

Winter 2010

The Journal of Canadian Wilderness Canoeing

Outfit 139



Photo: Cole Johnson

KING OF THE KOGALUK -- Artist and wilderness paddler Robert Mullen stands high atop the majestic Kogaluk River in central Labrador enroute to the ocean on a tough trek from the George River in Quebec. Rob lives in Vermont and is Executive Director of Wilderness River Expedition Art Foundation and they use remote northern trips to produce artwork of the north. His story on their Trans Labrador Expedition begins on Page 6.

Winter Packet



This letter is from the charter operator who was supposed to take the HACC Lake Superior trip down the coast in 2008 but was unable to due to their new boat not being ready.

Surfing the net this morning and came across your article in Fall 2008 edition of *Che-Mun*.

Again, apologies again for not being able to take you down the coast. I read with interest your comments about the bureaucracy and the culture (my word) of not wanting to attract visitors. Wanted to pass on that the bureaucracy and culture has not changed. Over the many years of running a small marine services business on Lake Superior, our two main obstacles are still Parks Canada and Transport Canada. Of course I am not objective, but I have some incredible stories of the arrogance and incompetence of these federal entities.

We had much more visitation on the Pukaskwa coast before it was the "Pukaskwa" coast - more hikers, canoers, kayakers, power boaters and sail boaters. Necessarily, our business has focused more and more outside of Pukaskwa National Park, including the area now covered by the Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area. With the development of the L. S. National Marine Conservation Area, we are deeply concerned about the bureaucracy and culture of Parks Canada having similar effects as has been with Pukaskwa National Park.

Notwithstanding, we realize that we have the privilege of living beside and exploring the greatest lake in the world. We encourage you to encourage your readers to come visit. Thanks and take care.

Keith & Melissa McCuaig
McCuaig Marine Services
PO Box 442, Marathon, Ontario P0T 2E0
807-229-0193 phone & fax
mccuaigmarine@shaw.ca

Pages 4 & 5 of this Outfit feature a selection of paintings by P. G. Rush. He was the patriarch of an interesting canoe group (we suggest calling them J2C3) that we will feature in a future issue. P. G.'s son, Chris, filled us in after we asked for a bit more about them.

Our canoe group consists of a core of three paddlers plus additional others who join trips as they can. The senior paddler is Jimmy Deschesnes, a doctor who works with the Cree up in Chisasabi, James Bay.



Jimmy is the most experienced having canoed the Nastapoka three times (his favourite river), as well as the Moisie and many other Quebec rivers. He is the head chef, and quite talented, dehydrates many of the meals before we go. Then there is Joel Cyr, a physiotherapist who now resides in Whistler BC, a very talented athlete who is the fittest of the bunch, a real pack animal, and the most keen to find white water. Joel is also a very good fisherman, always finds time to fly fish and knows where they lurk.

Myself, I am a doctor also, a Nuclear Medicine specialist who works in Montreal. I do most of the planning and logistics for the trips; I also do most of the photography and video the trips, and choose the wine we bring.

Joel and I are old friends who were introduced to Jimmy in 2001. Jimmy convinced us to tackle the Nastapoka in 2002 and since then we try to do one "big" trip every two years (Korok, Natla and Notakwanon shown below) with smaller rivers the other years (Chochocuane, Pontax, etc). We are limited to a maximum of about 2 weeks for the trips due to work and/or family constraints, but I hope this will change in the near future. We call ourselves (unimaginatively) the JJC Canoe Club after our first names!

Recently Francois and Eric Couturier, twins from Montreal, have joined our trips. These guys are also amazing athletes and very fit (Francis played pro hockey in France for many years, he now teaches in Montreal; Eric is a top amateur soccer player and also works in Montreal).

For our next trip we are talking about another northern Quebec river such as the Melezes (Larch), des Feuilles (Leaf) or Payne, although I just read a trip report in Kanawa magazine about the Vachon (it has always been a goal of mine to visit the Chubb meteor crater which is near the headwaters of the Vachon). But, as you know, things don't always turn out as we plan them!



Editor's Notebook

After 26 years of publishing *Che-Mun* I have accumulated a lot of books, trip reports and back issues. I was well aware of all this of course but never realized how much it all weighed until undertaking two house moves in the past 6 months.

The sheer bulk and weight of it all was overwhelming but I felt that *Che-Mun* back issues were now on par with National Geographic - in sheer tonnage at least! All that was a small part of a decision to take *Che-Mun* to a different format this year.

Our founder, Nick Nickels, for years railed against the cost and bureaucracy of Canada Post. But he had no other option of getting his beloved little newsletter out to his subscribers.

We do.

Plans are underway to take *Che-Mun* to a digital format later this year. That would mean a full colour and expanded *Che-Mun* coming to you in a PDF format. The small number of subscribers I have spoken to about it are clearly in favour of a digital version and all that it offers. That would also mean it would no longer be available on the Ottertooth website. I would like to hear from more of you about this proposal.

I still do like the idea of holding printed material in my hands but I think that Apple, as usual, has a great idea with their new iPad. A relatively small handheld device to easily and instantly view your favourite publications is a great option in today's world.

Continued postage increases and the cost of printing make these decisions inevitable. And if people don't want to keep getting *Che-Mun* then it will go the way of the many before it. It is the natural law. I love what this journal brings me and I hope that you will too in whatever format that may be.

Michael Peake.



Che-Mun is produced quarterly by the Hide-Away Canoe Club. For Canadian issues: We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Publications Assistance Program towards our mailing



Canoesworthy

Despite initial indications the planned renaming of the Northwest Passage to the "Canadian Northwest Passage" would have clear sailing through the House of Commons, the idea may be facing rough waters after all.

A major Inuit organization has raised concerns about the proposed symbolic boost to Canada's Arctic sovereignty, arguing any new name should "reflect the history of Inuit use and occupation of the waters in question for thousands of years."

The proposal to add "Canadian" to official uses of the term Northwest Passage was introduced last October by Conservative MP Daryl Kramp. The idea was quickly endorsed by northern affairs critics from the other parties.

But Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., the Inuit agency that oversees implementation of the land claims agreement that created Nunavut in 1999, has pointed to provisions of the deal that ensure Inuit input in "any review of place names that fall within the land and marine areas" of the territory — including "all the archipelagic waterways that have historically been linked to the concept of a Northwest Passage."

NTI president Paul Kaludjak, in a letter addressed to Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the three other federal party leaders, said the proposed name change should recognize "the reality of continuing Inuit use and occupation" of the sea routes through Canada's Arctic islands. In an interview Tuesday, Kaludjak said the Northwest Passage "has an Inuktitut name already." He said the term "tallurugik," which refers to the distinctive seascape of the Arctic archipelago, has been understood for centuries to refer to the water route through the islands.

The proposal to rename the waterway the "Canadian Northwest Passage" had earlier drawn criticism from University of British Columbia polar expert Michael Byers. Byers (the author of the newly published book *Who Owns the Arctic*) told media that he supported the idea of recognizing the long-standing Inuit presence along the Northwest Passage in the naming of the waterway, which is widely expected to become a major shipping route in the coming decades because of retreating sea ice.

"My view is that we should keep the English name as it is," said Byers, "and work with the Inuit to identify an appropriate Inuktitut name that we could then use in parallel with the existing name — thus underlining the Inuit contribution to Canada's legal position without suggesting any uncertainty about the strength of that position."

Two of the most respected and influential wildlife conservation groups in the world have come out against calling polar bears an endangered species. TRAFFIC, the international non-governmental organization that monitors the trade of wild plants and animals and their products, has submitted documents opposing the reclassification of polar bears proposed by the U.S. government.

An excerpt from TRAFFIC's recommendations:

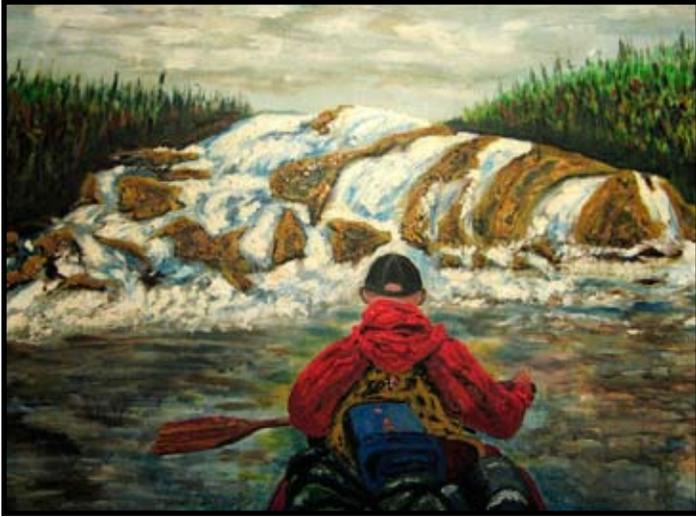
"The primary threat to Polar Bears is the retreat of sea-ice habitat, driven by global climate change. The global population of Polar Bears is not small and has not undergone a marked decline in the recent past; the species' area of distribution is not restricted; and the projected rate of population decline as a result of climate change is estimated to be approximately 30% over the next 45–50 years. Therefore, the Polar Bear does not meet any of the biological criteria for inclusion in Appendix I. Trade is not a significant threat to the species."

There are roughly 20,000 to 25,000 polar bears worldwide, mostly in Canada. According to TRAFFIC's documents, around 300 Canadian polar bears have been killed per year since the 1990s, mostly by aboriginal hunters. That comes out to about 2 per cent of the population.

◀ CANOESWORTHY continues on Page 11



Paintings by P. G. Rush



Amanda Falls, Nastapoka River



Korok Rapid, Mount Haywood



August Snow, Korok River



P.G.'s Portfolio

My Dad, Peter George Rush (known as "PG" to everyone) was a long time amateur painter who returned to school after retiring as a metallurgical engineer and earned both a BFA (honours) at the University of Guelph and an MA at UBC. He then spent the last 20 years of his life prolifically painting whatever he fancied as well as commissioned work. He loved the stories and photos from our canoe trips and one day surprised me with paintings of the trip we did on the Nastapoka in northern Quebec in 2002.

The paintings were of a waterfall from a tributary that cascaded into the Nastapoka that we called "Amanda Falls" in honour of one of our group's wives (Joel Cyr). We got up early the next morning and hiked along this un-named tributary to a nearby mountain for a glorious view (in full sunshine, unusual for this trip!!) of the main river and the surrounding barrens. The other painting of this trip was at the end of the river, just above a 100 foot waterfall that thundered into Hudson's Bay. We got a pickup with the Cargair single Otter in the calm part of the river just above the waterfall (safer than a pickup on the bay and avoided a 30th portage!!).

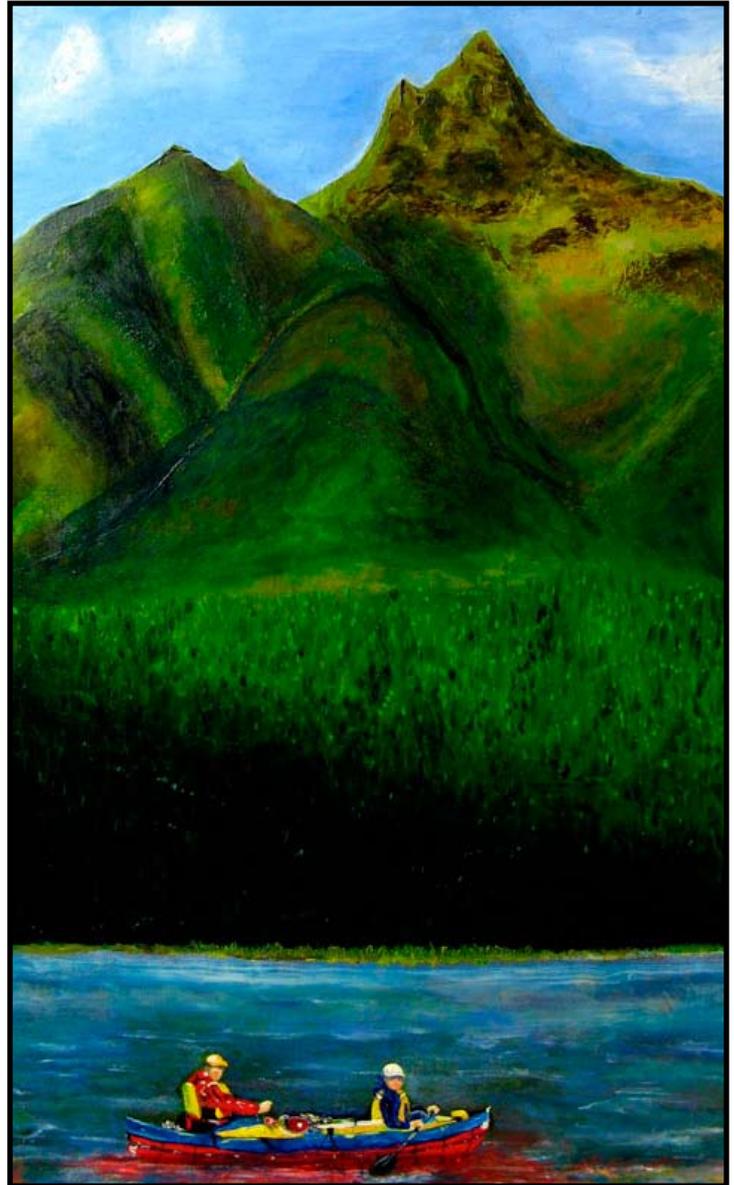
The next trip was on the Korok in 2004, a river you know well. We found and used your on-line trip report while planning this trip, thanks! The painting entitled "August Snow" was of the upper part of the river before it turns south. There were many pockets of snow left on the mountains, but this did not compare to the spectacle of the glaciers and snowfields on our climb of Mt. Iberville.

That climb was somewhat bittersweet as we stumbled upon the search team for the lost canoeists when we set up our base camp at the base of the mountain (and here we thought we were going to be alone for 2 weeks!). We spent two days with these guys, a great group but it would have been nicer meeting them under more pleasant circumstances. Several of them had a good laugh when they reached our main camp on the river as we treated them to such delicacies as peanut butter and jam on flatbread accompanied with red wine (they had been choking on the freeze dried hiker's food for 2 weeks). The next painting of the Korok was Joel and I shooting a rapid in our Pak-boat canoe near a hill ambitiously marked as "Mt. Haywood" on the maps.

After the Natla river in the NWT, 2006, my Dad admitted that he now loved painting the Canadian wilderness. This scenery surrounding this river is absolutely stunning, and the river itself is a gem. The first 40 km or so are almost continuous rapids, but all runnable. In fact, we did not portage once on the whole river (big smile!!). The first Natla painting was of a rapid we named "Rodeo Rapids" because it felt like being on a bucking bronco as we crashed through the standing waves.

We in fact climbed such a peak and named it Mount Sebastien, after one of our group's (Laurent Durot) first born, who was still in the womb at the time. The last part of the Natla is hairier than the first section, with several major rapids, some of which are tricky. All in all, a great river.

In August 2007, we canoed the Notakwanon River in Labrador. I was hoping for some great paintings of this river as well, but unfortunately while I was on the trip my Dad became critically ill and passed



Mount Sebastien, Natla River

away shortly after I returned. Sadly, he did not get to hear about this great trip and there will be no mementos captured in oil...

If you like these paintings, please raise a glass (red wine, scotch, whatever tickles you) and toast my father who is looking down upon us all and nodding appreciatively as we dig our paddles into yet another great Canadian river! Cheers!

Chris Rush is a Che-Mun subscriber and doctor who lives in Montreal and paddles with a core of like-minded, northern-loving Quebecers. They continue to tackle the great northern rivers in that province.



Across Labrador's Spine



Kalon Baughan on the De Pas River which is a tributary of the George River on the first half of their trip.

By Rob Mullen **Story & photos**

September 18, 2009: Three fifths of the crew was gone and the two of us left were heading into some of the most remote wilderness in North America - the Labrador Barrenlands for the most difficult half of the Wilderness Rivers Environmental Art Foundation's (WREAF) Nunavik/Trans-Labrador canoe expedition.

The Labrador Peninsula, from Hudson Bay to the Labrador Sea, is a storied land of mythic beauty where you can still feel the ageless and impassive immensity of the world without people. When it was first mapped in the early 20th Century, grizzly bears roamed its horizons -and the George and Leaf River caribou herds still do, on the longest land migration in the world. And for thousands of years the Mushuau-Innu have followed the caribou, providing one of the "last living links to our common nomadic hunting past" (Dr. Stephen Loring, *Smithsonian*).

The plan was to travel the route used by William Cabot from 1901-1910. WREAF member Stephen Loring had retraced the route from Cabot's writings in 1979.

Fellow artists Kalon Baughan and Rod Lawrence were to paddle 140 miles with me from Schefferville along the De Pas River to the George River. Heading east from the George, we would work out a six-mile portage in the area of traditional Innu routes onto the tundra highlands to Lac Mistinibi. At its eastern end, we would rendezvous with Tony Jenkinson of the Tshikapisk Foundation (an Innu experiential learning organization) and our resupply flight that would come in with art-

ist Cole Johnson and the third canoe on the 18th. The five of us would proceed east and north to the Kogaluk ("Little River" in Inuktitut), follow it to the sea and up the coast to Nain, taking the weekly coast boat back to our truck at Goose Bay. Modern canoeists have documented the Schefferville to the George River section; we had annotated maps noting distances, campsites and rapids. East of the George River and into Labrador, we would be beyond the realm of trip guides and published accounts - from this millennium anyway.

September 1 - 13; Schefferville - The George River

Initially our main challenge was low water. Past Lac Jamin, as the De Pas gathered itself and cut through increasingly rugged country toward the George, it became the rapids, which included numerous R2s and R3s with a few R4s. However, with Kalon in the lead canoe (a champion canoeist), we ran everything except a few short sections that we lined.

As wildlife artists, we were all looking for animals. Oddly enough, we saw very few for the first several days. Kalon saw our first caribou September 5 and we saw a few isolated individuals thereafter, but it wasn't until the 10th that we saw a group of about a dozen on the river-bank.

Scarce "charismatic megafauna" aside for a moment, it would be disingenuous not to mention some small, but notorious denizens of the North with their own collective charisma - blackflies. They were not scarce; in fact, it could be hard to breath without a headnet. If it wasn't freezing, the girls were out; millions of would-be-mother blackflies looking for a blood meal to nourish their billions of about-to-be babies. Such maternal drive must be admired - a little.



A week into the trip, concerned about the unknowns past the George and missing the September 30 coast boat, Kalon decided business commitments required him to return home on the resupply plane. Two days later, a dangerous toe infection that Rod's doctor felt had healed, flared back to life. Our outfitter had a camp just past the confluence of the De Pas and George rivers. Rod had to fly out from there - Kalon would too; our big portage was now a problem.

Twin River Lodge, George River, Sept 13 - 18

Reaching the George, I was anxious about how to continue, but the welcoming hospitality of the camp managers, Ricky Drudge and Christine Fequet soothed worries - and came with hot food and showers.

I seriously weighed continuing alone to the Mistinibi. However, with a six-mile portage over uncertain terrain, an 80 lb. tandem canoe and a big lake, I decided that unless Cole pulled out too, I would wait for him. Informed of the changes, Cole hung in. I arranged for the resupply flight to stop at the lodge and pick me up on the way to what would have been the rendezvous. That would take us over the 30 miles I would have covered if Kalon and Rod had continued. Later, finding out that Tony could not meet on Mistinibi, I asked our pilot, if he could continue to Hawk Lake, saving us the two-mile portage from Quebec back into Labrador.

I was itching to get going and regretted not going on alone, but after a day it was too late to do anything but wait, and fatten up on Christina's cooking.

Across Labrador; September 18 - October 3

Pilot Raymond Cloutier made a pass to check for rocks and set down in a bumpy chop on Hawk Lake. In what in hindsight was an omen of things to come, Cole and I hiked back across the border into Quebec to make it a true Trans-Labrador journey, confirming the border with the GPS (after which it died). We returned to the canoe and headed for the outlet from Hawk Lake. We planned to portage across to Long Pond at the closest approach and then, using a string of lakes to the north and east, "pond hop" to the Kogaluk. We hoped to reach the portage to Long Pond by evening. We didn't. We didn't reach it the next day. We never reached it.

The outlet was a shallow ribbon of cold clear water running over sand and gravel. We paddled for a few yards - then anticlimactically had to walk the canoe some, then line some, then line some more. No problem; a short way downstream our route widened and we were off, the wind blowing us across crystal depths beneath the wild tundra hills.

Problem; a few miles later the water disappeared. Where the map indicated a wide-open channel, we confronted a disconcertingly solid sea of boulders extending out of sight "downstream"! Reconnoitering, we found open water half a mile farther on. It was late to start a long portage, so we set camp on the shore of an ominously bone-dry kettle pond. That evening by the fire, Cole related the advice our outfitter André had given him before boarding the plane, "Deal with what is in front of you and keep moving" It would be good advice.

The morning dawned raw, wild and exciting. Fresh snow coated everything with the torn remnants of the overnight storm scudding southeastward. A Gyrfalcon swooped in low over our camp and wolves howled in the distance as we prepared for the portage; it was invigorating. We carried down to the open water, and still naively hoping for a clear route to our carry to Long Pond, pushed off in the morning light.

Our mistake of course was assuming the boulder choke was a local

aberration rather than a systemic pattern - which it indeed was. After a few arduous miles, we camped toward the end of our second long unplanned portage. Twelve miles of rocks was losing its appeal.

By the next afternoon, we decided to abandon the route. I worked out a carry directly to Long Pond and we headed overland to recon it and scout for a camp. We spent the balance of the day moving our kit up to the edge of a bog on the new route; the only place we could find with any shelter from the wind. We spent a pleasant evening by our campfire in the lee of a clump of spruce, where even a few especially hardy blackflies took haven. We killed them.

We started the main carry early. Skirting the bog, we ascended a ridge, curved under a massive escarpment, climbed above a series of lakes and finally crested the heights from where we could see Long Pond (no "pond") stretching out far below. We carried everything to that point and sheltered from the wind by a glacial erratic, took in the sweeping panorama. At least the rest of the carry was downhill.

Finally, on the water again, the wind was behind us but dangerously strong. It blew us along at such a clip that we had little time to see and avoid the barely submerged rocks that lurked close to shore, yet the waves and near freezing water made paddling offshore risky even with our full deck covers. After a difficult run, we entered a narrow twisting part of the lake. It had rocks and current, which we had to line and drag. That was a little disappointing and surprising. What came next was a lot of both.

As the map claimed, the lake opened back up after a short while. We happily headed into the clear water, rounded the first point and met the mother of all boulder chokes, complete with a perverse current boisterously burbling through it. A mile east, the map took the pains to indicate a few rocks with the standard "X", yet ignored this megalithic metropolis! Well, we would have to abandon Long Pond early as well. An annoyed porcupine waddled off as I pulled out the map and worked out another unplanned portage. With what was starting to have the ominous feel of a routine, we hauled our gear over to a desiccated pond on our likely route, some stunted spruce offering leaky shelter from the wind, and set off to look for the best terrain to the next lake.

The carry was over a mile of weaving through brush and bog. Done by lunch we set off for a quarter mile of paddling to another carry, several hundred yards to the next nameless lake in our series. This one was larger and presented a challenging crossing. It was as though some vacationing mountain giant from the Torngats had tried to fill it with rocks. The wind was still strong out of the west and hurtling us forward, but the following waves and our speed made the minefield of subsurface rocks that spanned the lake a nerve-wracking ordeal. We came to shore for the next portage at what must have been the same place whoever named the region the "Barrenlands" did, the freezing wind moaning in our ears with hardly a tree in sight. For the full effect, just beyond the ragged verge of the lake, gleaming in the chill gray light were the antlers and still bloody and scattered bones of a wolf-killed caribou.

This was a long carry and we only had time to bring our gear over before making camp. Here the low water worked in our favor. The near shore of the next lake was all bog and boulders with no place for our tent except a few elevated hummocks. The water was ankle deep just beyond our vestibules, but we were high and dry.

At dawn, it was cold and raining with heavy fog. We went back for the canoe and back in camp decided to take a rest day. There was a cold front coming and I didn't want to be soaked on the next portage and then deal with a deep freeze. Besides, I was beat. Cole didn't argue, but



curled up in his sleeping bag with a satisfied grunt. I heard some amazing things about Cole while passing the time – probably due as much to his boredom as the whiskey, which we mixed with hot lemonade and dubbed “hot toddies”.

It never pays to underestimate the effects of cold and fatigue. It was frigid as we set off down the nameless lake, with our steady companion, the west wind. Squinting in the blustery light 30 minutes later, I steered into a bay thinking we had reached the eastern shore (the continuation of the lake wasn't easy to see in the flat terrain). However, while trying to work out our next portage heading, I couldn't reconcile the orientation of the few visible terrain features. We were about to take a light load across as a recon when Cole wryly suggested that maybe we simply weren't where I thought we were. Huh - wrong turn. That was a little embarrassing. Cole took some video of me confessing as proof of my error and on we went.



A typical Labrador falls, here along the Kogaluk River.

The first load was a brute as we found ourselves tangled in willow brush, covering moss-slimed boulders. We stuck to the higher ground for the return and the balance of the portage. Well over a mile each way, the carry was eased by a divertingly dramatic sky. We finished in the fading ruddy light as scattered snow clouds raced overhead dragging thick squalls of big fluffy flakes behind them.

We were up a bit late and in the cold, breaking camp slowly, when Cole spotted a bear on the far side of the lake. We picked up the pace and it stayed there. It stayed there as we paddled straight for it. Engrossed in the luxuriant berry crop, the bear stayed until we were at the shore and Cole, with his camera ready, whistled. The bear stopped and stood straight up. He was huge! For several seconds he looked at us full on, then dropped to all fours and ambled along parallel to the shore. We followed. After losing sight of him, we put ashore on the northeast end of the lake and sat down to review our situation and have a bite for lunch.

There was one more “pond” on our pond-hopping route, but it was off the direct heading to what we hoped was a passable break in the Kogaluk canyon wall, so we decided to beeline it, a portage of almost 3 miles. As we were finishing our lunch, the bear reappeared. He was downwind, 30 yards away and closing with obviously no fear and probably no knowledge of humans. Happily, he balanced curiosity with caution. Cole unsheathed the 12-gauge (polar bears on the coast were a possibility) as I grabbed a camera and the bear halted. When we stood

up, he retreated and then casually continued around the point of the lake and up the opposing hillside, a deep black dot against the russet reds of the tundra.

We hiked our first load out for 45 minutes and found a small spot for the tent in the lee of a gnarled tamarack on the edge of a bog. It had a clear stream nearby and plenty of dead wood. We brought the rest of the kit across, and leaving it, hiked on toward the Kogaluk to determine our best route for the morning. A lot was riding on our first sight of the Kogaluk. Despite our torturously slow progress, we still had a chance to make the September 30 coast boat - *if* there was water. We didn't have time to go far enough to see the river, but were sure we had the best terrain planned out for the portage. Back at camp, we gathered our strength for the big carry and relaxed with some more “hot toddies”; we would see the Kogaluk in the morning.

A ragged rent in the vast tundra slowly opened as the canyon of the Kogaluk began to reveal itself. We

stopped at the high point above the chasm. Only a tease was in view, but the promise of a secret and stunning spectacle loomed portentously in the air, oblivious to the shrieking wind. We dropped our packs. Unencumbered, we descended toward the rim and as the last of the obscuring rock massif dropped steeply away, the 1,200-foot deep canyon dramatically spread out below.

The full power of the vision could only come from spending nine days carrying a canoe across the wind raked tundra to get there. Cole saw it first and his arms shot up into the air. From our cold, barren perch, bracing against the near gale, we looked down: water! A crystal-line river was wending its way between lushly forested banks, past gravel bars and islands and flowing on to distant mountains and the sea - our route home. I now know how Bilbo Baggins must have felt looking down into Rivendell. But we still had to get down there.

We brought up the rest of our kit and as we came across the tundra with our long-suffering canoe, a name occurred to me, “Bonnie”. In addition to my girlfriend's, it was also Cole's mother's name, so it was settled. But what true expedition canoe could fit in one name? Much of our perilous descent followed bear trails and as we guided Bonnie down, I wondered aloud what the bears would make of the big red “bear” descending their trail. And so, she gained her formal name, “Matashu” - the great “Red Bear” (Grizzlies) of Innu oral tradition. Finding a safe route off the precipice and getting our gear down took more than the daylight we had left. On our last trip, we had to leave

“Bonnie Bear” in the dense tangle of spruce that clawed its way up the slope. Of course, there was the small issue of finding her in the morning (you could be 20 feet away and miss a parade in the dense cover). I took a bearing to camp and noted the lay of the land as we dashed back with a gear load in the last of the light.

Fresh wolf tracks were within feet of our tent in the morning. They had not been there the night before. Our easy consensus on Bonnie’s location from the evening before eroded and we split up according to our competing theories of where she was. I was just thinking Cole had been right when with great relief I saw her prow in the bush ahead. I signalled with my whistle that I had her and by 10 am, we were on the water – 95 miles from Nain.

Even if we hadn’t struggled so to be there, the Kogaluk would rank as one of the most beautiful rivers I’ve ever paddled; bizarrely limpid water racing over clean rock and gravel between fresh scented banks of spruce. As much as I love the tundra, it was great being back in the shelter of a forest and carried on the back of a real river. As the Kogaluk hurried us under the towering cliffs from where we had first seen it the day before, I said to Cole, “Imagine two poor fools up there with a canoe.” We felt sorry for them. It was sunny, the scenery was grand, nothing was on our backs, we had a tailwind and we were flying. We crossed Cabot Lake that afternoon and camped at its eastern end. Only thirty miles of easy paddling and the falls of the Kogaluk were between us and the sea.

It couldn’t last. The dawn was cold with an east wind and light rain. There was little current now as the mountains receded and with the headwind, we worked hard to keep a good pace. The rain came and went but as we reached the falls 27 miles later, it was coming to a drenching crescendo. It was five p.m.; pushing to work out and execute a portage that late in those conditions was a recipe for trouble. Our window of opportunity for making the first coast boat was closing fast but we didn’t need to risk an injury or hypothermia over it. We pitched the tent on the grassiest patch of mud we could find, got into dry clothes, cooked dinner in the vestibule and went to sleep.

Dawn was raw and sloppy with intermittent rain but with almost no wind. From the map, it looked like portaging river right would be easiest. That was confirmed on our first light load recon, though it was sometimes steep and dangerous close to the river. We took stills and video of the three spectacular sets of falls, found a much safer and more direct route on our return and finished the carry around

lunchtime. Immediately below the falls was a powerful R3-4 in the right channel around a low island. The left channel had two bony drops that were impassable and both outside banks were too steep for lining. To continue the portage on the right bank would have been brutal. We put in at the pool below the falls and topped off every water container we had (brackish and saltwater from here on). We ferried across between the boiling surge from the falls and the maw of the rapid to the upstream end of the island, lined the R4 and paddled the estuary to the sea.

I dug the whiskey out to toast the Kogaluk. It was exciting to have reached saltwater, but intimidating too. To continue north, we had to cross Voisey Bay. The “anything is possible” sunshine of two days ago was a distant memory, replaced by cold gray wet, and now, as we left the shelter of the Kogaluk - wind. However, Conditions could be much worse and might be soon (Stephen Loring had warned me about Voisey Bay), so we set out immediately - a minimum of two miles of open water.



A cold and chilly day for sketching but artists on trips must do their thing.

After heading northeast, the coast fell away and we struck out for an island across the bay. The water was crystal aqua green, the sea floor clearly visible through ten to twenty feet. As the east wind strengthened, our progress slowed until the sea urchins on the bottom seemed to be going nearly as fast as we were. The wind continued to build, the waves followed suit and before long, we were in a fight. The big ones usually came in sets of three or four that appeared as solid ranks of foaming whitecaps racing toward us. These often buried the bow. After they would pass, I came off the wind a bit and we continued our distressingly slow progress. Bonnie was riding the seas well, but as the crossing wore on, cold and fatigue became issues. Despite our deck and spray skirts, the repeated dunkings for over an hour accumulated enough seawater in the bilge for an icy slosh to bathe my knees regularly. Cole only asked once if we were going to be OK; otherwise, he kept his head down and stoically ground out the strokes toward safety. As we slowly neared shore, we hit a tidal current that kicked up a difficult cross chop. Happily, it was short-lived, and once past it we entered the lee of the island. With great relief we relaxed and looked for a landing. Spent, we made camp on the flat exposed ground above the high tide line. There was plenty of driftwood for a fire but the wind sucked the heat out of it. We still had a mathematical possibility of making Nain on time (3:00 p.m.), but it was twenty-eight miles; we would have to be on the water at dawn and have perfect weather.

Well before sun-up, I looked out; the wind was calm - time to go... if we really were going. Conveniently, within minutes a breeze kicked



The Beaver is indeed History

CANADA'S second-oldest magazine, *The Beaver*, is changing its name after 90 years because the title is too often censored by online porn filters, preventing it from reaching new online readers. The Winnipeg-based magazine was launched in 1920 to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Hudson's Bay Company and the fur trade that led to the early exploration of Canada.

But in modern times, the term "beaver" has become slang for women's genitals. "*The Beaver* was an impediment online," publisher Deborah Morrison said.

"Several readers asked us to change the title because their spam filters at home or at work were blocking it," she said. "I've even had emails bounce back because I had inadvertently typed the term in the heading." "Nearly a century ago, it probably seemed the perfect name for a magazine about the fur trade and Canada's northwest frontier. There was only one interpretation for the word then. "But you're likely to find a lot of (porn) sites now if you search for the title of our history magazine online," she said.

Readers complained that Internet filters were blocking emails and newsletters from *The Beaver*, editor-in-chief Mark Reid said. The society also had concerns about attracting readers.

"Market research showed us that younger Canadians and women were very unlikely to ever buy a magazine called *The Beaver* no matter what it's about," said Mr. Reid, adding he has mixed feelings about the name change. "For whatever reasons, they are turned off by the name." Print subscriptions to the Winnipeg-based magazine, which publishes six issues a year, range between 45,000 and 50,000. It is published by Canada's National History Society. Changing the name also makes sense because the fur trade, while an important part

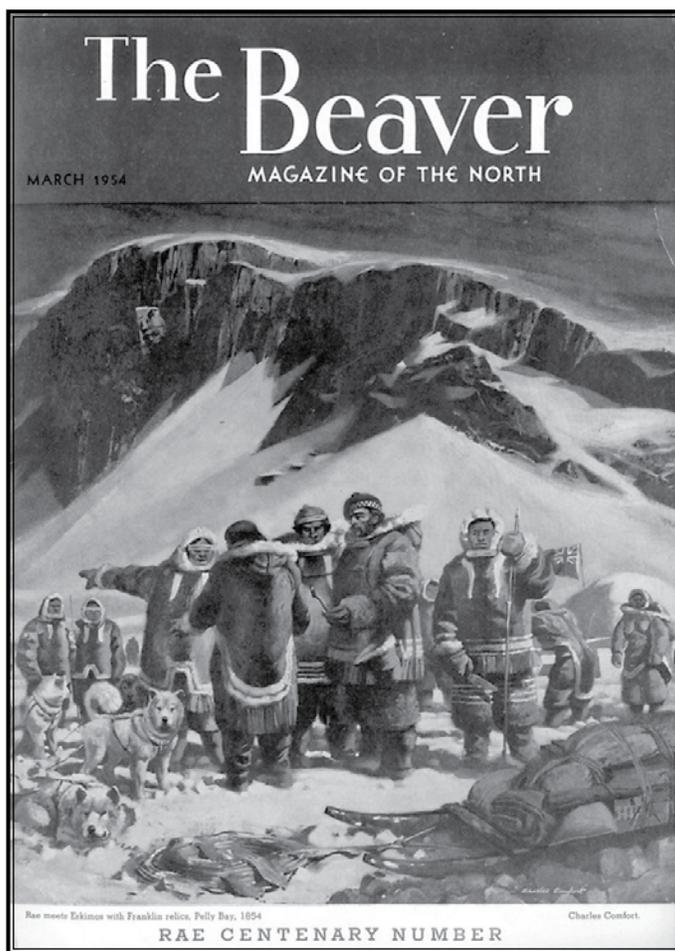
of early Canadian history, isn't meaningful to all Canadians today, especially as the population's makeup has changed through immigration, Mr. Reid said.

Readers have been generally understanding about the need for the change, he said.

The Beaver began as a company newsletter put out by the Hudson's Bay Company.

ada's National History Society, a Winnipeg-based charitable organization devoted to popularizing Canadian history.

The magazine that chronicles Canada's past will publish its last issue under the old banner in February/March. Thereafter, it will be known under the less evocative name of Canada's History.



Editor's Note: For many years *The Beaver* has been a treasure trove of truly fascinating northern material and the old issues remain a gold mine for wilderness buffs (or is that now an incorrect term?)

In fact, the logo on Page 2 which illustrates each Packet in *Che-Mun* was borrowed from a 1950 issue of *The Beaver* many years ago.

We're not sure whether the name change is a sad sign of the times or a sad reaction to it. But one thing is sure, the new name - *Canada's History* - sounds like a Grade 6 textbook. It would seem the publishers want to make sure their readers know they are a zero on the spicy literature scale. Not sure what kind of marketing idea that really is. I lost interest years ago when they became a general-based history magazine - which was fine - but they no longer regularly carried the unique northern historical stuff which our readers have an abiding interest in.

Take the 1954 issue shown to the left. It marked the centenary of John Rae's discovery of the remains of the Franklin Expedition. Unless I am wrong, that story remains as powerful today as in 1954 and new info and knowledge continues to be unearthed.

In the pages of the old *Beaver* you will find the writings of R.H. Patterson and George Douglas and classic images by Richard Harrington and Arthur Heming. Also most any old issue will offer a number of fascinating tidbits sure to interest today's *Che-Mun* readers. You can find some of the old articles online or purchase back issues at www.historysociety.ca

The first issue appeared in October 1920 under the banner, *The Beaver, A Journal of Progress*.

Beginning with the December 1923 issue, the magazine began to be offered to non-Hudson's Bay employees at an annual rate of \$1.

The magazine was acquired in 1994 by Can-



ACROSS LABRADOR *continued*

up that the wind gods quickly promoted to a gale turning the channel into a churning mass of whitecaps, collapsing the tent vestibule, and allowing us - with a sense of relief - to give up utterly on making the coast boat that afternoon. Now we could enjoy the coastal paddle; we had an extra week.

And enjoy it we did. Late in the morning, a trustworthy calm descended and we packed to make some miles up the coast. As we were ready to leave, Cole spotted a gyrfalcon perched on a boulder up the shore. Grabbing cameras, we slowly approached, taking shots every several yards, expecting it to fly at any moment. It didn't. With growing consternation, we came up to within ten feet of it, walked around it, filmed it, took video, changed lenses and filmed it some more. It looked calmly at us and then went back to scanning the shoreline. It is not often that wildlife artists leave a willing model, but we finally thanked him and turned back to the boat. The whole encounter had the almost eerie feeling of a reward for our new laissez-faire attitude. Escorted by curious seals, we started up the channel, gliding over a fascinating diorama of starfish, sea urchins and comb-jellies visible in the clear depths.

On our last night, we were on Kikkatavik Island where we had been waiting out high winds for two days. Cole had a fire going on the beach and I had finished cooking dinner as the evening colors gently rolled in. At a startling blow, we turned to see a minke whale surface just offshore, blow and dive, blow and dive again - it was a nearly perfect end to the penultimate day of the expedition.

On October 3, we were within an easy day's paddle of Nain, though the coast boat wouldn't be in port until the seventh. We could stay out; do some art and exploring. On the other hand, it was cold, the weather could strand us for a week at any moment, the M&Ms were gone, the beef jerky was gone, the whiskey was gone and Cole wanted to make Nain in time for Happy Hour.

We neared the dock at about 3 p.m. A minke whale surfaced in front of us three times, and then surfaced behind us three times. That seemed a fitting finale for our journey as Bonnie ground ashore on the boat ramp in Nain, the northernmost town in Labrador.

We put our stay in Nain to good use. We met several Inuit artists, all of whom are interested in future expeditions. I was disappointed that we didn't work out the old Innu portage out of the George River, and it is an asterisk on an otherwise successful expedition. We are hoping to go in with Tony, Stephen and some young Innu to explore the area this year.

Postscript

On our first day in Nain, while attempting a sat phone call, I met a friendly runt of a puppy happily following a young Inuit girl who was studiously ignoring it. Four days later, the little pup was still running loose and Henry told me its chances of surviving the winter were bleak. I took her aboard ship and "Nainette" is sleeping at my feet as I finish this.

Rob Mullen is a nationally known wildlife artist with a biology degree and a penchant for wilderness canoeing (www.paintnpaddlestudio.com). He is Executive Director; Wilderness River Expedition Art Foundation (www.wreaf.org). WREAF was incorporated in February 2005 to organize wilderness art expeditions and design exhibitions of the resulting work set in a natural history context. WREAF has worked closely with the Smithsonian's Arctic Studies Center at the National Museum of Natural History since 2004 and is partnered with the Canadian Wildlife Federation.

CANOESWORTHY *continued*

The U.S. government has asked the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species to change polar bears from Appendix II to Appendix I. Appendix I is reserved for the most extremely endangered species at risk of extinction.

Nunavik's heritage is at your fingertips, with an eye-catching website, called "Nunavik: A Land, Its People," the latest reference for newbies and residents alike. The newly-launched site, produced by Montreal researcher and photographer Luc Bouvrette, is now one of over 500 virtual exhibits funded through the Virtual Museum of Canada.

Bouvrette first came to Nunavik on business five years ago — then a place about which he knew little. Taken by its rich past and present, Bouvrette said he wanted to give the region the credit it deserves.

That beauty is captured in Bouvrette's many photographs, creating a rich visual display on the website at www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Nunavik/. Limited by time and money, Bouvrette has spent his time in four villages, Tasiujaq, Kangiqsujuaq, Puvirnituk and Kuujuaq. Based on these visits, Bouvrette offers a colourful introduction to Inuit culture that takes the visitor beyond the well-worn icons of igloos and dog sled teams.

The website's culture section provides a sensory experience, including audio of a trio of women from Kangiqsujuaq performing different styles of throat-singing. Viewers can also scroll through a gallery of drawings by students at Arsaniq school.

A watchdog organization is questioning plans for Quebec's first diamond mine after the Stornoway Diamond Corporation confirmed that estimates for its deposit in northern Quebec are larger than expected.

The Renard diamond project, 200 kilometres north of the Cree community of Mistissini, contains at least 23 million carats and is believed to contain an additional 13 million carats, the corporation said in a statement issued last month.

The project is co-owned by SOQUEM, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Société générale de financement du Québec, an industrial and financial holding corporation of the Quebec government.

But environmental group Mining Watch Canada is warning the project could have a serious impact on the local environment.

"Establishing an open pit, dealing with the waste ... there are certainly going to be some impacts," said spokesman Ramsey Hart. The government of Quebec should consider whether the mine is really worth the investment, Hart said.

"Diamonds aren't a necessary aspect of life and a necessary part of society so [they are] a luxury item," he said.

That idea is disputed by Stornoway president and CEO Matt Manson. "They are necessary because people give them value," Manson said.

The Renard project will require 600 workers during the construction phase and 300 during the 15 to 20 years it is operational, Manson said.

A diamond mine would also create numerous indirect jobs, said officials with Quebec's Natural Resources Ministry. The ultimate goal is to have at least 10 per cent of the raw diamonds processed in Quebec.



Photo: Cole Johnson

A minke whale rides along the surface of the Labrador Sea near the town of Nain, the most northerly community in Labrador. The whale and the sea were a welcome sign for the group who had travelled from the George River across the Labrador border and down the Kogaluk River following in the footsteps of John Cabot. Full story begins on Page 6.

Che-Mun

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

Che-Mun

Founded in 1973 by Nick Nickels
SUBSCRIPTION: \$25 per year
US orders in US dollars
Published by the Hide-Away Canoe Club

Che-Mun

The Journal of Canadian Wilderness Canoeing
Please visit our Web Site:
www.ottertooth.com/che-mun
Michael Peake, Publisher.