin Lake near the end of the Back River. We sat in astonishment wondering who it was, if the pilot was just curious, or if they were bringing news from the outside world. Unsure, brimming with excitement and slight apprehension, we drew together as the plane taxied forward and decided to paddle up to it and meet whatever was in store for us.

I don't think any of us would have ever guessed at the incredible series of coincidences that came together to shape the next few days.

"I'm looking for five women," the pilot said, as he stepped out onto his float. His smile growing as he read each of our names and handed us a note, laughing at our disbelief. Beth read the note out loud immediately, not even stopping to ask questions until she reached the end, which was signed "with love, from the 2005 Canuck Expo."

Laughter and questions filled the air until it was established that the two men in the plane were part of a group of ten men in five planes that were flying over the tundra on an adventure trip (see www.adventureseaplanes.com). They had run into a group of girls from Camp Manito-wish at Kazan Falls, and had been instructed to keep an eye out for us on the Back River since they were heading up our way. The fact that in the vast expanses of the tundra, news had just reached us from a group that included our friends, sisters and campers was astonishing. We had just received airmail from the Kazan to the Back, delivered by our new friends, who had just dropped out of the sky.

The Adventure Seaplane group was staying about seven miles down the river at an old fishing camp and we were promptly invited to join them for dinner. We have not seen any other canoeists for 86 days and the only people we have seen we had anticipated meeting at all of our re-supplie s. To have ten of the most generous and welcoming people drop out of the sky right next to us, bearing notes from our friends, was incredible. Meeting anyone up here in the northern reaches of the Canadian tundra is special in and of itself, and you immediately share the unique connection of the land you are traveling through for a call at home for any period of time.

Meeting the group of seaplane adventurers was an unexpected gift. Not only did we have the opportunity to catch a glimpse of the tundra from the air, after being escorted by our pilot friends to dinner, but we had the opportunity to see our enthusiasm and love for the land reflected ten-fold through different means. I have never heard of a float plane adventure trip before, but as we soared above the Back River, zooming over the astounding hydraulics and the rapids out of Franklin Lake, I was convinced that there could be no better way to experience the Arctic than by seaplane, except by canoe, of course.

The Boreal ladies at Mt. Meadowbank. along the Back River.

The planes landed and we caught our breath, and found ourselves wading through murky waters, to scattered outside buildings that had once made up Chantrey Inlet Lodge were now the temporary lodging for a group of pilots, chefs, fathers, husbands, adventurers, fishermen, professors, lawyers, inspectors and guides who shared their space, stories, intrigue and encouragement with five young women from Wisconsin and Connecticut.

Over an amazing dinner consisting of fish tacos, Oreos and popcorn, we talked to Bruce, Matt, Brian, Bruce, Craig, Gary and Mike, who like Eric, Wolfgang and Kirk, shared a love of flying and a love of adventure. We were delighted to swap tales of our current trip and past travels and we were excited to make connections of colleges and home towns. It truly is a small world, even above the Arctic Circle.

The following day after being transported back up the river to our regular life, we began the much slower journey back to the lodge. While we had attempted to scout the rapids from the plane, a rare opportunity to say the least, it still took us the rest of the day to make our way down the river through incredible whitewater and over calm stretches of flat water before coming once more to the white buildings of the old Chantrey Inlet Lodge. That evening, as we enjoyed another amazing meal of fish, the moon glowed huge and orange above the horizon at the cabin next door and again we watched the stars and the northern lights play in the sky.

I think it is fair to say that anyone you meet while traveling above the Arctic Circle will definitely remain a friend for life, whether you meet again in the future, or simply carry the energy of the memory with you to share with others along the way. It is difficult to express how genuinely touched the five of us were by this chance meeting on the Back River. It could not have come at a better time. Being able to share our stories with such interested and appreciative listeners put an incredibly positive twist on the bittersweet ending of our journey.

The night before we met our friends, I stood outside watching the sunset, willing it to last as long as possible and for the day not to end. The thought of being so close to the end of our trip was overwhelming and it hurt to count the small number of days left. Our time on the Back River has been beautiful. A huge river, carving its course out of smooth bedrock on one shore and rolling green hills, dotted with caribou and musk oxen on the other.

Leaving us alone in the tundra again, looking at each other in disbelief for confirmation that all this had really happened. We tried to sing to lift our spirits, holding on to a bit of hope that even though we had watched each plane disappear over the horizon, that one might come back. Sure enough, the humming sound reached our ears before we could spot the two tiny dots that we knew were Eric and Kirk, coming to say a final farewell that we knew would be good. As the planes approached, they split, circling around each side of us, while we stood in our boats, waving and belting out the song from *Top Gun*, "*You've Lost That Loving Feeling*" at the top of our lungs. Eric flew over Kirk, one plane 100 feet above the other, while Kirk did a full circle above us, skimming along the surface of the water on one float. One final pass from each plane, Kirk's arm waving out the window, and they were gone. We kept singing as the planes were lost in the endless blue sky.

1905 From Mina

Anniversaries of two r

Two classic canoe expeditions celebrate their respe

In 1905 Mina Hubbard and guide George Elson lef

to finish the trip that had claimed her husband's lif

Eric Morse, Sig Olson and four other notable padd

River in Saskatchewan. Both trips spawned classic

Way Through Unknown Labrador and Sigurd Olso

PEAKE offers a closer look at these two great journ

Alighting at Ungava. This classic, and likely staged photo, shows Mina Hubbard being greeted at low tide upon her arrival near the mouth of the George River in August 1905 by Hudson's Bay Company manager John Ford and his workers. George 'Great Heart' Elson is shown below right.

It has all the elements of a great movie: a woman scorned, an epic and improbable journey, a hinted and illicit love affair plus some great rapids! In fact, Mina Hubbard's epic Labrador journey almost become one - but that trip is even more tough and scary than a traverse of the Ungava Peninsula in 1905.

The fact is, the story of Mina Hubbard's incredible journey, from North West River, Labrador to the mouth of the mighty George River on Ungava Bay, was known to but a few for most of the last century. It was a minor footnote, mentioned by great Canadian pop historian Pierre Berton, but few others. It was a historical oddity that was largely undiscovered.

I recall searching hard for a copy of Mina's book for our 1983 trip down the George River. Her book, *A Woman's Way Through Unknown Labrador* was long out of print but a very small rural publisher had recently printed the book in a budget paperback form. A new edition of the book with a new Introduction was published last year by McGill-Queens University Press.

Nevertheless, it took the advent of a diverse group of northern historically-based paddlers that brought Mina and George Elson to life.

In it's time, the story of the 1903 trip of her husband Leonidas along with Dillon Wallace and guide George Elson, was the stuff of legend. It fed a public fascinated by the dangerous wilderness which was slowly receding from their doorstep. Writers of the era, like Jack London and Wallace, stoked these primeval fears, for readers were now safe and it was fun to explore those dangers in front of a roaring fire in a brick house. For many, wilderness was the enemy, so recently conquered.

Dillon Wallace's *Lure of the Labrador Wild* told the tale of that failed 1903 trip which led to the death of Hubbard. No one really knows what provoked his widow, Mina, into finishing the trip to rescue the good name of her late spouse. She was not happy with the way he was portrayed in Wallace's best-seller. To be fair, Wallace did a reasonable job. Mina must have had a lot of Victorian starch in her character, she was definitely not amused and took a great dislike to Wallace. But of such character flaws - legends are born.

When both led 1905 trips on slightly different routes, they did come close on a couple of occasions but neither mentioned the other in their respective books. Such single mindedness is rare today.

But despite the wide acclaim of Wallace's first book, it would have faded away were it not for Mina's determination to mount her own expedition and finish her husband's quest. That was pretty radical for the time and one of the reasons it makes for great drama. That and the fact that Wallace, too, would finish the trip at the same Mina was doing it. Truly incredible.

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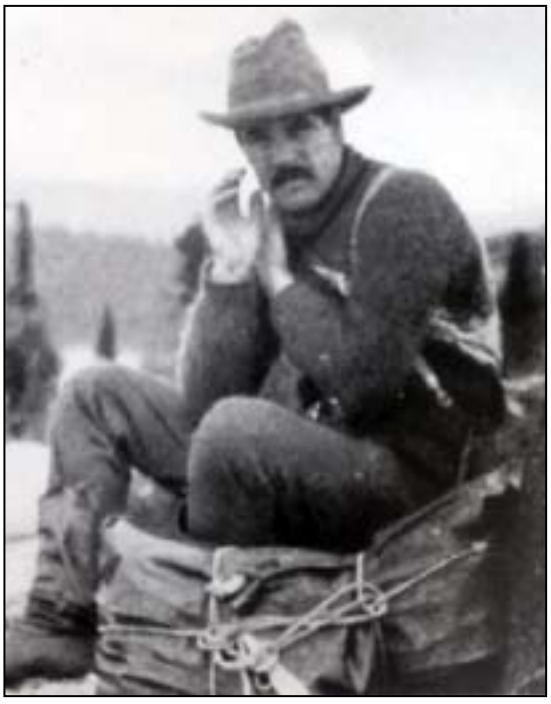


a to Morse

milestone trips

1955

ctive centennial and golden anniversaries this year. ft Northwest River to venture north to Ungava Bay fe two years earlier. A half century of summers later llers canoed the fur trade portion of the Churchill canoe literature: Mina Hubbard's A Woman's on's The Lonely Land. Che-Mun Editor MICHAEL neys and why they inspire us still.

photo: Eric W. Morse

Cumberland House. At the end of the classic trip at the first inland post of the Hudson's Bay Company, The Voyageurs pose in traditional bare-chested manner. From left to right; Elliott Rodger, Tony Lovink, Sig Olson, Eric Morse, Omond Solandt, Denis Coolican.

By the summer of 1955, the group known as *The Voyageurs*, had made three trips together in the Boundary Waters region of northwestern Ontario and northern Minnesota – the only place along the Canada-U.S. border in which each country defines its half as 'northern'.

They had made two journeys in Sig Olson's backyard of Quetico and in 1954, after seeing a historic marker enroute from Quetico denoting the old fur trade Grand Portage Route, decided to try that old trail as well.

It was at this point they latched on to history and awakened an era that still had traces among the living. It was only natural that, emboldened by their burgeoning interest in the fur trade, that they would then head to the next choice spot on the trader's route – the upper Churchill River in northern Saskatchewan.

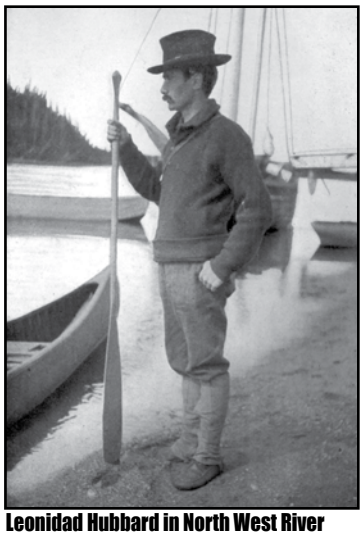
Of course what truly makes a great canoe trip a forever memorable is when it is preserved in time in book form. No doubt many incredible trips have been made that have vanished in the dust of time. But the book that emerged from this trip, a full six years later, is truly a classic. *The Lonely Land* by Sigurd Olson is an account of the group's 500 mile, 20 day trip from Ile-a-la-Crosse to Cumberland House. My copy is a comfortable as an old shirt, easy to slip into at any time and so marvelously evocative of that wonderful feeling of a shared northern adventure. Olson evocative and comfortable writing takes you right into those rapids and campsites. Your nostrils fill with pine-scented sun drenched air when you read his prose. He takes you there, which is the ultimate for a tripper.

The photo above, shows the crew at the end of their trip. It was no chance spot to finish this trip. As they knew well, Cumberland House, established

continues on Page 8 right column

photo: Eric W. Morse

In 1988, a truly wonderful book arrived that tied together all three expeditions. *Great Heart* is a true northern classic. Superbly researched, thoughtfully written with a subtle and delicate turn and eternal theme. Jim Davidson and John Rugge have only published two books, and both have been landmarks. The other is the wonderfully good-natured *Complete Wilderness Paddler*.

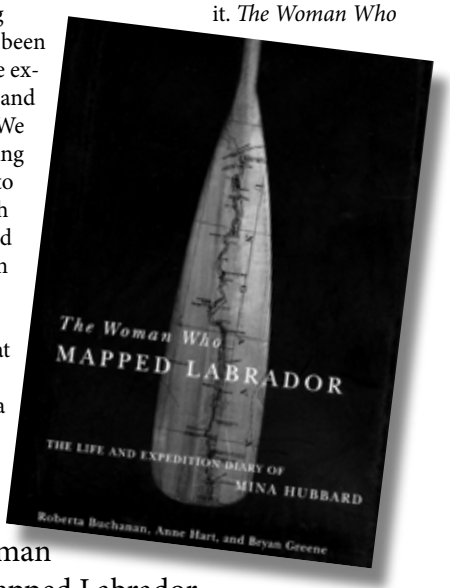


Leonidad Hubbard in North West River 1903 - he started it - but Mina finished it.

They had told me of the plans to get a movie made but it was fraught with actor's egos and financial problems and never got going. But I believe it will. It is too good a story for Hollywood to resist – and it's true. But a big part of me would never like it to be made because the odds are it will be butchered. The chance of getting the right cast, script and director is slim but if they ever did it right it could be incredible.

But a century on Mina is certainly not forgotten. In fact please check out the lovely Web site at www.mina2005.ca. In June, they officially launched the centennial in North West River featuring relatives of Mina and guide Bert Blake and they had a re-enactment of the trip's departure in period dress. I was disappointed at the down playing of George Elson. To me, he was as much of the story as Mina, and while he is mentioned, his story deserves more telling but most of it is lost in the bush of northern Ontario and Quebec. Elson ended up working in Nichicun House for Revillon Freres - he was still carrying a badge of shame for losing a client and guiding a woman. There are still stories to be told about this greatest of guides.

Another great benefit of the centennial of Mina's trip is a new book (pictured here) celebrating it. *The Woman Who Mapped Labrador* has just been published and includes the expedition journals of Mina and a short biography on her. We have included the publishing info but we were not able to give the book the thorough examination it requires and will publish a full review in Outfit 122.



Not surprisingly, two *Che-Mun* subscribers are at the centre of this project. Bryan Greene and Roberta Buchanan. The book looks wonderful with a clever and artistic cover showing a paddle painted with the map of Mina's adven-

The Woman Who Mapped Labrador
The Life and Expedition Diary of Mina Hubbard
Edited and introduced by Roberta Buchanan and Bryan Greene
Biography by Anne Hart McGill-Queen's University Press
$49.95 ISBN 0-7735-2924-1

photo: Eric W. Morse

SCOUTING BLACK TROUT – Sig Olson and Denis Coolican check out the large diagonal curling wave in this short and intense rapid on the upper Churchill River.

by Samuel Hearne in 1774, was the first inland post of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Of The Voyageurs' 12 years of northern trips, with crews varying from four to eight, the 1955 Churchill River trip stands out at their finest. It was truly representative of what they were all about and we have the superb writing of Olson in *The Lonely Land* to thank.

The arrival photo by Eric Morse, is one of my favourites and a great snapshot of a moment in time. It shows some of the locals, feet resting on a freighter canoe, checking out these men and their boats which seemed to arrive from another world. The canoeists are in conversation with HBC manager whose truck stands ready to move the canoes away.

Olson wrote; *"It was better to end here", said Tony, looking down at the little road. "better here than turning them over to someone at Flin Flon. At least they will seem more at home at a Hudson's Bay Post than in some warehouse on the main street of a mining camp".*

'The manager had merely given them a swift glance. From long experience he knew that they were worth as second hand canoes. To him it was just a matter of storage or a trade, but to us it was like losing old friends. The truck roaring down the road had robbed us of the freedom to come and go, and we were back where we started, dependant once more on our pocketbooks and credentials.'

What makes the Churchill River 1955 trip so special is that it showcases the Voyageurs as historical lynch-pins. They were a crucial link between the present and the past as they had one foot in each camp. They embraced times gone in a current context – proving you could still paddle through history. And most importantly – they realized it. And they continued to do it until the group's final northern adventure down the Hayes River and ending at historic York Factory on Hudson Bay.

Sig Olson wrote the following in a 1938 essay called *Why Wilderness*, which, although very gender specific, nowadays applies to all of us who "get it", who understand that connection to a northern land they we may not have even been to - but want to.

"Men who have shared campfires together, who have known the pinch of hunger and what it means to cut a final cigarette in half two hundred miles from town, enjoy a comradeship that others never know. Only at war or on wilderness expeditions can this type of association be found, and I believe that it is this that men miss as much in civilized living as contact with the wild itself.

"Why wilderness? Ask the men who have known it and who have made it part of their lives. They might not be able to explain, but your very questions will kindle a light in eyes that have reflected the camp fires of a continent, eyes that have known the glory of dawns and sunsets and nights under the stars. Wilderness to them is real and this they do know; when the pressure becomes more than they can stand, somewhere back of beyond, where roads and steel and towns are still forgotten, they will find release."

To Ungava Bay, by George!

Story and photos by WILL LANGE

Bob and I approached the last drop of a long rapid with the usual mixture of excitement and trepidation. It didn't look any more challenging than a lot of stuff we'd already run. We could spot a few big hidden boulders humping up the water around themselves, and several rows of white breaking waves most of the way across the river.

We were last in line, and the three other canoes had bobbed through them safely, so I was perhaps a little careless. I should have followed Earl and John; they were the ones just ahead of us and had done fine. But I got a little left of their line, headed for a white curling wave perhaps 12 feet wide. No problem. But suddenly Bob's head shot up into the air. His paddle waved in space. Then he plummeted downward, and I went up. There was a huge souse hole below the wave, the size of a Ford Explorer, with an ugly yellow boulder just awash at the bottom. We couldn't miss it.

I've wondered ever since that moment whether what I said was a heartfelt plea for help from the Almighty, or just blasphemy. My various theological pals would come down on it in various places. Whichever it was — and whether there was a response — we missed the rock somehow, and our beautiful folding canoe, which rides big waves with the motion of a caterpillar, shot rocketlike out the far side of the hole, with hardly a drop of water coming over the side.

Somewhat giddy with success, we spotted a potential campsite in an eddy on our right where a tributary stream came in. As we swung in to investigate, a black bear appeared on the shore. The other boats paddled gently toward it, and I could see the video camera going. "Come on," I said to Bob. "We'll look at the campsite while they look at the bear." We paddled gently into the quiet little bay and slid just as gently up onto a submerged rock. It was a keeper; we couldn't get off. "Just a second," I said. "I'll get out." "Don't get out," said Bob. He knows how nimble I am. "No, I'm OK," I said. "I can do it all right." "Don't get out," he repeated. I got out. My hind foot hooked the gunwale, and I spilled both of us out of the canoe into the water on our backs, soaked to the armpits. Bob looked pretty disgusted — like that famous Life photograph of the baboon up to his chest in the water. "Why don't we just, ah, walk it ashore," he suggested. Not for nothing is this river called the Mighty George. It's huge, compared to what we're used to, and it never really lets up for more than a few stolen minutes. If the wind doesn't grind you to a back-aching halt, the rain runs down the front of your parka and drips through the fly of your rain pants. If the hidden boulders lurking along the banks of the rapids don't grab you, the big standing waves farther out can sink you. But the exhilaration of each day's travel is intense. Earl turned toward me a couple of nights ago in camp, as we stood listening to the roar. "You know," he said, "this river has an aura of its own. I've never seen so much raw energy before."

If I dream of this place in years to come, the dreams will occur in a deep, rain-misted valley of black granite, sloping down toward the center of the earth like the gates of Mordor. Where the horizon is trees instead of basalt, they are black spruce and tamarack — the spruces standing straight and stiff as wooden soldiers, the tamaracks waving lacy and crooked against a gray sky.

That afternoon we were blown off the river by wind, rain and whitecaps. We found an empty cabin in a little bay and were able to get out of the weather for the night. But clearly, we had to plan our next move carefully. Kangiqsualujjuaq's harbor dries out completely at low tide. We decided to go for it — 17 miles, with one last rapid two miles down. We would set off about two hours before high tide, get through the rapid, and try to make the village before low tide. It was a long day. The rapid disappeared from the bottom up as we worked our way through it. We paddled against a strong tide for a couple of hours and ate a quick cold lunch while it shifted. It began to look possible; but as we rounded the last point and the village came into view about two miles away, the wind and tide hit us right in the face one last time. "Let's go for it, Bobby!" I cried; and we did, 71-year-old muscles straining against the wind. The village's features very slowly became more distinct, and finally our bow scratched lightly on the gravel of the town boat landing. The others were right with us. Ten minutes later the bay was empty. Half an hour after that we were taking turns in the only hot shower in the Iluliliq Hotel. Ahh …!

Canoes wait out a blow on the long and narrow Indian House Lake. Camped by a sand bank (above).

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Two of the most regular and public of northern paddlers are Bill Layman and Lynda Holland who completed a trip to Baker Lake from Pike's Portage on Artillery Lake via the Hanbury and Thelon rivers. As they have done for four years running, they have posted their daily log and photos to the web for us to follow along. Their site URL is www.townoflaronge.ca/features/blayman/journal2005/

Every so often Bill gets quite poetic and the following journal entry struck us. It is from Day 32, two days from the end of their journey.

But something gnaws at my soul today. Perhaps like John Hornby I don't appreciate the thought of the bath and the bed and meals at a table that will come in two nights. Maybe I too feel a bit of the same confusion he felt as I too feel so comfortable out here.

I should be glad I have been able to come up here so many times. And yet all I can think of is next year. I already have at least three or four plans starting to take shape.

A good friend who traveled by dog team in the days before snow machines talked about the feeling you get on the land. He said after awhile every thing else - civilization in short - seems to vanish. You find yourself simply existing - as one with the land you travel on. The going back isn't a relief, it is a burden. You have to leave the glimmer of a higher meaning that you felt behind. And worse, you can't explain what it is you found to anyone who hasn't felt the same thing.

I find it hard to remember what it is I feel out here when I go back to town. All I know is that there is something out here and I have to come back to find it again and again and again. And each year when I come back I am utterly thrilled and relieved to find it waits for me I am in no way religious. But there is some higher spiritual truth embodied in this traveling by canoe. I find my mind free to wander the land, and soar to the clouds as my body marks time like a metronome with the paddle. It is my nature to try to figure out the answer to "why I feel purpose out here" and I am no closer now than I was the day I first ventured out of the trees and onto the Barrens. But then perhaps there is no answer as there is no question. Maybe it is that simple. Perhaps the question and the answer are wrapped together like a snake eating it's own tail. Perhaps I simply need to revel in my mortality and accept the purpose I find here, and not question it."

We also heard from paddling vet Bob Dannert of Arizona who paddled the Kazan River in Nunavut.

I read Bill Layman's notes on his Thelon trip. I would disagree with his statement that I said that the trip was awful. There are no awful things about being on a North river. Awful might describe the constant and never ending hordes of black flies that we did encounter this summer.

The Kazan was high from the very start of our trip on Kasba Lake. As we traveled to Lynn Lake we found Southern Manitoba to be one big lake and this should have been our first warning of things to come.

The Kazan is a big river and with the water levels being about three feet high, minor rapids became very large and route selection became very important. Lichen covered rocks and willows were inundated. My crews are normally quite conservative in what we run. On this trip, we did a significant amount of lining where I know that in normal water levels, running would have been easy. I had solo paddled the lower Kazan in 1999 and paddled the middle of the river below Kazan Falls to the delta - this trip, we ran the insides of the curves, did one portage and lined other risky areas and even then, we swamped both canoes in the last rapids of any consequence.

Other crews has as much trouble as we did. The Camp Menogyn boys swamped once, let a canoe drift away to never to be found and had one member bitten by a bear. A crew of four from B.C. also swamped one boat and the Menogyn girls crew hooked one canoe on a rock but were able to recover it with no damage.

In spite of the insects, 11 days out of 35 river days being wind bound and the long lake paddling, this was a great trip. The fishing for Lake Trout and Arctic Grayling was the best I have ever encountered. Scenery was great in the lower river and the Inuit sites are truly outstanding. One can almost feel the presence of "the ancients" as you descend the river.

Of course, the rapids out of Thirty Mile Lake and Kazan Falls are breathtaking. It was also nice being in Baker Lake as Bob O'Hara's crew came off the Arrowhead River and Bill Layman finished the Thelon. What a small world it is.

This past summer a group of eight canoeists, including Andrew Macdonald and Hugh Stewart, retraced Albert Peter Low's 1896 route from Hudson to Ungava Bay. Andrew reports;

Low (1861-1942) was a geologist and map-maker for the Geological Survey of Canada (GSC). In that role he explored and mapped more than 12,000 kilometres of terrain in Labrador and northern Quebec in the late 1800s .

While Low sailed to Richmond Gulf and then canoed, our group paddled in four 17-foot cedar-and-canvas Chestnut Prospector canoes. We left the Inuit/Cree community of Kuujjuarapik in early July and canoed north up Manitounuk Sound on Hudson Bay. We had the delight of Arctic wolves passing through camp one dawn, and Beluga whales feeding offshore just south of Richmond Gulf.

The notorious entrance way to Richmond Gulf, referred to as the 'Gulf Hazard' in Arthur Twomey's 1938 book *Needle to the North*, had grown large in our imaginations. In 1938 Twomey, an official collector of birds and mammals for the Carnegie Museum of Pittsburgh, traveled our same route as far as Seal Lake – but in winter. He was to learn about the freshwater seals inhabiting Seal Lake.

A passage from Twomey's account, which we refrained from sharing with family and friends until after our journey, contributed to our robust imaginations: "Richmond Gulf with its famous Hazard is in many ways dangerous territory. Its cliffs are sheer and it is strewn with islands among which it is difficult, either in summer or winter, not to get lost. The wise traveller stays up out of it at any season." Indeed the strength of the incoming and outgoing tides is impressive, but we were able to ride upstream via back-eddies, cheeks virtually brushing the cool cliff-face, sea-smell on the breeze and hundreds of sea urchins and starfish passing beneath our hulls.

We camped for two nights at Punngavialuk, a giant saddle just west of the stunning gateway to the Gulf known as Presqu'ile Castle. A highlight was exploring the Inuit sod-huts dug into the hillside. Frequently between Richmond Gulf and the headwaters of the Larch River, were stone fire rings heavily overgrown with moss and lichen. Often a set of wigwam poles would lie decomposing around the stones, occasionally with spruce root still lashed at the apex.

Where the Larch meets the du Gue River is stunning, as is the Larch confluence at the Caniapiscau River. On the 40th and final day of our journey we rode the outgoing Koksoak River tide to Kuujjuak.

An Inuk came over and said that there were beluga sighted upstream and they were going to hunt. Before leaving he introduced us to another Inuk who had just arrived by truck. With our flight leaving in a few hours Jobie Tukkiapik offered his assistance: transporting all our gear to the airport, storing our canoes in anticipation of the fall barge and giving us a tour of the town. His unconditional kindness capped a wonderful journey.

For some visual images see: www.squebb.ca/larch2005/

Of Governors & Graves

they came, chanting their boat-song, and occasionally sending up a shriek which resounded far and wide. It was thought by all upon the wharf that his Royal Highness would immediately embark on board the Kingston, which lay waiting to receive him. Burt when within a few yards, at a signal given, the whole fleet suddenly turned. There was no apparent diminution in speed; with one stroke of the paddles each canoe was brought round. So close were they together that had any one of them failed the whole line would have been thrown into confusion and some by no means light collisions might have taken place. But Indians make no such mistakes. They stretched in complete order across the river to Caughnawagha, and were paddled along the whole extent of the village, so that his Royal Highness might gain a just idea of the colossal proportions of the residence of the two thousand Indians who dwell there."

The Prince was duly delivered back to his sailing ship, the Kingston, and he marches up to the bow for one last wave to the crowd before casting off. And, because I know the HACC aspires to the thirst-quenching feats of the Beaver Club ... and because every good pageant needs at least one drunk ... here's how the account ends. "The Prince very kindly took his stand at the bow of the boat, thus giving the people assembled a capital opportunity of seeing him. Some amusement was caused by a stalwart red-man who appeared to have been drinking freely of whisky. He loudly proclaimed his intention of looking upon the face of his "Great Feather," and, when he did get a sight of the little Prince, set up three or four lusty cheers upon his own account, waved his hat in the air, and declared that he could now die in peace."

So there you go, a little diversion on Sir George, in response to Outfit 120. By the way, there is a nifty etching of this pageant in the Saturday, October 13th issue of *The London Illustrated News* (Volume XXXVII, Number 1054), if you're ever cruising the stacks at Robarts or U of T and want to get an idea of what this looked like.

As to why the HBC is not mentioned on his stone ... my guess is that is has to do with Sir George's Napoleonic illusions of grandeur. He was born out of wedlock--a bastard from northern Scotland and took delight in the mantle of authority and social standing that came with the title of "Governor."

Governor of Rupert's Land sounds more like the King of Siam than it does like CEO of HBC in North America. I don't know for a fact that the text on the current stone is a replica of that on his original grave stone but I suspect that it is and, as such, may have been done to his prescription. When Simpson was in Russia on his around the world journey in 1843, his British passport listed "Governor" as his occupation and, because in Siberia and elsewhere this title had peer and possibly semi-royal overtones, people fawned over him as they would a monarch. Sir George enjoyed this. That they didn't know the title was really a mark of executive authority in a business was kind of a plus because it allowed him to be treated like a king ... something that gave him quiet satisfaction (and all of the comforts of home including, sometimes, the freely-offered embraces of his hosts' nubile daughters).

Canoesworthy

It seems the James Bay Crees are growing increasingly intolerant of criticisms over their deal with the Province of Quebec to divert much of the Rupert River into the massive La Grande hydro project. Work on the massive diversion above Namaska is still being prepared as a massive, and somewhat predetermined, environmental assessment is being done.

In a recent letter to *The Gazette* newspaper in Montreal, the Grand Council of Crees complained of the paper's recent story on unhappiness of many Crees with the Peace of the Braves land deal signed three years ago. We have followed the Northern Quebec hydro story for more than 20 years and there is no doubt it is a complex one. There is also no doubt the Crees are selling out what they termed, 15 years ago, their "sacred" homeland which they fought for so long and hard to hold on to. They can't have it both ways.

Now certainly times and circumstances change - as indeed they have. There is no black or white in this story and both sides have their problems. The fact remains that the "southern" environmental types are no longer courted or wanted by the Cress and basically told to mind their own business. It's a fascinating story and will make a great book.

One paragraph in the letter sums up the problems from the Cree perspective;

"What choice do we have but to manage the impacts of this change? In the film *One More River* it is suggested that going back to the land is the solution. Yes, many find solutions in the land and in tradition, but many do not. There are twice as many Crees now as there were in 1975 and hunting, fishing and trapping that were once 100% of the Cree economy are now at most, 3% of (it in monetary terms. Crees want jobs and the ones that they get at Hydro Quebec are not all short term."

Quebec's Crees are rightly proud their nation has not slipped to some of the poverty seem in so many aboriginal communities. But how many such communities were blessed with a landmark land claim, now 30 years old?

Rising temperatures and a melting polar ice cap triggered by greenhouse gases in the planet's atmosphere affect subjects as different as the varying thickness of sea ice, the changing migration routes of snow geese and the growing number of shipping vessels expected to cut across Arctic waters as the polar ice melts.

But until recently, the researchers who studied these subjects often remained isolated, publishing their findings in obscure academic journals and closed off from other Arctic scientists working in different fields. A Canadian icebreaker decked out with electronic gizmos and loaded full of researchers represents a break from this old way of doing things, said Martin Fortier, executive director of ArcticNet, recently in Iqaluit. The ship is the CCGS *Amundsen*, currently nosing its way around the northern edge of Baffin Island. It will give the Northwest Passage a run this season, taking ice and sediment samples and dropping monitoring gadgets along the way. What's new is that the scientists on board, part of a larger network of some 250 researchers across the globe, will put their findings together to help create a more complete picture of the effects of global warming. Fortier said that picture could eventually be used to help shape government policy.

Nunavut's polar bear hunt is a multi-million dollar industry, but most of the spoils never reach Inuit hands, and when they do, they vary substantially from community to community, a recent study suggests.

Dr. George Wenzel from McGill University examined the economic impact of the polar bear sport hunt for several years, beginning in 2001. The study focused on three communities: Resolute Bay, Clyde River and Taloyoak. He followed the trail of money that began with southern agencies who are paid to funnel foreign hunters into communities, up to local outfitters and finally to the pockets of individual Inuit guides.

It became clear that not everyone gets the same cut. Visiting hunters spend about $2.9 million each year on the polar bear sports hunt in Nunavut, Wenzel estimates. From that, Inuit receive $1.5 million, barely half. Inuit could boost their share of the hunt by charging southern hunters more. He points out that trophy hunters have been known to shell out as much as $400,000 US to hunt a bighorn sheep.

The Voyageurs had a good assortment of newspaper clippings over their relatively short tripping career (1951-1964). The large photo is of Eric Morse and the clippings, which they did not seek nor use as a sponsorship gambit, show the interest in the group's unusual hobby. The very thought of men at or near the age of 50 undertaking such pursuits was, very clearly, the stuff of headlines.

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