



Summer 2009

The Journal of Canadian Wilderness Canoeing

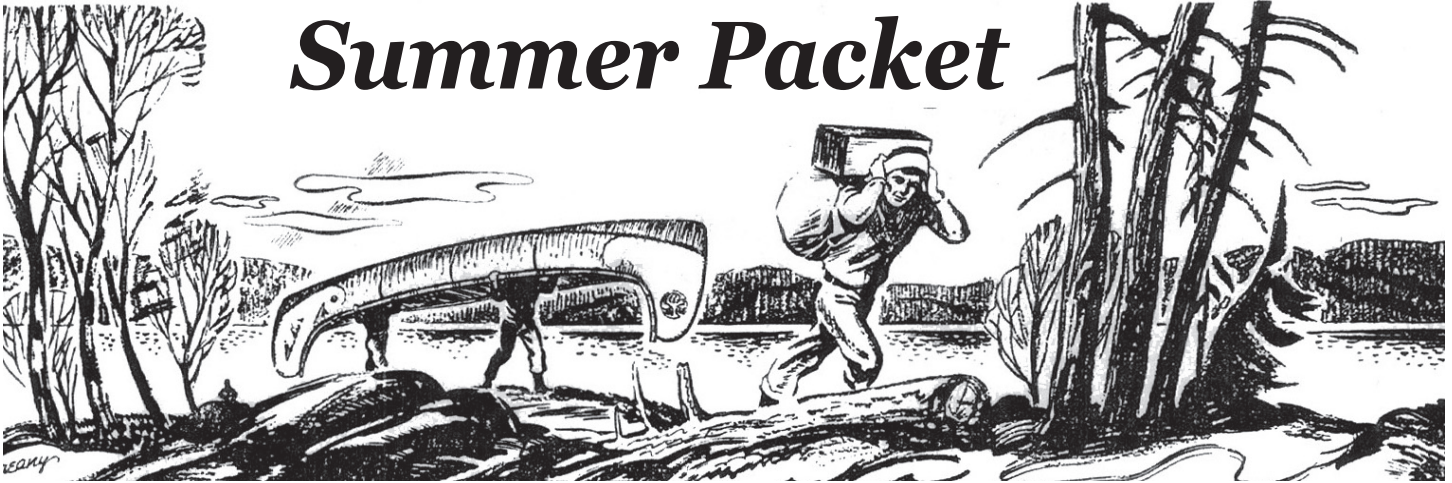
Outfit 137



photo: Michael Peake

A PRINCELY PADDLE -- Prince Andrew, 17-year-old son of Queen Elizabeth, is shown receiving a handmade cedar strip canoe from the master builder Walter Walker, 70, in Lakefield, Ontario on June 15, 1977. On the right is Terry Guest, headmaster of Lakefield College School which Andrew attended from January to June of that year. Weeks after this photo was taken Guest and the Prince left for a canoe trip on the Nahanni River. This photo was recently retrieved from the Che-Mun files and is part of an article on Page 10 on the digitizing of old photos and films from our past.

Summer Packet



Dire concerns over the fate of the Beverly caribou herd continue after the 2009 reconnaissance survey found even fewer breeding cows than 2008's extremely low results.

Although exact numbers of Beverly breeding cows spotted during the week-long aerial survey are still being calculated, early reports indicate the number is less than half of what was seen in 2008.

Last year's reconnaissance survey counted only 93 breeding cows, down from over 5,000 in 1994.

The Beverly's population was estimated at 276,000 in 1994. No population survey has been done since.

"The trend is continuing downward," said Ross Thompson, secretary of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (BQCMB). "We need to continue to make people aware of the seriousness of the situation."

The BQCMB has called for immediate provincial and territorial government action to protect the Beverly calving grounds as well as enhanced efforts to protect two adjacent caribou herds, the Ahiak and Qamanirjuaq.

Both the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds range throughout Nunavut, NWT, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. The Qamanirjuaq's calving grounds are entirely in Nunavut, while the Beverly's calving grounds range from inside the Thelon Wildlife Sanctu-

Justin P. J. Trudeau
M.P. for Papineau

April 20, 09

Dear Michael,

Thank you for taking the time to write and send me the DVD of my father's trips with Eric. Paddling in the North with my father remains one of my most cherished set of memories of my father, and I look forward to walking his strong, sure strokes once again. Thank you so much,
Justin

A very thoughtful note from Justin Trudeau on receipt of a DVD of his father's trip on the Coppermine River in 1966 with Eric Morse and August Scott and five other notables.

ary into Nunavut.

The Ahiak range along the Queen Maud Gulf shoreline in Nunavut.

Thompson said additional hunting pressures may be placed on the two other eastern-

arctic herds given the decline of the Beverly, making protecting all three herds essential.

Surveys of both Ahiak and Qamanirjuaq populations were recently completed, but numbers are not yet available. The BQCMB stated an early estimate of the Qamanirjuaq herd shows a slight decline.

"It's a much larger picture than what governments originally thought," Thompson said.

BQCMB member Dennis Larocque of Camsell Portage, Saskatchewan was one of the alternate pilots flying a second plane behind the survey team. Outside the calving ground, he saw only one caribou, a bull, and almost no caribou tracks.

"Caribou-wise, it was very depressing," said Larocque.

The BQCMB wants to hold a workshop in the autumn of 2009, bringing community stakeholders together with all relevant governments to discuss an action plan. Thompson said the plan is to hold a week-long meeting in either Yellowknife or Saskatoon, but that will depend on additional government funding. Meanwhile, the board will continue to push for all caribou calving grounds to be protected by legislation.

They will also be pressuring hunters to kill bulls rather than cows during next fall's caribou hunt.

"If you take one bull instead of a cow, that translates to an extra 23

animals ten years down the road," Thompson said. "If you apply that stat to a large population it makes a big difference."

- Shawn Bell, Slave River Journal



Editor's Notebook

Well, another summer without a real trip. I tell everyone who asks where we're headed, and there are a few, that I am doing the House River this year. Great camping but not much scenery or downstream progress.

Our housing moves are underway, but a 39-day municipal strike in Toronto has held up our building permit. A 39-day trip sounds a lot better. One of our regular group, Peter Scott, was able to get to the Keele River with NWT guide Al Pace and his group. Beautiful weather, scenery and nicely runnable rapids made for a great trip Peter tells me. I know a bunch of you are getting out there and a few are doing it online, in a lower maintenance way with the help of the ever-popular SPOT device, to pinpoint daily progress on a fairly featureless map.

We feature an tripping feature by one of the new generation of northern paddlers who have continued with some historic ways. Garrett Kephart and his band of long-graduated Camp Keewaydin paddlers tackle the McPhayden River in Labrador with wanigans and wood/canvas canoes. Great to see the kids carrying the tradition on.

In keeping with that thought, we also feature a wonderful short essay on what canoe tripping can mean to a young man, by Michael Thompson. My 13-year old son, Tom, is doing two 25-day sessions of Camp Hurontario this summer, paddling both the Michipicoten and Magnetewan Rivers. He boasted between sessions of how he carried the canoe for a kilometre portage - without a break. And how he and his friend slept out in the open the night they reached Superior. Sounds like he's ready to shoulder the load on one of Dad's trips.

Michael Peake.



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Canoesworthy

The search for Sir John Franklin's long-lost ships in the Northwest Passage could become a partnership between the Canadian government and an Alberta-based firm, if federal officials agree to come aboard.

A government-sponsored search for the Erebus and Terror, which disappeared in the High Arctic more than 160 years ago, was cancelled this summer because underwater archeologists with Parks Canada were unable to secure the services of a coast guard icebreaker.

Rob Rondeau, a marine archeologist with ProCom Diving Services, told CBC News he contacted Parks Canada officials on Monday morning to invite them to join his own search for the Erebus and Terror, slated to begin in late August. Rondeau said he is awaiting an answer from the federal agency.

Rondeau is working with a British archeologist on his search for the ships, and will send remotely operated and autonomous underwater vehicles to search in the Northwest Passage. He said that the British remain fascinated with Franklin's disappearance and that locating the ships would be big news in both England and in Nunavut, where the remains are believed to be located.

In 1845, Franklin had set out from England aboard the vessels, hoping to explore and map the Northwest Passage. Neither he nor any of his 128 crewmen ever returned. In the years since Franklin disappeared, only traces of the expedition have ever been found.

Last year, then environment minister, John Baird, announced that the federal government would back a three-year search for the Erebus and Terror, to be led by Parks Canada and using traditional knowledge from Inuit in the area. This year would have marked the second year of the project had it not been cancelled.

Rondeau said the search would benefit from a collaboration between ProCom and Parks Canada — a view shared by Vickie Aitok, manager of the Arctic Coast Visitors Centre in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. Author Ken McGoogan, who has written extensively about the Franklin expedition, said Canada could benefit greatly if Franklin's lost ships are found at last.

"With the opening up of the Northwest Passage, there is an opportunity, it seems to me, to attract more people to bring more money into the North if you will," he said.

Rondeau said his team will set up a base camp on the north end of King William Island and be at sea for two weeks beginning at the end of August.

Nunavut's environment minister says he is open to a proposal to get the Back River added to Canada's official list of heritage rivers. The Back River was long home to Inuit hunters who settled in the modern hamlets of Baker Lake and Gjoa Haven, Baker Lake MLA Moses Aupaluktuk told the territorial legislature on Wednesday.

"The Back River has some historic importance to, I guess, the sovereignty of Canada," Aupaluktuk told the assembly.

In 1834, British explorer George Back found the headwaters of the river at the top of the East Arm of Great Slave Lake. He followed the river for more than 1,000 kilometres to its end at Chantrey Inlet. Aupaluktuk also noted that the late great Inuit artist, Jessie Oonark, called the Back River "home".

The territory currently has three rivers occasionally recognized in the Canadian Heritage Rivers System:

- Kazan River, designated in 1990
- Thelon River, designated in 1990
- Soper River, designated in 1992

A fourth river, the Coppermine River in western Nunavut, has been nominated. Environment Minister, Daniel Shewchuk, said that the territorial government would be pleased to nominate the Back River to the national Canadian Heritage Rivers Board, which decides

◆ CANOESWORTHY continues on Page 11

What's Yours is Mined

Story and photos
By MICHAEL PEAKE

The Digital Revolution has been here for more than a decade. But only now has it settled in as a part of our everyday life, allowing us to get caught up in one of the most exciting aspects of this new technology - bringing the past and present together on the same platform.

It takes enough work to just stay caught up with the everyday pace of life. So it has taken some time for us to master the new technologies and begin to dig into the pile of photos, films and artifacts that made up our lives for the previous several decades.

The photos you see here and on *Che-Mun's* front and back pages are a prime example of this. As a photographer for the *Toronto Sun* since 1975, I have taken a LOT of photos . . . Millions! But the *Sun* negatives from 1977-78 were destroyed in a warehouse accident many years ago. However, in a recent move-inspired fit of cleaning and purging, I discovered these old negs which I had somehow brought home - fortunately!

The amazing thing about the shots of the now-Duke of York, is not how young he looked and how much he has changed, but how little Walter Walker has changed. Now into his second century, Walter has been a canoe-making legend for decades and has passed on his knowledge to countless canoe crafters.

I was recently putting together a new canoe show entitled, *In Search of Eric Morse*. This show, which I debuted at the 24th Annual Maine Canoe Symposium on June 6, was a real challenge to create. Because it did not follow the logical timeline of a canoe trip, it took a lot of



Walter Walker works in his Lakefield shop in April 1978 (above) and presents one of his custom made cedar strip canoes to H.R.H. Prince Andrew on June 15, 1977. He was a student at Lakefield College School and Headmaster Terry Guest, who still paddles with Andrew, is on the right.



thought about how it should be structured. It was really about what influenced the Hide-Away Canoe Club through the, now, many years.

I had recently had digitized a batch of old VHS and Beta video tapes that I had not seen for years. Contained in there, in the newly-accessible digital form, were some gems of our past - and others'. This included our first meeting with Eric Morse in 1984, which we videotaped. Out of that meeting came the idea to name a river after him. Also, there were copies of some of Eric's trips which included the Coppermine River in 1966 with Pierre Trudeau and Angus Scott, father of our canoe partner Peter.

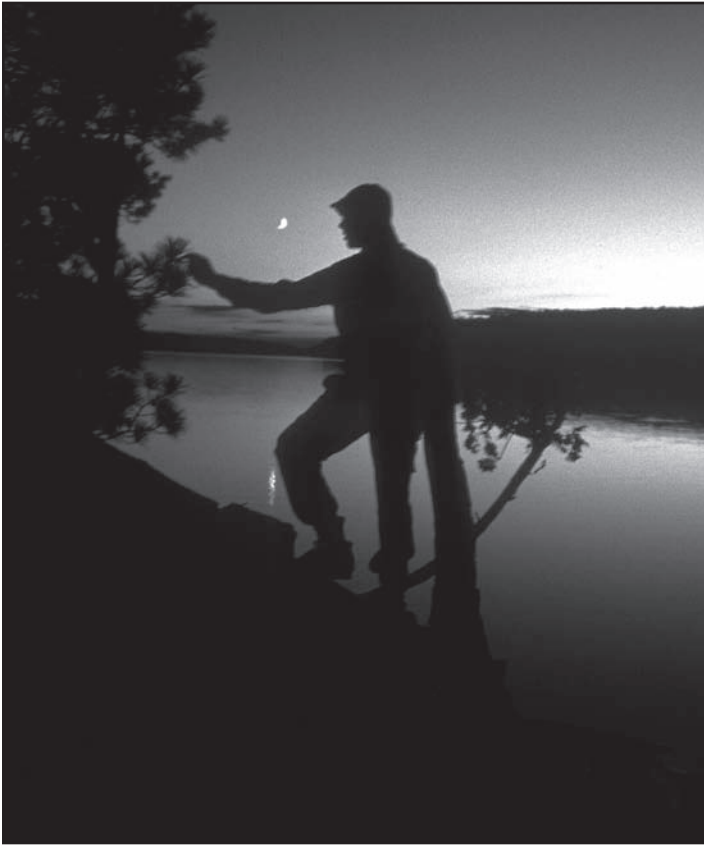
Also included was a Petawawa River trip with Blair Fraser a year or two before he died on that very river. Another gem was the 1968 Labrador trip by Stew Coffin and Dick Irwin up the Naskaupi and down the Churchill rivers- the last year the famous Churchill Falls were running. Dick Irwin's film features a hypnotic sequence of this truly awe-inspiring cataract. Despite my poor copy, seeing the fearsome power of that falling water was still amazing. And when I added a different soundtrack to the original guitar background, it was clear why Hollywood spends so much on musical scores. Watching the churning majesty of

Churchill Falls to the martial might of Holst's *Mars*, *The Bringer of War* sends chills up your spine!

What also struck me was their re-creation of the shot in a 1950 *National Geographic* magazine by the late Andrew Brown. It was no fluke. That story without a doubt, inspired them to do that trip and stand in that same spot on either side of the awesome cataract. The inspiration goes on from one generation to another - even if the falls don't.



The Trip of a Lifetime



By MICHAEL THOMPSON

The boy sitting next to me on the plane from Toronto to North Bay was 17 years old, a rising high school senior with a slight beard. He had the misfortune to sit next to a child psychologist, a so-called expert on boys, who would pester him with questions for the entire trip about how he was spending his summer, and why.

"This is kind of like a final exam," he observed, trying to get me to relent, but I wouldn't let go. After he had gamely answered a number of my questions about the summer camp to which he was headed, I sprang the *big* one on him, the question I have asked many boys his age. "Do you consider yourself to be a man?"

"Yes," he replied immediately. Then he caught himself, hesitating momentarily before declaring with conviction: "Well, *no*. But I will be in August!"

What could a 17-year-old boy do between the last week of June and August that he could anticipate would make him a man? American culture doesn't have any universal ritual that sees a boy through that psychologically difficult passage from boyhood to manhood. Many boys, actually, almost every boy, struggles with what it means to become a man. Boys (or young men, if you prefer) of 17, 19, and into their early 20s wrestle with the riddle: What test do I have to pass to become a man, and who will be able to recognize that I have reached that point?

My young companion thought he had found an answer. It turned out that he was going to embark the next morning on a 50-day canoe trip that would take him and nine companions through lakes, rivers, rapids, mud, and ferocious mosquitoes, all the way up to Hudson Bay, a distance of 600 miles. He and his friends had been preparing for this by developing wilderness skills for the last four years at their camp. They would carry all of their own food, they would take risks, and they would suffer. Toward the end of their journey they would see the Northern lights and visit an Inuit settlement. They might see moose and wolves, but, he told me, they were not going to be tourists. "This isn't about seeing wild animals," he asserted.

What was his definition of manhood? "It's taking responsibility," he said. "At the end of the day, it's taking responsibility and taking things you've learned from others and creating your own 'self'."

"It's about finishing a grueling portage," he said, "It's about doing work and getting a result."

Didn't he get that from school and varsity athletics? No. Though he did well in school and had bright college prospects, school didn't address his hunger to be a man, not even playing sports. "After sports you go home, take a shower, and watch TV." When he was canoe tripping, he felt as if he made a sustained effort that connected him to all the men who had canoed before him at that camp for more than 100 years.

Could he find the experience he sought among his friends back home? What were they doing this summer? "Hanging out. They're playing video games," he said. They didn't get it. "It's frustrating. You try to explain to them how great it is. You tell them about paddling all day, and cooking your own food, about the mosquitoes, and carrying a wood canoe, and they say, 'What, are you crazy?'"

This young about-to-be man described his father as a "good guy," his mother as a hardworking professional, and his step-father as financially successful, but none of them seemed to hold the key to helping him become a man. American culture has no universal ritual for helping boys move from boyhood to manhood. Jewish boys have their bar mitzvahs, Mormon boys have their year of missionary service, other boys sign up for the military. Yet every boy yearns to be a man, and traditional societies always took boys away from their parents to pass an initiation rite. We no longer have such rituals, but boys still wonder: What is the test, where do I find it, how do I pass it, and who will recognize that moment when I pass from boyhood to manhood? We fail to provide a meaningful, challenging path that speaks to the souls of a majority of boys.

The key to his manhood lay with the councillors who accompany him on the journey and with his companions whose lives he would protect and who would, in turn, look out for him. Past the rain, the bugs, the smelling bad, he would discover his manhood in community and in the kind of challenge that only nature offers up. Our journey over, I wished him luck. And then I couldn't get our conversation out of my mind.

While a demanding canoe trip is not for every boy, I'm certain that every boy is searching for a test. You can find the test by taking on anything that requires commitment and courage. However, there is something that happens out-of-doors that strips you down to the essentials: safety, companionship, a shared sense of mission. You set aside the busyness and crap of daily life, and then you can think about what it actually means to be a man.

Michael Thompson is co-author of "Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys." Reprinted with permission of the author.

A McPhayden Memory



photo: Bob Neill

John Lehrman and Matt McKean punching through a wave in the McPhayden Canyon.

By GARRETT M. KEPHART

Portaging through a burn is tough. Portaging through burned rocky taiga is worse... I cursed the charred landscape as I balanced my canoe at the lip of the steep river canyon. After more than a kilometre of tumbling whitewater, the McPhayden River had returned to thick black current. The rest of the group was still upstream. I probably should have waited for help, but my patience was shortened by heavy legs and aching shoulders.

Turning the canoe sideways, I sidestepped into the gorge. Eventually, I maneuvered the canoe perpendicular to the river, and pointed the bow straight down. The carrying-bar dug into my shoulders as I prepared to dismount. I had to get this right, or I would fall into the

frigid water and damage the canoe. Concentrating on my balance, I delicately rolled the canoe onto my knee and slid it into the river.

Exhausted, I remember slumping back on a small ledge to examine my surroundings. The spectacular landscape told a powerful story of contrasts and interconnections. Steep granite walls lined this section of river. Stunted black spruce and larch grew optimistically in cracks in the canyon walls. Caribou trails snaked through the burnt undergrowth, and blueberries, lingonberries, and white reindeer moss covered the ground...

Keewaydin history is usually passed down beside the campfire. I listened to countless campfire stories over the course of my tenure at Keewaydin Canoe Camp. Some of the most impressive lore originated in the Labrador wilderness. These legendary tales

involved hoards of black flies, bird-sized "bulldogs", enormous trout, endless caribou trails, and craggy taiga landscapes. Although Keewaydin sections have traveled to some of the most remote regions in Canada, only six sections have paddled in Labrador. These modern day voyageurs have explored the á l' Eau-Claire, Atikonak, Churchill, and McPhayden Rivers on their way to-and-from the Pekans, Caniapiscaw, Moisie, and Nastashquan Rivers.

In July 1995, I was a 14-year-old camper somewhere near Lake Temagami in Northern Ontario. My Staffman, Dylan Schoelzel, had just described his experience as a camper on the first Keewaydin-sponsored "Labrador" trip in 1990. A month into the trip, a Canadian Coast Guard helicopter had to airlift his best friend, Jack Hamill, out of



the steep Moisie River canyon due to an allergic reaction to a bee sting. Dylan described the harsh beauty of the terrain, something most Ontario trips lack altogether. Although I am allergic to bees, the idea of being so far into the bush that you had to push a “button” (EPIRB) to radio for help was cool enough to almost single-handedly solidify my commitment to the camp for the next decade.

Although most of his trip didn’t technically occur inside Labrador, the trip began in Labrador City and was the first descent of a North Shore River by Keewaydin. Fulfilling a dream nine years later in 1999, Dylan and Dana Shonk led the first true Keewaydin sojourn into central Labrador. The group drove for three days from the Keewaydin’s base camp on Lake Temagami to the Pekans River in Quebec. They paddled upstream on the Pekans, crossed to the upper Caniapiscaw River, and paddled downstream to Lac Chambeaux.

The group then turned upstream on a tributary from the Labrador height-of-land (they dubbed this stream, Rivière du Fromage) and portaged the 15-meters of elevation into the McPhadyen drainage, and paddled downstream to Menihék Lakes. They returned with electrifying stories and a truckload full of junk caribou racks.

In 2000, Alex Perkins and Booth Platt attempted the same route, but were forced to evacuate on the Rivière du Fromage because of huge forest fires blocking their way to the McPhadyen. Given the urgency of the evacuation the group sank their wood-canvas canoes with boulders in order to avoid the fires.

My own Labrador story began in the winter of 2008 when I dispatched a mass email to dozens of Keewaydin guides to join me on a canoe trip in Labrador. Five hearty guides answered with a serious intent to join the trip. The group included Keewaydin’s Associate Director, John Lehrman from Hamilton, MT; Bob Neill, an energy consultant from Atlanta, GA; Ben Pomeroy, a freelance writer/photographer and small-time real estate mogul from New York City; Matt McKean, a gourmet wilderness cook; and Constantine Von Flotow, fellow wilderness guide and recently retired real estate agent from Toronto, ON.

I originally planned an easy-to-access route from Oreway to the Atikonak via the Rivière à l’Eau-Claire, but that way involved too

much open lake paddling to complete the trip safely in our time frame. Instead, we agreed to use a float plane to access the McPhadyen headwaters near the Quebec-Newfoundland border. The trip was planned for late August to coincide with the Keewaydin Camp’s closing. Fortunately, the late-season trip meant fewer bugs than one might expect. From the headwaters, we paddled seven days downstream to Menihék Lakes, and another two on the reservoir to reach Esker on the Tshiutetin Railway.

On August 19, Bob and I drove 17 hours from Washington, DC to La Malbaie, Quebec where we met Ben, Constantine, John, and Matt at Matt’s house along the St. Lawrence. We repacked and departed together the following morning, arriving at the Labrador Air Safari parking lot in Labrador City at 1:30am. We failed to realize that the

Newfoundland border marked the Atlantic Time Zone, and were an hour late for our first float plane in the morning. Luckily, the weather agreed with our departure and we were able to fly both planes out in consecutive flights. We flew two Beavers because the Otter was unavailable, and a Pak-Canoe helped us to avoid a third flight. We remained at least partially committed to wood-canvas; the other two boats included a 17-foot Fraser Cruiser and an 18-foot Salmon Falls Windigo (hand-made by Dylan, himself).

Labrador Air Safari shuttled us 75 miles to our put-in

approximately five kilometres south of the first marked rapids on the McPhadyen. Low water throughout the region was obvious from the air. While all of Quebec and Ontario drowned in rain last summer, central Labrador was uncharacteristically dry, but without any substantive forest fires.

Both flights were completed by noon. The Pak Canoe was assembled on a sand beach along the western edge of a peninsula extending to the north. Coincidentally, we found fire-iron rocks with chopped wood just beyond the first line of vegetation behind our put-in. This might have been from the Songadeewin of Keewaydin girl’s section that completed the Caniapiscaw-McPhadyen route in 2005.

We enjoyed 70F temperatures, clear skies, and a light tailwind upon departure. Since it was late August, the mosquitoes were gone, and only a few black flies remained. Three kilometres into our paddle we pulled over and climbed the first bald mountain in eyeshot. Grabbing shelter beyond another sandy peninsula, we clambered



photo: Ben Pomeroy

Near the “Gap” before the outlet of the McPhadyen River. Back: Matty and Bob. Front: John and Garrett.

through an open spruce and larch forest full of slippery caribou moss, blueberries, and lingonberries (partridgeberries). The view was stunning – naked rolling mountains in every direction. Lakes filled each depression at the base of hillsides and the McPhadyen meandered northeast toward Menihék Lakes. The scene vividly reminds me of the terminus of the Appalachian Trail at the top of Katahdin in Maine. I'm sure Thoreau would have found peace here.

We continued to the first rapids. The drop was a sure portage for the woodies. The Pak-Boat attempted the run, only to be turned around backwards and stopped completely by an exposed rock shelf. After the pool at the base of the first set of whitewater, the river splits around a small island. A nice landing was chosen on river left for camp and the canoes were portaged 350-meters on caribou trails around the river widening to the terminus of the second set of rapids.

We unhooked our rods for the first time here and soon had a stringer full of small brook trout. The brookies are marked by a neon color scheme (the males have an orange underbelly) and leathery skin. But there is another fish found in these waters – the landlocked salmon, or Ouananiche – and we quickly found that the McPhadyen is full of them! Constantine pulled in the largest Ouananiche at 22-inches, and Bob and I caught a pair of smaller salmon at the base of the first rapid. The Ouananiche are covered with silver scales and they have pale- and forest-green spots across their backside. Oh, and of course, they have tasty pink flesh when you clean them.

The landlocked salmon are strong fighters. It is common for salmon to rocket into the air numerous times when hooked. I had a good-sized salmon by foul hook at the bottom of the second set of rapids, but as I pulled him out of the water, he unlatched himself and fell into a streamside pool. When I reached to grab him, he made two leaps past a large rock embankment and escaped into the main channel of the river.

Back at camp, Bob manufactured a smoking stand over the fire with alder branches and metal wire, while John and I filleted the fish. John ate the salmon roe raw with a couple of slurps, and Matty breaded the largest Ouananiche for a fry.

The next day we headed downstream with the warm sun at our backs again. This was fortunate because the river was small and low water forced us to wade and line the entire day. One of the surprises of the trip was the versatility of the Pak-Canoe. In wood-canvas we couldn't run most of the rapids, but John and Matt managed to keep their feet dry for most of the trip. A soft skin allows the Pak-Canoe to

slowly maneuver around sharp corners and slide off rocks with ease.

By day three, we had descended into a massive burn. From the tops of the mountains in the area, it was clear that the burn had consumed both sides of the river for miles. I now know how to spot a burn on Google Maps. In planning, Google showed a strange orange-maroon-colored blob covering a large section of the river.

Even more telling was the fact that this burn did not exist in 1999 on the first descent of the McPhadyen. For this reason, we believe it

was likely the same burn that forced Booth and Alex to evacuate in 2000. If this was the same burn, it was lucky that they evacuated because the path down the McPhadyen was entirely consumed by flame.

We climbed another mountain just before the confluence with the Rivière Desliens. The burn still blanketed the surrounding area. At the top, we startled a pair of partridge and found our first caribou antler. It was nibbled by rodents and lay in a bed of white reindeer moss



Photo: John Lehrman

Garrett and Bob in an 18-foot wood-canvas Windigo built by Dylan Schoelzel of Salmon Falls Canoe Company.

and lingonberry.

The McPhadyen picks up substantial volume at the Desliens confluence. Soon after the Desliens, we left the burn and entered a surreal, open taiga landscape. Camp was made at a sharp bend in the river at the base of a steep hill. A biting wind whipped the rapids into a frothy mess, and we bundled up to stay warm. We spent a good amount of time gathering twisted deadwood for the fire. Our dome tents were pitched on the top of the hillside among the scrub larch and black spruce.

The next two days involved lengthy Class I, II, and III rapids. Bob and I perfected the slow back-paddle approach with a back-ferry to avoid numerous large boulders. Our forearms and shoulders burned as we maneuvered the 18-foot Windigo through a maze of channels and small chutes. We were less inclined to push the limits than Ben and Constantine, however. Practically every time we chose to wade or line, Ben and Constantine would shoot a rapid and bump a few rocks. Their zeal for risky maneuvers was evident upon comparison of our green underbellies on the trip home.

Keewaydin tradition often involves naming places after J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. This trip was no different as we labeled one of the most impressive geographical features, the "Gap of Rohan". The Gap is where the McPhadyen has carved an impressive valley through the prominent mountain range running north-south along the western shore of Menihék Lakes. We sailed

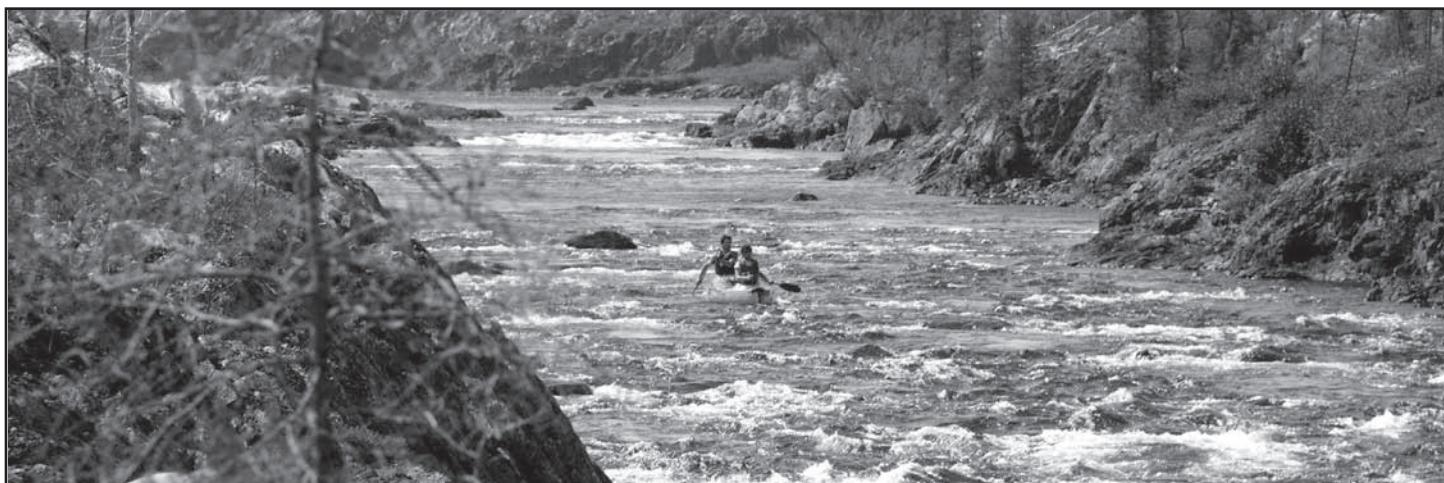


photo: Ben Pomeroy

down the final widening before the fjord-like Gap. A strong current pulled us through an S-curve and we shot the final rapid with ease. Camp was made just before Menihek; upstream of a rusty crumbling cliff that highlights the high iron deposits in the area`.

We enjoyed a tailwind on Menihek. At our first rest break, I took a cast with the largest spoon in my tackle box. Almost immediately, a hungry northern swallowed my lure. After a 15-minute battle, I had landed the first of numerous 35 to 40-inch snakes. In some locations, we had three or more people fishing at the same time, each with his own prehistoric beast yanking at the line. Trophy pike fishing has never been so good!

That night, we stopped at an Innu campsite at the outlet of the Clark River, across from the Esker landing. The Clark River valley at Menihek involves a series of magnificent rapids and falls stretching more than three kilometres upstream to Clark Lake. A recent burn on river-left, and a steep cone-shaped mountain on the opposite shoreline flank the lower rapids.

Trains run north and south twice weekly, but rarely on schedule. This time was no different, as we waited four extra hours at the track.

As we waited, we reflected on the McPhadyen and discussed our plans for an even more remote expedition next summer. The train eventually arrived and took us to Emeril where we hitched a ride to Labrador City to get our cars. We drove back in darkness to La Malbaie, and the six of us headed in separate directions the following day.

Back at home, I'm often asked to retell details of the McPhadyen journey to family, friends, and co-workers. Now that I've finally been to Labrador, the images evoked by fellow trippers are more powerful today than they were when I was 14. It's my turn to describe the harsh beauty Labrador. If I'm lucky, maybe I'll capture the imagination of another young camper with a love of northern canoeing... someone who will dream big and plan his own journey into the remote Labrador bush.



photo: Bob Neill

(Above) The crew at the first big mountain on the McPhadyen River. Left-to-right: Constantine Von Flotow , Matty McKean, Ben Pomeroy, Garrett Kephart, Bob Neill, and John Lehrman. (Top) John Lehrman and Matty McKean shooting the McPhadyen gorge in the Pak-Boat.

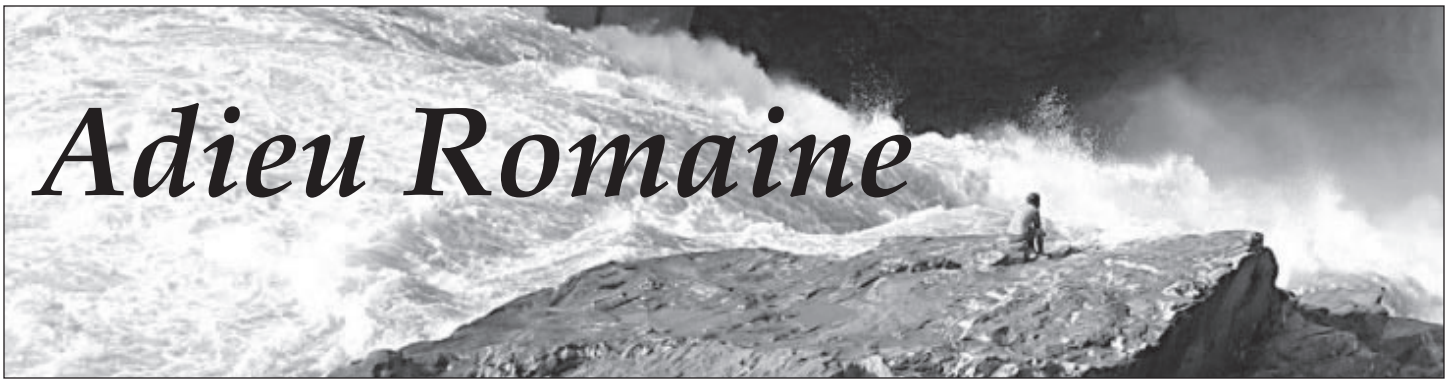


photo: borealriver.com

Adieu Romaine

On the north shore of the St. Lawrence, the Romaine River (above), one of Quebec's last great untamed waterways became Canada's biggest infrastructure project in June with the toss of a few shovelfuls of dirt. The controversial \$6.5-billion Romaine hydroelectric complex will see the construction of four dams on the Romaine, jobs for thousands of workers, and, when complete in 2020, it will provide enough power to service about 450,000 households.

The additional power is intended primarily to secure Quebec's energy supply, but will also be offered for export. How much will be exported depends of market conditions and the economy.

The potential to export is also growing. For the first time in 30 years, there are plans to build a new transmission line to the U.S. A new transmission line to Ontario is now being built. Energy exports last year ate about eight per cent of Quebec's power production but generated 32 per cent of Hydro-Québec's profits, he said.

The average cost for power generated by Hydro-Québec in 2006 was 2 cents per kilowatt-hour, but that rate is largely supported by older facilities that have been paid for. Power from the Romaine is expected to cost about 9 cents. The construction project will sustain an average of 975 person-years of work for 11 years. The peak workforce will number 2,000. Economic spinoffs are estimated at \$3.5 billion across Quebec.

Construction work has started on a new multibillion dollar hydroelectric plant on the Romaine River. The La Romaine plant, which includes four dams, will take 11 years to build at a cost of \$6.5 billion.

Premier Jean Charest called the project a "powerful economic development lever for Quebec" that will create jobs and "contribute to the fight against climate change." The four dams will have the capacity to generate 1,550

megawatts – enough energy to meet the yearly needs of Fort Worth, Texas.

Most of the electricity generated at La Romaine will be exported, with expected profits to rise as high as \$2 billion in the first 12 years, the government estimated.

Environmentalists have objected to the project because of its potential impact on the river. Quebec signed partnership agreements with Innu communities in the area before proceeding with the project. Nutashkuan Innu Chief François Bellefleur said the project is a great opportunity for the Innu Nation to prove it is committed to regional development.

Hydro-Quebec claims that one of the only significant impacts the hydroelectric complex will have on the Romaine River concerns the landscape. However, the repercussions are much more far-reaching. The Romaine River is the home of Atlantic salmon, Woodland Caribou, Golden eagles, Peregrine Falcons, Osprey, bald eagles, insects, trees and wildflowers, to name a few of the species that make up this unique boreal forest which is part of the world's most essential carbon sinks.

Thus, not only will the construction of the four proposed giant dams destroy the ecosystem and the flora and fauna through fragmentation, mercury contamination and the flooding of vast expanses of boreal forest, but the net effects will also contribute greatly to greenhouse gas emissions. Finally, as is the case with the damming of most other Quebec rivers, the long term negative environmental impacts of dams and their reservoirs are still unknown.

As the forest industry has been collapsing in Quebec, we have witnessed over the past 10 years the hydroelectric industry regaining momentum and thereby promising jobs in Quebec's resource regions. Hydro-Quebec needs to compensate for the fact that it sells electricity to Alcoa at a loss. In March 2008, an agreement

was signed between Quebec and Alcoa permitting Alcoa to keep its 3 aluminum plants open and even expanding some of them. While the laborers rejoice at the fact that they are keeping their jobs, what is lesser known is the fact that Alcoa can remain open only because energy is sold to Alcoa at such a low cost price.

This agreement means that Quebec is adding \$228 million to its long-term debt, which will be paid off by all Quebecers for next thirty years to come. With this agreement, it becomes apparent that, not only must Hydro-Quebec stop damming because it already produces a surplus of energy, but it shows that the government is selling our electricity at a loss and keeping alive aluminum smelters that pollute and contaminate Quebec with mercury. Yes, the people are keeping their jobs, but it is their own taxes and those of the rest of Quebec's citizens that are paying Alcoa's bills and are forced to pay increasing electricity bills which result from the need for Hydro-Quebec to compensate for the loss.

A common argument is that wind power is still more expensive than hydroelectricity, however, with this example we see that if Hydro-Quebec is selling to Alcoa for 4 cents per kWh what costs citizens between 8 and 10 cents per kWh, this argument has no credibility. It is much more viable that all the money lost by Quebec citizens instead be spent towards renewable energies and creating employment in that field.

Hydroelectric dams usually raise environmental concerns due to flooding needed to create reservoirs for the dams. Over \$200 million has already been spent or budgeted on environmental studies, attenuation measures, and environmental monitoring, which is planned to continue until 2040. Power from the project will be initially available by 2014 and all construction will be completed by 2020.



CANOESWORTHY *continued*

whether to recommend the heritage designation.

"Of course, we would have to do quite in-depth consultation with the community of Baker Lake and all interested user groups," Shewchuk said. "But if that was an interest of the community of Baker Lake, we would be interested in looking at something like that."

Nominations for heritage river status can be made only by provincial and territorial governments. Should the Nunavut government nominate the Back River, it would have to design a management plan or heritage strategy to preserve the river's natural, cultural and recreational values. The national board then reviews the nomination and can recommend the heritage designation to the federal government. Once a river is designated as a heritage river, it is preserved in its natural form into the future.

Nunavik will see more cruise ship traffic in 2009 than ever before. Three different cruise ship companies, including the Makivik Corp.-owned, Cruise North Expeditions, Adventure Canada and Polar Star Expeditions, will be making an estimated 13 stops in Nunavik between July 14 and September 21.

Their ships, the M/V Lyubov Orlova for Cruise North, the M/V Clipper Adventurer and the M/V Polar Star, will stop in Kuujuaq, Quaqtaq, Kangiqsujuaq and Kangirsuk.

To make sure communities are prepared for the visits, the Kativik Regional Government has been involved in offering training and support. The KRG, which developed customized culture and heritage modules, has given training sessions on interpretation and presentation skills.

The KRG is also helping Cruise North staff on customer service, first aid, and boating certification, with all salaries subsidized by KRG and Nunavik's Saputiit Youth Association. The youth trainee and mentorship program at Cruise North, which is now in its fourth year, has resulted in a "significant increase and retention of local staffing," Gillani said.

"Despite the economic downturn which made it harder to market cruises in 2009, Cruise North is set to start its season next month on a positive note," said marketing representative Jillian Dickens. The company's most recent promotional offer of 50 per cent off, landed many additional bookings, she said. "Spirit Mountains," "High Arctic," north and southbound, and "Northwest Passage" is almost sold out completely. "Baffin Adventure" has been sold out since early 2009.

New this year for Cruise North is a pilot project in collaboration with the Torngat National Park where passengers on August's High Arctic cruise can visit the Base Camp near the Saglek Radar Base, about 100 kilometres from Kangiqsualujuaq. Also new for Cruise North in 2009 is the inclusion of a Northwest Passage cruise.

The thinning Arctic ice pack is already producing the much-anticipated surge in commercial shipping through the Northwest Passage. And as the pace of ice loss accelerates, experts say the federal government is not keeping up to ensure Canadians control it.

Three companies are now planning to send commercial vessels deep into the Passage's once ice-choked waters this season - triple the number from 2007. There are now more solely commercial vessels in the Passage than there were ships of all kinds just a few years ago.

"The ice is more favourable than in past decades," said Capt.

Georges Tousignant, who is scheduled to take a cargo ship from Montreal almost to the western gates of the fabled waterway this September - the first such passage for Nunavut Eastern Arctic Shipping. "It's navigable," Tousignant said. "It's not that high-risk."

Experts have long predicted that shrinking Arctic ice cover would lead to an increase in use of those waters. The increase, they said, would be created by demand from local communities and growing northern industrial development. That's exactly what's happening.

Coast Guard figures show there were 62 commercial and re-supply ships and three ore carriers in the Passage last year. That's more than all 54 of the ships that entered those waters just four years earlier, which includes research and recreational vessels. Although the Coast Guard expects the number of research and tourist ships to decline slightly, commercial shipping is still expected to increase.

That demand comes not only from Nunavut's growing population, but from the federal government's increasing spending on northern infrastructure. Northerners rely on sealifts for everything from bulk supplies of dog food to concrete and lumber. "Ten years ago, how much money was spent on infrastructure building schools and hospitals in the North compared to today, the difference is huge," said Rayes.

The U.S. National Snow and Ice Data Centre reported last week that the pace of ice melting throughout the Arctic over the month of May was about 54,000 square kilometres per day - well above the long-term average. And every May, there's less ice. The long-term trend shows an average decline of 34,000 square kilometres of ice per year.

A leading caribou scientist is re-igniting a long-standing argument over whether Peary caribou numbers are stable enough to justify hunting the animals. There isn't enough population data on the remote caribou herd to safely hunt it without risking serious depletion of its numbers, according to a researcher.

However, Inuit have for years insisted their hunting practices are not detrimental. "If more caribou are dying than bringing in through birth and survival, you're in a negative situation. If you don't know you're in a negative situation, you're in for trouble," said researcher Frank Miller. Miller, along with Sam Berry, published an article laying out his case in the journal *Arctic* in June 2009.

Simon Idlout, chairman of the Resolute Bay Hunters and Trappers Association, said mandatory reporting isn't the best way to monitor the caribou population. Instead he said the most effective way to keep track of the animals is to ask the people who are in closest contact with the herd: the hunters who live on the land.

Grise Fiord resident Larry Audlaluk told Nunavut News/North in 2007 that due to the landscape they inhabit on the High Arctic islands, Peary caribou have fewer places to graze and must compete for food with muskoxen. According to Audlaluk, any decrease in the number of caribou is part of a natural cycle.

"The Peary Caribou is not endangered," he said. "The cycle of Peary caribou in the high Arctic is not like your regular caribou in other parts of the North."

Peary caribou inhabit a broad range across the High Arctic and are difficult to monitor. However, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada estimates the Peary herd has declined 72 per cent since 1984, to approximately 10,000.



photo: Michael Peake

Legendary canoe builder Walter Walker (right) is shown in his shop in Lakefield, Ontario in 1978 with his unnamed assistant. Housed in a corner of a local marina Walter continued to produce his masterpieces of iconic transportation for many more years. Still with us at 100-plus years of age, he remains a priceless resource and a vital link to a vanishing past.

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