



Autumn 2009

The Journal of Canadian Wilderness Canoeing

Outfit 138



photo: Al Rollins

BLOODY CONVENIENT -- Veteran paddler, Will Lange of East Montpelier Vermont, who describes himself in this shot as "an old guy suffering from arthritis, scoliosis, and a broken femur." Well, that 'old guy' had just paddled down the Coppermine River and was taking advantage of a new boardwalk along part of the portage. Will advises there's a two hole privvy there as well! His group of seasoned paddlers continues to defy time and doctors by paddling the northern rivers of Canada.



Fall Packet

Anthony Way from Dallas, Texas was struck by some canoes in the most recent Outfit.

"Hey, that's my PakCanoe!" I said when I saw the photos in "A McPhadyen Memory" by Garrett Kephart, *Che-Mun*, 137, Summer 2009.

Here's the little back story to "avoiding a third flight" (about the price of the PakCanoe). Fifty-four years ago, I too became enamored of wood and canvas canoes guiding at Camp Keewaydin.

Thirty-eight years later, climbing the Devil's portage out of Temiskaming convinced me that carrying an 80 lb. canoe was not as fun as it used to be (Is the universe getting heavier? I know it is expanding: all those portages are much longer than they used to be).

This led me to the 56 lb., 17' PakCanoe which greatly enabled me on the North Knife (MB) and the Eau Claire (QC not NL). In summer 2008, I took it with me on a little trip down the Temagami River led by John Lehrman of Keewaydin and McPhadyen crew. He tried my PakCanoe and really liked it. I also pumped him on his pending Labrador trip. A little too late (I was already back in Texas), I realized that even if I couldn't go on this trip (two of those guys might make my age), I could still send my PakCanoe. John welcomed the idea, so I tried to FedEx it to his home.

Two days later, it was back on my doorstep: the label had come off. The FedEx folks agreed it was their fault, so they flew it to Pennsylvania at no extra cost.

From there, John flew it as luggage (no charge) back to Canada. A month later, back it came, full of wonderful smells, scratches and John's trip report. I suspect that the one long gash (easily patched!) came from that first ledge Kephart describes. The first and third photo confirm John's report of it shooting every rapid.

So the message is: if you can't make the trip, send your canoe. It's the true vicarious experience!

A TRIP NO ONE WANTS TO TAKE

Excerpts of recent emails from John Silbar, a Che-Mun subscriber from Wisconsin.

I am departing June 20, 2009 for a solo decent of the Hayes River from Norway House to York Factory. This trip is for my 50th birthday and will include a quantity of photos and video and I again will try my hand at another book attempt. If you are interested in any updates please let me know and I will gladly share with your readers.

I turned 50 on my Norway to Oxford House trip. Married 27 years. Born and raised in south eastern Wisconsin. Have 3 adult children, and have worked for the Dept. of Public Works in my own home town for the past 15 years, and a volunteer firefighter/EMT for 8 of those years and involved with the Eagle scout program for over 35 years.

I have canoed extensively in the upper Mid-West my entire life time, enjoying marshes, swamps, creeks, and any ditch line with enough water to explore. I have paddled in Glacier National Park and my biggest adventure and my own personal vision quest was my Manitoba trip Norway House to Oxford House in June 2009.

York Factory was not to be. In 11 days I traveled Little Playgreen Lake through the East channel of the Nelson River.

Located the Echimamish River in a driving rain storm. Portaged 20 plus beaver dams on the same river in the same driving rain and in 216 miles arrived in Oxford House exhausted and to far behind schedule to continue.

I was very disappointed to not finish at the Bay but the weather won. It rained all days but 2 and a strong NE wind was in my face daily. All things considered I kicked ass and the final section awaits me for another day.

I apologize for my Hayes River story not sent. It was half done when I took sick. I

am being treated for an aggressive form of Pancreatic cancer that has now spread into my liver.

I am still at the Medical College of Wisconsin's Cancer care center which is only 30 min. from my house which makes my sometimes bi-weekly trips livable. I am still on morphine 24/7 which is a real problem in living a normal life. My goal is to beat this cancer and continue with my life as I had been. I was very satisfied with my life. My job, my wife, my kids, were all great. I have not been able to work since Aug. 27 and this has been very hard.

My week starts on Wednesdays with strong chemo and I don't recover until Sunday. Monday and Tuesday are good and then it starts all over. I am up to the challenge and take it one day at a time. Sometimes one minute at a time. I cannot tell you how bad I want to return to the fields and the streams just for a visit. Forty five minutes in my back yard does it for now.

As for myself I have 2 more rounds of Chemo in this treatment, a week off and then my MRI to see what my friend the Tumor is no longer have the severe pressure points I had when I started 7 weeks ago. I also had a spinal pain block done 3 weeks ago which greatly improved my quality of life.

That's where I am at right now, ready to fight to the end of the game, because that's what I do. Please give my regards to the canoeing community and remember to live and love life. Thanks for posting my info. If I can help another human being in any way with my story my trials will have been worth while. Could you please see to it that I get a copy as I want very much for my children to read this. I strive to set an example for them in all facets of my life.

As of late October, John reports he is continuing with treatment. We wish him well on this treacherous journey.. See Page 12 for his self portrait.



Editor's Notebook

It is a rare breed of paddler who falls in love with canoeing in Ungava *aka* Nunavik. For there are few canoeing locales so grindingly tough on unsuspecting trippers.

For several years the Hide-Away Canoe Club became fond Ungava-ists when we did three traverses of the peninsula plus two trips down the George River. As we fade



into our armchairs, a new band of enthusiasts has taken over. Lester Kovac and Lynette Chubb are likewise smitten with the tough conditions - and pure raw wilderness - that Ungava offers.

The above photo was kindly sent to *Che-Mun* this summer after the pair completed a trip down the De Sable and Caniapiscaw rivers. The shot is from the famed Eaton Canyon on the Caniapiscaw. The river was partially diverted into the La Grande hydro project and was where 10,000 caribou drowned in 1984 crossing hydro-swollen water levels in the fall of that year.

We feature the couple's 2007 trip down the Charpentier and Leaf rivers in this Outfit. As you will read the weather and bugs were brutal but the rewards great. Ungava is not for everyone but you can be pretty sure you will not find it crowded with fellow paddlers. In our three crossings we met no other canoeists.

Michael Peake.



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Canada

Canoesworthy

The Government of Nunavut believes recent indications of significant caribou decline in the Eastern Arctic result from the cyclic nature of caribou populations. Nunavut's director of wildlife management also told *The Journal* the decline of Beverly caribou on the calving grounds may be due to a shift in calving ground locations or the herd joining the Ahiak herd on the shore of the Arctic Ocean.

"We believe (the decline) is cyclic, natural," said Drikus Gissing, director of wildlife management for Nunavut's Department of Environment. "There are examples from traditional knowledge that it has happened before."

Gissing said the government is conducting ongoing monitoring of the herds, including plans for a full survey of the Beverly and Ahiak populations in the spring of 2010.

A GNWT reconnaissance survey of the Beverly calving grounds in June found fewer than 50 breeding cows. In 1994 a reconnaissance survey of the same area found nearly 6,000 breeding cows.

The Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (BQCMB) has called for immediate protection of all caribou calving grounds across the North.

Both the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds range through Nunavut, NWT, northern Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba. The calving grounds for both herds are found in Nunavut, except for a portion of the Beverly calving area in the Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary in the NWT.

Gissing cautioned, however, against widespread permanent protection for calving grounds, saying a mobile approach for protection is necessary to deal with the shifting nature of caribou.

The only way Nunavut can deal with the big picture, Gissing said, is through increased monitoring of all caribou herds. He added that Nunavut is currently working on developing a Northern caribou conservation strategy to cover all herds in the territory. It is still in its initial stage, but Gissing said the goal is increasing resources available for caribou protection.

Manitoba Hydro is plowing ahead with plans for a huge new northern dam, but a regulatory bottleneck in Ottawa could bog the project down. The Crown power company has applied for the first batch of environmental licences needed to build the Keeyask dam on the Nelson River. The first phase includes a road into the dam site, a temporary camp and infrastructure for a more permanent camp big enough to house 500 construction workers. It's a \$175-million project -- small by Hydro's standards. But it signals the Keeyask dam is likely a go.

Hydro, however, is echoing concerns often voiced by Manitoba Premier Gary Doer that the federal environmental assessment system is full of frustrating overlaps and ought to be streamlined.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans appears to be the bottleneck, in part because it has to deal with the Environmental Assessment Act and the federal Fisheries Act. Ottawa has added more regulatory staff at DFO and has created a special management office able to handle large-scale projects like dams. Officials say capable federal regulators are overworked and hampered by a 100-year-old Fisheries Act that is not only out of step with modern conservation practices, but also needlessly burdens builders.

Hydro has filed the first 300 pages of what will likely be thousands of pages of documents submitted to Manitoba Conservation, the Clean Environment Commission, the federal fisheries department and other federal environmental regulators. A public hearing is widely expected when the dam itself works its way through the permitting process. That's a few years away.

◆ CANOESWORTHY continues on Page 11



If it's Tuesday, this must be Beechey

By Ken McGoogan

The late Pierre Berton liked to describe how in 1853, when Arctic explorer Leopold McClintock was searching for the lost expedition of Sir John Franklin and travelling across spongy, summer-time tundra, he chanced upon cart tracks so fresh that he thought they had been made the previous day. As he studied them, slowly he realized the truth: those tracks had been made by Sir Edward Parry, another Arctic explorer – not yesterday, but thirty-three years before.

The preservative power of the Arctic has loomed large in the Canadian imagination since 1987, when Owen Beattie and John Geiger published *Frozen in Time*. That book contained photos of the well-preserved bodies of the first three sailors to have died during that last Franklin expedition. Dead since 1846, the three looked as if they might have died last week.

Yet a recent visit to their gravesites on Beechey Island suggests that the preservative power of the Arctic may have met its match – and that match is us. It also reminded me that while Canadians have grown fond of talking about Arctic sovereignty and developing the North, we are failing to take concrete, relatively inexpensive actions that could make a difference both today and tomorrow.

Where to begin? This was my third visit to Beechey Island with Adventure Canada, a conservation-minded travel company based in Mississauga. And the history-rich island, the most famous site in the Arctic, is so confusingly degraded that only on this occasion did I finally sort out what happened where, exactly, in the 1840s and '50s.

Arriving in two ships late in 1846, the Franklin expedition spent one winter on Beechey before sailing south to its terrible fate. Four years later, in August 1850, American explorer Elisha Kent Kane was among the first men to discover this site. The artistic, articulate Kane sketched the three gravestones, copied their inscriptions, and scoured the area, turning up countless artefacts.

A quarter mile from the graves, he found a neat pile of more than 600 preserved-meat cans. Emptied of food, these cans had been filled with limestone pebbles, “perhaps to serve as convenient ballast on boat-ing expeditions.” Today, of all that Kane described, only the three headstones (and the bodies before and beneath them) remain – and those headstones are not the originals, which are preserved in Yellowknife, but facsimiles, two of which have been accidentally switched.

The site is further confused by a fourth headstone, which marks the grave of a sailor named Thomas Morgan who died here in 1854; and also by what looks like an unmarked grave, but is in fact the original location of a memorial to Joseph-Rene Bellot, a searcher who died nearby in 1853.

Franklin's original campsite is today nothing but a shallow pit, unmarked. The 600 pebble-filled tin cans are long gone. About eighty-five of them have been moved a couple of kilometres west to the ruins of Northumberland House, a storehouse erected in 1852-53 in case Franklin

should return. There, half-buried in the sand, those 85 cans form a rusty cross, itself badly damaged. Nearby stand a number of memorials – some of them significant, like Lady Franklin's monument to Bellot, others irrelevant.

Standing amidst this archaeological chaos, where well-meaning but unaware visitors have bent cans and broken beams, I found myself thinking that they must have arrived unprepared and unguided. A priceless historical record is being destroyed – part of our cultural heritage. And I wondered: Should visitors be banned?

I thought then of a young Inuk woman, a guide I had met a few days before at Kugluktuk, an Inuit settlement at the mouth of the Coppermine River. In 1771, Samuel Hearne had reached that location after an arduous, months-long journey from Churchill on Hudson Bay. To this guide, I had described what Hearne had seen -- seals, tide water markings, an array of

islands – and she had been able to lead me to where Hearne must have stood: a bluff overlooking the mouth of the Coppermine River.

That location, the first point charted on the northern coast of North America, and also along the Northwest Passage, remains devoid of signage. After I had spoken of the site to those who accompanied us, and as we walked back into town, the young woman told me, “We need more of these ships stopping here.” She was alluding to the fact that ships bring much-needed spending to any northern community they visit.

Now, on Beechey Island, as I stood amidst the archaeological confusion, I rejected the idea of banning visitors. And surveillance, given the isolation of many sites, is obviously impossible. What we need, I realized anew, is interpretative and cautionary signage at every significant historical site in the north. We should start with Beechey Island, which is both busy and jeopardized, and move on to sites like the mouth of the Coppermine River and Victory Point on King William Island, near where Franklin's ships got trapped in the ice.

At each site, well-designed interpretive signage should explain and map what exists and caution visitors to ensure that it remains intact. These same interpretative materials should be distributed to travel companies that regularly venture into the Arctic. And those companies should be encouraged or even compelled to follow the example of Adventure Canada, which brings archaeologists, historians and conservationists on every voyage.

As the Northwest Passage becomes increasingly viable, the Arctic will attract more visitors. Relevant sites need protection. And the territory of Nunavut, with a population of 30,000, can hardly be expected to shoulder responsibility. The federal government should act immediately to protect and develop Canada's exploration history as a natural resource.

*Ken McGoogan is the author of a quartet of books about the search for Franklin and the Northwest Passage, among them *Fatal Passage* and *Race to the Polar Sea*. (Reprinted with permission of the author.)*

*The preservative power of
the Arctic may have met its
match – and that match is us.*



Arctic Inspired
A Tribute to the Tundra
Edited by Tim Irwin
Tundra Press 216 pp. 2009 \$26.99

Arctic Inspired is well named as it was truly inspired by the Arctic. A group of people banded together under the direction of Tim Irwin to produce their own book on the north and what is so special about it.

It is a mixed bag of original stories, paintings and poems as well as stories, journal entries and portions of talks given by others. Or as Editor Irwin describes it, "a compilation of creative works inspired by people's self-propelled travels through the tundra." Contributors include Robert Perkins, Alex Hall and Paul vanPeenan.

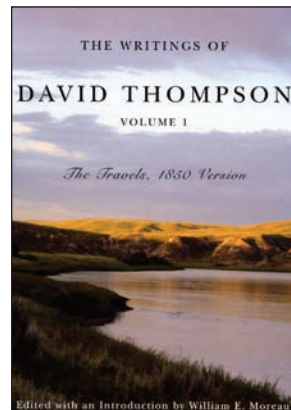
There is, of course, a variety of beautiful photos to accompany the text. The book is sold through Tim Irwin by mail. [Contact arcticinspired@gmail.com]

One is struck by the number of female contributors both in words and photos. That would have been unheard of a generation ago. Also women seem to more easily be able to express their intimate feelings in contact with the land.

The book features travels on numerous northern rivers but is really a celebration of the special moments along the way and lasting memories and impressions.

One of the problems in self-publishing is the quality of photos when they range in contrast and quality. Colour correction is an (expensive) art and some of the pictures here need expert help but are for the most part excellent. There are many interesting perspectives. Lindsey Cymbalisky sums it up nicely in her piece titled *Reflections*. "But paddling in the Arctic offers an exceptionally engaging blend of challenge and charm – a serene isolation that provides little shelter for the body or the mind,

allowing each to be unusually receptive.



The Writings of David Thompson - Volume 1
Edited by William E. Moreau
McGill-Queens University Press
352 pp. 2009 \$44.95

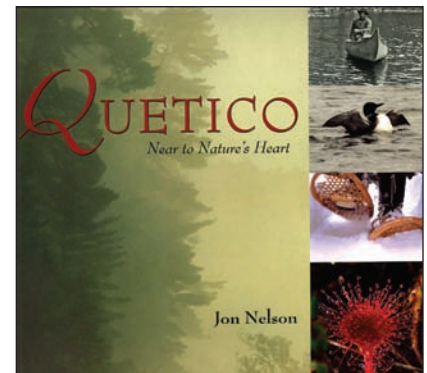
David Thompson is the most famous northern traveller that no one really knows.

His exploits are legend yet since no photo or painting of him exist, his memory

is somewhat faded in the public's mind. But luckily academics, like Toronto teacher William Moreau, continue to mine the incredible depth of Thompson's decades of groundbreaking travel across the little-known Northern American continent for 40 years.

This volume contains Thompson's journal from 1784 to 1807 and covers travel in the Rockies, Athabasca and Missouri. While the reading is not light, it is a tremendous resource and look into the world of a unique man who mapped much of this continent.

Quetico
Near to Nature's Heart
By Jon Nelson
Natural Heritage/Dundurn Press
288 pp. 2009 \$35



Quetico Provincial Park marks a century this year and this beautiful book, written by a man who knows the park so well is a fitting tribute to the million acres of wilderness west of Thunder Bay.

Jon Nelson, a teacher for many years, has also been a ranger and archeologist in Quetico and brings a wealth of knowledge of this unique place.

The book is full of beautiful color photos and maps and is really about what the park is all about - a very special place combining history and ecology in a superb setting.

One section of the book features special spots that most paddlers would have visited like The Pines on Pickerel Lake or Prairie Portage at the US border.

Quetico holds a special place in our hearts and a fall trip through its quiet and beautiful waters is truly special.

Through the Heart of Ungava



photo: Kester Kovac

Lynette Chubb enjoys what could be a BBC nature series view from a vacant Leaf River Lodge in the estuary of the Leaf River in northern Quebec. The Leaf River herd was in great abundance for Lester Kovac and Lynette's 2007 Charpentier/Leaf trip.

By Lynette Chubb (LC) and Lester Kovac (LK)

LK: The terrain in Czecho-Slovakia, where I grew up, was conducive to hiking and spelunking, so I spent much time exploring trails and mapping caves. After immigrating to Canada in 1992 and establishing myself economically, I found no "Muran Plateau", karst caves or "High Tatras" mountains to play in, but uncountable lakes and rivers. A colleague at work introduced me to canoe tripping in Algonquin Park. Eventually, I started to dream of exploring untrodden (unpaddled?!) pathways again. One of my children brought home a schoolbook that had a basic map of Canada, outlining the provinces and territories, and showing about

10 major rivers. One of those rivers caught my eye immediately: it was in north Quebec, flowing from a big lake to Ungava Bay, and on that simple map it was very visible. I bought a big map of Quebec and learned that it was the Riviere aux Feuilles (Leaf River) and it started in Lake Minto. A dream was born.

LC: How did I get sucked into this you ask? Must be love...

I've been a canoe tripper since my youth, with thousands of miles under my belt, so I had a good idea of what was involved in this venture, but I had never tripped in the barrens and I had never tripped whitewater with only one canoe before, both of which made me nervous. This state of mind impels

me to visualize all the "what-ifs" and to be ultra-organized: back-ups for my back-ups and extras for my extras, etc. So we ended up being well-equipped, and having too much food.

LK: (Logistics) The real life part of the dream was how to get there, so I spent a few years learning whitewater, building up my tripping experience (my trip reports can be found at www.geocities.com/l_kovac/), and researching the Leaf. A cheap(er) way to access the Leaf was to take advantage of commercial flights on each side of the Ungava peninsula and to travel from Umiujaq upstream to Lac Minto, then down the Leaf to Tasiujaq. Other paddlers had been there before us, and I had limited vacation time,



so I extended my research into the headwaters and found 2 tributaries south of Minto for which there was no information to be found. The topo maps indicated that the Nedlouc River was too steep to be fun, so we chose the Charpentier River which began in Lac Nedlouc, 329 m above sea level up in the high barren plateau of the Ungava peninsula. The explorer in me thrilled: Unpaddled landscape to map! To access Lac Nedlouc, we drove (23 hours and 1900km) north from Ottawa, 668 gravel km of it east to the end of the Trans-Taiga highway to Air Saguenay's float plane base on Lac Pau at the Caniapiscou Reservoir. From there, Lynette and I and our canoe, gear and food for 3 weeks flew due north for another 400 km to tiny Duck Island in the huge octopus of shallow Lac Nedlouc.

LK: We flew over Ungava, with rain and wind buffeting the turbo Otter (we'd contracted for a Beaver). The view was incredible: land filled with lakes and rivers like a Swiss cheese. This, along with the beautiful landscape along the north Quebec roads, is paradise for real canoeists – such a secret compared to all our overused parks!

LC: Pierre, our pilot, had to keep the prop turning into the wind to keep us in the lee of Duck Island as we unloaded all our gear into our canoe beside the float. After combining the cabin for anything forgotten, we untied the plane and quickly blew backwards far enough for Pierre to quickly rev up and heads and disappear quickly into the far flat horizon. Alone. Cold whistling wind. Cold whitecaps in all directions. We pulled up onto the low wet shoreline, rearranged our load, secured the spray deck, and, it being only 11am, decided to try paddling. As we inched up alongside the island and turned into the teeth of the gale, with next landfall 3 km (and maybe 3 hrs!?) away, common sense prevailed and we had to submit to windbound defeat on our very first day.

LK: It was an overwhelming feeling, to camp here. We were completely alone, the closest human being far, far away. We used stones from an ancient tent ring to anchor the windward side of our cook shelter (and replaced them carefully afterwards). There were no trees – save a stunted clump in one sheltered bay – only the exposed Precambrian rock of the Ungava Plateau. Yet clusters of berries were everywhere, providing more than enough excellent twig firewood for our tiny bomb of a zip stove. It was a feeling of beauty, loneliness, big space, love, freedom.

The next day we were on the water by 5am, afraid that the wind would return. We paddled under the full setting moon, the sunrise rewarding us with warmth.

LC: To our “southern” eyes, the landscape was featureless: Shallow ‘moonscape’; shallow water. Navigation required all of Laco's expertise: Lynette sterned while he glued both eyeballs to the maps and GPS. Although Lac Nedlouc is drawn on the topo maps as one huge expanse, we found current in the narrows and definite drops in elevation as we squeezed between willows and dragged over boulders.

LK: As the drops morphed into a creek, then a small river, we finally arrived at a “Boulder Valley” where the river was filled with huge

boulders. Fortunately, as the river dropped steeply, it turned back 180 degrees on itself, so all we had to do was portage 700 metres over a small ridge to the left, woven with caribou trails, thus avoiding a horrendous drag.

LC: (Bugs) These tiny horrors are why the north remains unpopulated. You HAVE to be prepared for the onslaught, or you will go crazy. I thought the bugs were bad in Algonquin Park at the height of the season... We were paddling whitewater in headnets in the pissing rain because every second



photo: Lester Kovac

Lester (Lako) Kovac and Lynette Chubb enjoy a rare sunny day in challenging Ungava.

raindrop was black and dive-bombing our eyes. Mosquitoes were drilling through neoprene. We often had to look outside the tent to answer the question: is that sound bugs or rain? I've never experienced such aggressive dive-bombing technique. It was when the bugs were thick that I was asking myself, “What AM I doing HERE?!”

LK (the Dreamer): The most beautiful place on the Charpentier, and most likely on the whole trip, was a place we baptized “Caribou Rapids”. The River there narrows and winds through several steep steps, waterfalls, ledges and rapids for about 2 km. The landscape is strewn with huge boulders (“erratics”) dropped in odd places by receding glaciers. We camped at the top of the rapid and next day portaged (about 1 km), following caribou and wolf trails, almost losing the canoe off my shoulders a few times to the incessant wind.

LC: We found the topo maps adequate to keep us located, except for one missing section of river, but completely inadequate in forewarning of rapids: Many were unmarked. Most were runnable, but my back was giving out because of the amount of lining/dragging/



lifting/portaging. We (I) really needed some rest time. We christened the series of multiple slash marks (making the river look like a furry worm), the 8 “Caterpillar Rapids”, some runnable, some not. Being only one canoe, we had to exercise extreme caution.

LK: We traveled past several gorgeous waterfalls. We camped at Chute Bleu, portaging on the left next day. At “Canoeslide Waterfall” we landed on smooth rock in the middle of the river and were able to slide/line the canoe down with our throw ropes – not an easy operation in the unrelenting rain. We regret not having any photos of that – not having a waterproof camera yet, (mine was already dead from the rain and it took another 5 days of sleeping with it to dry it out), Lynette refused to subject hers to the rain as well. The biggest waterfall, Chutes de Burin, came on our last day on the Charpentier. It, again, was portaged easily via a well-used caribou trail.

LK: (Lac Minto) There is not really a strict definition of where Lac Minto ends and Leaf River starts. Most of the maps have the end of the lake a bit more west than where the Charpentier joins in, but the flatwater/lake feeling stays with the traveller until the first rapid. I think the lake ends about 10 km east of the Charpentier, where it narrows and turns from north-east to directly east. Even then, it is still about 22 km before the first rapid.

LC: Leaf Rapids were very different from the rapids we had encountered on the Charpentier. The river was wide, but we could see the huge pebbles flying past underneath us and one could feel the energy in the amount of water passing through. We stopped to scout the second bigger narrower rapid, only to surprise the first people we’d seen in 12 days: Jean-Paul was so focused on his trout fishing that we had to tap him on the shoulder to say hi. He could’ve been bear bait...

We scouted, decided on a strategy and ran the rapid perfectly, just avoiding JP’s line, hitting a slot in the ledge and using the slow water behind the ledge to power across the river to avoid the big wave train in the corner at the bottom, quickly passing by another fishing boat.

LK: That night we camped on a beautiful spot marked by a big, clearly printed sign “Point Charley”. Only persistent rain and ever present insects dampened our joy at being past the rough stuff and into the “big easy”.

LC: The Leaf River Outfitters (aka Alain Tardif) welcomed us with

open arms and were delighted to be able to report our progress to Pierre the pilot who’d been worried about us. Being overbooked, they were unable to spare a cabin, but plied us with hot coffee and invited us to use the hot showers... what heaven to feel clean again! The friendly crowd of clients repeatedly asked if there was anything we needed and I admitted to being worried that my supply of Robaxacet (back pain pills) was inadequate and JP hooted with laughter and told us we’d landed amongst a very happy group of pharmacists on vacation and 20 minutes later handed me a prescription bottle of Naproxen (way better back pain pills) to last me the year. Too funny – stuff like that happens to me all the time.

LK: Soon after the outfitters’ cabins, the river narrowed and turned into more than 20km of continuous rapids, mostly swifts, class 1 and 2, but the big river made them fast and strong, leaving no time to dilly dally about making decisions on where

to go. Just before the most challenging spot that we’d been warned about, we stopped for lunch with the intention to scout, but one of the guides in a boat with two clients stopped and explained to us in detail what was around the corner, saving us from a long walk. He told us also about the great skiing he’d enjoyed some years ago in the High Tatras. You can imagine how surprised I must have been!! Small world...

LC: (Wildlife) At lunchtime, our peanut butter attracted a bear (kidding; it had no idea we were there until it landed, caught our scent and bolted) to cross the river just 50 metres upstream of us and I got some great footage of it emerging from the river. We rounded another corner and spotted our first caribou and ended up chasing it across the river in an effort to get some good shots, being afraid it’d be our only caribou sighting. Little did we know that over the next few days we’d cross paths with the bulk of the Leaf River herd and would have to stop paddling numerous times to let them pass so close that we would see the whites of their eyes and hear them snorting and the babies bawling with mamas grunting quiet encouragement. We lunched and camped at crossing points and would laugh that we were “missing the parade” when we were distracted by having get on with mundane camp chores. Our nights were disturbed by the clatter of the ever moving herd as our tent blended in amongst the rocks.



A few members of the Leaf River herd encounter coming down the Riveires aux Feuilles (Leaf River).

Photo: Lester Kovac



LK: (Ungava Tides) On August 16th (day 19 of our trip), we finally reached the first tidal rapid that marks where the river empties into Leaf Bay. Apart from the usual strings of caribou, there was also a curious (and pretty big) bearded seal to welcome us. The weather, as usual, was pretty miserable as we pitched our tent between the tent-sized boulders on river left. Dressed in all we had, we watched the rapid grow as the 15 metre tide receded: it changed from a big class 1-2 in high tide into a ferocious suicidal class 5 at low tide. The caribou weren't swimming here. To avoid a portage through the field of gigantic unstable boulders, we'd need to head out the next day on the high tide, scheduled for 12:49 pm. Next morning we woke up to the worst weather we'd had on the whole trip – it was so bad there were no bugs! All the driving rain and howling winds we had before just faded in comparison with this. It was just plain unpleasant to get out of the tent for a quick breakfast and an evaluation of the situation. We stayed in the tent and warmth of our sleeping bags until 11:40 a.m. when we had to make a decision to either go for it, or stay another day. The weather seemed to be improving: It was still very cold, but not as windy, and the rain seemed to have almost stopped. We decided to go. We packed up in record time and were on the water by 12:45. The rapid was quite easy at this tidal level, but there were huge choppy waves below caused by the conflict between the current and the wind. We had to veer over to the right shoreline for safety, so could not take advantage of the current sweeping out into the bay. As a matter of fact, now we were fighting a giant eddy current as well as the wind. It was a tough paddle all the way to the corner, where suddenly the current started sweeping us out to sea. At 2:20 p.m. we landed at Leaf River Estuary Lodge for a late lunch. The Lodge was abandoned and neglected - no people around, only one black bear on a caribou hunt and a few ptarmigan.

LC: Upon inspection of Leaf Bay with binoculars, there appeared to be a bay-wide white frothy line as if the outgoing current was meeting a vicious line of surf blowing in around the corner from Ungava Bay. Apparently this was the “reversing falls” (created by a shelf of huge rocks across the mouth of the Bay), which is also only passable at high tide. With the incoming wind and those huge whitecaps, I'd had enough for the day and we decided to use the satphone to call the municipality of Tasiujaq to ask if they knew anyone who could come with a bigger boat to ‘taxi’ us into the harbour. Because all the big boats in town had gone to the Aqpiq Festival in Kuujuaq, they used us as an excuse for a ‘rescue drill’ and sent out the municipality's big rescue boat, however, because the tide was on the ebb, it was unable to cross the reversing falls in spite of its 400 hp motor and several runs and strategies, and we finally watched it turn and retreat. On our next call they said they'd have to wait for the high tide the next day. We moved into the frosty main lodge and warmed ourselves with hot tea and soup, then settled in for a good night's sleep. As we waited, more strings of caribou arrived all along the shoreline, having crossed the huge Bay (2-3 km of swimming against some of the strongest tidal rips in the world!) and we sat on a couch in front of a picture window full moving strings of caribou heads swimming towards us, clambering up the slippery rocks and flowing past our canoe, around the cabin, to be briefly silhouetted against the sky behind us as they disappeared over the ridge. The tide ebbed, house sized rocks appeared, turning the caribou into mice now trotting across mud flats where they'd been swimming earlier. We watched until we fell asleep, then woke to more caribou.

LK: In Tasiujaq, we checked into the most expensive accommodations we've ever paid for – the new Iqaluppiq Hotel - it was \$333 for the night! We're sure we could have easily asked for permission to camp anywhere, but the hot showers, clean laundry, and really helpful friendly staff were really worth it. The next day, we did some hiking in beautiful weather around the village and then were shuttled to lower Finger Lake where we had a last paddle and portage upriver into the upper lake where we were expecting to be picked up the next day by Air Saguenay. The Finger River was teeming with Arctic char: I have never seen so many fish moving and jumping all around us.

LC: The Finger Lake Outfitters was also abandoned, except for a large black bear that had taken over the kitchen cabin. In view of all the bear damage, we decided to camp inside one of the sleep cabins. We were woken at 5am by the bear bouncing off our thin unlocked door and opened our eyes to his huge head silhouetted in its window. Simultaneous adrenaline shots had me flailing for the bear banger and spray at the end of the bed and Laco flailing for his camera while he let out a huge yell. The silhouette dropped out of sight and all remained quiet as we tiptoed about and peered cautiously out all the windows. The yell seemed to have scared him off. We slowly organized and packed for a 10 am departure, but a confirming phone call put Pierre's ETA at about 1 p.m. so we ate and snoozed, suddenly hearing the plane about noon. Being not quite ready, Laco, still in his long undies, grabbed a pack and bolted for the beach to flag the plane down. I hurriedly packed, dressed, loaded up and headed out the door to what I thought was Laco hollering his guts out for “Pierre”, which confused me, because the plane was still circling and roaring overhead. As I looked up for Laco, who was running towards me and waving frantically, my peripheral vision caught something big and black and I realized he'd been screaming “bear”! I dropped my load (the packs that is) right there and bolted back into the cabin for the bear stuff (which I should have been wearing), followed closely by Laco who made a beeline for his camera again. The bear had been right beside the cabin, but on Laco's screaming approach it had retreated 50 meters back onto the tundra and stood up to get a better look at us as we clambered out the back door. Laco took a couple shots as I armed and fired the banger which dropped him to all fours and we watched his bouncing rear disappear. By the time we got back to the beach, Pierre was quietly backed into the beach and wondering what was keeping us. He keeps a gun in the plane and has had to shoot 5 “camp” bears over the years.

LK: We landed back at Lac Pau, then started our long drive back south, marveling at the warming temperatures and thickening of the forests. I expected the Charpentier/Leaf to be a fantastic trip, but reality far exceeded all my expectations. It left me with a strong desire to explore even more of the Ungava peninsula. In 2008, we paddled the De Pas and George rivers to Kangisualujuaq and we have great plans for 2009 and 2010 already, all of them ending on Ungava Bay.

Lynette and Lester completed another Ungava trip this past summer paddling the Du Sable and Caniapiscaw rivers enroute to Kuujuaq. s



Walter Walker 1907-2009

WW:The Master Builder

Just two weeks short of his 102nd birthday, master canoe builder and paddle maker Walter Walker, of Lakefield, died early in the morning of Monday, October 19th at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre. "It's a sad day for canoeing, and quite possibly the end of an era," said

Jeremy Ward, Curator of The Canadian Canoe Museum. "Walter connected us back to the heyday of wooden boat building in this area and there is no one left with his years of experience. Walter was generous to this museum and also gave freely of his time to pass on his building traditions to a number of other canoe makers in the local area," said Ward.

"He's the last of the master builders," said Ron Squires. "Walter came out to our shop in 1986 and taught me how to build the Gordon "four-flat" (or wide-board) canoe and since then my wife and I have been keeping the tradition going with the creation of a how-to manual detailing the procedures for creating this timeless craft. And, although it is the end of an era, his building techniques will live on."

"I have known Walter Walker as an outstanding craftsman and a very special gentleman for more than 60 years," said Canadian Canoe Museum Founder, Kirk Wipper. Over the long journey we have shared, I have been positively influenced by Walter but especially in reference to the Canoe Museum and Camp Kandalore which he always encouraged. I admire him and will always love him."

Walter Walker was born in Ancaster, Ontario, on November 4th, 1907. In 1931, his family moved to Lakefield, Ontario, where he was first introduced to building canoes at the Lakefield Canoe Company. From 1937-

42 he built cedar-strip sail boats for George Cook at Sail-Craft in Lakefield. When that company closed as a result of the demands of war production, he found work with the Peterborough Canoe Company and spent the next 20 years there, from 1942 to 1961.



In 1959, at the age of 52, he was appointed foreman, overseeing the work of 100 men in the factory.

The Peterborough Canoe Company closed in late 1961. The following year, Walter returned to another Lakefield company, RILCO Industries, to build canoes for Jack Richardson, who had been Manager of the Peterborough Canoe Company. Walter eventually became Plant Manager at RILCO, a position he held until 1967 when that company too closed its doors. As he had done many times before, always driven by his passion to build boats, Walter then moved on to Peel Marine in Lakefield where he built and repaired canoes until he retired in 1986. Many of the canoes Walter built at Peel Marine are treasured by their owners to this day;

they are visible and distinctive at the various annual regattas in and around the Kawartha Lakes and farther afield. One such craft, built in 1977, was commissioned by the Village of Lakefield as a gift to HRH Prince Andrew, at the time a Lakefield College School student,

now Patron of the Canadian Canoe Museum. The item is presently part of a *Royal Canoes* exhibit at the Canadian Canoe Museum, on loan from its owner.

The Canadian Canoe Museum enjoyed a close relationship with Walter Walker, making him the first Builder Emeritus in the Canoe Builders' Hall of Honour back in 1994. Shortly thereafter, the Canoe Museum commissioned Walker, at 90 years of age, to build a wide-board canoe, using a Thomas Gordon form from the late 1800's. Working with three local builders, Ron Squires,

Fred Forster and Ted Moores, this canoe was exactly constructed just as it would have been in the 1850s. It was the first canoe of its kind to be built using traditional techniques for several generations, and Walter Walker was perhaps the only living craftsman who had the intimate knowledge of exactly how to build it. A film documenting this project is part of the museum's permanent exhibits. The day following Walter's 100th birthday in 2007, an editorial in the Peterborough Examiner summed up Walker's place in the hearts of canoeists and non-canoeists alike in the Kawartha Region: "Now that the canoe is officially one of the Seven Wonders of Canada—a title the iconic watercraft earned this past summer—Walter Walker must surely be the eighth."

— from the Canadian Canoe Museum.



CANOESWORTHY *continued*

Doer has often expressed frustration at the overlaps and delays that can plague the federal and provincial environmental-approval processes -- a long-held frustration made more urgent by the fact that Hydro is about to spend the next decade or so navigating the approvals process for two huge dams and a new transmission line down the west side of the province. If Hydro decides to go ahead with the project, First Nations crews could start work this winter on grading and clearing the way for the road into the proposed dam site. Infrastructure like utilities and barracks for the construction camp should be in place by 2012.

Nunavut will lobby against a U.S. proposal to ban the commercial trade of polar bears in many countries, a move that would affect Inuit sport hunting guides across the North.

Recently, the United States proposed reclassifying the polar bear under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) to effectively outlaw all commercial trade in the animals. The 175 countries that have signed the international treaty will vote on the proposal in March.

Reclassifying the polar bear under CITES would ban sport hunters who go polar bear hunting in Nunavut from taking home their polar bear hides and trophies, which in turn would severely impact business for Inuit who make a living as hunting guides.

The proposal follows the U.S. government's decision in 2008 to list the polar bear as a threatened species within that country, citing threats to the species by shrinking Arctic sea ice caused by climate change.

But Nunavut Environment Minister Daniel Shewchuk said the U.S. does not understand that Canada has a good polar bear management system, and that the species is neither threatened nor endangered.

"The message here that we have to send is that polar bears are strong and healthy in Canada, and our position on this is going to be to support and lobby Canada to present our position to the countries that belong to CITES," Shewchuk said.

Shewchuk said Nunavut will work with federal government counterparts to lobby other member countries in advance of the March vote.

"It's a matter of educating these other countries and the U.S. on our management system on what we have done for polar bears and what we continue to do, and that we are very interested in conserving polar bear for the future generations," he said.

The polar bear's threatened listing in the U.S. already killed most of the market for U.S. sport hunters who want to hunt polar bears in Nunavut, as it prevents them from bringing polar bear trophies home with them.

Shewchuk said there is no compensation plan in place for Inuit sport hunt guides who would be affected if the polar bear is reclassified under CITES, as that is not his department's responsibility.

Arctic Bay elder Kunuk Uyukuluk, a former sport hunting guide, said at least 10 guides would be affected in his community alone if the CITES listing goes ahead.

The polar bear population is actually on the rise, not decreasing, he said, adding that polar bears are becoming less afraid of human contact and even competing for people for food.

Canada is moving to firm up control over the disputed Northwest Passage by designating the waters of its eastern entrance a national marine conservation area. The federal and Nunavut governments as well as the regional land claim organization are close to signing a memorandum of understanding intended to make Lancaster Sound Canada's fourth such protected region.

Lancaster Sound, just off the northern tip of Baffin Island, is an area of rich ecological diversity and stunning beauty that has been on Parks Canada's wish list for protection since 1987.

"Lancaster Sound is a one-of-a-kind jewel," said Scott Highleyman of the Pew Environment Group, an international environmental organization.

Its dramatic coastline is dominated by 300-metre cliffs and interspersed with bays, inlets and deep fiords. Most of the world's narwhal, as well as large numbers of beluga and bowhead whales, swim below the icebergs that bob in its waters.

"When you do a survey of the whole Arctic, it just jumps out at you," said Highleyman.

But Lancaster Sound is also the eastern gateway into the Northwest Passage, a waterway that melting Arctic sea ice is making increasingly accessible. Commercial shipping and private voyaging is slowly increasing, as is pressure to exploit Arctic energy and fishery resources.

Experts agree on the need for some regulatory regime for the area. But countries such as the United States and the member nations of the European Union dispute Canada's control over the passage.

Creating a national marine conservation area in Lancaster Sound would ban ocean dumping, undersea mining and energy exploration as well as manage fisheries for sustainability. It would also demonstrate Canada's will to control the region, say Arctic experts.

A much-anticipated polar bear conservation agreement between Greenland, Canada and Nunavut was signed in November.

The Canadian and Greenland governments as well as the Nunavut territorial government have been working for months on a conservation agreement that covers hunting areas shared by Nunavut and Greenland, including Baffin Bay and Kane Basin.

Polar bear hunting in those two areas by Inuit from Nunavut and Greenland has caused international controversy in recent years, with biologists arguing that the combined level of hunting is not sustainable.

Greenland has cut its polar bear hunting quota in Baffin Bay to 68 bears a year, and Nunavut officials are under pressure to follow suit. Hunters in Nunavut can currently take up to 105 polar bears in Baffin Bay, but the territorial government wants to slash that to 64, introduce a new reduced quota or impose a complete moratorium on polar bear hunting in the area.

But Inuit who hunt polar bears in Baffin Bay have said the polar bear population is actually rising, not decreasing.



photo: John Silbar

John Silbar's self-portrait taken on his aborted trip down the Hayes River in northern Manitoba last summer. He was stopped by the weather but when he returned was met with a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. His emails to Che-Mun from before and after the trip appear in the Fall Packet on Page 2. We wish him well in his fight.

Che-Mun

Box 548, Station 0
Toronto, ON Canada M4A 2P1
E: che-mun@rogers.com
T: 416.221.3225 PAP # 10740

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