



Spring 2012 The Journal of Canadian Wilderness Canoeing

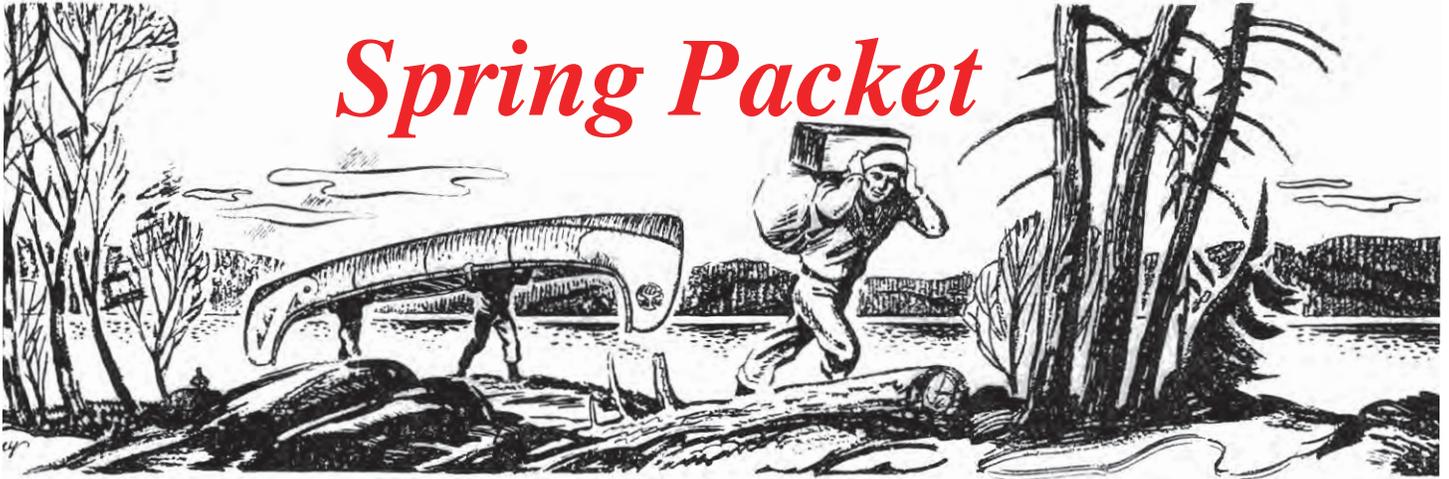
Outfit 148



photo: Brian Johnston

They called it Spider Canyon, and, as likely the first people to paddle the remote Lorillard River northeast of Baker Lake, Nunavut, they were certainly justified to do so. Winnipeg Che-Mun subscriber Brian Johnston and his group paddled this unknown stream tucked away in the eastern corner of Nunavut. Trip report and photos begin on Page 6.

Spring Packet



We heard from Chris Nikkel of Five Door Films who are showing the remarkable near-century old Hudson's Bay Company film *Romance of the Far Fur Country* we wrote about in *Che-Mun 147*.

I wanted to let you know of some upcoming screening dates of the archival film project *Return of the Far Fur Country*. We are currently touring 30 minutes of excerpts from the 1920 HBC film *Romance of the Far Fur Country* and are excited to announce the following screenings:

Winnipeg: Cinematheque, Friday May 11 (7pm), Saturday May 12 (7pm), and Sunday May 14 (2pm) 100 Arthur Street. Their website: www.winnipegfilmgroup.com
University of Winnipeg Rupert's Land Colloquium, Friday, May 18. 1:30pm. Their web site: <http://uwwebpro.uwinnipeg.ca/academic/ic/rupert/collo2012.html>
Vancouver: Vancity Theatre, Tuesday, July 31 (7pm). 1181 Seymour St. Their web site: <http://www.viff.org/theatre/>
Washington D.C. October, 24-27, 2012: Inuit Studies Conference, Smithsonian Institution

I hope to confirm dates/locations for Victoria and northern Ontario in the coming weeks. You can find recent updates, press interviews and news on our blog: www.returnfarfurcountry.ca."

From the website: No complete print of *The Romance of the Far Fur Country* exists. But thankfully, there exists fragments that make up the whole, which have been stored securely for over half a century at the British Film Institute Archive.

What is more, the diaries kept by the film crew members have also been preserved, albeit on the other side of the Atlantic, in the HBC archives in Winnipeg. With the footage,

and the notes, it is possible to resurrect the film to its original two hour run time, returning *The Romance of the Far Fur Country* to its former glory.

The Hudson's Bay Company Archives' interest to add this cache of 1920s HBC



Camera operator on location circa 1920 on an unknown river.

footage to its collections in Winnipeg has gained momentum in recent years. For the last two years, Five Door Films and the Hudson's Bay Company Archives have been collaborating in order to bring this footage back to Canada. What started as a distant idea grew into reality when the British Film Institute agreed that the important HBC film collection should be relocated, brought back to its rightful home in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in Winnipeg.

Transferring the tens of thousands of feet of highly flammable nitrate film across an ocean is no easy task. After lengthy discussions, a plan was established to preserve and transfer the film to HD video for future use.

The film elements from 1920 were transferred first to the BFI preservation centre, then to a film lab in London to scan each frame to a digital format, then packed carefully for the trip back to the country where it was shot some 90 years earlier.

Return of the Far Fur Country is all about putting what is perhaps the most important record of northern Canadian life, back on the screen.

Unbeknownst to the filmmakers in 1919, their footage has become an extraordinary time-capsule, a moving history of how Canada has developed as a nation. That is why the goal of the project is not only to bring the film back to Canada, but to bring it back to the very communities where it was shot.

This return to local communities will be held in town-hall screenings to provide a place for local people to view their ancestors on film, tell stories of how the country has changed, and help name the people and places that appear in the film.

This very unique tour will go not only to cities like Montreal, Winnipeg and Victoria—places that feature in the HBC film—it's also going back to some of the most remote locations in Canada. The tour includes Northern Alberta, Nunavut, Alert Bay off Vancouver Island, and Northern Ontario.

This project would not be possible without the cooperation of Hudson's Bay Company Archives, the British Film Institute / National Film and Television Archives in London, England and funders such as the Manitoba Arts Council.



Editor's Notebook

In our last outfit we talked a lot about mining and in this issue will continue the theme but in a much more canoe-friendly way.

Two recent books on well known travel stories have shown that mining the past through original source material such as travel journals and field notes reveal another layer of interest to even a familiar travel narrative. In this case the journals of P. G. Downes and Ernest Oberholtzer (reviewed on Pages 4 and 5) take us deeper into the everyday state of mind of the wilderness traveller both in 1912 and the 1930s in the far north. They are interesting and worthy additions to our wilderness libraries. We are also very happy to feature a trip report on a great northern river we had never even heard of. Thanks to intrepid subscriber Brian Johnston of Winnipeg, we get a fascinating look at the Lorillard River which is northeast of Baker Lake. And Brian also shows something new, to us anyway, in the practice of kite aerial photography which allows rare overviews of your travels. Will be looking into that as we often take a kite anyway - though they would never hold my Canon Mark IIIs!

The summer of 2012, the 100th anniversary of what we have often called the last great year of traditional northern canoeing, should have found the Hide-Away Canoe Club undertaking our semi-planned project on an unknown northern river - which will be revealed when we do it! However, as fate and finances have it we're not. I will be remaining in town with not even a cottage rental at my beloved Georgian Bay to get my northern hit.

On the other side of the "from failing hands we throw the torch" metaphor, my 16-year-old son, Tom, will be starting his first year in his post-camper experience as a CIT at Camp Hurontario in Georgian Bay where he has gone for the last six years.

With hard work and perseverance he will make the jump to full time councillor next year and enjoy a few golden summers of tripping with kids, revelling in this time-honoured and essentially Canadian outdoor opportunity - and even get paid for it!

I envy him but I am thrilled that he has shown an interest and excitement in this new undertaking. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

- Michael Peake

Canoesworthy

Although Parks Canada will eliminate or reduce 64 positions in the North, it says no national parks will close as a result. Parks Canada said 32 positions in the N.W.T., 30 in Yukon and two in Nunavut will be affected as a result of federal budget cuts. Across Canada, more than 600 jobs will be affected at Parks Canada.

Bill Fisher, Parks Canada's vice-president of operations for Western and Northern Canada, said reducing 64 positions doesn't mean that number of people will lose their jobs.

Fisher said the cuts won't affect how the national parks operate this season. Any changes to service resulting from the staff cuts will take effect next season. To minimize the impact on visitors, the jobs affected range from administrative to technical to asset management.

But Fisher said some adjustments have to be made to visitor services. In the North, that means two national historic sites in Yukon — the SS Klondike in Whitehorse and Dredge No. 4 near Dawson City — will no longer have tour guides, only self-guided tours.

The Union of National Employees represents Parks Canada workers. Its representative for the N.W.T., Geoff Ryan, said any jobs lost will have an impact.

Jenni Bruce with NWT Tourism said her organization highlights parks in its marketing. "A shorter season probably means retail, accommodation, any of these sectors situated beside the park, aren't going to have as many people coming, so not as much revenue," she said.

Chuck Blyth worked as a superintendent for more than a decade in the Nahanni National Park Reserve. "These parks are a real vital part of the local communities, so you cut a couple people or shorten their positions and it has a fairly significant effect on the towns," he said. With the Nahanni National Park Reserve's expansion in 2009, any cuts will be felt hard.

"It was expanded by about seven times, plus it has another unique aspect in that there is going to be a mining road through it, with Canadian Zinc," he said. "And that presents a lot of permitting and regulating and environmental monitoring and co-operation and technical committees, so if there are cutbacks, who is going to do that?"

The government of Nunavut says it has wonderful news for those worried about the decrease in the polar bear population. After sending planes and helicopters to survey the Western Hudson's Bay area, Nunavut Tunngavik reports that the frosty white bears aren't really in peril, despite dire warnings from environmental experts. Really?

"There are concerns about the effects of global warming," allows Drikus Gissing, Nunavut's director of wildlife. "But they are not endangered." In fact, he says, there are about 1,000 bears in the Western Hudson Bay area, up from the 935 estimated in 2004.

Hold on a minute. Groups such as the World Wildlife Fund Canada say the Nunavut survey doesn't state the whole story. Over the past few decades the bears have lost six weeks of hunting time due to the late freeze and early thaw of sea ice. This affects their health and the number of cubs, explains Peter Ewins, the WWFC's director of species conservation. "No ice, no bears," he says.

The news about healthy polar bears reflects a bit of self-interest on the part of Nunavut. It wants to increase the quota for hunting bears, a profitable venture for the Inuit. Hard to shrug off 30 years of studies by environmentalists, though. No bears, no hunt.

As the polar bear sports hunt in Nunavut faces more restrictions — and international criticism — many big-game sports hunters have turned to another large, and plentiful Arctic animal, the muskox.

With about 50,000 muskox roaming around Victoria Island in western Nunavut, you don't have to look hard to find the animals, says George Naikak Hakongak of Cambridge Bay, who started an independent muskox outfitting company in 2010.

The muskox, known as *omingmak* in Innuinaqtun, are plentiful, Hakongak says. His main challenge now is to get the word out that he's open for business.

To that end, Hakongak visited the Safari International annual conference for hunters held in Las Vegas this past February.

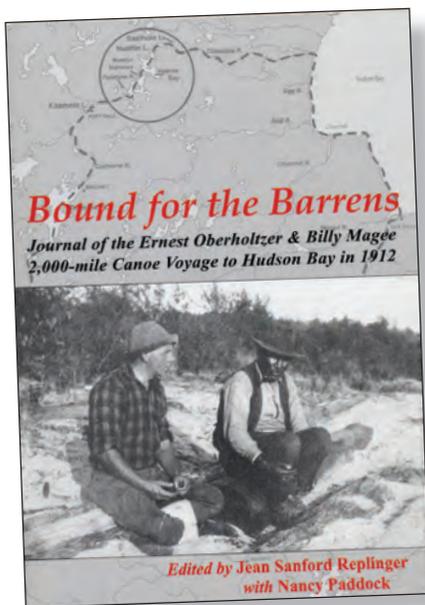
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Bound for the Barrens

By Ernest Oberholtzer
Edited by Jean Sanford Replinger
Mallard Island Books 2012 \$19.95

We have had the good fortune in these pages previously to tell the tale of Ernest Oberholtzer's 1912 canoe trip through 2000 miles of the Canadian north with Ojibway guide Billy Magee. This remarkable journey at the end of the



classic era of land-based travel in the north was not published until 2001 when the lavish *Toward Magnetic North* book appeared. Subsequently veteran Arctic hand David Pelly wrote *The Old Way North* in 2008 which looked at this trip in detail.

Well those books were the finished and decorated cakes of that great trip - and now we have a book of the ingredients. *Bound for the Barrens* is a full transcription of the wonderful field notes and journals of Oberholtzer's six month trip from Cumberland House to to the bottom of Lake Winnipeg via the Reindeer, Cochrane and Thlewiaza rivers plus Hudson Bay and the Hayes River in an 18-foot Chestnut prospector which is another of the stars of this story.

And despite the fact I know this tale fairly well from enjoying the other two books, I found these journals absolutely fascinating. It will appeal to *Che-Mun* readers especially as I

think they would have a better understanding of reading someone's immediate impressions noted during a trip.

Perhaps the most interesting parts are Ober's wonderful observations and insights into the people he met along the way in that summer of 1912 when the near north was a busy and bustling place. Oberholtzer, who was just 24 when he did the trip, has a great eye for detail and his adventures among the northern world of 1912 are quite revealing. I found it very compelling to be guided through the machinations and planning for the trip they were about to undertake and their fruitless search for a guide to take them into an unknown area. Ober and Magee, a native from northern Ontario, had often travelled the waters of Quetico but neither had been to the far north.

It was interesting to read how much study the young Ober put into the Tyrrell trips. spending time at the British Museum reading his reports and wishing to emulate the Tyrrells. He wanted to follow their route and was taken on his own unique one.

The chance meeting with the tremendously able Inuk named Bite and his family near the mouth of the Thlewiaza provides the most interesting part of the book. As David Pelly pointed out, Bite opened Ober's eyes to a new type of survival on the ocean. With his young family traveling with them, Bite showed the pair how to live on and navigate the particularly treacherous west Hudson Bay coastline - one of the most dangerous places on the planet to paddle a canoe.

Ober had great observations on almost everyone they met - and they met quite a few people - everyone except his stalwart travelling companion Billy. There are not many photos of Billy and he is often treated as the servant he sort of was - but not without respect. The pair, separated by 25 years, had a lifelong bond in a way that we find somewhat difficult to understand today. Things were different then. People were described differently. That's just the way it was.

It is very surprising that Oberholtzer did not publish any of this trip in his lifetime. He

went on to a very distinguished career of environmental stewardship. This trip was clearly the cornerstone of that.



Billy Magee and Ernest Oberholtzer years after their famous trip

However, he was clearly aware that his trip had some newsworthiness when he ends up speaking with a newspaperman at the end of the trip and says he purposely did not tell him much at all - presumably to keep it for his own effort.

The book concludes with a fine summary by retired University of New Brunswick professor Bob Cockburn, to whom this book is dedicated and an eminent P. G. Downes expert who also worked on this. His insight is valued as he knows the areas of northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba from a historical travel perspective better than almost anyone.

The journals contains all the usual things any good northern trip journal would. This includes a full listing of supplies purchased and all the other info gathered along the way. One particular small but interesting addition is under Miscellaneous at the end of the journal. Dozens of lines and snippets are included - things which wouldn't have meaning to an attentive reader - lines like "Little bells to keep away the wolves in winter. Joins the circus" and "Huskie wakes you at 3 o'clock in the morning to ask if you are cold. Very solicitous." Little chinks in the logs of a major wilderness trip that many of us would write.

The fact that this pair made this remarkable journey unguided under difficult conditions makes it all the more appealing. The book features numerous photos and maps and is fully footnoted. A most wonderful read for canoe trippers of all eras.

- Michael Peake



Distant Summers

P.G. Downes' Journals of Travels in Northern Canada, 1936-1947 Vol. 1
Edited by R.H. Cockburn. McGahern Stewart Publishing \$26

In 1943, P.G. Downes, a teacher from Concord, Massachusetts who was obsessed with Canada's north, published *Sleeping Island*, an account of his canoe trip from Pelican Narrows SK to Nueltin Lake, NWT in 1939. It received enthusiastic reviews, despite the world's attention being focused on more pressing business in Europe. Toronto's *Globe & Mail* declared, "it is the sort of book that is going to create, after the war, a whole army of men, and maybe some women, who will be poking into every odd corner of our still unmapped places, and liking it." Despite the critics' praise, there was only one edition printed of *Sleeping Island* until R.H. Cockburn, professor at University of New Brunswick, republished it in 1988, and expanded on it in 2004 and 2011.

Now, Cockburn has provided remarkable book-ends for *Sleeping Island*—a collection of journals and field notes Downes wrote during his adventures in the north before and after his 1939 trip. Called *Distant Summers*, P.G. Downes' *Journals of Travels in Northern Canada, 1936-1947*, it is being printed in two volumes this year. The "pre-Island" volume is now available and covers the years from 1936 to 1938, when Downes made his first trips into the north to reach Brochet on the north-east shore of Reindeer Lake.

In '36 Downes left Pelican Narrows on 23 August, a late start and a time when weather can work against you. As he progressed along the eastern shore of Reindeer, the season changed. Fall came and brought strong winds, heavy seas, and hard frosts. Thirteen days out and only 12 days left before he had to be in Pelican to return home, Downes had no choice but to turn back—"there have been eight days of blowing; so with 170 miles of coast, much of it necessitating calm, I have let it beat me this once." The following year, leaving in mid-June instead of mid-August, Downes made it to Brochet.

These two adventures gave Downes a profound sense of wanderlust, an affliction he could never shake. In a letter to his friend from Pelican Narrows, Downes wrote that he could never feel comfortable unless he was moving about.

In 1938, Downes went farther north, this time to Great Slave and Great Bear lakes. On this adventure Downes encountered some of

the living legends of the north, including King Beaulieu, grandson of Francois Beaulieu who travelled with Alexander Mackenzie to the Pacific in 1793, and George Douglas, author of *Lands Forlorn* and renowned northern traveller and geologist.

Downes flew into Ile à la Crosse then set off for the Methye Portage and the Clearwater River, Fort McMurray and the Athabasca. Two months after leaving Ile à la Crosse, Downes pulled ashore at the Eldorado mine on the eastern shore of Great Bear. A week later, 28 August, he flew out to Yellowknife—"the maddest town on the continent." Of the locals, he wrote there are, "gamblers, prospectors, bums of every description, half-breeds, one or two whores... a miserable place."

The most—perhaps only—rewarding part of his visit to Yellowknife came when he left. On board the steamer to Fort Smith, Downes met

George Douglas—his hero of northern travel and history. Many times on this adventure, Downes wrote much about the late John Hornby, who died of starvation on the Thelon river ten years earlier but who's legend make him larger than life across the north; Downes even became sympathetic to Hornby's disposition towards humanity after enduring the wretches and bottom rungs of society at Fort Smith. Douglas, however, brought Downes to his senses when revealed the eccentricities and character flaws of the unfortunate northern traveller that eventually led to his death.

Certainly these journals

lack the prose of the *Sleeping Island*, but they are field notes after all: most entries were made at the end of long days and he wrote down what he remembered of the events of the day, with few if any revisions. Despite this, his observations of the geography, history, and inhabitants are vivid and enchanting. So knowledgeable and well-prepared was Downes that when Douglas introduced him to Charles Camsell, the Deputy Minister of the NWT, and an accomplished traveller himself, Douglas said, "Dr. Camsell, I wish to introduce you to Mr. Downes; he knows more of the history of the north country than J.B. himself [J.B. Tyrrell]. High praise, indeed, of the compact little man from Massachusetts.

Bottom line: if you love *Sleeping Island* (and if you don't why have you read this far?) you need this book. And the other when it comes out, too. Seldom does one get to glimpse the influences and experiences, the germs of ideas that would contribute to a classic northern travel narrative. It's like seeing the sketches of a great work of art before it is painted.

- Sean Peake



A P.G. Downes' classic photo of natives living in the canoe culture in the near North pre-WWII.

The Lorillard: North of Baker, West of Hudson



Photo: Brian Johnston

Enjoying a run on the remote Lorillard River northeast of Baker Lake. Very few - if any - canoeists have enjoyed this remote waterway.

By BRIAN JOHNSTON

In the District of Keewatin, on the mainland across from Hudson Bay's Southampton Island, south of Brown Lake, and east of the Quoiich River lies an unfamiliar waterway. The unknown river flows in a southeast direction from the Wager Plateau (nearby Ukkusiksalik National Park), emptying into Daly Bay north of Chesterfield Inlet. The unheard of watercourse is called the Lorillard River.

To our knowledge, the Lorillard River had not been paddled but it was our decision and intention, to canoe the river. That begs the question, what would the Lorillard River turn out to be—the river from hell, an insignificant river, or a gem of a river?

It's a bit of a crapshoot planning to canoe an obscure river. Any unheard of and unheralded river lacks the usually known and welcome canoe trip details and information—starting location, camping, canoe friendliness, rapids, falls, portages, ending point and so on.

We spent much of the winter months perusing maps and emailing map images with marked up routes. Our quest was a suitable starting location

as well as an artful inland route via the Connery River and Sagvaqjuaq River to minimize the amount of canoeing on Hudson Bay. Our research found that Water Survey of Canada no longer collected Lorillard River data but nevertheless, data from two decades ago showed a peak runoff during the month of July and minimal flows the rest of the year—visualize a spike on a flat line graph.

Our assumption was that the headwaters of the Lorillard River would have insufficient water as the maps displayed a small basin with only little lakes and no channel, similar to but worse than the upper Kunwak River.

Below the steep headwaters the river prospect showed potential and we believed a canoe trip was plausible though timing the trip to coincide with peak flows would be critical. With continuous permafrost, sparse vegetation, and limited storage of precipitation (a lack of lakes) the historical water data clearly indicated that the runoff would fast and the window of opportunity short. With the ice typically going out in later June we accordingly anticipated an early July trip.

The likelihood of successful fishing was an uncertainty, given the lack of lakes and minimum flow the river might freeze solid in the winter.



In spite of our conclusion that a Lorillard canoe trip looked possible, we had a bail out option—paddle the nearby Quoich River.

U.S. Army Lt. Frederick Schwatka named the Lorillard in 1880 while looking for the lost papers of the Franklin party on behalf of the American Geographical Society. Similar to the Lorillard, he also named the nearby Winchester Inlet and Daly Bay after benefactors.

Schwatka went up the Lorillard River, overland to the Brown River, down the Hayes River to King William Island and then returned via the Back, Meadowbank, and Quoich Rivers almost a year later. His epic 4,360 km trek overshadows our little trip by all accounts. Our trip area had been explored and mapped by the Inuit and by Schwatka but that was a longtime ago and by sled and foot, not by canoe.

With the planning complete, the sole remaining unknown was crew member number six. We lost our sixth paddler and even after soliciting our canoeing network, we found our expedition one member shy. We gave some thought to using a solo canoe. In the end, an email message sent to Pakboat owner and avid paddler Alv Elvestad saved the day. He sent out a special Pakboats Newsletter featuring our request. And guess what, one person took the bait!

After the usual procrastinating on packing we'd had pulled, pooled, and culled gear, dried food, and double-checked our mounting pile of supplies (4 personal packs, 1 barrel of bread and crackers, 1 paddle and pole bundle, 1 double gun case, and 5 red food packs plus carry-on bags and camera boxes). We had previously shipped our wanigan and three Pakboat canoes. It was like moving from one staging area on to the next. Once the seemingly endless art and science of planning and packing was done, we started our journey to "experience the north"

A trip north is not without cautionary signs detailing the carry-on baggage restrictions that disallow "large food items, cakes, jugs of milk and buckets of chicken." There was a government notice in one airport stating, "Water from this source is untreated and should be boiled or disinfected prior to consumption." In addition, we read signage stating that, such-and-such "airport cannot be held responsible for passengers who write offending messages in these washrooms." Of course, like many passengers the first place we headed to was the washroom. Finally, we took note of "Please do not spit tobacco into the drinking fountain." Certainly, the way north is unique.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned warnings, the north is welcoming with open arms. Consider the prominent religious statue of Jesus standing tall with arms wide open or the smiling local young women seen in the small airport terminals wearing handmade amautiit complete with babies in the back pouches. Yes, there is hope.

In our case, we were bound for the hamlet of Baker Lake with our advance crew staging at Baker Lake Lodge until our final departure for the Lorillard River. Again, the lodge is welcoming with its wall of photographs and teapot cozy—both familiar icons from past visits before previous final river departures.

Even though our last flight leg out of Rankin Inlet was cancelled, we boarded a flight for Arviat that was rerouted via Baker Lake. It was during the terminal transport trajectory on route to Baker Lake that I got excited seeing the land and rivers, optimistically knowing that things were falling into place—that all our gear would arrive after a frightful night of worrying. One less unknown. Baker Lake was mostly iced over but the Kazan and Thelon Rivers were open. Another good sign.

Life is always changing and Baker Lake was no exception. After we

landed, immediately one passenger checked his cell phone. Cell coverage in Baker Lake—the north is changing fast. Baker Lake Lodge offers a wireless connection although none of us had anything to connect. Still old fuel drums for garbage cans. Still kamituks in use, even brand new homemade wooded sleds for sale. Still a community freezer. Still a family of five passing by on an ATV—even the odd helmet in use. Starting to see garages including attached garages.

Mining is the other noticeable change. Baker Lake is now dubbed the Mining Capital of the Keewatin. Agnico-Eagle Mines and Areva both have main street offices.

Let's get back to the canoe trip. We picked out a potential airplane landing area based on the combination of river and land features. For the air charter, we hoped the esker and flat grass-like surfaces of the post glacial period would yield a suitable landing area. Eskers themselves do not always mean good landing (picture a camel back esker) but they along with flat grass-like ground are often well-suited for off-strip landing sites for tundra wheeled planes. Furthermore, our desired location was close to the river and downstream of the shallow and steep upper river section.

We were fortunate to have picked the perfect landing site. Again, the mining presence surfaced as our potential landing area turned out to be Nanuq, a known natural sand airstrip for a Peregrine Diamonds' tent camp, so our pilots said. Furthermore, it was conveniently located along the Lorillard River shoreline. No portaging to the river as is sometimes required when utilizing eskers for landing sites.

In the late evening light of July 9th among long shadows we prepared our first supper and assembled camp and canoes. It is worth mentioning that some of our crew left from the south earlier that day. They followed the Hudson Bay coastal communities milk run before heading inland to Baker Lake where our air charter awaited and deposited all of us on the land next to the Lorillard River. Now that's a real segue or landscape transformation. And so, we begin the river portion of our canoe trip. Rather than providing a day-to-day trip account, I will highlight the Lorillard River and the expedition events.

It was a perfect start to the river trip except my tent-mate and I did not pack the tent pegs! The next morning, even after all the hoo-ha leading up to the trip, I was awake at 5 a.m. to a sauna tent, the heat of the early morning sun can have that affect.

Of course, there was much apprehension due to the unknown nature of the river. After one day of paddling, I could affirm that the nature of the river was proving to be ideally suited for canoeing!

The extensive receding waterline was leaving the sand and gravel beach ridges scarred. Where the river widens, sometimes we'd lose the deep water channel and end up walking our canoes in search of deep water. There were exposed boulder bars. All of this evidence indicated we were on the downward side of the spiked water flow graph.

The river and landscape was varied and intriguing. As the Lorillard River meandered there were snow-lined banks, hills and ridges that crested a couple hundred metres tall, and eskers that invited wayward hikes. At times, we found goose dropping and caribou hair landings, while at other times we came ashore on exposed rock. As well we found sand and gravel shorelines, hence the dashed river channels. As paddlers we were treated with playful whitewater, bigger pool and drop style rapids and falls, and steep sided or walled mini canyons with powerful



and explosive water forces. Further downstream, Inuit way markers and stone villages awaited us, as well as a final long moving water river valley run-out down to sea level. Once on salt water abandoned cabins from the time period when a few Inuit still lived on the land appeared.

In general, the river drops one metre per kilometer, which meant the usual far north river style of whitewater paddling. Whereas the one

section with a drop of 40 meters over less than 10 kilometres where the map indicated more than a dozen rapid hash marks resulted in some lining and portaging, along with whitewater running.

At home while marking up the maps we took note of topography such as a wide lake-like section followed by a pencil thin river and rapid hash marks—hmm,

mini canyon? Sometimes our ideas of mini canyons turned out to be runnable. Then again, to our surprise we arrived, portaged, and camped at a mini canyon where we expected no such thing! Nevertheless the views and area were breathtaking and included several flat on the ground nests as well as a large raptor nest on the opposite canyon wall. We also saw a caribou skeleton and antler rack at that site.

As the other branches entered the Lorillard proper, the volume increased and the little Lorillard gained our respect. One day with current, our GPS had us moving over 10 km/h whilst paddling and drifting at six km/h. The Lorillard River really was a downhill ride, ideally suited for canoes.

We stopped to check our first rock cairn—a single large base rock with a smaller marker stone on top. On the top of the mound or hill there was a possible kayak stand. At another campsite we were not the first people to visit, as there were half a dozen old tent rings gently held in the tundra.

One day we were on the water at 10 a.m. racing downstream with the strong current and past the cliffs of a corner rapid. We floated by sik siks, wolf, golden eagle, bank swallows, and ptarmigan—a morning of wildlife.

Another day shortly before lunch we were treated to the wildlife channel, caribou on all sides of us, approximately a dozen swam right in front of us and across the river only to be followed by another couple of dozen, a repeat event. Earlier in the morning, we had seen another group of caribou.

Of course, we saw the usual loons, geese, sand hill cranes, sik siks,

ptarmigans (first still in winter white and then later in summer colours), wolves, caribou, fox, seals, and birds of prey, not to mention a polar bear!

You could see lake trout and arctic char in the eddy pool as well as grayling. Some the larger lakes must not freeze to the bottom.

Several seals surprised us with spectacular splashes and popped their noses and heads up to check us out.

After a week, we put up the bug tent (aptly christened The Lorillard Lounge) for the first time because there were a few mosquitoes. Our first day with black flies was day ten. About halfway into the trip I stood at the edge of a rapid feeling the mist. White puffy clouds far off in the distance were hiding behind the dark hills.

On the tundra

misted cranberries flourished. More than once we ate juicy and sweet cranberries (from last year but absolutely fabulous—quite unbelievable). Often we had explored tent rings, cairns, and caches while grazing on south facing sun-ripened cranberries—just unreal! We had a relaxing hour of pancake frying complete with a double round of coffee and tea one morning as we tried to draw in a lone male caribou that was watching us eat by raising our antler arms and bowing to kiss the ground.

It's good to be close to nature. As it rained early one morning I could hear the nearby rapid and falls. First, the sound of the rapid reached my ears but then the falls increasing in volume as the rain continued to fall. There were no sounds from other crew members. I read while I waited. It was humid so I had to crawl back into my sleeping bag to fend off the early morning chill!

Our trips are not without tradition but sometimes we break the routine. On evening, we mixed it up a bit and forewent the salty snack and salad. Instead, we pan-fried some extra corn tortillas with leftover hummus from lunch as an evening appetizer. Not wishing to push the limits, the usual happy hour rum was rightfully the rest of the bottle.

Kite aerial photography (KAP) is another tradition practiced by one of our party, which adds a unique photographic perspective.

With the diverse weather, a single day can seem like several days all in one. Envision an early clear blue and warm morning turned dark, cold, and blustery by afternoon when towering cumulus clouds roll in, but move on in time to leave a calm golden evening skyline. At other moments time pauses—a beautiful evening, sun sparkles off the



Saying farewell to their charter plan which fortunately could land on the flat sand of the upper Lorillard River.

Photo: Lee Sessions



lake like river, a silhouetted island lies off in the distance, and nearby wet granite glistens in the low evening light with long erratic boulder shadows. It's bug free in the wind as small waves lap at the shoreline. My mind wanders off...drifts away.

Then we experience the opposite of serene. Wind howled all night, ripping and tearing at the tent, flapping continuously and endlessly. It was loud and it was ceaselessly. I woke having worried incessantly all night about the wind even though we had rocked down every tent guideline as well as the snow skirt or ground cloth.

We were up after 7 a.m. to strong winds and back into the tent several hours later, after a potato pancake cook off with an apple and raisin sauce and a double round of hot drinks.

According to our route plan, we would exit the Lorillard River and then portage and paddle an overland tundra pond and river hopping adventure. Once again, embracing known unknowns. In doing so, we would avoid canoeing on much of the coastline (and dealing with tides, winds, salt water on equipment, lack of drinking water, migrating polar bears). Our chosen path was to paddle the Lorillard until we were within 20 km of Hudson Bay, then head over to the Connery River via some silver dollar ponds, and continue to work our way towards Chesterfield Inlet via the Sagvaqjuaq River. At the end of our overland route, we would paddle to Severn Harbour and Hanbury Island and then cross over to the south side of Chesterfield Inlet, before paddling in to the Hamlet of Chesterfield Inlet.

Landing at Nanuq (polar bear) was perhaps foreshadowing a polar bear encounter. If so, we definitely missed it. During the trip planning stage, we had spoken to a scientific researcher who had worked in the vicinity. He had said night was the worst time for polar bears, so sleep with the gun at the ready. As predicted, night was when we experienced our first polar bear visit.

At 2 a.m., one of our crew woke and sat up face to face with a 950 lb. eight year old male. The curious polar bear had nosed his feet at the bottom of his sleeping bag! Its head was fully in the tent vestibule!

Naively, we thought the next day we would be venturing into possible polar bear country and were caught a bit off guard (we had the air horn and shotguns at the ready but had not erected the electric fence). Clearly, we were mistaken.

We initially scared the bear off and checked and cleaned up the camp, placed pots on packs as noisemakers, and erected the electric fence we had packed and planned to use the next night!

At 6:30 a.m., our cadre was summoned again when the polar bear returned for its second visit. After firing shotgun-warnings, blasts from an air horn, and bear bangers we again caused it to retreat but this second return concerned us.

As we packed up camp and discussed our situation, we noticed the polar bear stalking us in the water like they do when hunting seals, barely his nose and eyes out of the water. We immediately tried to get him to alter course but we were unsuccessful and the bear came ashore just upstream and up wind of our camp. Eventually, with more warning shots and bear bangers we were able to force him to retreat for the third time, this time back into the river where he remained near the opposite shore, across from our camp, near the top of a rapid watching us, but blocking our exit river.

To us, his stalking behaviour and attempting to get upwind of us indicated an escalation from curious bear behaviour to predatory or hunting behaviour. We called via our satellite phone the Conservation Office in Chesterfield Inlet for advice and unfortunately were informed he was on holidays.

Before we could complete another call the bear took a direct fourth approach of swimming to our side of the river and making a beeline right into our camp despite our noise making and warning shots. The bear's demeanor had changed. It was no longer stalking or sneaking but rather taking the direct and determined line into our camp showing no sign of annoyance, fear, or hesitation. Without regard for our deterrence actions, the polar bear crossed our line in the sand and unfortunately we had to dispatch the bear.

We had known that seeing polar bears was a real possibility so we had two 12 gauge pump shotguns loaded with 3" rifled slugs, a small electric fence, bear banger flare style noisemakers, as well as an air horn.

Following the incident, there was a group consensus to shorten the trip and arrange for a pickup at the end of the Lorillard River at Daly Bay instead of venturing overland towards Chesterfield Inlet. We were shaken and concerned about encountering more polar bears and aware that numerous warming and lethal shots had left us with a short supply of slugs.

With the help of the RCMP officers, a pickup was arranged with two boat operators from Chesterfield Inlet.

It is worth noting that over a hundred years later we, similar to Schwatka, hired and traveled with native families and followed their customary ways of travel. More foreshadowing. We were picked up by a traditional freighter (Nor-west Canoe) as well as a modern aluminum motorboat (Zag Fab).

Not many canoe trips end in Chesterfield Inlet and we were privileged to visit the community and be welcomed by the hamlet.

Local kids follow and hang on to foreigners. Kids are kids, dress like the south, but chew snuff even though Health Canada uses northern anti smoking images.

Chesterfield Inlet has history such as the first Roman Catholic Mission building in the eastern Arctic (1912) and for a longtime Ste. Theresa Hospital (1931) was largest building in the eastern Arctic. School came in 1951. The community now offers the Pitsuilak Co-operative as well as a Northern Store. Prices, of course, are up there, with 4 L of milk approaching \$15. A can of 4 L of Coleman camp fuel will set you back \$30. Sometimes, the end to a trip chooses you rather than the other way around. Even the known end sometimes becomes unknown. Paddling into the unknown turned out to be fumbling towards a river of ecstasy. The afterglow is still strong.

Postscript

This was a trip of unknowns from the get-go although everything was fitting nicely into place. We had paddled other rivers to the bay so seeing a polar bear would not have surprised us. Even though we had come prepared for a polar bear, having to shoot one truly took us by surprise. I'm indebted to my fellow canoe trippers for working together and coming to a consensus on several issues under stressful conditions.

It is important to understand that although we found the Lorillard River to be a gem and untrammelled, future travelers are cautioned to heed information about travelling in polar bear country.



CANOESWORTHY *continued*

But Hakongak hasn't yet been able to tap into the help he needs to market his outfitting business— such as help setting up a website or tips on booking clients, the kind of expertise that Visit Greenland and its website provides to outfitting operations in Greenland.

Despite the challenge of building an independent tourism operation in Nunavut, Hakongak sees room for growth. He's set up a Facebook page and he already has bookings for the 2012 fall muskox hunt.

The clients hosted to date by Hakongak include hunters from the Outdoor television channel. For now, personal recommendations continue to send Hakongak new clients, hunters who are willing and able to pay \$5,500 plus travel to Cambridge Bay to hunt a muskox.

Hakongak's muskox camp is located at Bryon Bay, at the mouth of the char-rich Lauchlan River, about 140 kilometres from Cambridge Bay by boat.

That's a place steeped in history, with many traditional camping places and a former DEW line site nearby. From the camp, Hakongak takes his hunters out onto the land, where they can scout for muskox.

"Most want the biggest one," he said.

But sometimes they'll see many in a large herd, so they have to choose the one they plan to harvest. And while you might think you couldn't miss hitting a target as big as a huge muskox, Hakongak says the hunt can be challenging, depending on the terrain.

You must pick your spot and aim for a clean shot, with a rifle or crossbow. After the hunt, Hakongak and his team clean and butcher the muskox.

They salt the hide and package the horns so that these can travel safely back home with the sports hunter to be mounted. Hunters can also count on taking more than 100 kilograms of packaged muskox meat with them. Muskox aren't considered to be endangered or listed for trade restrictions on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, so there are no problems exporting muskox trophies or meat.

Hakongak isn't alone in offering muskox sports hunts in Cambridge Bay— Canada North Outfitting and the Ekaluktutiak Hunters and Trappers Organization are among the other outfitting companies which also offer muskox hunting trips.

The Kitikmeot now sees a total allowable harvest of about 400 muskox a year, with about half that going to the Kitikmeot Foods commercial harvest in Cambridge Bay.

A recent editorial in the *New York Times* praises Premier Jean Charest's Plan Nord bill as "a remarkable precedent," but critics note it also adds to growing pressure on Charest to strengthen the bill so that it truly protects from development half of northern Quebec, as Charest promised in his re-election campaign.

The \$80-billion Plan Nord was billed by Charest as a way to preserve half of Quebec's north by 2035, while allowing sustainable mining and forestry in the other half.

"The bill matters," the editorial in the May 1st *Times* says, "not just to Canada but to the world: The boreal forests and tundra of northern Canada remain a relatively intact ecosystem, absorbing more carbon than the world's tropical forests and providing a vital buffer against global warming."

The editorial goes on to say that Charest had made a firm commitment to prevent all industrial activity in 150 million acres— half of northern Quebec, an area the size of France— but that government

bureaucrats have watered down his intentions. The bill now promises only that at some future point steps will be taken to protect the environment and promote the sustainable use of resources.

Participants in a two-day forum on the Plan Nord in Quebec City echoed the concerns raised in the *Times* editorial.

"It's a very good objective, this idea of protecting 50 per cent of the north, and it's nice that Americans are applauding it," said Christian Simard, director of Nature Quebec and a spokesperson for the Plan Nord Forum. "But so far, the Plan Nord is simply an arrangement to facilitate a mining boom."

He noted that the government's plan at first was to set aside only 12 per cent of the territory as true conservation areas. The other 38 per cent would be placed in "natural capital land reserves" where mining exploration and forestry would be allowed.

When environmental groups denounced this plan, the government shelved the idea of natural capital land reserves. In February, Environment Minister Pierre Arcand announced that the government would create conservation areas on 20 per cent of the north by 2020, including 12 per cent of the continuous area covered by boreal forest. The rest of the conservation plan will be hammered out gradually, with new public consultations in 2020 and 2030.

Environmental groups at the Plan Nord Forum are concerned the government will protect only the northernmost boreal forest areas, and that energy needs of mining operations in the north will necessitate the damming of Quebec's few remaining intact rivers, and increase the province's greenhouse gas emissions.

The federal government has announced more money to clean up some of the remaining mess left by a Cold-War-era Arctic defence system, one of the largest environmental cleanups in Canadian history.

Federal Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq has committed another \$15 million to clean up two more sites on the Distant Early Warning line, the radar system that once stretched across Canada's North to guard against attack.

Those sites are the last two of the 21 being remediated by the Department of National Defence (DND) with a total cost of \$575 million. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development is responsible for another 21 sites.

Just one site, Cape Dyer on the east coast of Baffin Island, is expected to yield thousands of containers of contaminants such as hydrocarbons, PCBs and heavy metals.

The DEW line was established in the late 1950s along the Arctic coastline, roughly along the 69th parallel from northwestern Alaska to Iceland. It was built to warn against the possibility of a Soviet missile attack that never came— but its impact in the North was large and long-lasting nevertheless.

DEW line construction crews were one of the first and largest forays of southern institutions into the Arctic at a time when Inuit people were making the transition from life on the land into settled communities.

The DEW line offered Inuit their first industrial-type jobs, introduced them to money for the first time and disrupted centuries-old patterns of family life. It accelerated their movement off the land. It created public health problems as Inuit scavenged from DEW line sites and built shanty towns, which one federal health worker compared to the worst slums of India.



CANOESWORTHY *continued*

While the stations provided services such as occasional medical care, they also brought with them problems such as substance abuse. Contact between Inuit and thousands of DEW line workers was discouraged to the point of separate dining halls for Inuit workers, said Tester.

Now, the DEW line is again a source of Inuit jobs. Work on DND's last two sites has been contracted to an Inuit company and is expected to provide 130 short-term positions.

Part of the reason the cleanup has taken so long — work began in 1989 — is that local people wanted to make the most of the work available, said Eagles. The U.S. Military, which was largely behind construction of the DEW line, put up US\$77 million to tidying it up — believed to be the first time the country contributed to such an effort not on American soil.

It rated just a six-paragraph mention among hundreds of pages of Quebec government budget documents. But it will be one of Canada's largest infrastructure projects when it gets off the ground — a multibillion-dollar effort to build a huge railway across an isolated stretch of rugged land and accelerate the province's push into natural resources.

Canadian National Railway Co. and pension fund manager Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec are teaming up on an estimated \$5-billion project to lay down a new track stretching 800 kilometres from the port of Sept-Îles north past Shefferville into the mines of the Labrador Trough. The aim is to serve major iron ore producers like Cliffs Natural Resources and juniors like Adriana Resources Inc., as well as other current and potential miners, that are searching for a better way to get their Quebec-produced material to international markets.

The project is in its early stages but is expected to be completed by 2017 if talks underway with mining companies yield firm transport agreements. Once those commitments are reached, the railway will do a feasibility study.

CN estimated that it will hire 1,000 new permanent employees, from signallers to engineers and maintenance staff, to staff the rail link. It hasn't executed new construction of this magnitude in years.

Caisse officials talk about the project in terms of "nation-building" for Quebec. They say it's in the same vein as the James Bay power project of the 1970s, which vaulted the province into the big leagues of hydroelectric production.

"You have to go back to the 1950s to see a railway project of this scale" in Canada, said Jean-Paul Viau, a railway historian based in Montreal.

That decade, the privately-owned Cartier Railway was built to transport what is today ArcelorMittal's iron ore concentrate from Mont-Wright over 420 km to Port-Cartier. Iron Ore Company of Canada, majority-owned by Rio Tinto, also operates a 419 km rail line from Labrador City to Sept-Îles. It is not involved in the current negotiations, a spokesperson said.

Chinese investors, desperate to secure iron ore supply to make steel, are pouring money into greenfield iron ore projects in the Labrador Trough. This new rail line is different from other Plan Nord projects in that it will be entirely privately owned and financed. The estimated \$5-billion cost is split into half debt and half equity, with CN putting up two-thirds of the equity portion while the Caisse puts up one third.

Like a cat with nine lives, the Bathurst Road and Port project in Nunavut's Kitikmeot region has landed back on its feet. Sabina Gold and Silver said it plans on reviving the port and road project, which would provide easy access to its Back River gold mine, with up to six million ounces of gold and to Xstrata Zinc Canada's planned silver-zinc mine at Hackett River.

Now Sabina says it's looking, along with Xstrata, at building a deep water port in Bathurst Inlet (approximately 70 kilometres to the north of Sabina's Back River project) and an all weather road connecting the port to existing ice roads which service the Ekati and Diavik mines from Yellowknife.

The port facility, 35 km to the south of the community of Bathurst Inlet, would include the construction of a dock, 18 large fuel storage tanks, the 211-km. road to Conwoyto Lake, a 1,200-metre airstrip and two camps for about 200 workers. Its cost was estimated at \$270 million several years ago.

Vehicle owners in Nunavut may want to hang on to their polar bear-shaped licence plates after the territory's new rectangular plates featuring an updated design are issued later this year.

That's because the iconic polar bear licence plates, which Nunavut inherited from the Northwest Territories, appear destined to become collector's items.

After 32 bids from 11 bidders on the online auction site eBay, bids on a polar bear plate closed March 24 at \$213.30 U.S. With postage adding \$20 to this cost, the winning bidder will pay more than \$230 for the plate described as "14880N September 2008."

The description on the item adds that there are about three other stickers under the "08" sticker, indicating the plate was used for about four years. The Government of Nunavut unveiled its new plate design March 6, featuring a busy and colourful night scene to replace the white, bear-shaped plate.

Nunavummiut will be issued the new plate when they update their vehicle registration or purchase a new vehicle after July 2012.

It's been a long time coming, but Nunavik's Tursujuq park project should gain official park status in 2012. The proposed provincial park, carved out of more than 26,000 square kilometres along the southeastern coast of Hudson Bay, was set to become a park in 2011.

But the creation of Nunavik's third provincial park continues to face delays as Quebec's department of sustainable development, environment and parks considers requests to add the nearby Nastapoka River watershed to its boundaries. As it stands now, Tursujuq's borders still include only part of the headwaters of Nastapoka River where Quebec's power corporation, Hydro Quebec, has said it may eventually build a hydroelectric project.

The vast majority of speakers at Tursujuq public hearings held since 2009 asked for the addition of the river's watershed to the park.

Many would like to see the park protect the river's population of landlocked salmon, the only salmon to be found on eastern Hudson Bay. And there's also a chain of inland lakes near the river, called Lacs des Loups Marins or seal lakes, which are home to a rare population of fresh water seals. The Nastapoka could produce up to 1,000 megawatts of power, enough to meet the daily needs of about 250,000 homes.



Photo: Rich Durant

To be honest, we had not heard about kite aerial photography until Brian Johnston mentioned it in his trip report on the Lorillard River in this issue. His photo above should say all there is to know about the results. This aerial shot of their camp along the remote Lorillard River could typically only be obtained from a departing or arriving charter aircraft. But they did it themselves using a special kite and camera combination. A simple Internet search will yield a wealth of info on this technique. Definitely something we will be looking into.

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