



Summer 2012    The Journal of Canadian Wilderness Canoeing

Outfit 149



photo: Brent Oliver

**RIVER RESURRECTION:** Members of the Wilderness Adventurers of Ontario hold the bronze cross they recovered from the shallow waters of the Petawawa River at Rollway Rapids in July 2012. The cross was snapped off at its base and thrown in the river four years ago in a story covered by Che-Mun. We have the tale of the group who found it and more thoughts on wilderness memorials on Pages 4 & 5.





# Summer Packet

We are not really gear freaks here at Che-Mun. We found equipment that worked for us and stuck with it as long as it worked - or more often for as long as it was available. It was maddening when some manufacturers stopped making perfectly good gear or clothing for reasons of fashion or profit.

We stumbled across the BioLite Campstove (right) in an email from my brother Sean. And while we have not used it yet it, the product is very intriguing - combining the best of the past and future/present in one handy package.

This small stove, that will only burn small twigs will also produce a small amount of electricity thanks to a built-in thermoelectric generator. That means you smartphone or satphone can be charged with 100% certainty at any time in the wilderness - something that solar chargers cannot guarantee.

And for it's perfect for northern trippers who paddle north of the treeline in what has historically been known as the land of the little sticks. That has new meaning now!

This innovative stove was invented by two New Yorkers, Alexander Drummond and Jonathan Cedar. The BioLite stove technology was inspired by a philosophy of applying efficient design to real world problems.

They also make a larger version, the Homestove which has been used with huge environmental benefits in the third world where cooking over wood fires in the way of life - and death. This stove dramatically reduces the amount of wood required and smoke emitted with the benefit of producing electricity for LED lights and phones etc.

As we members of the HACC age we are becoming more of a source for river and trip info. This is a tradition we gladly carry on from Eric Morse and Bill

haven't heard an update at of press time but they were scheduled to reach Kugluktuk in late August. Nice to see the younger crowd is carrying on the traditions.



Mason who were both very supportive and generous to us when we started.

We were therefore very happy to meet with Wanapitie Guides Toban Leckie and Shauna Kearns who are guiding a very interesting trip for their 12 18-year-old senior trippers in their Temagami based camp.

They departed in early July from Tulita (Fort Norman) on the Mackenzie River and headed up the historic route to the barrenlands via the Great Bear River. From there across Great Bear Lake and up the Camsell and Tilchuse rivers to access the upper Coppermine. This route was similar to the HACC Heart of the North trip in 1993. We

We were introduced to Canoeing.com recently and found the US-based website to be an impressive wealth of info. Run by Tim Eaton, the site has a lot to offer and has a special section on Advanced paddling. They were following the route of Brian Johnston, who penned the Lorillard River story in Outfit 148.

Brian is their Far North contributor and is with a crew of eight paddlers traveling parts of the Thelon, Dubawnt, Kazan, Ferguson and Wilson Rivers, ending at Whale Cove on Hudson Bay. They left from Lynx Lake on the upper Thelon River on their route to Hudson Bay.

On a July 23 crew change, winds gusting up to 36 miles an hour socked the crew into their

campsite on Nowleye Lake for two days before the crew and delayed the plane's arrival.

In order to reach a spot where the plane could land, they had to paddle around a peninsula through three-foot high waves to another bay, where they were once again wind bound.

When the plane finally arrived, the bay was relatively smooth compared to the exposed parts of the lake but the plane still had to make three passes before it could land. When it did, the pilot wouldn't beach near shore and the crew had to paddle out to swap gear.

Ah! Northern paddling at its finest!



## Editor's Notebook

We are delighted to be able to report on the recovery of the missing cross honouring the death of Blair Fraser from the Petawawa River, four years after being vandalized.

In what can only be described as a fitting and mythic ending, the bronze cross was recovered this summer by a group of paddling friends not too dissimilar from Fraser's own group, The Voyageurs.

Brent Oliver, who wrote the story is a member of the Ontario Wilderness Adventurers, a loosely-based group of 100 or so outdoor enthusiasts who arrange trips amongst each other. (*wildernessadventurers.com*) Brent, a 46-year-old software developer who told us, "Through the club we met others with a passion for canoeing, learned a lot from more experienced members and had the opportunity to expand our canoeing to include whitewater paddling. Twelve years after first joining the club, we now have our own Kevlar canoe and Royalex whitewater canoe and enjoy backcountry canoe tripping may times each year."

I was struck by the quality of Brent's photos but also by the fact that all of the group was wearing helmets. If Blair Fraser has been wearing a helmet on May 12, 1968 there may have been no need for a cross. We have never worn helmets but if doing rocky rapids they're obviously a wise idea and not a lot more gear to pack.

It now appears that the cross was not cut from its base but bent and twisted until it broke and then tossed into the river where Blair died. The extreme low water let the river give it up to, fittingly, a committed and caring group of wilderness paddlers.

For all the debate about whether or what such wilderness memorials should be allowed, the one fact is plainly clear. You don't rip one out that had been there 40 years. And you don't destroy a memorial to a man and a way of life that still speaks to people, a small, tasteful and heartfelt memorial to a man who spoke for so many people about the place wild rivers have in our lives. The Petawawa River still flows. So does the message and meaning of Blair Fraser and The Voyageurs.

—Michael Peake

## Canoesworthy

The Quebec government and Quebec's Grand Council of the Crees have signed what both are calling a historic agreement which gives the Cree more power over the James Bay territory and its resources.

Premier Jean Charest and Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come signed the agreement on what is to be known as the Eeyou Istchee James Bay territory.

Under the deal, which covers a territory the size of Italy, the municipality of James Bay ceases to exist — replaced by a regional authority to be governed jointly by the Cree and non-natives living in the territory.

Both Coon Come and Charest stressed the development is a first in Canada — and perhaps in the world.

"There are no precedents," said Charest. "I'm convinced that leaders of First Nations in Quebec and in Canada will want to look very closely at this agreement today."

"We would be flattered if they thought that through this agreement and the work we have accomplished together, that there is some source of inspiration of what they may choose as a common path," the premier added.

"Never before in Canada has such an innovative and forward-looking governance initiative been conducted between any aboriginal group and any level of government — be it provincial or federal," said Coon Come.

The new regional government will have the same responsibilities and powers as local municipalities, which the Cree have long sought.

Coon Come said the issue became more pressing with Charest's ambitious scheme to develop northern Quebec's untapped mineral wealth, known as the Plan Nord.

"Certainly the Crees, being the majority, want to be full participants and have a say in the way development takes place," Coon Come said.

The agreement does not give the Cree veto rights over future mining projects, although it will give the new regional authority more say over what projects are developed on so-called "Category 2" land, traditionally set aside for hunting and trapping.

The Cree will also help manage projects such as wind power schemes and hydro-electric developments of 50 MW or less.

Quebec appears ready to enlarge the planned Tursujuq provincial park to include more of the Nastapoka River watershed which lies inland between the Nunavik communities of Kuujuaaraapik and Umiujaq.

A working group met recently in Kuujuaaraapik to present a new boundary proposal that "includes a large portion of the Nastapoka river basin," said a document tabled May 29 at the Kativik Regional Government council meeting in Puvirnituq.

The Nastapoka River, home to salmon and rare freshwater seals, also has an enormous potential for hydro-electric power production. The Little Whale River also runs in and around Tursujuq, which covers 15,000 kilometres between Kuujuaaraapik and Umiujaq.

Hydro Quebec has said it has no plans at the moment to construct hydro-electric projects along the two rivers. But the power corporation has also said it wants to keep the door open to a future power project along the Nastapoka River.

If a dam was built along the Nastapoka River, Hydro Quebec previously said power lines, access routes and roads would cross the park and that the flow of the Little Whale River would also be reduced.

The Nastapoka River, whose development is mentioned in the 2002 Sanarrutik deal, signed between Quebec and Nunavik, could produce up to 1,000 megawatts of power, enough to meet the daily needs of about 250,000 homes.

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (Quebec chapter), Nature Quebec, Canadian Boreal Initiative have asked Quebec to add more than 10,000 sq. km. to Tursujuq's size so the entire Nastapoka River watershed would be included within the park boundaries.

The communities of Umiujaq, Kuujuaaraapik and the Cree community of Whapmagoostui as

*Continued on Page 10*



# PETAWAWA RESURRECTION

By BRENT OLIVER

Fresh off of the Dumoine River in Quebec, our group of eight paddlers, all members of the outdoor club Wilderness Adventurers of Ontario, were finishing a week of mid-summer whitewater paddling on the Petawawa River in Algonquin Provincial Park. The summer of 2012 will be remembered for near-drought conditions in central and eastern Canada and both the Dumoine and Petawawa Rivers were at very low water levels in mid-July as a result.

Day two of our three-day run of the Petawawa River started with Rollway Rapid. The excellent guide book "Petawawa River – Whitewater Guide" by George Drought, describes Rollway as the "most challenging whitewater most people will ever encounter that can be run in an open canoe" and then describes possible runs in high water (HW), medium water (MW) and low water (LW) conditions. This year the rapids would be better described as very low water (VLW). The only real challenge with Rollway Rapid in particular was finding enough water.

We determined that Rollway's ledge contained two narrow, runnable tongues on

river left - both required a hard right turn to avoid rocks below the tongues. The remaining run-out was to river right, running below the Blair Fraser Memorial Cross, a memorial known to most who have paddled this section of the Petawawa River.

The bronze cross was custom made and put in place over 40 years ago as a memor-



ial to Canadian journalist Blair Fraser who died while paddling Rollway Rapids. The man may not be familiar to newer generations of paddlers but for those portaging Rollway Rapid, the cross had become a destination to seek out. The memorial cross is specifically mentioned in George Drought's guide book. Sometime during the summer of 2008 the cross was removed from its concrete base by an unknown person or persons as a protest to a "sense of self-importance" and lack of attention to issues related to mining in the park.

Alan and Dave were in the first canoe to run the ledge. They ran out the section below the ledge and eddied out on river right – just below where the cross had previously been anchored to a rock for decades. As they watched the remaining canoes make

their way down river, a glint in the water caught Alan's attention. Although Alan didn't know the full story behind the disappearance of the cross he had enough knowledge to recognize what he was looking at. There at the bottom of the river, unusually shallow due to recent drought conditions, was the bronze

photo: Brent Oliver





cross missing since 2008. Alan reached down and recovered the cross and placed it on the shore. After it was pointed out to me, I carried the cross up to the top of the bank and found where it had been anchored into a rock with cement. A few centimeters of bronze remained about the concrete. It appeared to be a clean break but did not appear to have been cut. The lower part of the recovered cross had a rounded bend almost to a 90 degree angle suggesting that it had been physically bent over until the metal snapped. The cross must have then been simply tossed into the river.

After I took a few photographs of the cross we placed it at the base of a large boulder a couple meters up-stream from its original position and placed smaller rocks around its base. Once again other paddlers would have an opportunity to see the cross and reflect on the dangers inherent in whitewater river paddling. At this point none of us knew the full significance of the find nor knew about the discussion and debate that had resulted from the removal of the cross. We were to learn more about the cross and the man it memorialized after the trip ended.

### Epilogue:

Two weeks later while paddling in the Chiniguchi area north-east of Sudbury, Ontario, I had time to reflect on what I had read in the days following our group's paddle down the Petawawa River and the finding of the Blair Fraser Memorial Cross at the bottom of the river. Specifically, the forums in Canadian Canoe Routes and an article in Outfit 134 of Che-Mun, The Journal of Canadian Wilderness Canoeing, provided some interested insight into why someone might choose to forcibly remove a memorial that had been in place for decades.

On the one side of the debate words like "reflection", "history", and "moving" demonstrate an appreciation for memorials like the Blair Fraser Memorial Cross. Words such as "idiot", "bastards", "scoundrel", and "vandal" clearly show a disdain for the person or persons who took it upon themselves to remove and discard the cross.

On the other side of the debate, the cross was seen to be akin to a cemetery and not appropriate to a wilderness park. One person grouped the memorial together with finding a used condom, human feces, toilet paper, and other garbage in the park. It was also suggested that such memorials attempt to impart a greater importance on a single individual.

The common ground I noticed was an acknowledgment that it isn't appropriate for memorials to people, events and places to be put up by anyone, anytime, anywhere. Most people seemed to agree that a discussion about future memorials was appropriate and necessary.

I personally saw the Blair Fraser Memorial Cross as

a 'destination' in much the same way as the fire tower at the top of Maple Mountain, the abandoned towerman's cabin on Dewdney Lake, the pictographs on Matagamasi Lake and Mazinaw Lake, the cross on McCrae Lake, and a rusting logging truck abandoned in the forest long ago.

These examples -- and there are hundreds of other examples across the "wilderness" we frequent -- are *destinations*. Travellers to an area read about them in guide books and make an effort to see them. Some have historic significance, some have a personal significance, some have significance to only a few, and some have no real significance at all. But in most cases they represent a *destination* and I like the fact that they exist. Some are fun, some are cause for reflection, some are educational, and some are nothing more than an excuse to venture into an otherwise unvisited area.

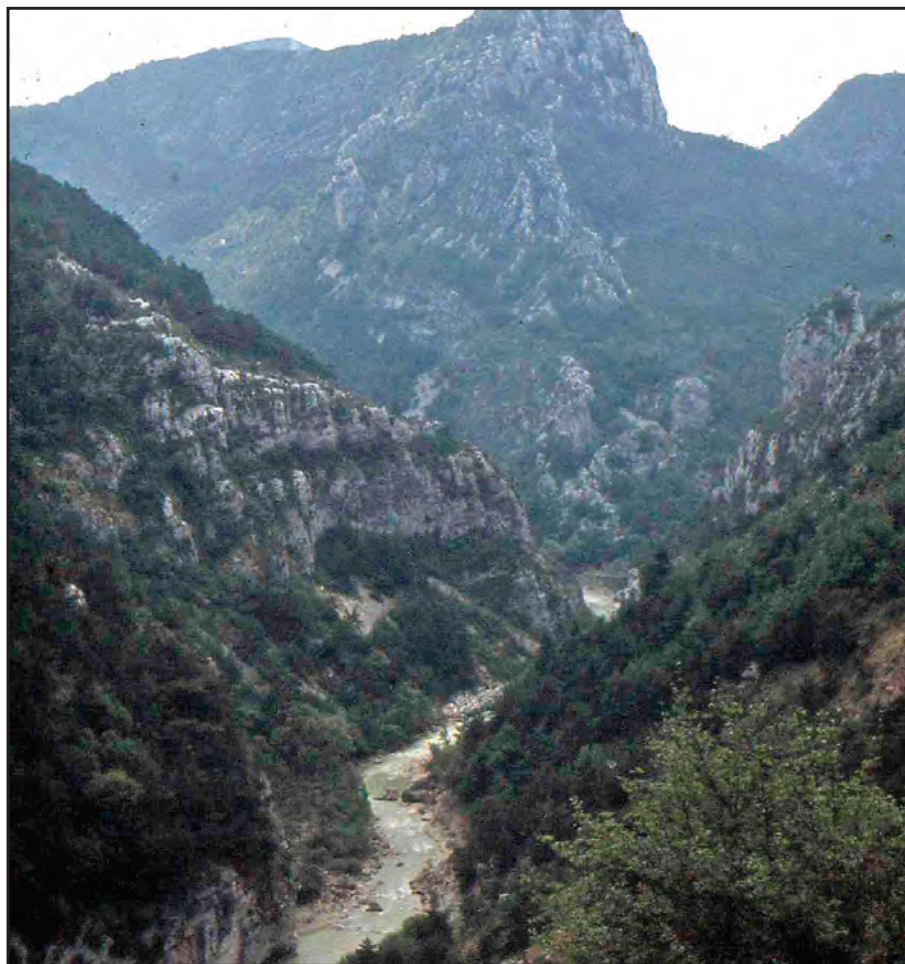
I acknowledge that memorials and other man-made destinations are not always appropriate and may even be a simple scar to be removed. Which ones are appropriate? Which ones are scars? Are there too many? At what point does something become historic? Who decides? I can offer an opinion but I certainly can't make those decisions and I don't acknowledge the right for any one person to elect themselves arbiter of these decisions.

Is the Blair Fraser Memorial Cross a historic site, a place of reflection, or simply a man-made scar on the natural landscape? As the discussions continue, at least the cross is once again a *destination* to be sought out -- for now anyway.



Blair Fraser (third from left) with The Voyageurs before their 1959 trip on the Camsell and Great Bear rivers.

# Mecatina 1973: The First Time



**The impossible, impassible Petit Mecatina has a seemingly irresistible lure to some paddlers.**

**Story and Photos by ROLF THEISS**

*Translated by Brigitte Engel*

**G**ood luck! Such was the farewell wish of our bush pilot Robert, or Bob, before he left us alone on one of the countless lakes of Labrador.

Two lone guys – with two kayaks and a tent. After the four-seater Cessna had eventually disappeared over the hills, we truly realized our situation. Alone. Totally alone in the hard wilderness of interior Labrador. Relying on just ourselves, we had to master the next three weeks. Despite this rather “frightening” thought, a yearlong dream was about to become reality.

A year earlier, in 1972, my friend Fritz Gottenstroetter and I had seriously begun to plan this dream of a true wilderness trip in this lonesome part of Canada. We had been inspired by the books

of the German authors Hans-Otto Meissner, A. E. Johann and our friend Elmar Engel. An encouraging sign was the fact that Elmar was arranging trips from Germany to his camp on the Kecarpoui River on the island-dotted coast of southern Quebec and Labrador.

Our project of going down a whitewater river did not meet his approval at first, but after a rather short time we were able to persuade him and he warmed up to our project.

In early May our kayaks were shipped from Europe to the North Shore via Montreal. We followed shortly after departing Cologne in high spirits, guns in the luggage. The flight would take us through England and Scotland across the Atlantic to Gander, Newfoundland. Due to a bus drivers strike we had to complete the final 200 km by taxi – which cost an additional two hundred bucks. We paid with grinding teeth but the next morning saw us in good humour again after a long rest at the hotel in Deer Lake, Newfoundland.

From the neighbouring town of Pasadena, our chartered plane took off for a 90 minute hop across the Gulf of the St. Lawrence to the mainland of Labrador. A quiet, smooth flight brought us to the Kecarpoui River and the camp of Elmar and Brigitte Engel. Quickly, the provisions and ammunition for the guns were packed into the plane and the two kayaks were tied on the floats of the Cessna.

We cautiously mentioned to the pilot some second thoughts about the overload, but Bob shrugged and grinned “We’ll see right away – or not.” To our dismay he also needed us aboard for the test.

Back in the camp we talked over the full detailed plan of the trip with Elmar once again – and he assured us “if you’re not back in three weeks I will begin looking for you!” We simply grinned at his remark but we did not have any idea how important his promise was to be.

**W**ith mixed feelings we boarded the overloaded plane and Bob assured us he could reach the necessary altitude of 2000 feet after roughly 20 km. It took us an hour to approach the Mecatina River. We closely followed his course into the interior, steadily marking the rapids we could recognize from the air. Three hours of flight through this empty country and the plane landed on one of the nearly countless lakes near the headwaters of the river.

After the last puttering of the Cessna 185 had died away, we spat in our hands and started to put up a comfortable camp. The





tent was pitched and a fire lit against the pest of the mosquitoes and the provisions underwent scrutiny. Milk powder, dried fruit, dried mashed potatoes, pasta, rice, gravy mixes and dried coups, pudding mix, coffee and tea, flours and baking powder, Elmar's smoked bacon were only a part of our provisions fit for a king. Brigitte had thrown in a jar of fresh cooked Bolognese sauce and a home made cake!

**F**ishing and hunting would hopefully enrich our larder during the coming weeks. Then we made our first super-bannock – pan fried bread – for desert cake, cheese, dry sausage and the last bottle of beer. Afterwards we tried our luck at fishing and the river gods smiled on us – one nice fat Northern pike – enough for several nourishing meals.

Provisions and luggage were stored in the kayaks, in watertight bags of course, when we started our way down river the next morning. Lean, high spruce were to accompany us for hundreds of kilometres from now on, black or dark green and silent.

The only means to escape from this wilderness was our kayaks. The loss of one boat would mean disaster. Exact positioning was difficult and after several days we had lost our position. No reason to worry, after 300 km of river travel we would have to pass through Lac Fourmont – 50 km long and about 30 km wide – and landmark not easily overlooked. During the following days we thoroughly soaked up the peace of the untouched wilderness – seldom travelled by a human being before. The peninsula of Labrador is very sparsely settled along the coastline, accordingly we could not expect to meet anyone. The only living things we sighted were the industrious beavers, whose art of chewing and knowing surprised us more than once. There were wild geese, ducks and loons and thousands of fresh bear tracks and footprints of moose and caribou, though we didn't see any of the latter.

Slowly but steadily the rapids grew more formidable. We took to wearing our life vests permanently. Rapids which proved too difficult to run were portaged, which was difficult in the rough terrain.

We killed two geese which was a welcome change for the next day's menu. Then came our first encounter with a bear. Both parties were astonished but not overly concerned. Blacky preferred immediate retreat to the safety of the bush – he was so much closer to the woods than the water anyway. We just managed a snapshot and gone he was.

During the next hour we encountered two more black bears

who reacted similarly. To be honest; our hearts were pounding a bit when we pitched the tent that night. Needless to say our loaded guns lay beside our sleeping bags that night, although this did not ensure a peaceful sleep.

Eventually we came to the vicinity of Lac Fourmont and were able to define our exact whereabouts. It took us one day to put this large 50 km body of water behind us and an adjoining lake of about 8 km. Our hopes grew high for an arrival in Elmar's camp at the beginning of our third holiday week.

But . . . everything would turn out different.



**The only advantage of a killer portage up a steep sided impassible river is the great view.**

Though we had glanced into the canyon from the airplane,, we had totally misjudged it. Consequently the run would take us far longer than planned – or imagined.

The rapids developed continuously into waterfalls and the portages into slave labour. Our daily progress – six to seven kilometres. The canyon is 30 kilometres of very rugged terrain. Ten rapids were marked on our maps, which turned out to be actual waterfalls, each with a drop of several lengths of our boats and their runoffs were over 100 metres long.

The result was portages of several hours long. We had to carry the kayaks, loaded to capacity, over rocks and trees and stumps and dead trees covered with thick moss. Each boat weight about 150 pounds.

After four days of backbreaking work we presumed we had reached the end of the gorge. We hadn't. We were between two mountain ridges, rising opposite of each other and in between a chute – and all this scenery so tightly pressed together without any chance for portaging.

**T**he only chance to continue down river was cutting a trail through the impenetrable woods, to climb the 1000-foot hills – all to get round this eye of a needle not longer than 160 feet long.

The next night found us coming from the dense woods – completely discouraged. What we had discovered was that portaging was impossible on the left bank with woods so dense – like a wall. Was escape impossible? Our answer was to take a day off. The next day we cross to the other side with all our belongings towards a small pond. The kayaks had to be dragged up the enormous steep cliff, inch by inch. Our scraped and shaved fingers showed off the indescribably hard work – true drudgery!

We persuaded ourselves that going down would be easier and we started our way back to the river the next morning. The next



disappointment came after eight hours of more slave labour. Another chute, another 100-foot cliff that block the way for portaging and for paddling. We were terrified of the forest/jungle and we pulled up our boats and gear using the painter ropes. Paddling – we could finally start paddling again! During the last week this word had vanished from our vocabulary. We had made a miserable seven kilometers down the river during the last five days. But what a seven kilometres!

Soon the gorge widened and the end was in sight. Suddenly some of the rapids were runnable again. And then it happened! One boulder followed another and then I capsized! The boat and its vital contents were in danger. With combined forces we were able to rescue the boat. But the kayak seat, pot and pan, cutlery and cups drifted away. Loss of these things was painful but could be tolerated. One bundled up life vest replaced the seat and the coffee can, 10 inches high and 4 inches in diameter became the new pot. Our knives, attached to our belts became the new forks and spoons. Not a very pleasant pastime though.

**A**n hour later we finally reached the end of the canyon. We had done it – believe it or not! We were at the end of our energy but nonetheless happy – when we pitched our tent that night. The next day was a Sunday and we calmly reflected on our situation. In case we still wanted to make it the Engels camp, we had to leave the Petite Mecatina at this location and get to a small lake 2 km away which would be about two days of portaging. Two more days would not enable us to make the 80 km to the camp and we had only three days until our flight left from Labrador. So we decided to remain on the spot and to abandon our dream of making the full descent of the river. It was just impossible to accomplish.

Those two long days we could spend thinking about our future and our destiny. Would anybody pick us up? Would we be found? From where and how would the search be done? Two long days of questions and no answers. We kept ourselves busy with cooking, eating, sleeping, repacking and always watching for a search and rescue plane which could show up earlier than expected.

Tuesday morning we change to another place to be picked up – and we were in high spirits! The gorgeous weather added its own exclamation mark! Waiting for long hours our good hu-

mour changed to nervous angst. All the possibilities swirled in our heads. And over and over again; where when and which way would we be searched for? And last but not least – what if nobody showed up?



**Fritz bagged a goose which was good for several meals.**

When dusk was near, we finally heard the roar of an engine and after some minutes we realized this was “our” plane. To our utter disappointment the plane passed right over us – and continued upriver. Neither our mountaineer’s tent nor our kayaks were spotted! And all three were red. However the aircraft returned in 30 minutes or so and landed on the sand banks.

Now everything happened fast. There was a brief welcome and discussion with Elmar. Strong winds made flying difficult so our gear was flown out first. We passed the night with Brigitte and Elmar

and some of their canoeing friends in their huge tent camp on Robertson Lake, halfway between the Mecatina and their home at the mouth of the Kecarpoui River.

The next morning we flew up the Mecatina once again to pick up the kayaks. The wind had died down. The boats were left in Kecarpoui – Elmar bought them for his guests. Unfortunately one was stolen the next winter when the Engels were in Germany.

But my “Appel Eski” is still in front of Brigitte’s house in Mutton Bay where she moved after Elmar died in 2001. Yes, and she still goes paddling across the mouth of Mutton Bay with her big Newfoundland dog swimming behind.

When Fritz and I left Robertson Lake and Kecarpoui we went straight to Pasadena and directly on touch down to and a cab to Gander and shortly after boarded a plane for Europe. We had survived one of the great wilderness adventures you can still experience.



**Rolf at the rapid which starts the impassable canyon.**

*Che-Mun is indebted to Brigitte Engel of Mutton Bay, Quebec, at the east end of the North Shore near Labrador, for translating this story from Rolf Theiss’ original German. Brigitte and Elmar emigrated from Germany and fell in love with Canada’s north. They canoed the George River in 1969, went down the Bell and Porcupine rivers in the Yukon to Alaska and travelled through Gros Morne in Newfoundland before it became a park. Perhaps we may hear more of their old adventures in future outfits. We sent her a copy of Great Heart as she was interested in the Hubbard story and had not heard of that superb book.*





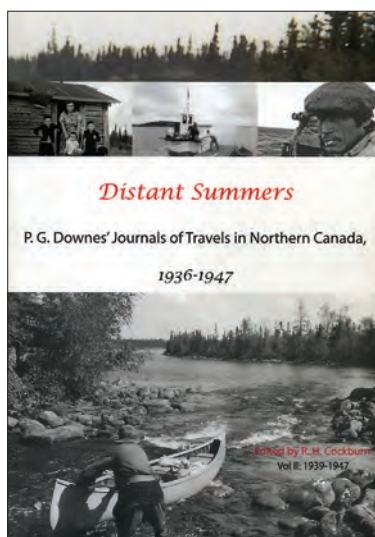
## Distant Summers Vol II

**P. G. Downes Journals of Travel in Northern Canada**

**Edited by R. H. Cockburn  
McGahern Stewart Publishing 2012**

**W**e reported with some acclaim on Distant Summers Vol I in the last outfit of Che-Mun which gave us a unparalleled look into the northern life of P. G. Downes.

And hot on the heels of that superb offering Volume II has arrived. All the superlatives credited to Volume I are upheld here. Volume II includes the entire 1939 Sleeping Island journals which are a superb complement for the many readers well familiar with that classic book.



In Prof. Cockburn's assured hands we get the full story behind Downes and his famous book. Reading the journals adds massively to the wealth of characters and Downes' own state of mind.

The second part of the book is the 1940 trip which had been regarded as a failure with respect to route finding. They went up the wrong river and had to turn back but as Cockburn notes their journals improved in detail and content.

And their encounter with "Eskimo Charlie" Planinshek on Putahow Lake is a fascinating meeting with one of the truly colourful

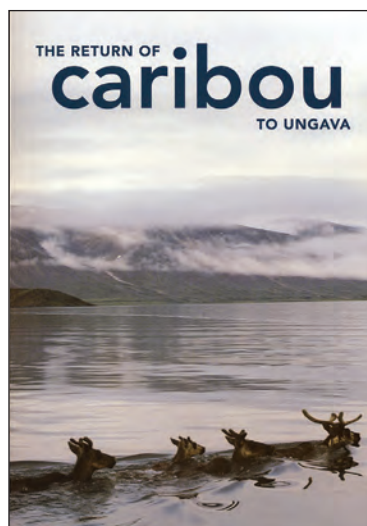
characters now long vanished from that land.

The book is absolutely loaded with a massive amount of northern minutiae all of which goes together to paint a detailed picture of an extraordinary place and time. Volume II is also full of great old photos and original maps and drawings that make it a complete pleasure and a superb service to the memory of the most memorable P.G. Downes.

## The Return of Caribou to Ungava

**By A.T. Bergerund, Stuart Luttich, & L. Camps  
McGill Queens Press 2012 \$34.95**

**T**his 586 page opus of Ungava caribou is not your light summer read and definitely not for anyone with weak wrists.



This scholarly look at the mysteriously fluctuating George River caribou herd (from 15,000 in 1958 to 700,000 in 1988) is a daunting piece of work and not for the average reader. But those who have travelled in northern Quebec and read of the historic importance of this vast herd of mammals will draw many interesting facts from this book. Che-Mun subscriber and noted Labrador scientist Stephen Loring has a short chapter as well.

The many who have paddled the George River will be interested to know that Wedge Point on Indian House Lake, halfway down the George

is the epicentre of caribou activity in Ungava. In 1983 we just missed a large herd heading west from Wedge Point. This comprehensive look entails history and science and a lot of charts. But there are numerous photos both current and historic.

## The Greatest Lake

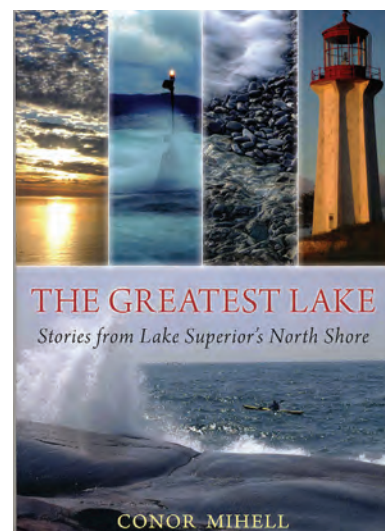
**Stories from Superior's North Shore**

**By Connor Mihell**

**Dundurn Press 2012 \$24.99**

**T**here is no place south of 60 comparable to Lake Superior. This massive lake has an allure and history all its own.

Author Connor Mihell was a guide at Naturally Superior Adventures and takes readers on a selection of river and lake trips including the Pukaskwa and White rivers.



This is not a history of Superior but more of a snapshot of today. He also includes the people and stories involved with the lake and its development and environmental future and visits it in all seasons. Mihell grew up on the shores of the lake and pays tribute to his interesting grandfather who explored it in his sailboat.

There are numerous photos but unfortunately they have been reproduced poorly in this book in which an emerging young writer is finding his style. We will see if we hear more from Mr. Mihell.

*– Michael Peake*



## CANOESWORTHY *continued*

well as the KRG have said they want the park enlarged.

The new boundary proposal is now in the hands of the Kativik Environmental Quality Commission, which in 2009 placed eight conditions that Quebec would have to meet before moving ahead with Tursujuq.

The KEQC said the Parc National Tursujuq project was “a good project,” although it fell short of offering “all possible protection to rare, endangered or vulnerable species and their habitats.”

During a May 29 discussion about the new proposed park borders, Maggie Emudluk, the chairperson of the KRG, praised Quebec’s readiness to enlarge the park — but she said that a Quebec provincial election in the fall could halt the progress towards the creation of the park, Nunavik’s third.

**A** caribou conservation group is protesting plans for mineral exploration in the Qamanirjuaq calving grounds. Anconia Resources has received approval to carry out drilling there this summer - in an area between Arviat and Baker Lake.

Now the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board is appealing for legal protection for the caribou. Executive-director Ross Thompson said the board is frustrated.

“The membership of the board [is] saying ‘what’s happening here?’ Since ‘04 we have formally registered a paper on why the calving grounds should be protected, and since then no action’s been taken,” said Thompson.

The Kivalliq Inuit Association and the Nunavut Impact Review Board have approved the project.

Thompson said the Qamanirjuaq caribou may be in decline, and calving grounds are especially sensitive.

“All of a sudden, boom, right in the middle in the calving ground is a permit that is going to be issued likely by both agencies now. So, it’s just like, enough’s enough. We’re very discouraged, disheartened and frustrated.”

Anconia president Jason Brewster points out that his company is complying with permitting requirements in Nunavut and will follow Caribou Protection Measures when they start drilling next month.

Brewster said the work will consist of 10 drill holes using one drill, and he said all the holes will be capped and left in “as close to undisturbed condition as possible when completed.”

Brewster added that they will keep staff to a minimum and use an existing camp about 65 kilometres away from the site.

Ryan Barry, the executive director of the Nunavut Impact Review Board, said the board took concerns about caribou into account when it approved the project.

“At the same time we have to be cognizant of the fact that the current land-use planning regime, the legislation that is in the Kivalliq region, does allow for exploration and development in these areas,” said Barry.

Thompson says that is exactly why the Caribou Board wants legislation to protect the calving grounds.

“I have been with caribou all my life, and have seen firsthand how human disturbance and access on the ranges can threaten their very existence. It is discouraging that nobody’s listening,” said Thompson.

**C**anada’s biggest railroad wants to build a \$5-billion rail line to ship iron ore from isolated northern Quebec to port, a crucial link that could transform Canada into the world’s third-largest

producer of steel’s main component.

Montreal-based Canadian National Railway’s 500 mile project, backed by Quebec’s public pension fund, is still years away from becoming a reality. Indeed, the 2017 projected startup date looks ambitious, given the complexity of negotiations that lie ahead.

The junior miners needed to fill the rail cars want to keep a lid on transport costs, and some have even floated the idea of building their own rail line rather than signing on to CN’s plan.

The proposed railway also faces an intensive consultation process with governments and local aboriginal groups before work can begin. Assuming those talks are successful, construction over the rugged terrain would take three years to complete.

Stretching from the Port of Sept-Îles on the St. Lawrence River to north of Schefferville, on the border between Quebec and the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, the line will pass numerous mining projects in the Labrador Trough — a geological formation rich in iron ore.

There are already two rail lines in the region, but their capacity is insufficient to meet demand from planned new mines in northern Quebec and Labrador.

The Quebec government says the region represents potential private investments of more than \$20 billion.

The privately funded rail project is just one piece of Quebec’s far-reaching Plan Nord, a 25-year plan that targets \$80 billion in public and private investments to develop a resource-rich area of 1.2 million square kilometres, roughly the size of South Africa, with mining, renewable energy and infrastructure.

CN needs to ship at least 75 million to 80 million tonnes a year for the project to be feasible. But Spracklin said his conservative estimate of 125 million tonnes translates into rail revenue of \$2.2 billion. In 2011, CN recorded \$9 billion in revenue.

Current Canadian output of the metal, which is too heavy to be transported by truck, is around 40 million tonnes a year, while top global producers Australia and Brazil have a combined output of more than 850 million tonnes a year.

Assuming the Labrador Trough projects go ahead, as well as the huge Mary River mine on Baffin Island in the Canadian Arctic, Canada could produce as much as 250 million tonnes a year by 2020, overtaking India as the world’s No. 3 producer.

**A** proposed Arctic coal-mining project that was rejected by a Nunavut development regulator in 2010 but has been revived by another Canadian company has triggered renewed concern about the potential impact on wildlife, Inuit hunting grounds and world-renowned fossil sites on Ellesmere and Axel Heiberg islands.

The Arctic-coal controversy has re-emerged at a time when scientists across Canada are sounding alarms about the potential impact of budget cuts to Canadian environmental research and ecosystem monitoring capacity.

John Streicker, the Green Party’s national president and chief spokesman on Arctic issues said that the party does not issue “knee-jerk” rejections of all mining projects. But the Yukon resident said the Arctic’s unique environment requires the government to be “even more careful” in assessing potential resource projects in the region — particularly when coal’s considerable carbon footprint has contributed to the emissions





## CANOESWORTHY *continued*

widely seen to be driving the Arctic sea-ice meltdown in the first place.

“Coal itself is part of what’s causing this massive change,” he said.

It’s been known since the travels of 19th century Arctic explorers that Ellesmere and Axel Heiberg islands have substantial coal deposits. But it wasn’t deemed to be feasibly extractable until melting sea ice in the past decade improved the prospect of reliably shipping excavated coal out of Canada’s Far North.

In recent years, several major fossil discoveries on Ellesmere and Axel Heiberg islands have shed light on the lush, swampy environment that prevailed in Canada’s High Arctic in the distant past.

The region is considered one of the planet’s most important windows into the Eocene era of about 45 million years ago, and other sites on the islands preserve important fossil forests and petrified plant and animal remains from about four million years ago.

In its 2010 report, the review board also cited “unacceptable potential adverse impacts” — including the possible disruption of Inuit hunting activities in a region inhabited by Peary caribou — in rejecting the proposed mine.

Environment Canada experts, however, had backed Weststar’s plan, saying that “the potential adverse effects are highly predictable and can be mitigated with known technology.”

For the 16th year running, a team of NASA-backed scientists are flying into the remote barrenlands of Nunavut’s Devon Island to mimic life in a Martian colony.

“[It] just takes you to Mars as soon as you go there,” project director Pascal Lee told a CBC camera crew during a stopover in Iqaluit.

Mr. Lee, a veteran of Antarctic research, first proposed the idea of a High Arctic Mars simulator while in post-doctorate studies at Cornell University. The National Research Council soon shined to the idea, and by 1997, Mr. Lee was on his first exploratory trip to the island’s 20-kilometre-wide Houghton Crater.

Smashed into the tundra 20 million years ago by a hunk of errant space debris, the crater is ringed by networks of canyons and channels that are “astonishingly” similar to Mars, Mr. Lee said in a 2008 web video.

Today, the crater is home to two separate space-research facilities. The cylinder-shaped Flashline Mars Arctic Research Station (FMARS), constructed in 2000, is operated by the Mars Society, an international non-profit devoted to the exploration and ultimate settlement of Mars.

Mr. Lee’s Houghton-Mars Project (HMP), which shares an airstrip with FMARS, is backed by NASA, the Canadian Space Agency, the U.S. Marine Corps and a litany of private sponsors.

Two specially equipped Hummers, driven to the site in dramatic winter journeys over the frozen Northwest Passage, are on hand at HMP to simulate overland expeditions across the Martian surface (at a typical Martian rover speed of about 10 km/h). The Arthur Clarke Mars Greenhouse, installed on the site in 2002, is wired with sensors and communications systems to autonomously grow hydroponic plants under harsh conditions. At times, to simulate the conditions that would be faced by Martian astronauts, radio communications between “ground control” and HMP crew members are handicapped with a 20-minute delay.

Of course, while Devon Island is one of the world’s best Mars “analogs,” the simulation can only go so far. On its website, the neighbouring FMARS project wrote that its project is similar to “camping in a RV,” with crews routinely forced to “break the simulation” to collect water, refuel

generators and perform other camp-related tasks. Also, unlike actual interplanetary explorers, the FMARS crew must keep a loaded shotgun on hand to guard against invading polar bears.

A researcher conducts an experiment in the Houghton Crater on Devon Island. NASA-backed scientists have been using the crater as a Mars ‘simulator’ for 16 years.

Science author Mary Roach, who visited HMP in 2008, praised the site’s “inconvenience.” “Doing science here is a lesson in extreme planning,” she wrote in her 2010 book *Packing for Mars*. “A moon or Mars analog, rather than the orb itself, is the place to figure out that, say, three people might be a better size for an exploration party than two.”

The rugged, rocky terrain of Devon Island has also made it a go-to spot to field-test emerging robotics or extra-planetary technologies.

In 2010, a team from NASA’s Intelligent Robotics Group flew to the site to deploy K-10, an unmanned rover designed to follow behind human explorers, collecting soil samples, topographic models and other “tedious” data. Wearing bulky spacesuits, Mr. Lee and others have rappelled off cliffs and embarked on long-distance journeys. This season, the HMP team is expected to continue tests of a robotic rock drill.

The Parti Quebecois says it will give Jean Charest’s signature northern-development plan a makeover if it wins the Sept. 4 election, altering a project the Liberal premier hails as Quebec’s ticket to prosperity.

The party’s mining critic said a separatist Parti Quebecois government would “redo” the multibillion-dollar Plan Nord. It argues the initiative offers up Quebec’s natural resources for next to nothing.

Martine Ouellet said the PQ is pledging to raise royalties; ensure more Quebec resources are processed in the province; and spend less public money to help private companies — unless Quebecers get something in return.

“The Parti Quebecois is OK with developing northern mines, but certainly not in the same way as the plan I call ‘The Plan Marketing du Nord,’” Ouellet said in an interview, adding the PQ would launch environmental reviews before each project and boost returns for Quebecers by processing more of the resources in the province.

The \$80 billion Plan Nord, which the Liberals have made a key part of their re-election platform, would also take a different shape if the province’s upstart third party, Coalition Avenir Quebec, takes power.

Meanwhile, a possible public-private joint project could already be taking shape. It was announced in August that Canadian National Railway will work with mining companies and the Caisse pension-fund manager to study the possibility of building a rail line, which analysts estimate could cost \$5 billion.

Natural Resources Minister Clement Gignac defends the Plan Nord, saying Quebec already has one of the highest royalty models in Canada.

The province recently raised the rate — to 16 per cent of profits — from 12 per cent. The PQ would would, in addition to its 30 per cent tax on so-called “super-profits,” replace the Liberal royalty on profits with its own five per cent royalty on the value of the minerals extracted from the ground.

The Liberals say their opponents should be careful to avoid over-reaching.

“I prefer to have 16-per-cent royalties on many project activities than have 25-per-cent royalties with no projects at all,” Gignac said in an interview.



photo: Rich Durant

We neglected to mention last outfit that Che-Mun attended the wonderful Wilderness Paddler's Gathering in Vermont in March after an absence of many years. It is a great get together of mostly veteran paddlers and wilderness folk. But some youngin's were there too as shown above. Peter Marshall, who with his brother did a Minnesota to Back River trip is shown chatting with James West Davidson of Great Heart fame who was there with paddling partner John Rugge. Listening in was Maine Guide extraordinaire Garrett Conover. Featured evening speaker was Karsten Heuer author, filmmaker and Banff Park Ranger. He gave a superb talk on his Being Caribou book where he and his wife followed the Porcupine herd for five months on foot. Rugge and Davidson delighted the crowd with a revisit to their Moisie River trip of 1972 which inspired the classic Complete Wilderness Paddler which in turn heavily inspired the Hide-Away Canoe Club. More photos at [hacc.ca](http://hacc.ca) in the Che-Mun section.

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**Che-Mun**  
Founded in 1973 by Nick Nickels  
RATES: \$25 per year electronic/\$40 printed  
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.hacc.ca](http://www.hacc.ca)  
Michael Peake, Publisher.