



Fall 2007

The Journal of Canadian Wilderness Canoeing

Outfit 130



photo: Tom Stevens

SCOUTS HONOUR -- As they have for over a quarter century, Hide-Away Canoe Club paddlers Peter Scott along with Geoffrey and Michael Peake scout a set of rapids before running it. In this case, it was the famed Thompson Rapids on the Fond du Lac River in northern Saskatchewan part of their Northern Crossing canoe trip. The day was perfect, the water warm and the history quotient high - an ideal scenario to be running northern waters. For a trip report through the eyes of a newcomer to northern canoeing see Page Six. For more Northern Crossing photos and a complete trip journal and history of the route go to www.northerncrossing.ca



Fall Packet

Nice to hear an update on a successful trip by Seth Wotten who we wrote about in our Summer Outfit.

On Sunday, September 9th, I pulled into Fort McMurray, Alberta to complete this year's paddling journey!

While the conditions were favourable for most of my time on the Churchill River, it felt like the forces of nature turned against me as I approached its headwaters. It was cold and wet for much of August. I was forced to wait out a four day storm in Buffalo Narrows, SK. Once I left, I figured out that I had giardia (or "beaver fever"). This slowed me down considerably and made me doubt whether I would be able to reach my goal for this year. Thankfully, I persisted through my recovery and managed to enjoy myself travelling at a slower pace.

I have spent two paddling seasons travelling mostly upstream, looking forward to crossing the final height of land beyond which all water flows downstream to the Beaufort Sea. When I carried my 2 heavy loads of gear over the 20km Methye Portage, I left the Hudson's Bay watershed for the Arctic watershed. When I reached the other side, I felt like I had motor attached to my boat as I raced down the beautiful Clearwater River toward Fort McMurray. Although I'm glad to be out of the cold, wet weather, I will certainly miss the simple life and freedom of canoe travel over the coming months. I'm already getting excited about next year's journey. Is anyone interested in joining me for a leg?

I have learned a lot while spreading the word about Water for Future Generations, Toxic Nation, and the Council of Canadians' Water Campaign this year. The locals I have met during my journey have been great sources of information about water issues, whether positive or negative. I look forward to sharing some of this information through my water reflections.

Although I will be busy finding a place to live and settling back down in Toronto over the coming weeks, I will be working to get all of my remaining photos, journals, and water reflections posted. I will send out a quick email to let every-

one know as soon as they are available. Thanks to everyone that supported me in some way or another this year!

Seth Wotten

Expedition Organizer and paddler

Water for Future Generations Expedition

Email: seth.wotten@gmail.com

Website: www.wffg.ca

We heard from the Mecatina Man, Tom McCloud and an amazing bit of info on that river.

Got the new *Che Mun* and was surprised at front page billing. You did the story justice, with a few abrupt transitions. Hope your readership enjoys it.

Unexpectedly I got an email from a guy I've never met saying he was part of a group of kayakers who had just done the Mecatina canyon, and that he'd found my trip report someplace, which was useful to them in planning for the trip. Even though this trip only took place about two weeks ago there are already two web sites that have some shots: [Ed. Note - You can find the incredible video linked on this page on October 9 ; <http://lvmtv.lvmvideo.com/2007/10/index.html>]

These guys were flown into the river just above the first big rapid in the canyon. Apparently it took about two days to get through the steepest part of the canyon, and then two more to reach saltwater at Harrington Harbor.

They took the north channel, while the group I was in took the south channel. I am getting the feeling that these kayakers were very impressed, and also that they did about 4 portages, though they stayed down close to water level.

So that's all I know right now. Regards.

The Saga of Barrenland Bob continues and we heard a bit more of the story from Dwayne James of Indianapolis.

I have been following with interest your letters on "Barrenland Bob". I know many chimed in on the Canadian Canoe Routes site, but I did not really follow it until a friend pointed it

out, and then the thread was pulled before I had a chance to read it. I wonder how many people-trips actually had problems with him.

While I did find him a bit contrary, not very detailed oriented, unorganized and dependent upon staff who just could not care less and who had no clue nor knew they did not have a clue, perhaps due to the haze from the weed they smoked, my fellow travelers and I had no real difficulties other than minor stuff. Some last minute changes due to the lakes not being iced-out yet for refueling (no one knew if the Thelon was yet clear of ice that June 20th, 2004) and the need to upgrade to a larger plane to make the flight without the need to refuel at a base camp. Some last minute negotiations, over the phone with BB down in Alberta getting his plane, and with his clueless staff at the loading dock were needed. Finally, a young lady who ran his base camp stepped in and worked it all out. She was sharp. And cute too. Anyway, we had to come up with another \$600 bucks, not too bad since they had originally wanted \$1800. And when we returned from the trip as scheduled, BB refunded my \$600 bucks. I think you just have to know how to deal with people like that. Hell, he even asked me to come up and help run his bookkeeping and scheduling, something I think he does not care to do himself.

But we had asked questions and prepared. I wonder about those who write in complaining about low water on the Clarke, or problems with equipment, that must have been resolved else they would still be there on the Thelon. Anyway, I did find it curious as to his many corporate names and websites and promotions of his business, but that is the way most do it these days.

Anyway, thanks for updating us lurkers out here paddling the waves of the net in our solo canoes. I look forward to the next two issues getting archived as I see more of the stories on TT from Alex Hall. Strange, but I heard some stories about his trips and practices that I bet he would not want publicized.



Editor's Notebook

Well, here we are - late again. And Merry Christmas to you all! Technically it is still Fall as I write this, though this Autumn issue is tardy for which I apologize.

So . . . I'll blame the new guy. Rather than hear from that same old HACC hacks we thought you would like to get the impression of a first timer to northern canoe travel - *HACC style*. That's why we asked our Newbie Keith Gunn to write the *Che-Mun* report on our *Northern Crossing* trip this summer. It's just that he took a bit longer than the trip itself to write it.

I saw Keith recently when I was showing the trip to a group in Peter Scott's church in Orangeville where they both live. Keith's eyes shone when speaking of the trip and the glowing memories it evoked. And he wondered how all that weight he'd lost had found him again. I commiserated and said that's to keep us coming back! We'll all be together December 29 at the Governor's Dinner where trip plans are hatched between mouthfuls.

I also ventured to the beautiful Canoeing Canoe Museum in Peterborough this fall for the launch of Gwyneth Hoyle's wonderful new book (reviewed on Page 4). What a crew were there, besides the delightful and adorable, Gwyneth; CCM curator Jim Raffan, CCM founder Kirk Wipper, Jim Jennings, Bruce and Carol Hodgins, Kevin Callan and many others. I shot some photos and promptly erased the digital files by accident and for the first time ever, I could not retrieve them.

In my younger days that would have infuriated me. But at 55, I can revel in the warm memory of meeting those canoeing giants many of whom I can call friend. Besides, without photos, we cannot be contradicted that we are not all still young and strong with a limitless horizon of paddling ahead of us.

Too bad you have to get old to figure that out.

Michael Peake.



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Canoesworthy

Canada has announced the creation of a 10-million hectare national park and wildlife sanctuary -- an area roughly twice as large as Nova Scotia.

The new status makes the protected area among the largest in Canadian history. The government set aside roughly \$3 million for studies and talks to create a national park in the 3.4 million hectares of land that surrounds the eastern arm of Great Slave Lake in the Northwest Territories.

A further six million hectares that stretch from the boundaries of the park to an existing wildlife preserve, has been set aside to eventually become conservation land that will be managed by native groups.

They also announced the earmarking of \$830,000 over five years to establish a 1.5-million hectare national wildlife area along the Arctic Circle. The designation would protect the massive swath of the boreal forest from diamond and uranium mining in the region that threatens to encroach on the area, would ban sales and leases of property and put new limits on hunting in the area.

Native leaders and environmentalists have applauded the news. The newly protected land is home to one of the largest caribou herds in the world, as well as unique plants and other species.

"There's fish in some of those small lakes that you can't find anywhere else in the world," said Chief Frank T'seleie of the K'asho Co'tine Charter Community Council. Native leaders had fought for permanent protection of the land since 1900, according to Fred Sangris, Chief of the Yellowknife Dene Nation.

"It took three generations of people but we managed to get there," he said.

The Nunavut government has cut its polar bear hunt in western Hudson Bay by nearly one-third out of renewed concerns that the bear population in that area is in trouble. Environment Minister Patterk Netser said the total allowable harvest for polar bears will be reduced, effective immediately, from 56 polar bears to 38.

The move comes five months after his department held a special hearing in Arviat to discuss hunting levels in the area. Inuit hunters, organizations and the Canadian Wildlife Service were consulted before the quota was cut, Netser said, adding that the decision was based on both Inuit knowledge and western science.

Netser said it's now clear to the Nunavut government that the polar bear population in the western Hudson Bay area is not doing well. And it may get worse: preliminary results from a government survey found no significant migration of bears further north in Hudson Bay, meaning more quota cuts could be coming.

The decision to cut the polar bear hunt quota was based on sound management practices, Netser added, not international pressure due to concerns that shrinking sea ice is threatening the bears' survival.

Studies in Western Hudson Bay show that shrinking ice is affecting the survival of both adults and cubs.

At the same time, the Nunavut government has also faced criticism from Inuit that it has been favouring western science over the knowledge of Inuit hunters. Many hunters maintain that the western Hudson Bay polar bear population is rising and there have been bears migrating further north in Hudson Bay.

An Inuit group is investigating for itself a long-standing accusation that RCMP officers slaughtered sled dogs in the 1950s and '60s to force their owners to give up their traditional lifestyle.

Many Inuit are convinced that up to 20,000 sled dogs were systematically killed by police officers and other white authority figures as people were moving off the land and into communities. It's long been believed that the RCMP's actions were part of a plan to keep Inuit in settlements

♦ CANOESWORTHY continues on Page 11



Emperor of the North

By James Raffan

HarperCollins, 484 pp 2007 \$34.95

ISBN: 978-0-00-200783-2

He was the Governor of a mammoth enterprise that spanned a continent. The Hudson's Bay Company was the Wal-Mart of its day - without the smiley face. A man of power, taste, influence and crudity whose travels spanned the much bigger world of the mid-19th century. But he is largely forgotten and his gravestone in the fur traders cemetery, Mount Royal in Montreal, is as humble as he was not in life.

George Simpson was Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company at the height of its powers from 1820-1860. He came to head the firm just as the merger with the more nimble North West Company went through.

James Raffan has delved as deeply as anyone ever has into the life of this Scot who came to rule Canada's fur trade. He was a tough man and neither well liked by peers nor history.

There is not a lot of air in this book. Tightly written, densely researched, it is clear Raffan made good use of his prodigious research talents. He has pored over those voluminous and dry HBC reports and letters breathing life into them. It's almost like reconstructing a crime, putting particular people together and trying to imagine what happened and what was said. In that, Raffan's style is moving into the world of Ken McGoogan, who has made a specialty of writing historical biographies and making the characters come alive as he did to Samuel Hearne and John Rae.

This is not a book to be skipped over or quickly read. Each paragraph is soaked in references and it's hard to keep the cast of dead

and forgotten players straight. Or it may be my age is catching up with me!

But Raffan truly succeeds in bringing the world of the fur trade alive. George Simpson, while an admirable businessman, was not a wonderful person. Clearly racist, though not alone back then, he also bred with many native women "bits of brown" fathering many children all while having little regard for natives in general. He ended up marrying his 18-year old cousin, Frances, when he was 43 and promptly set out on a gruelling canoe journey to Manitoba. Three years later she headed back to

England for five years presumably to rest up.

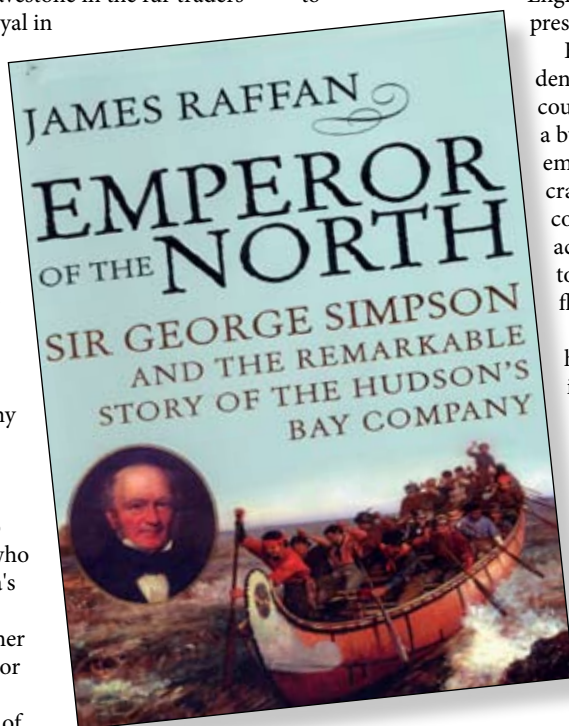
But there is no denying the man could travel. Not a by himself, he employed a crew of crack paddlers who could whisk him across the continent to many of the far flung outposts.

Raffan sums him up nicely in mid-book. "But Simpson was never fully a parent, never a doting father or uncle. He was a business operative who, through his own efforts and with his own bootstraps and a bit of luck,

had tasted power and influence of near royal dimension."

The good Gov went out in a spectacular blaze of Canadian canoeing glory. In August 1860, at his Isle Dorval estate in Montreal, he played host to the Prince of Wales whose boat was welcomed by stirring sight of ten 35-foot, freshly painted red, *canots du maître* each manned by a dozen Mohawk paddlers blazing along at sixty strokes per minute giving good air to the HBC and Union Jacks fluttering from the bows.

The governor died of a stroke a week later. A bit of ironically cruel fate really; that one who commanded so many strokes should die of one.



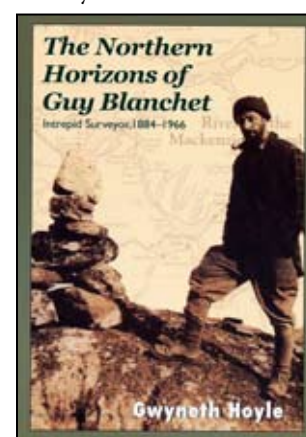
The Northern Horizons of Guy Blanchet

By Gwyneth Hoyle

Natural Heritage, 240 pp 2007 \$24.99

Gwyneth Hoyle has presented us with a very important white jigsaw piece. They're the hardest parts of any puzzle to fit in with few distinguishing marks. But the remarkable story of Guy Blanchet (1884-1966) is a fascinating tale of someone who was an integral piece in our northern history of surveying and exploration.

For years his name has surfaced in my



reading. He wrote several pieces in *The Beaver* back when it was a northern treasure trove, a book *Search in the North* on the famed Mac-Alpine Expedition and numerous references to northern

canoe travel.

We first became acquainted with Guy, who, until Gwyneth told me I pronounced as a French first name, in 1995 when we discovered his 1926 story from the *Canadian Field Naturalist* in our Arctic Land Expedition trip from Lake Athabasca to the Back River. It was Blanchet who had a map of his route from the Slave River heading to the source of the Thelon. It told the tale of the secret inland route promoted by Dr. Richard King to rescue the Franklin expedition in 1848.

Gwyneth Hoyle has fleshed out the story of this Dominion Land Surveyor, a man who traveled and mingled so many the great men of northern lore: George Douglas, Jack Hornby, R. M. Patterson, Richard Finnie, J. C. Critchell-Bullock and Vilhjalmur Stefansson.

It's a great read. Gwyneth employs a very clear, fact-filled, yet not overly so, prose which manages to pack a lot of pertinent info without appearing overloaded. She has clearly done a load of research from many angles. I had the honour to scan the book's photos to help her out. We spent a fascinating afternoon with a scrapbook of Blanchet's original photos all an-



notated in his beautiful handwriting.

What she weaves through the hard facts and dates and photos is the core belief of Blanchet - and many men like him i.e. Hornby. Their northern work was much more than a job. For Blanchet, who also mapped the murderous route for the CANOL road though the mountains in 1942-44, was never happier than heading into the bush in the company of a few natives for weeks on end. He thirsted for wilderness and was quenched by it often.

Blanchet's early years (1906-20) were spent doing formal surveys and with 12 men and 20 horses. It was fascinating to read about how those surveyors did it - and learning that no one should ever ride one of the horses, whom they often grew very attached to. He also mapped much of Great Slave Lake and at Pike's Portage bumped into Hornby and Critchell-Bullock on their way in to their infamous trapping expedition. He left his wife Eileen alone for many years which proved to be the secret to a happy marriage as the friction mounted when he lost his job.

Gwyneth takes us inside that very rugged, northern life. In his late 50's he enlisted for WWII but had to leave in 1941 for medical reasons. He packed and paddled all across the north with many forays into the Barrens. He was a survey Chief, a natural leader in a world now gone. He was lucky to have lived when he did. And we are indeed lucky Gwyneth was able to provide us with this most interesting piece of an endlessly fascinating puzzle.

Wilderness Ontario

By Gary and Joanie McGuffin

244 pp Boston Mill Press, 2004 \$40
ISBN: 1-55046-504-X

Gary McGuffin has long been one of my favourite nature photographers. Along with wife and write Joanie they have produced a number of very scenic books centered primarily around the Lake Superior area where they live.

The pair was first featured in *Che-Mun* two decades ago when their honeymoon trip was to paddle across Canada - which they did over two years. This pair came out of the gate knowing they wanted to make their living by telling and showing people about Canada's natural wilds. And they have certainly done so for quite a while. They added a new wrinkle a few years back with their birth of their daughter Sila who travels with them and who must

feeling like camping is one big photo shoot.

This book features 240 beautiful photos of the Lake Superior watershed area. Many of them are older images and quite recognizable from advertisements. Gary makes use of many polarizing, gradation and warming filters in the creation of his pictures and is known for long exposures to create interesting light in what is called the reciprocity effect. This look is most pronounced on film as opposed to digital.

What is missing from this book is any info on the technical aspects of the photos. I think a lot of people would have been interested in how he did some things and whether a shot is film or digital, and I believe he uses both, and what was done to achieve the look he creates - without giving away any secrets. There are some very striking shots which feature some unearthly tones and light that can only appear by manipulation by gradation filters or extreme exposure.

And this is solely a photo book. Even with the double credit, the only writing is a two page introduction and the captions. The photographic reproduction is first rate and certainly makes a person who's photos appear daily on newsprint extremely envious! And it was printed in China - where else?

It would be very interesting to see the McGuffins expand their geographic range. It would be a treat to see Gary's talents unleashed on the Barrenlands or the western mountains.

Voyageur

By Robert Twigger

400 pp Phoenix House Press, 2007
ISBN: 978-0753821480

Reviewed by Gwyneth Hoyle

British men - or women - often become obsessed with a physical challenge, and pursue the adventure to unbelievable lengths.

Robert Twigger, a prize-winning Oxford poet, saw his first birchbark canoe hanging in a dark corner of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford at roughly the same time as he found a copy of Alexander Mackenzie's journal in a second-hand bookstore. He became inspired with the idea of recreating Mackenzie's 1793 journey to the Pacific in his own birchbark canoe. The book, *Voyageur*, is the account of three summers spent achieving his dream, with teams of paddlers gathered more or less by chance each year.

His Canadian adventure began with getting his birchbark canoe. He found a part-Palestinian builder, John Zeitoun, living on the Gatineau River in Quebec, and with a friend, Ben from his Tokyo adventure, all three worked together to build the more than twenty foot canoe, christened *Firefly*. When it was finished, John opted to go along on the trip, with his large Alsatian dog, making up the crew of three for the first summer. After the drive to Fort Chipewyan, they finally launched the canoe and began the slow, slow, slog up the Peace River. They made it as far as Peace Point the first summer, stored the canoe and Twigger and Ben went back to England.

The following year Twigger was back, and his crew consisted of two tree-planters from northern Alberta, and the godson of a friend from England. Having four paddlers instead of three improved their pace up the Peace River, but the crew was quirky, given to outbursts of rage, and one of them was arrested in the town of Peace River, their final destination for the season.

Just when the reader despairs of the journey ever being completed, Twigger arrives back for his third season, with a mostly new crew, consisting of an old school friend from Oxford, and a man recommended by the Royal Geographical Society in London. One of the tree-planters, whom Twigger had declared he would never travel with again, begged to come along, promising that he had reformed, and as the fourth member he added strength and experience.

This time they made it past the Bennett dam, across the monstrous man-made lake, and the faced new hazards such as rapids, going downhill with the current. One man lost a thumb in an accident with a rope, just before the dam, had to leave the trip while his hand healed, but joined them for the final walk to the Pacific.

For Twigger, the trip is as exotic as any of his previous adventures. He sees the Canadian experience through foreign eyes, and his descriptions of the land and the people in a British idiom that keeps the story alive and fresh. He carries Mackenzie's journal with him and frequently finds the same things happening that had happened to Mackenzie at the same place. Each section has a charming hand-drawn map, with details of the events that that occurred along the way.



Northern Crossing 2007/On Thompson's Trail

NEWBIE'S CROSSING



Nestled into a mid-rapid eddy, Geoffrey Peake and newcomer Keith Gunn get an up close look at the famous sandstone ledges of the Fond du Lac River in Saskatchewan.

By KEITH GUNN
HACC Novitiate

Though a man of few words I have been asked to write many on a once-in-a-life time opportunity to canoe in the steps of the great David Thompson with a group of great canoeists and now friends from the HACC (Hide Away Canoe Club) Michael Peake, Geoffrey Peake, Peter Brewster, Reverend Canon Peter Scott, Tom Stevens.

The call came on June 22 while I was planning a calm water trip with my wife and 4 friends in Algonquin Park. Reverend Canon Peter Scott put the call out looking to see if I would be able to fill the spot of one of the members of the HACC Sean Peake who had to drop out of the trip at the last moment (and I do mean last moment.)

Peter and I had the opportunity to canoe the Barron Canyon in Algonquin Park the previous year with a group of parishioners so he knew that I could paddle, portage, enjoy the odd drink of single malt scotch and that my skill level was at least intermediate with minimal white water experience.

He also knew with my flexible work schedule that I would probably be able to make the short notice (eight days notice) work. (This might have been the major reason) I was honored to be asked and before I knew it I had accepted.

Before I knew it I was at the Airport in Toronto boarding the plane to

Saskatoon the first of four flights to our final destination and start of our trip on Reindeer Lake in northern Saskatchewan. Here I would meet the remaining members of the HACC for this trip. (Geoffrey Peake and Tom Stevens)

The dynamics, friendship and camaraderie of these members of the HACC were amazing. The stories and the sarcasm of their adventures and life made me envious but also made me proud to be considered part of them. I soon felt right at home and after dinner retired for the evening with the excitement of starting our trip the next day.

Once at Points North we met up with a load of supplies that had been shipped ahead and once again we had use of the Pronto warehouse here and began the job of a final pack of everything for our trip. I could not believe that amount of supplies and cargo we were going to be taking with us I thought to myself there is no way that all this would fit into three 17 ft canoes. I would later be proved wrong.

After a filling lunch in the field crew's cafeteria at Points North Airport we headed down to the water to assist in the loading of the Twin Engine Otter. Again my thoughts were that these 3 canoes and all these packs plus 6 passengers and a pilot and copilot will never all get in this plane. I was told that the Twin Engine Otter was the most versatile plane and packing everything we had would be an easy feat....they were right.

Jean-Michael Dube our pilot on Osprey Wings Limited Twin Engine Otter packed the plane with precision, with direction from Michael and Geoffrey Peake and Tom Stevens one canoe at a time and with packs



in every canoe as we stacked them. The length of the canoes took them right into the cockpit where they were tied to the back of the plane to stop them from moving any further forward.

Jean Michael spotted a location on Reindeer Lake and effortlessly set the Twin Engine Otter down, then to my amazement proceeded to back the Otter up to a beach area where we unloaded and then watched the Otter taxi and take to the air leaving us in the wilderness with the only way out by canoeing. Our journey had just begun.

A light rain greeted us as we started our paddle on Reindeer Lake but soon let up although the skies stayed threatening. We paddled for about 2 hours then set camp up in Swan Bay on Reindeer Lake for the night.

We managed to find a spot for our tents which we set up before the threatening skies brought us more rain but it managed to hold off till after dinner. So at 8pm we were in our tents to escape the oncoming rain and ready to get a good night's sleep before a long hard day of paddling.

Ah the end to an exciting day and a perfect start to what was to be a great adventure.

One thing I soon realized was what my children use to complain about through their childhood, that was about going to bed before it was dark but up here we had no choice as darkness really didn't come and morning arrived early at 4am.

Morning greeted us with a day that was overcast and dizzily but none the less perfect. The aroma of coffee and the continual comical bantering of the group (friends, that's what it's all about) was all I needed to tell it was going to be a great day.

As The Newbie of the group I felt I was the observer for most of the trip learning how the packs were packed, how the canoes were packed, how to read the water and what was everyone's responsibility. But especially in the beginning I tried to learn and understand who everyone was, not names but what their make up was and how they fit. I can now tell you after 18 days I am still not sure what their make-up is but what I am sure about is that the group has a special tie that stands the test and is life long.

We pack up the tents and most of the supplies and after eating breakfast loaded the canoes and shoved off for our first full day of paddling.

As we paddled up the Swan I could not help but wonder what it must have been like back when Thompson did the trip or for that matter when The Voyagers did their trip. Not knowing what lay beyond the next corner or where the next lake was or rapids were. I'm sure there were lots of surprises and mishaps along the way all just part of being a trapper, explorer and Voyager surviving in the wilderness.

Soon I could hear the thunder of water which indicated our first set of Rapids and my first lesson in white water canoeing.

Because we were traveling against the current all the rapids we would encounter for the first few days would be the bottom and we would either

drag up or portage around if the water level was too low.

Once at the bottom of the rapids Geoff did a quick scout of what was in front of us he soon reported back that there was enough water and we would drag up. Well this would be a first for me and before we got in the water everyone put on their water shoes for traction. I soon realized that the water sandals I had intended to use were not a good choice so a quick change into sneakers and into the water. (Note to self - proper footwear is very important).

The water was fast and pleasantly warm and the rocks slippery, so with me at the front dragging and Geoff at the back dragging and pushing, we soon made short order of our first set of rapids and to my surprise the next set started at the top of the first set.

The second set took more effort then the first and the third set was draining, the water varied in depth and in some places you would be walking along knee deep then all of a sudden you are chest deep the back to ankle deep. Footing was difficult due to slippery rocks and dark water not allowing you to see the depths or the contour. By the forth set of rapids my legs had turned to rubber and I had bonked, I yelled back to Geoff I was done and he yelled back to hold on and he pushed us up the final set of rapids to calm water and a well deserved rest for all. (What a time and place to realize you are old and out of shape)

My perception of Saskatchewan as a flat tabletop province with no hills or mountains and the only high spot being the grain elevators was quickly changing. We were now canoeing in some of the most beautiful waterways and traveling among some of the most wonderful untouched wilderness in Canada. The waters were fresh and



The Crossing Crew at North Rapids. Back row; Peter Brewster, Peter Scott, Geoff Peake. Front row; Keith Gunn, Michael Peake and Tom Stevens.

clear and provided more then just a means to travel but a way to quench our thirst and cool off and the Forests provide shelter from the weather and a safe place to set up camp as well fire wood was always plentiful.

Our journey up the Blondeau River brought us to our first portage a 400 metre one and a landing area that was only accessible through a winding swamp, a bit of hard slugging but we all managed to unload the canoes and drag everything to the top of an esker where it was ready to portage after lunch. This spot was where an old Hudson Bay warehouse had been located, we were going to scout the area looking for the remains but the first order for us was to build a noon fire to warm up by. The temperature had dipped and a constant drizzle made for a quick chill once we stopped paddling so the need to warm up was immediate. While we prepared lunch Geoff scouted the portage identifying a clear path through a burn out but he could not locate the remains of the building. This would be my first portage and a chance to see if the packs once on my back were as heavy as they were when we hauled them in and out of the canoes.

Oh they were. Somehow I managed to get off the portage and Peter Brewster was following me so we had to trudge through rough areas to get back on the portage adding about double the length of the original portage to our travel. This would be the last time Peter would follow me, come to think of it was probably the last time anyone followed me.

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Shooting the Partridge

I could use shin guards. I was nearly waist deep and leaning heavily on the bow of our canoe for balance, and getting ready to jump across to the next boulder. We had already poled, lined, waded, and literally dragged our canoe up several rapids, and had many more to go. I chuckled to my wife Rachel, "Next time, honey, let's bring our hockey pads."

"Uhh, next time?"

By **ANDY BRECKENRIDGE**

We had a fantastic trip. We left Pelican Narrows, Saskatchewan on the Sturgeon-Weir system on June 10th, 2005, and arrived 54 days and 1700

km later at Baker Lake, Nunavut after finishing with the Kazan River. The apex of the trip was the haul up the Little Partridge River (part of the Thlewiaza system), and rocky descent down to Kasba Lake near the headwaters of the Kazan. It was this crossing that tested our persistence and patience - and Rachel's sense of humour.

We chose the route because we wanted to connect a barrenlands journey with trips we had made farther south. We'd paddled through Pelican Narrows three years earlier, and I was familiar with both P.G. Downes's trip (who went north to Nueltin from Pelican Narrows in 1939, see *Sleeping Island*), and more importantly J.B. Tyrrell, the great Canadian geologist and explorer, who first mapped the route in 1894. Tyrrell is perhaps best known for a book written by his brother J.W. Tyrrell, *Across the Sub-Arctics of Canada*, a classic of northern travel, which describes the trip he made (along with his native guides and paddlers) to map a route between Lake Athabasca and Baker Lake via the Dubawnt River. A year later J.B. Tyrrell returned without his brother to explore another large river farther east, now known as the Kazan. The descriptions of these trips were published in 1897 as a Geological Survey of Canada publication titled, *Report on the Doobaunt, Kazan, and Ferguson Rivers*. It was his map (see endnote), that inspired our trip.

We knew of several other canoeists who had passed over the Little Partridge route prior to our trip. We later came to learn the route is actively traveled in the winter by snowmobile by Dene band members from Lac Brochet (on the Cochrane River), who still travel north as far as Ennadai Lake on the Kazan to hunt caribou. Unfortunately the requirements for adequate winter trails differ from portages, and nearly all of the old trails are overgrown and lost. Nonetheless, I was amazed by the accuracy of Tyrrell's notes. With just a few exceptions, I could easily match his 100 year-old descriptions to the modern land (see accompanying map.) Many of the rapids Tyrrell portaged, we dragged and waded - I'm sure

our Royalex canoe can withstand far more punishment than the bark canoe Tyrrell's party used. Much of the area also turned out to be quite scenic. While I probably won't retrace this route, it was less difficult than

expected - although I would warn paddlers that you do not want to travel in low water. Many of the rapids we forced our way up would probably have to be portaged later in the summer or in dry years.



Andy Partridge and wife Rachel on top of Roosevelt Hill on the Partridge River.

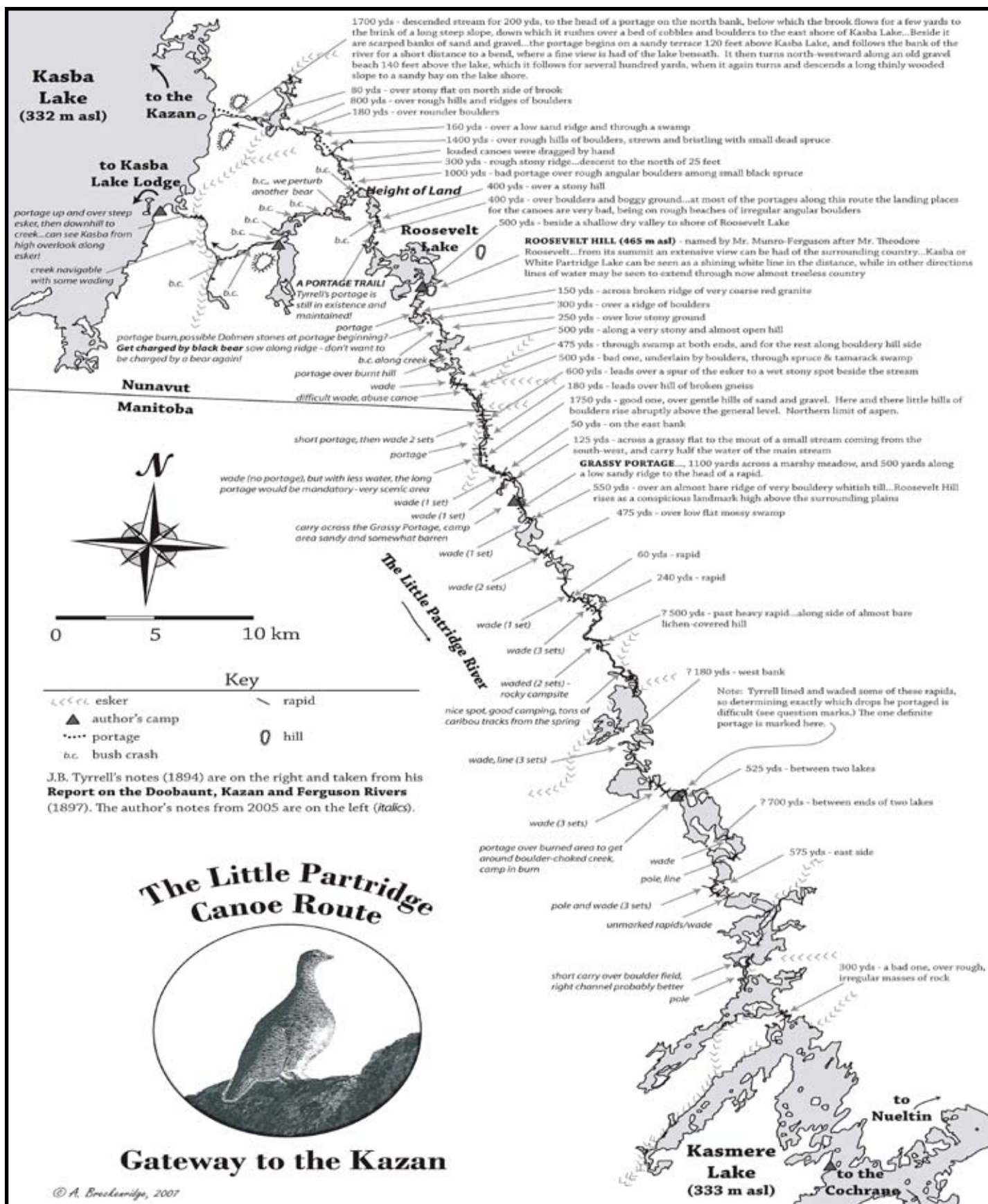
Also take note that we deviated from Tyrrell's route north of Roosevelt Hill (which incidentally has been mislabeled by cartographers at the Geological Survey.) One of most exciting discoveries of our trip was a maintained portage leaving Roosevelt Lake, and even more exciting, an ancient blaze on a second portage now above the reach of an axe. However, beyond this point the portages get longer, and

over muskeg, which can be easily traveled via snowmobile. Instead we opted to follow a more westerly route that had been pioneered by a Camp Manitowish group years earlier. This route was less direct, but offered shorter portages.

Overall, the route was challenging, but doable. If there is one lesson to be learned on the Little Partridge, it is patience. Take your time, watch your footing, enjoy the land ... and consider bringing shin guards and knee pads.

*There is an excellent online resource concerning J.B. Tyrrell managed by the University of Toronto Fisher Library, which includes many of Tyrrell's photographs and a digitized copy of his 1897 map. See <http://link.library.utoronto.ca/tyrrell/>. Clayton Klein also provides a brief description of the route in his book *Cold Summer Wind*.*

Andy Breckenridge is an assistant professor of geology at Mercyhurst College in Erie, PA, and an avid paddler. For questions and comments, he can be contacted at abreckenridge@mercyhurst.edu.





A Newbie's Crossing *continued*

Once back in the water we had four short paddles and three more portages of 200, 600 and 900 metres before we stopped for the day and set up camp. I had aches and pains where I didn't know I could have them, definitely a casualty of today's lifestyle. It wasn't until later that evening that I learned there was a bet that I would not finish the day. Well from that day on the line was drawn in the sand I was not going to allow the bet to be completed.

Our most taxing portage was one that I was totally not ready for but having completed it I can say that it was very interesting and a challenge that we all rose to and concurred. It was 1900 m in length and at least 600 m through a Muskeg Swamp with no alternate route around only through. I watched as everyone tried to find the best footing area but with packs on our backs and front, given that extra weight anywhere you stepped you sank and not only ankle deep but knee and waist deep.

At one point I thought we were going to lose Peter Brewster as he made his way along he sunk up to his thighs and he was stuck. After taking the pack off his back he tried to lift his legs but they were not moving at all this called for divine intervention so Reverend Canon Peter Scott and I started pulling Brewster and prying and finally you heard the suction break and out he came. We quickly took inventory and checked to make sure that his boots were still on as luck would have it they were.

Wollaston Lake was our next challenge this lake by any standard was huge and if the weather did not cooperate the crossing could be long, tough and treacherous possibly adding 1 to 2 days to our scheduled calm weather crossing of 4 days. This was about the mid way point and it was at this point that I realized I was losing weight and the paddling and portaging was getting easier - what a way to get in shape..

Leaving Wollaston Lake we entered the Fond du Lac River this would be the final river before reaching our destination of Stony Rapids, this would also be of first opportunity to shoot the rapids and test our skills and my nerve.

As we paddled down the Fond du Lac we spotted a young eagle perched in a tree his markings were not full yet but his size and weight resembled his parents as he sat there with the branch bending from his weight. We soon heard that familiar sound of fast water as we caught site of the first set of Rapids. It was here I realized that I was paddling with the Guide and that meant we would be going down the rapids first. Oh boy! After a quick demonstration of my technique we were off down the rapids for a great ride, success, clean, clear and dry that's what I like.

The skill set of the group was amazing, they were in control of the canoe at all times and were able to maneuver in the rapids to any position and direction they wanted, boy I had a lot to learn.

Everyone followed and it was onwards to the next set. The rapids were exciting and the scenery where they cut through beautiful.

Our paddles took us through many more sets of rapids and swifts but the most spectacular section of water was at the two falls we had to pass through. First we entered a canyon of sand stone cliffs and due to the canyon the roar and thunder of the water made it difficult to talk but I did understand that we were not shooting these and we would take out before and portage around.

This was Manitou Falls it was breathtaking, the sheer force of the water crashing down the rocks into the eroded cave and crevasse was spectacular. We walked around taking many pictures of the different formations caused by the water before starting our portage to the bottom and our continuation of our trip.

We continued to paddle the length of the Fond du Lac running many rapids and white water until we finally reached Thompson Rapids. This

was the canyon where Thompson while lining his canoe with a guide fell in and lost his supplies and cut his foot badly. His attempt to survive without food and his injury was complicated by dysentery brought on from eating baby eagles in order to survive. Luckily a native Indian came upon him and over time nursed him back to health before he set out to complete his journey.

The canyon was magnificent there were two ledges where the water dropped six feet at each with big haystacks and an extremely fast current. Dumping in this would mean disaster and a long hard swim in the strong current. Although it was agreed that it would have been impossible to shoot it was agreed that if the canoes were empty it would be possible and a fun ride. Just for the record, I was not up for it.

We set up camp at the edge of the canyon beside the crashing rapids and enjoyed not only the scenery but the sound of the water. That evening we could smell smoke and the evening sky seemed to be overcast but what it really was, was a forest fire somewhere off in the distance, far enough away as not to be a threat to us .

That evening we enjoyed a wee dram of Scotch and a fine Cuban Cigar a bit of a celebration for our trip so far. The next couple of days we paddled calm waters and many rapids on route to our next portage at Burr Falls which cut through an Indian Reserve called the Chicken Reservation en route to Black Lake and the final leg of our trip.

Late afternoon was upon us as we paddled into a burned out canyon, this burnout was recent and the area was devastated. We started looking for somewhere to set up camp close before the falls but the land and swamps were not lending well to a decent camp site. We continued on to the thunderous sound of crashing water, we had reached Burr Falls and the best possible site just before the falls on the rocks. Before dinner Geoff set out to scout ahead and look for the portage he was gone for some time but finally reappeared in full bug net attire and cuts and scrapes over his hands and legs he found the portage and it was actually very close to where we had set camp and with the burn provided a relatively clear portage..

That evening was so hot and our position in the canyon was one sheltered from any wind or breeze this made for still air and a poor sleep, as well this would be the first night that the black flies would drive us into our tents for the evening. Next morning we packed up the canoes and paddle 100m back to the start of the portage then headed down the portage to the bottom of the falls. Once in the water we paddled to the bottom of the actual water falls to catch a closer glimpse of it was amazing. The noise indicated the power of the water and the force behind the current

We were approaching the end of the Fond du Lac and getting set for the final leg of our trip that would take us through a Black Lake and on to Stony Rapids via truck from Camp Grayling avoiding several miles of portaging.

My thanks go out to all involved in this trip. First to Sean Peake who without him having to cancel would not have given me this opportunity, to the members of the Hide Away Canoe Club (HACC), Michael Peake (Governor), Geoffrey Peake (Guide), Reverend Canon Peter Scott (Vicar), Peter Brewster (Squire) and Tom Stevens (Fancy Boy), all who gave me the opportunity of a life time and taught me a great life lesson "Friends are Forever".

Full journals, photos and historical texts can be found on the website at www.northerncrossing.ca



CANOESWORTHY *continued*

- where they were easier to administer - by destroying their main form of transportation.

Much of the social dysfunction in Inuit communities today stems back to that time of transition, giving the sled dog issue tremendous emotional force in Nunavut and Arctic Quebec.

The RCMP completed its own review last fall in which it summarized 40,000 pages of documents and interviewed 200 former officers, government officials and northern residents. The review concluded that while many dogs were killed, it was always done for humanitarian, security, safety and health reasons.

But only a handful of Inuit elders co-operated with that study. The three-member panel is likely to begin travelling to Nunavut communities by Christmas and hope to have fieldwork completed within a year.

Whatever the commission learns about the slaughter, it will be a valuable addition to Inuit history and could end up in school materials. Makivik Corp., which represents Quebec Inuit, is still pushing for a public inquiry. That effort is supported by the Quebec government.

Quebec's large Inuit community living in the northern region of Nunavik will soon have greater autonomy, according to a new agreement-in-principle the community has made with the province and Ottawa.

The community of about 11,000 Inuit living in the area will soon have its own self-governing region with its own elected assembly. The new government will be responsible for some of the community's social services such as health and education while receiving assistance from the province to run its programs.

The changes in Nunavik are expected to be set in place by 2009. Within the next few years, it is expected the government will have the authority to collect taxes, adopt laws and take out loans. While it will be considered a territory within the province, Nunavik will have to adhere to Quebec laws.

The new assembly will be made up of 21 members, including the mayors of the territory's 14 villages, five elected representatives and the chief of the Naskapi First Nation plus the region's leader, who will have more power than a mayor but will not have as much authority as a premier. The move sets a precedent for aboriginal communities in Canada. While British Columbia has a self-governing agreement with the Nisga'a community, Nunavik's agreement is different in that it is the first to have successfully claimed such a large region and to adopt the British-inspired parliamentary system.

The creation of Nunavik's regional government, which will be known as Nunavimmiut Aquuvvinga, was supposed to be made official by the end of August during a forum in Kuujuaq. However, Ottawa's cabinet members still need to officially approve the agreement before that can take place.

Elders in one Nunavut community were sharing their stories this fall with a trio of researchers, eager to document how they had to move from traditional igloos and tents to southern-style wooden-frame houses more than 40 years ago.

The team, which includes two University of British Columbia researchers and former Nunavut commissioner Peter Irniq, is compiling the anecdotes into a one-hour documentary, explained Frank Tester, the lead researcher and an assistant professor of social work.

It's important to document the massive changes in Inuit culture in the 1950s and '60s, Tester said.

"You know, in 10 years, almost all Inuit went from living in their traditional camps to living in settlements and wood-frame houses," said Tester, who has conducted research around the North for more than 30 years. "This is a dramatic change in lifestyle."

Tester said that once they've done interviews and shot film footage around Repulse Bay, they will begin seeking more funding toward the documentary.

Stephen Doughty, a Scottish management consultant with 20 years of kayaking under his belt, is part of a two-man expedition led by artist and businessman Glenn Morris. They've just finished the three-month-long first leg of an arduous 3,000-mile trip across the Arctic, taking the Northwest Passage route from Inuvik, Northwest Territories, to Kugluktuk, Nunavut - a sea route that links the Atlantic and Pacific oceans through the vast archipelago of Canadian Arctic islands.

Supported by the Royal Geographical Society and the International Polar Year 2007/2008, the team's aim is to increase understanding of the damaging effect that climate change is having on the region and the indigenous Inuit people. One of the ways they've achieved this is by forging links with schools in the Arctic and the UK, such as a blog for children to follow their adventures. One Scottish school involved in the programme is Fortrose Academy on the Black Isle, which has a link school in Gjoa Haven, Nunavut. Skype video link-ups have made it possible for the children to talk to each other and the team, condensing the thousands of miles between them.

The project is vital because global warming is threatening the Inuit people. To put things in perspective, an area of permanent ice the size of Texas has melted in only one year. This has had a knock-on effect in all areas of life, including the local wildlife. Due to a change in the caribou migrating pattern there has been a huge increase in bears.

They've finished this leg early, having reached an impasse of pack ice. If they'd waited for the ice to disperse, they'd have run out of food, so the last part of their journey has been put on hold. Thankfully, they were rescued by a helicopter. On their return next June they'll have to renegotiate this route again.

Labrador's Inuit government is considering suspending all uranium mining and development on its territory because of concerns over the safe disposal of the radioactive element's waste.

Nunatsiavut, an Inuit settlement in Labrador the size of New Brunswick, boasts vast deposits of the highly lucrative metal and has attracted the eye of mining companies eager to explore and develop. But the push to drill for uranium could be thwarted after the Nunatsiavut government introduced a motion that would put a moratorium on uranium mining.

Aurora Energy Resources Inc. has proposed to mine for uranium at Michelin and Jacques Lake, two ore bodies in a heavily rocky and coniferous area about 40 kilometres southwest of Postville.

The proposal would involve the construction of an open pit and underground mine at each location. Combined, the two projects are expected to yield 97 million pounds of uranium.

This fall, an Inuit land claims organization in Nunavut reversed its long-standing position against uranium development. The move by Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. was hailed by mining investors, but ignited fears from some community members of the potential repercussions of radioactive waste on water quality and surrounding environs. The desire to mine uranium has grown within the last decade due to its meteoric rise in value.



—Andy Breckenridge

WHERE'S THE MAIN CHANNEL? -- The view here is hardly an inviting view to a paddler. But it is the one faced by Andy Breckenridge and wife Rachel as they paddled a long summer trip from Pelican Narrows, Sask. to Baker Lake in the summer of 2005 in the footsteps of P.G. Downes and J.B. Tyrrell. It shows a boulder choked section of the Little Partridge which must be portaged. This is a key route to the Kazan and still a popular winter route for natives. Check our web site for more of Andy photos and Tyrrell's map of the region.

Che-Mun

Box 548, Station O
Toronto, ON Canada M4A 2P1
E: che-mun@rogers.com
T: 416.221.3225

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