Wilderness Canoe Association
WCA
nastawgan

Winter 2013 Vol. 40 No. 4 Quarterly Journal of the Wilderness Canoe Association

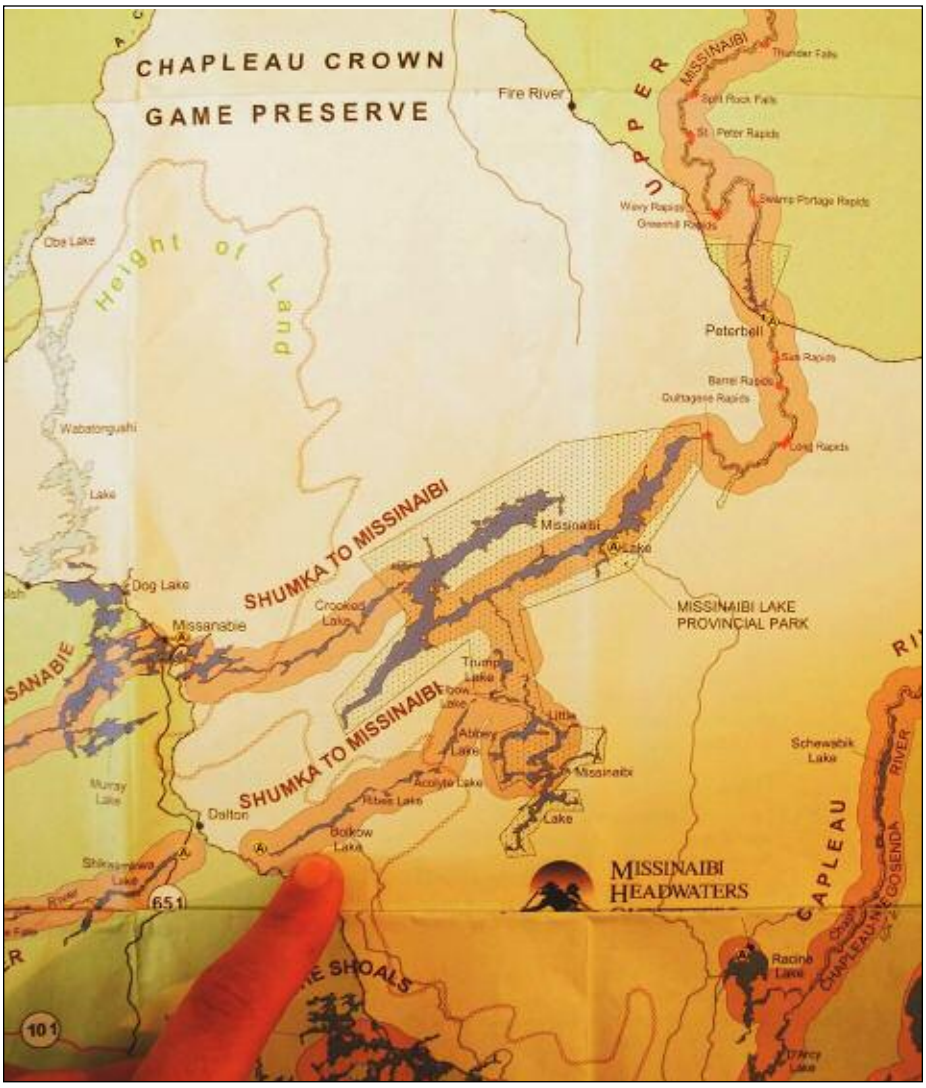
Missinaibi Headwaters – Explorer's Club 2013

Story by Dave and Kielyn Marrone

Photos by David Hartman, Vanessa Rizzotto, Mat Masin and Kielyn Marrone

In a typical off-season planning scene, four of us crowded around a table in our backyard log structure – "the Pagoda." Spread before us were Ontario's NTS index map and Dave Morin's "Arctic Headwaters Canoe Routes", both displaying a broad overview of a wide area. As always, options (and opinions) were plentiful, and the major difficulty lay in choosing the best of a great lot.

Our trip plans often start with a simple objective and develop from there. This time, it was to walk "from rail to rail", connecting the CN and CP rail lines by snowshoe. Our home-



The height of land route from Shumka to Peterbell.

town, Sudbury, marks the junction of these two lines; north of the city they quickly diverge before turning west and running roughly parallel for hundreds of kilometres. At this point, the two lines are nearly 100 kilometres apart – a perfect distance for a ten day snowshoe adventure! As we pored over the maps and deliberated about the various pros and cons of the Chapleau, Nemegosenda, Ivanhoe and Missinaibi Rivers (among others), we couldn't help but appreciate how blessed we are in Canada to have so many fantastic opportunities for wilderness experiences so close at hand. We were immediately drawn to the historic Missinaibi River. Some of us had paddled it in the past, and in 2009, two of us had snowshoed a 250-kilometre section of it further downstream. We were all keen to revisit this beautiful river, but the series of large lakes covering much of our route had us pining for more intimate experiences on some of the narrower waterways. Once we identified an alternative start, the choice was clear. We would travel a series of smaller lakes and the Little Missinaibi River, before rejoining the main route at the halfway point, thus eliminating the least desirable section of the original route. The historic Missinaibi River and an intimate travel route – it seemed we could have our cake and eat it too!

And with that was born the 2013 incarnation of Lure of the North's Explorer's Club. Stephen Ritchie and Colin Pollard, both veterans of the 2011 and 2012 Explorer's Club expeditions, were immediately on board. Added shortly thereafter were Vanessa Rizzotto and Katie Halls, who had gone with us to Ishpatina Ridge the previous winter. Kielyn's brother, upon hearing about the adventure, was quick to sign up for his first snowshoe expedition. "Piece of cake," he quipped when we warned him of the tough days, long nights and often bitter cold. Meanwhile, Kielyn and I had often daydreamed about winter travel with our icons Garrett and Alexandra Conover, especially since we had started chatting with Garrett more frequently and the idea began to seem more reasonable. But still, one does not simply invite Garrett Conover on any old snowshoe trip! But as the team developed and the route solidified, excitement continued to grow and we realized we were set for a special experience. The invitation was extended, and to our delight Garrett was giddy at the prospect! Rounding out the team was another special addition – David Hartman of Hayfire Media, an adventure film company out of B.C. David's inclusion, and the subsequent production of an hour-long documentary based on the expedition, were generously funded by Laurentian University and the LU Alumni Association. This is discussed in more detail at the end of this article. For now, it's time to get to the trip!

Feb. 15th (Day Zero)
We all gathered at our place on the evening of the 15th to enjoy fresh pizzas from our earth oven, and to discuss our personal goals and apprehensions (if any) about the trip. With more vehicles than our driveway could hold, we tucked the "extras" in various discrete locations around the neighbourhood for the night. These vehicles aroused more suspicion that we had anticipated, so we were thoroughly taken aback when we were awoken by two police officers banging at the door in the wee hours of the morning. The officers wondered about the vehicles in back lots and the unlocked doors to the house, but I think they were mostly agitated about the scare Garrett had given them from inside the Pagoda, or as they put it: "There's a man living in your backyard!"

Feb. 16th (Day 1) – 0.2 kilometres
The train station is a scant one kilometre from our home. We arrived early, despite suspicions that the train was bound to be late. That was OK. We wanted our Old Rock coffee – a Sudbury staple. We also had a nice opportunity to fraternize with

"the freezers", an informal and very welcoming group that has been using the Budd car to get out into the winter bush north of Sudbury for 13 years running. Having read their reports for many years, it was nice to connect with another group of like-minded winter enthusiasts.

The seven hours on the train were spent in typical "Budd-Car" fashion. We lounged in the baggage car, readjusted furniture, hung out the windows, slept on the floors, climbed the walls, held team meetings, and oversaw a many-hours-too-late gear check. At 4:20 p.m. we piled out at mileage 39.5 (measured north of Chapleau). Once the train pulled away, we were surrounded by silence. We were in the heart of the wilderness. A 1600-metre portage leads from the tracks to Bolkow Lake. We travelled an easy 200 metres before coming to a beaver pond, and a great location for our first night's camp. The two tents were set in the last of the day's light and supper was held in the larger tent after dark. With the planning behind us and the trip finally underway, there was no shortage of excited energy among all members of the group. While Kielyn and I stayed behind to wrap up the dishes, most of the others decided to head out for an evening snowshoe to explore further along the trail. Garrett exemplified an efficient and conservative manner throughout the trip, and this evening was no different. Perhaps in anticipation of tough days and reduced sleep ahead, he rolled quietly into his sleeping bag while everyone else scrambled out the door.

Eager to start the adventure on Bolkow Lake!

Feb. 17th (Day 2) – 12 kilometres

Winter mornings start early for a group hoping to cover much distance. A 5 a.m. or earlier wake-up was the norm for this trip. Our first morning on the trail was also our coldest: -32°C. By the time we reached Bolkow Lake, frost feathers kissed our cheeks, lashes and beards, but so too did the rising sun. We were spoiled by a beautiful, calm clear winter day, and would have savoured it all the more had we known it would be our last one for some time. Owing to a fresh snowfall days before our trip, the snow lay deep and soft on the lake. Breaking trail was an onerous position, but one that group members did not give up lightly. We had a keen group. We were all excited to access the small lakes around the height of land, and we had all agreed that a strong start to gain some momentum was going to be one of our keys to success on this trip. Perhaps because of this we all pushed ourselves a little harder than we should have on our first full day and consequently many of us were paying for it later. With the hard work and rising mercury, most of us were shedding layers quickly on Bolkow Lake, but after a couple of hours of hauling, Vanessa reported that her toes had not yet warmed up. A rest was called and her feet were checked. Alas, we determined that Vanessa's beautiful pair of moccasins that she had just made were too small and couldn't accommodate the required insulating layers. A larger backup pair was pulled out of the emergency kit and that solved the issue for the rest of the trip. But it was disappointing that Vanessa couldn't enjoy the

Kielyn settles into a cedar grove for a "mug up."

Waiting for the train, enjoying "Kristen's Wilderness."

pair she had sewn herself.

The animal signs were abundant along the shores of Bolkow, and we again came to appreciate what a resource we had on hand with Garrett as he pointed out tracks and interpreted the activity of wolf, lynx, snowshoe hare, fox, partridge, ermine, river otter and pine marten. We made few stops this day, and had expected the long, portage-free expanse of Bolkow Lake would provide fast and easy access to lakes "deeper" in. But we nonetheless ended the day tired, and still on the lake, after a difficult 12-kilometre haul through deep snow.

Feb. 18th (Day 3) – 9.5 kilometres

When we awoke on Day 3 to a heavy snowfall atop the already deep snow, we knew we were in for a strenuous day. Before we had wrapped up the final 3.5 kilometre of Bolkow Lake, it was clear that despite the high energy and keen attitudes, we needed to work smarter, not harder. A proposal was made to employ the "Annexation of Puerto Rico". This is a Lure's much-loved strategy for efficient travel in deep snow. We typically travel with one toboggan hauled by each person. Toboggan loads on a trip such as this one probably range from 100 – 160 pounds. Weight is a significant factor when hauling uphill, where even minor inclines are difficult with an overloaded toboggan, but on flat lakes in deep snow by far the most strenuous aspect of travel is breaking trail. Breaking trail while pulling a toboggan is tiring work, and to keep up a consistent pace we needed to rotate trail-breakers every few hundred metres. "The Annexation" involves tying two toboggans together to be pulled, at the back of the line, by one person. That leaves one group member free to break trail at the head of the train. This serves to equalize the workload along the train more evenly so less frequent rotations are required and a better travel rhythm can be established. This certainly improved our travel speed, reduced stops and eliminated the most tiring position in the train. However, we still had our work cut out for ourselves and fell shy of our goal of 11 kilometres for the day.

The route offered some difficulty in navigating shallow, open water and hidden portages along Agusada Creek. There were also some pleasant surprises. We skipped a couple of summer, overland portages, by sticking to the flat, frozen marshes. Finding these alternate, often easier, diversions around summer trails is a favourite pastime of winter travellers,

and always satisfying when it works out and you find a more practical winter path. We pulled to the end of Acolyte Lake, our last lake in the Atlantic watershed, by 3:30 p.m. With the sun already low in the sky, we didn't have the time, nor the energy, to cover one-kilometre 'Height of Land' portage into Rosary Lake by the end of the day. Instead, while others finished camp setup, I walked the trail without a toboggan. Giving the snow an entire night to sinter would leave us with a harder packed, easier-to-travel-on surface for the next morning's portage.

Feb. 19th (Day 4) – 7.5 kilometres
Six inches (15cm) of snow had fallen the day before, and the same amount today. The weather remained mild, overcast, windy and damp. Pre-packing the height of land portage worked quite well and we moved our toboggans smoothly over its 1 kilometre length and into the Arctic watershed. The watershed portage on this route was quite benign, being a relatively flat, short link. In fact, this is part of what made the Missinaibi-Michipicoten waterway such an important link between James Bay to the North and the Great Lakes to the south. Nonetheless, I think we all felt a certain sense of satisfaction knowing we had reached the end of our uphill journey and would be travelling down towards the Arctic Ocean from here onwards. We had two shorter portages to contend with today, and we really began to develop a systematic approach at this point. Upon reaching a trailhead, Mat and a partner (often Colin) would go out ahead as the maintenance crew, carrying axe, saw and shovel. They cleared overgrown sections of the trail where needed, but more importantly worked with the shovel to level out side-hills, fill in depressions, and generally smooth and straighten out the trail for the forthcoming nine toboggans. Individual toboggans became communal property once on the trails. Everyone worked together – often multiple people to a toboggan, to keep the loads moving. At steep sections one or two people would be stationed to help others get up the hills. At very steep sections the ropes would come out and most of the team would be needed to get each and every toboggan up. Toques, scarves or anoraks lashed to your toboggan might end up down the trail before you even realized someone had moved on with your load. When a snack or water was needed, it was pulled from whatever toboggan was on hand. We worked well together, and the group bonds grew stronger. But still, we struggled and fell short of our daily travel goal.

That evening we pulled up at the start of another long portage. This one was

Native pictographs on Lake Missinaibi.

Dave and Katie share a moment on a difficult day.

Videographer Dave Hartman and the "Media Barge."

marked on the map as 1000 metres, but looked much longer. Again, while others set camp, I packed the trail for the following morning. I walked until nightfall – surely over 1000 metres – before losing the trail as it dropped down into a thicket of bent, snow-laden willows. I trudged back with the disappointing news that I had walked so long and still hadn't seen any signs of the lake at the far side. But group morale didn't seem affected. At least we had a beautiful campsite and a comfortable home for the night.

Feb. 20th (Day 5) – 8 kilometres

The snow finally stopped overnight, but the weather certainly hadn't turned completely. Instead, it remained windy, overcast and damp. We travel with canvas tents heated by wood stoves. After camp is made, the day's damp clothing gets hung in the peak of the tent, where the rising hot air and the breathable canvas both help to move that moisture outside very effectively. But canvas doesn't breathe very well under 4 inches of wet, packed snow, and after a couple of days of damp, blowing snow there was a lot of clothing getting hung in the tent at night. Air flow was stifled and the drying capacity of the tent was overcome. Everyone donned damp clothing for a couple of days, or else gave up on working their frozen items back into a wearable shape and switched to backup clothing. Neither option was ideal. Space in the peak of the tent was at a premium in these conditions, and only "high priority" or next-to-skin items (moccasins, mittens, liners, etc) were allowed in. Anoraks and other bulky shell items were left outside to freeze. This day marked the low point of the trip for many group members. The mis-marked portage that seemed to go on forever, the unrelenting wind, and stiff, damp outer layers wore us down, some later admitted, close to the point of tears. We moved across Trump Lake into a headwind, and stopped in the lee of a small island at noon to conduct a satellite phone interview for the CBC's "Points North" program. As I huddled against the shore of the island looking at the downtrodden group around me, the often-elusive interview question of "why" we were doing this became even more slippery and hard to define.

One answer to the question "why" was provided only hours later in the form of an absolutely beautiful winding trail through snow-laden spruce from Trump Lake to the Little Missinaibi River. I think everyone felt a sense of something magical as we walked through this northern wonderland. Smiling faces were drawn in the snowy boughs as encouragement for those at the back of the line. Mat raced ahead again with shovel and axe to prepare the way, and had so much fun he became known thereafter as the "Glade Runner". About three quarters of the way through the kilometre-long portage we lost the trail and couldn't pick it up again. A few of us struck ahead through the trees. Upon reaching the river we would find the other end of the trail and trace it back to the toboggans. As I topped out on the final crest, I was provided my first view of the Little Missinaibi River and my heart sank. The river was wide open and fast flowing for as far as I could see. A quick look at the map confirmed a rapid upstream of our intended trail head. I moved downstream along the bank, and sure enough, there was our portage trail, and, thankfully, solid ice at the foot of it. For now at least, we would be allowed to continue onwards, though we were all becoming aware of our slowed progress. We spent the night at a fine little site tucked up against the shoreline in a widening of the river.

Feb. 21st (Day 6) – 10.5 kilometres
Our sixth day dawned much like the previous three – overcast with flurries. We had a series of short portages and one long portage in the final 5 kilometres to Lake Missinaibi. Even the short portages were not trivial, however, as we had to pull out the rope on numerous occasions to work the toboggans up and down the steep river banks. The morning slipped quickly away without much progress, but we buoyed our spirits knowing that the expansive Lake Missinaibi would be scoured from the previous four days of wind and would afford easy, almost snow-free, travel. Surely, we would make up for the lost time and then some on the lake, or so we told ourselves. When we did reach the lake in the early afternoon we were in for a few surprises. The first was the beauty of Whitefish Falls as the river we had just left poured into the lake beside us, and the second was how much snow lay deep in our bay. "Just a product of this sheltered bay," we told ourselves and each other."The main body of the lake is sure to be wiped clean," we said; though it certainly didn't look it from our new vantage point. We moved on, stopping to contemplate the pictographs at the mouth of the bay, and then into the seemingly undisturbed snows of Lake Missinaibi. Our third surprise came moments later when a dramatic front rolled in, and in less than half an hour transformed a leaden grey sky into a brilliant bright blue one. The wind was absent and we all stripped to our undershirts (or less) to enjoy the warmth of the sun on our bodies. We chose a site on the shore of Mary Island with views to the southwest so we could savour every last moment of the setting sun.

Feb. 22nd (Day 7) – 15.5 kilometres
An early start and a methodical pace did help us make up for lost time today, but it certainly wasn't easy. We continued to have a dedicated breaker at the front of the line, and someone hauling two toboggans at the back, and used this for the remainder of the trip. Of course, the trip was not all hard travel and head-down slogging. The long nights of winter afforded ample social time in the heated tents, and the hard travel during the day served only to strengthen the bonds and camaraderie we shared. Trip names were handed out last night and this morning. Vanessa, on account of her grace on snowshoes, was given the name Lynx. Sighting a magnificent lynx on the south shore of the lake less than an hour later was taken as a positive omen (and a great opportunity for a rest!). Near the end of the lake we encountered a long stretch of open water at "The Narrows", and chose to skirt it via a short detour along the north shore. As a result, we missed a visit to the HBC's abandoned "Missinaibi Lake House" site on the south shore. But, we did camp with views of the still-visible clearing, and wondered yet again about those who had travelled and lived here long before our brief visit. After another long day, Kielyn presented a potentially unpopular suggestion. To save time and energy, we would set up only the large tent and squeeze everyone into it for the night. I'm not sure if it's a testament to how close we'd become as a group, or simply how tired we all were, but everyone loved the idea of a single tent, and this is how we slept for the remainder of the trip.

Mat takes a break while Dave explores down river.

Feb. 23rd (Day 8) – 12 kilometres
The final four kilometres of Lake Missinaibi were travelled quickly this morning. We were all keen to see the

Welcoming the return of the sun on Lake Missinaibi.

What a treat to travel with Garrett Conover.

final incarnation of our route: the mighty Missinaibi River! As we approached the head of the river, we finally found the shallow snow conditions we had been waiting for all trip, but this was the wrong place for it. The absence of snow here was not a result of scouring winds, as the river was too sheltered for that. Instead, it was an indication that this ice had formed after the most recent snowfall (only a scant two to three days previously). It seems likely that the fresh snow earlier in the week had depressed the lake ice and the underlying water and forced more current into the river, degrading the existing ice. I can only wonder if we had arrived at the river two days earlier if we would have found any ice at all. We knew the ice was thin, but we no longer had the luxury of extra time (or energy) to walk conservatively in the deep snow and steep side-hills of the river's banks. We took our chances on the river, and walked cautiously, probing as we went. With so little snow, travel was fast and easy. The farther we got from the outlet of the lake, the more confidence we gained. But in a moment of complacency, and a couple of missed pokes with the probe, I was suddenly up to my waist in water. I scrambled out and used dry snow as a sponge to wick away as much moisture as possible. For the most part, my inner layers stayed dry, but not my moccasins, which were wet right through to my skin. Knowing I could stay warm if we kept moving, and not wanting to break the group's momentum, we regrouped and continued onward, after Kie crawled out and retrieved our probe from the water's edge. Shortly thereafter, Mat also punched through the ice, but with a quick roll managed to avoid a full lower-body immersion. As we moved farther from the lake edge, the snow quickly became deeper. This was a mixed blessing. It was an indication that the underlying ice was older and presumably thicker, but it was also a return to more difficult travel. Even worse, this time the deep snow was accompanied by shallow slush, the bane of winter travelers. Thankfully, it was something we had not encountered on the trip yet.

Quittagene Rapids, 200 metres long with an established portage on its south bank, should have been a straightforward obstruction. But as is often the case in winter travel, the open water of the rapid extended well beyond the end of the summer trail. From the end of the established trail, we continued an additional 300 metres, fighting branches, willows and side-hills to get back to solid river ice – not an easy task with 10-foot long toboggans. Further on we had an even nastier surprise when we encountered 300-metre long Cedar Rapids. This rapid does not have an established trail, but we had hoped its greater distance from the lake might mean we'd find some existing shelf ice along shore to travel upon. This wasn't the case as the river was open right to both banks, banks that looked choked with thick cedars and underbrush. We stopped for lunch near the edge of the good ice. We were three quarters of the way to our goal, yet still a successful finish was not a certainty.

Perhaps sensing we were now close

enough to push through any obstacles, someone called out "we'll just have to walk through the night". "Yeah, but the problem is, we could work all night, and we might only get to the bottom of this rapid," responded Stephen, showing that he understood just how time-consuming moving these toboggans overland without a trail could be. This was certainly the lowest point of the trip for me. With enough time and effort we would get around Cedar Rapids, but beyond that lay another seven rapids, some over a kilometre in length and five of which did not have marked portage trails. If they all looked like this one, we could take another week to reach our destination.

"Don't worry, we've got Garrett with us," I called out to the group, only half jokingly. But Garrett gave me a quiet look that told me even he could not walk on water. There would be no secret tricks, but only hard work if the ice conditions didn't improve quickly.

Getting underway on Bolkow Lake.

After lunch, Colin and Stephen went to scout the right bank, while Garrett and I started across the river towards the left bank. As we got half way across the river, an unnatural looking clearing began to become more visible. I tried not to hope too much and set myself up for disappointment, but as we got closer it was clearly a trailhead. The trail was seldom

.More adventure beckons further downstream from Peterbell.

Dave and Dave at "mug up."

used and overgrown, but brushing out an old trail is many times faster than cutting a new one. We yelled over to the group and raced back to get our toboggans. For this rapid at least, we had been granted a reprieve!

We camped about five kilometres further downstream from Cedar Rapids in a beautiful little cove. Travel that afternoon had been relatively easy and we were buoyed by the belting singing voice of our tireless videographer Dave Hartman. We felt good that night as everyone piled into the single tent, but there was still a lot of tension in the air. The final twenty kilometres held a lot of unknown rapids with unmarked portages, and some of us felt we might've just gotten lucky with Cedar Rapids.

Feb. 24th (Day 9) – 13 kilometres

The following day was almost a bit melodramatic after the mounting tension of the previous day. Rapid after rapid afforded easy travel on solid shelf ice. Every challenge that was met left the group feeling more confident that we could face any nasty surprises we might encounter further downstream, but none ever materialized. We still had to contend with the now ever-present slush, but for kilometres of rapids we didn't have to leave the river bed a single time. Lunch was taken in a brilliant grove of cedars near the end of our final major rapid. We had spent the previous half an hour weaving through the convoluted ice of the rapid, using snow bridges and shelf ice to navigate weak and slushy sections under a sparkling sun. I was frequently amazed on this trip at the twists and turns an unknown route can throw at you. What a difference from the group slumped on their toboggans at the head of Cedar Rapids only 24 hours ago. Compared to then, we were practically prancing over the river ice now! This, to me, was the essence of an Explorer's Club expedition. The highs and lows, the tension, even a fear of the unknown, and the thrill of discovery. This will be a fantastic journey to return to someday soon. The low points will be smoothed out by our advance knowledge of hidden trails and likely ice conditions, but the highest points will be smoothed over, as well. It was only through our personal challenges and emotional lows that we were all able to rise so high at the end.

After the final rapid was passed we set up camp early, sure at last that we would make our destination on time the next day. We had more time and energy tonight, but still elected to squeeze into the single tent. As Vanessa wrote in her journal entry that night "A deep breath of relief for us all." She mentioned a feeling of connectedness, and I believe we were likely all feeling connected to ourselves, our environment and each other. Certainly the conversation in the tent that night was a clear indication of how close we had all grown as friends and travel companions.

Feb. 25th (Day 10) – 8 kilometres

We slept in until the lazy hour of 6 a.m. this morning and had a leisurely pancake and sausage breakfast. We dawdled on our way to the train tracks, with ample opportunity for Dave Hartman to shoot video and photos. His set shots from atop the train bridge were perhaps the only time of the whole trip that he requested the group slow down while he got into filming position. Otherwise, he raced ahead, to the side or fell behind, with a full toboggan of his own, to capture the right shot. We were all consistently amazed at his dedication to the film on such a tiring journey. Our final obstacle was a steep haul up the riverbank to the tracks, where we found a clearing in the forest to settle in and wait for our pickup. Garrett had experienced waiting beside the tracks for hours during his Labrador travels, and immediately set about preparing our site. Some of us walked the tracks, explored the bridge or stared wistfully down at the river. From my journal that night:

> "Our journey ends here; but the river does not. It continues another 500+ kilometres north to its mouth in the Arctic Ocean at James Bay. As I stand on the bridge and stare north, I can already feel the river's pull, beckoning me on to see what lays around the next bend. There is a sense of elation and satisfaction among the group, but also one of discontentedness as we sense the end of the adventure.

The train is late. We have now waited beside the tracks for over eight hours, but spirits remain high. Garrett has prepared us a 'hobo camp' after the fashion employed by the Nauscapi natives of northern Labrador when waiting for their own often-delayed train. We crouch or lounge

on a circular bed of boughs around an open fire floated on a raft of green logs. It has been a surreal evening around the fire listening to Garrett read from his latest book "Kristen's Wilderness" as freight trains roar past, terrifyingly loud in the darkness. We cling to these last few moments together as a group, savouring the experience we have just shared, proud of what we have accomplished together and wishing we could hold it longer. I feel content knowing that the river continues onwards, and there will always be more wild places to explore."

Our train arrived sometime after midnight and we all piled directly into the dining car looking for food and drink. The kitchen was closed, but we took over the car anyways to present our Explorer's Club awards – a mini snowshoe that represents breaking trail and leaving a path for others to follow. We certainly expect that we will return to the Missinaibi Headwaters area someday soon and hope that this year's explorers have helped to inspire others to return to this historic waterway in the winter. The picture taken in the dining car reveals a trail-weary, bedraggled group; black eyes and other bruises are in evidence, but so are the smiles and satisfaction on all our faces.

Footnote: As mentioned in the introduction, Laurentian University helped to fund the making of a documentary film based on this expedition. This was in part due to a fortuitous coming together of many participants with a strong connection to the university, combined with the school's desire to continue to support and highlight their graduates as they move into their careers. Kielyn and Dave Marrone are alumni of the university's Outdoor Adventure Leadership (ADVL) program. Stephen Ritchie is a current professor of the same program, and Katie Halls is a current student. Videographer David Hartman is also an ADVL graduate and Garrett and Alexandra Conover's "A Snow Walker's Companion" is used as the text book for the program's Winter Camping course. Only Vanessa Rizzotto, Mat Masin and Colin Pollard did not have an LU connection, but like most newcomers to the school's community, they were welcomed with open arms. The film will be premiered at LU on November 29th, 2013 and released online afterwards.

About the Authors: Dave and Kielyn Marrone reside in Sudbury, Ontario and are owners and operators of Lure of the North, specializing in traditional winter travel, crafts and culture. Visit then at www.lureofthenorth.com.

An oasis in the wilderness.

CPM #40015547
ISSN 1828-1327

Published by the Wilderness Canoe Association
Nastawgan is an Anishinabi word meaning "the way or route"

The WILDERNESS CANOE ASSOCIATION is a non-profit organization made up of individuals interested in wilderness travel, mainly by canoe and kayak, but also including backpacking and winter trips on both skis and snowshoes. The club publishes a quarterly journal, *Nastawgan*, to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas of interest to wilderness travellers, organizes an extensive program of trips for members, runs a few basic workshops, and is involved in environmental issues relevant to wilderness canoeing.

WCA member and contributor, **Cliff Jacobson**, wrote recently to complement us on the *Dubawnt Special* issue. He adds:"… A special thanks to Toni for the kind words about the book. I much appreciate his review. But I really think you guys should publish my review of his new book, "The Devil's Grin" which appeared as one of my blogs.

On another note: I really enjoyed Dawne Robinson's take on the decline of wilderness canoeing. We went to folding canoes some time ago for the very reasons she expressed. Granted, I'd prefer to be in a hard boat, but the Pak canoes are very reliable. They're as fast on the flats as most big Royalex tripping canoes; they turn as well or better and they are more seaworthy in rapids and quite a bit lighter to portage. The one problem is how the thwarts are arranged—unlike hard boats, they can't be moved so you have to be more creative in how you pack. Most people who first see these boats think they're fragile, which they're not. Indeed, unless the rocks are very sharp and pointy, they absorb abuse better than most hard-shelled canoes. Still, there was (is) something magical about flying into a remote river with a hard-shelled canoe tied to the floats of a vintage DeHaviland Beaver. I'm thrilled that I had the opportunity to do this many times in the past. Our way of "getting there" is changing, but as Dawne pointed out, we're still "going"! "

Cliff, you'll be pleased to see the review of "The Devil's Grin" on page 30. We felt that many readers who love Toni and respect his enormous contributions to WCA and *Nastawgan* will enjoy learning more about this obscure chapter of his life!

Many of you wrote to ask for more details about **Fred Pessl's** upcoming book "Dubawnt Journals". Fred's engaged with the University Press of New England in the publication process of his Dubawnt narrative, planned for Spring '14 release.

Laurie Pelly wrote to bring to our intention the unfortunate reference in the Fred Gaskin's article in the *Dubawnt Special*. Photographs on pages 23 and 24 refer to "Eskimos" and a family of "Eskimos". Laurie points out the preferred modern usage of terms "Inuk" and "Inuit", regardless of whether the photograph is archival or not. **David Pelly,** renowned author and *Nastawgan* contributor, further clarifies: "… that the only time the work "Eskimos" might be used in Canada would be in the quotation marks from a properly referenced historical source…"

We appreciate the feedback and apologize to anyone who found the referenced photo credits offensive!

TONI HARTING 1927-2013

On November 22, 2013, Toni Harting completed his life journey at home in Toronto. Born in Sumatra, Indonesia on February 16, 1927, he lead a remarkable life and very much marched to the beat of his own drum. A long-time *Nastawgan* Editor, renowned photographer and an author, Toni will be sorely missed by his WCA family. Read more about Toni in the *Spring Nastawgan*.

CCR Update

CCR website (www.myccr.com) continues to thrive. We now have approximately 10,000 members! Usage statistics continue to be very high. In July this year, we hit an all-time high of just under 59,000 of "Unique Visitors" for the month.

In development work, we have now launched the "New" Routes Database. This section boasts a number of features not available in the "Old" Routes Database. For example: new browsing maps for all of Canada and US, improved routes database search, and a new form to upload and share your trips with the paddling community. You can also upload a GPS tracks, photos, & many other file formats with your trip report. In addition, Allan Jacobs continues to expand the Route Information Knowledgebase, for both Canada and US.

Looking ahead, we are currently in the process of uploading the entire Cartespleinair library of maps and canoe routes (many thanks to Charles Leduc) to our routes database, and are about to start several other enhancements funded generously by MEC. Among other things, this includes transforming the entire photo gallery into the same format as the rest of the site, introducing a pdf search function and greatly enhancing site search capabilities.

Marilyn Sprissler
CCR Site Administrator

Wine & Cheese Gathering

By David Friesen

The 2013 WCA Wine and Cheese event was sold out and it is not hard to see why. The Toronto Sailing and Canoe Club is a great location, and we thank Martin Heppner for that connection.

A team of volunteers organized by Diane Lucas served a wonderful selection of cheese and veggie nibblers. The audience was composed of an enthusiastic group of over 100 canoe adventurers. We had a great speaker in Joanie McGuffin, renowned for her canoe, kayak and conservation achievements, with her appearance supported through the trust remembering Mike Wevrick.

After an hour of pleasant food, drink and conversation, we all settled in for a wide-ranging presentation by Joanie McGuffin on "Exploring the Lake Superior Water Trail". Founders of the Lake Superior Conservancy and Watershed Council, Gary and Joanie McGuffin have published seven books. It's clear that Joanie knows the coast of Lake Superior intimately. Her first encounter with Lake Superior was during a canoe voyage from the Atlantic to the Arctic Ocean in 1983-84. Later, she and her husband Gary returned to circumnavigate this greatest of the Great Lakes in a summer-long adventure again by canoe.

After an account of her many adventures on Lake Superior, her presentation turned to the many projects related to the protection, preservation and restoration of wilderness. In particular, Joanie talked about those devoted to the Lake Superior watershed: the Lake Superior Conservancy and Watershed Council, the Lake Superior Land Trust Partnership, and The Lake Superior Alliance and Lake Superior Waterkeeper. We were treated throughout with marvelous pictures of rock promontory campsites, loons and eagles, of soaring cliffs, of boundless forests and the vast vista of Superior.

We also saw another project, where the McGuffins have been working to identify the exact sites where the Group of Seven painted in their formative years in northern Ontario, with particular focus on the Algoma region. The research is ongoing, and the McGuffins are constantly discovering paintings and their matching locations. The slide show included "transitions", where we were able to see an original Group of Seven artwork fade into the photo of the very location as it stands today.

I am sure that many of us will be encouraged towards further exploration of Joanie's work, and perhaps our own adventure to Algoma and Superior. Thanks to all the organizers! See you next year.

Wilderness & Canoe Symposium Update

Great news –thanks to the considerable negotiating skills of our Secretary, Bill King, we're back at the Monarch Park Collegiate for another year! Symposium will take place on 7 and 8 February 2014 and follow the usual format. Most of the presenters will be confirmed by the time you read this update. Here's a sneak preview of who'll be speaking and about what topics:

George Luste – recent canoe trip to Great Bear Lake, Douglas's cabin and the Coppermine
Kathy Hooke – "George Douglas and the Influence of Northcote Farm"
Robert Hildebrand – Publisher of "Lands Forlorn" by George Douglas
Karl Hartwick – "Northern Yukon Summer"
Ron Tozer – "Changes in Algonquin Park's Birdlife"
Michael Peake – "Eric Morse & Voyageurs"
Ken McGoogan – "Fatal Passage: Return to Rae Strait"
James Raffan – "Coppermine Atanigi Expedition"
John Lentz – "Tales from the Paddle"
Katie Tanz – "Keewaydin Canoe Trips-Girls in the Wilderness"
Neil Hartling – "Through the World's Largest Non-Polar Icecap"
Bob Saunders – "Agguanittuq journey"
Matt Hopkinson – "From St. Lawrence Seaway to Maine Coast"
And more…

Admission price for 2014 remains unchanged – $45 for adults and $25 for children. Online registration is open. Volunteers required, please contact Aleks (aleks@wcsymposium.com).

Events Calendar

Wilderness and Canoe Symposium will take place on 7 and 8 February 2014 at Monarch Park Collegiate.

Murdoch-Wheeler-Whale 2012: A Map-Lovers' Odyssey

Story by Ann Ingerson
Photos by Dave Brown and Al Stirt

A glassy-water crossing of Lac Attikamagan got our journey off to a good start.

The joys of canoe tripping begin well before the all-too-short weeks of the trip itself.

During winter when the skis and snowshoes are out and canoes stored away, we love pouring over maps and dreaming up new routes. Several years back, we saw a presentation by Wanapitei camp staff about a 1989 trip down the Wheeler and Whale Rivers, and in 2012 we decided to give it a try. Trip members included my husband Dave Brown and our long-time canoeing partner Al Stirt. We missed Al's wife Wendy Scott, who stayed home to care for their aging dog (named Tasi in honor of a canoe expedition ending in Tasiujaq). Fortunately, fellow Vermonter Eric Nuse was crazy enough to join us for his first long far-northern trip, and he certainly carried more than his weight (literally) and brought some new stories to tell around the campfire.

Too shallow to paddle, but better than portaging.

As we poured over the maps, each marked rapid inspired dreams of brook trout as long as your arm, fast-water lake trout taken on a fly (an amazing fishing experience we first discovered on the Swampy Bay), and on the Whale perhaps Arctic char and Atlantic salmon. The maps also revealed a possible alternate route from the DePas to the Murdoch through a series of narrow lakes within a deep northwest-trending trough. We've had considerable experience with Labrador plateau headwaters, which drop rapidly in summer unless replenished by rain, so we were well aware that the blue on the topo map doesn't always translate into paddling water. But the unknown is part of the adventure, so off we went.

As on many past trips, the Quebec North Shore and Labrador railroad carried us to the centre of the Quebec/Labrador land mass where our trip began. Tickets are relatively inexpensive, though riders pay in other ways with frequent inexplicable delays enroute. The northern part of the line is now managed by an Innu/Naskapi company, and the system is much friendlier to canoeists. Rather than ship freight a day ahead, and bite your fingernails wondering if or when it will arrive, you can – as in the "good old days" of the 1970s and 80s – load your canoes the morning of departure. One baggage car even has canoe racks built in.

Oksana Choulik of the McGill Subarctic Research Station picked us up at the Schefferville station at nearly midnight and drove fearlessly through the dark streets with our untied canoes balanced crossways in the truck bed – Dave and Al clinging on for dear life and hoping the passing vehicles could see our extra-wide load. Next morning, we took pains to lash the boats down, though the road to Iron Arm is much improved, and we soon discovered the reason. At the put-in our canoes were nearly launched into the water, without us and our gear aboard, by prop wash from a helicopter shuttling gear and people to a new mining operation.

This beginning turned out to be a sign of things to come, as we saw several helicopters during the first weeks of the trip, often dangling long-lines carrying camp construction materials.

Schefferville's iron mines are once again active, several new locations are under development, and active prospecting is underway across Nunavik for other metals and minerals. Much to our surprise and chagrin, we even ran into a government prospecting crew at the big falls at the end of the Wheeler. The Northern Plan has apparently arrived.

After an uneventful crossing of Lake Attikamagen and several short portages into the DePas River, we soon ventured into new terrain as we turned north up a tributary of the DePas. We took the easy paddle up the first narrows as a good omen, but alas it was not to be. We soon found that many of those deep, narrow lakes between steep shorelines that we visualized from the maps were actually rock-choked, nearly-waterless stream channels.

But we're used to portaging (people watching our slideshows often ask why we bother carrying canoes along on our extended hikes). We're not as frisky as we used to be, with three of us over 60 years of age and the fourth with a fake hip, but what can you do? We slogged ahead over several hot sunny days – through burns with tangles of downed logs, over rock piles with treacherous holes hidden by a skim of moss, swatting the usual clouds of hungry black flies – ever hopeful that the next bend would lead to deeper water, but mostly disappointed.

On the final lake in the DePas drainage we set up camp on a beautiful caribou-moss flat, and Dave and Eric went out to scout the next day's height-of-land portage (which typically for this area is not much of a height at all). On the way, Eric caught a lake trout that fed us for two meals and turned out to be the largest fish of the trip. Most days we spent at least a few minutes tossing flies or lures into likely fishing spots, catching mostly small brook trout (speckled trout) and landlocked salmon (ouananiche). Northern pike were a surprise this far north, but thanks to Eric's filleting skills we ate quite a few fried, in chowders, or even grilled over the fire.

Morning mists cloak Eric and Al on a Wheeler River lake expansion.

After our upstream experience lugging heavy loads with five weeks' worth of food through rough terrain, we approached the outlet of the Murdoch's first small headwater lake with trepidation. Oh joy of joys, though the stream had boggy banks and a channel barely wider than our boats, it was deep enough to float a canoe and more-or-less free of rocks. Once we reached the

The rapids at the junction of the Wheeler and Whale required bushwhacking for the better part of a day.

Murdoch's large headwater lakes, we were actually quite happy to battle headwinds for a change.

Next intriguing question – what about those stretches of river we noted on the maps with kilometres of continuous marked rapids and ominously-close contour lines? Fortunately and puzzlingly, low water in the DePas watershed seemed to give way to high water on the north-flowing rivers. The Murdoch provided us with a few great days of lively but no-need-to-scout rapids that we appreciated all the more after our upstream ordeal.

Driftwood gathered along the coast supplemented the firewood we carried with us.

The Murdoch joins the Wheeler between lacs Kawasayakanisich and Low. Despite intense pre-trip map perusal, we failed to really register the falls marked on the connecting river section, which turned out to represent well over a kilometre of churning whitewater complete with ledges, drops, and huge holes. We crept down the shore as close to the falls as we felt safe, then grunted our way up a very steep bank onto an esker that parallels the Wheeler on the north. Walking was relatively easy up top, but the day was hot, water was not to be found along the trail, and Dave was suffering from a particularly nasty cold that I caught on the train and passed on to both Dave and Eric.

The next morning we paddled out into Lac Low (named for geologist A.P. Low, whose footsteps we've followed on many trips), and had our first glimpse of the Corrugated Hills, an unusual series of parallel sinuous folds covering some 1,500 square kilometres and proposed for special protection. For some reason unfathomable in retrospect, we didn't stop to hike here. Perhaps we were worried about our slow pace, the possibility of being trapped by wind on the large lakes, and the momentarily-perfect paddling weather. We tell ourselves that the view may have disappointed at any rate, as the patterns apparent on aerial photos and maps would be hard to decipher on the ground.

Here we joined Wanapitei's previous route, for which we had trip notes heavily dominated by camp menus (a clue to the priorities of teenagers) and number of canoes capsized at each rapid. We seemed to have higher water, or maybe just an abundance of caution, since we ended up lining and portaging a bit more than the campers. Nonetheless, we did enjoy some fun runs that were marred only by the horrific alder and willow thickets that made scouting a nightmare and portaging worse. No established portage trails here or anywhere on the trip, and none of the open country that so captivates us on other northern Quebec and Labrador rivers. In order to get from river to relatively open woods where there was some hope of carrying canoes and gear, we developed advanced techniques in alder tunneling which we're happy to share.

Toward the end of the Wheeler we had a solid day of rapids that we could run, much like the stretch on the Murdoch but much bigger water. We found we could sneak carefully around corners to avoid scouting trips through the brush. If only there was a shuttle service back upstream so we could run it again! At the end of this stretch we took our only "hiking" break (if you discount the portages that is) – a short walk up a riverside esker that gave us a taste of the open country we love.

Just before joining the Whale, the Wheeler drops through a series of unrunnable ledges ending in a spectacular falls. We'd met the Karboski family on the train the previous year, and knew about their Whale River salmon camp located just below, so we envisioned a well-trodden fishermen's trail along the river bank, around the falls and ending in a nice sandy beach loading spot. As with most of our map-based inferences, the imagined trail was not to be found.

More portaging adventures: a close call in the ledge section where Dave and I tried paddling to avoid carrying gear over a small cliff and got pinned briefly against a rock wall in a strong eddy; bashing knee-deep through wet sphagnum patches littered with fallen spruce; resorting to bog-water lemonade with our lunch; following imagined footpaths that turned into a maze of old caribou trails; and the grand finale: crashing down a steep bank and through about a kilometre of alders to get back to the water. Are you getting an idea of how much fun we had?

Once we reached the island fishing camp, the Karboskis treated us to several days of cabin bunks, home-cooked meals, and stories of camp history. We offered thanks for our room and board by cutting firewood and helping install a float-plane dock.

Unfortunately, the salmon were not in yet, though the fishermen gave it their best shot. On departure day we had rainy, squally weather, but the abrupt transition from camp comfort back to soggy trip mode was eased by some surprise bottles of wine that Mike Karboski had snuck into our packs. Thanks to the whole Karboski family for treating us so well!

Most of the rapids on this lower stretch of the Whale are relatively short and many are runnable, but it's definitely a big river. The strong current saved us during several days of stiff headwinds. Since our lighter canoe caught the wind more than Al's and Eric's, Dave and I actually loaded our boat with rocks to push it further down into the current.

Admiring the beginning of the final rapids on the Wheeler.

Portage-fatigue led to some inventive solutions to avoid unloading the boats. One day, Al and Eric did some creative lining down a side channel, tossing their lining rope across to Dave and back again to get to where they could climb back into the boat.

We began spotting more wildlife as we approached the coast. Red-throated loons, with their demented cackling call, circled overhead, and we scared up rafts of geese and ducks. We coasted past a large black bear grazing in a riverside wetland. A lone wolf raced along the riverbank when she spotted us, perhaps a female returning to her den in an esker. She looked thin and likely missed the caribou as much as we did. The George River caribou herd approached 800,000 at its 1980s peak, but

Reviewing the day's travels around the evening fire.

A difficult put-in after portaging a short canyon section of the Wheeler.

now numbers only about 20,000. In past years, we've been lucky enough to paddle right through the herd or spy them from afar on hilltop hikes. A 1989 trip down the Swampy Bay River was especially magical, as we dodged swimming caribou in the rapids, crept into close range on wind-bound days to watch them foraging, crossed churned-up caribou highways on our hikes, and watched thousands of animals stripping alder leaves along shore as we drifted by. It's hard to believe we saw not one caribou on this trip.

Before long, we started to see the influence of Ungava's famous up-to-17-meter tides, though we seemed to be in a period of moderate fluctuations. After a day in camp listening in vain for the roar of the last tidal rapid to fall silent, we finally resorted to a final shoreline portage. Planning our days according to the tide became a more complicated puzzle than you might anticipate. Tide tables are not very helpful on a river with strong current far from the actual ocean, which makes for unpredictable timing and unexpected tide rips flowing in unpredictable directions – or even multiple directions at once. Waiting onshore for the tide changes seemed to test my patience more than that of my older-and-wiser trip-mates, which in turn tested their patience with me, I'm sure. But we passed the time watching bearded seals, timing the reversing rapids, and even doing a bit of fruitless fishing.

Al and Eric wading a small side channel to delay portaging through the alders as long as possible.

Paddling Ungava Bay is not for the faint-of-heart, and I suspect I fall in that category. We've done a fair bit of paddling on Labrador and Hudson Bay coasts in open canoes with spray covers. But the Ungava tides add a whole new element. How do you find a campable spot when trees are nonexistent, freshwater streams are few, and you're not quite certain what is actual dry land and what will soon be underwater? What if the wind picks up during the narrow window when the tide is going your way? What if the tide drops and strands you on the mud flats a kilometre from shore and then the wind picks up?

Not to mention the maps – ah, the maps again. Two times on our coastal paddle, where we had to round complex points that stick way out into the bay, or cross wide-open bays waterless at low tide, we really had no idea where we were. The maps just didn't fit reality. We pitied the poor mapmakers working from satellite photos that depict totally different coastlines at low and high tide.

Despite the confusion, the coast was beautiful in its austere way, with a fascinating variety of rock (we wished mightily for a trip geologist) and tiny oases with rain-filled ponds and arctic flowers. We also had some incredible luck on the coastal stretch. The wind was never a serious obstacle. We found rainwater ponds and driftwood to supplement the drinking water, and pre-cut firewood that we carried. And despite many advance warnings we didn't run across a single hungry, prowling polar bear (encoun-

The Ungava landscape at low tide bore no relation to our topo maps.

ters are increasingly common given the shrinking sea ice).

We planned to cross the False River by paddling upstream to an island to shrink the exposed open-water paddling distance from six to 3.5 kilometers. Although we approached this crossing with some trepidation, it actually went like a charm. Incoming tide sped us southward – brief pause for lunch and inukshuk exploration – outgoing tide shoved us back out again. We found ourselves rounding the final point much sooner than expected, and the experience was moderately terrifying as we were sluiced into a huge tidal wave-train that extended well out from shore. Looking back from our camp that night on the other side, we realized that we could have paddled through an inland passage to avoid the harrowing point altogether, but the channel was not to be found on the topo maps.

After a few days negotiating the maze of rocky reefs in the final bay, we were quite happy to reach the mouth of the Koksoak, where for the first time we were joined by dozens of other happy people out in boats. We've seen relatively few people on the river south of Kuujjuaq on previous trips, but the river north of town is another story. The shores are lined with cabins, and Inuit families were everywhere fishing, drying their catch, picking berries, hunting seals. Paddling with the tide right up the broad river, we had time to visit and enjoy the scene. Robbie and Cecilia Kooktook shared some dried whitefish that we munched as we paddled. Norman Hublee welcomed us to camp near his cabin, joined us for our last supper on the river, and talked of guiding on the Whale River in his youth and teaching traditional skills to Kuujjuaq youth.

On the last day, we rolled out at 3:30 a.m. to catch the incoming tide. For most trips, the finish is something of a let-down. This time, our trip's end was spiced up by a small herd of muskox on the outskirts of town. And we received a warm welcome from Mireille Bouliane, formerly of Nunavik Parks, who took grubby us and our grubby gear into her home for three days while we waited for our plane. With our canoes safely stowed for late-fall shipping to Montreal via Taqramut Transport, we had a few days to appreciate some glimpses of northern community life. We enjoyed the Aqpik Jam music festival, featuring musical styles from throat singing to beat boxing, and attended a community potluck feast where we tried raw frozen caribou and char.

Eric, Dave, Ann, and Al on a hike to "The Wart" near the mouth of the Koksoak River.

This account may leave an impression of a trip filled with hardship and disappointment. For sure, we now understand some of the reasons this route is seldom travelled. But we nonetheless loved the adventure of exploring new places, the good camaraderie of kindred spirits, and even the rare opportunity of finding ourselves "off the map" for a few brief days.

A herd of muskox welcomed us on the outskirts of Kuujjuaq.

On a Snow-Clad Mountain: A Tale of Perseverence

by Gary Storr

Whenever our paddling group, the Canoeing Legends, chalks up another questionable achievement, there are no jubilant high-fives – we don't have a bucket list. In fact, our goals are few but our defeats are recurrent and plentiful. So for us, a skydive of partly favourable outcome would hardly inspire such a list, much less be emblazoned on it.

Occasional aspirations on my part to backpack across the northern cliffs of the Bruce Peninsula and camp at a former logging depot called High Dump bit the dust. Once, I actually lumbered into High Dump but was compelled by bright yellow bear warning signs to retreat exhausted, dehydrated, and in darkness. Held up against the original objective, this feat, for me, was Herculean, but I had fallen short – I hadn't mustered the nerve to overnight at High Dump. On another front, the Legends have yet to conquer the rapids of the Mattawa River. We will take up the gauntlet – and our paddles – again in spring.

This story doesn't concern itself with those debacles. It is about our third attempt to summit Silver Peak in Killarney Provincial Park, Ontario. In winter. On snowshoes.

After registering at the park office, we wandered down to George Lake to test the ice. It was firm – solid enough to support us and our gear. Recalling our past ambitions to cross the ice, someone quipped that we wear swim trunks. The conditions were adequate and our spirits were high. This time we would succeed.

At Johnnie Lake Road we cinched our gear to the toboggans and began our trek. There were six of us: my nephew Drew Goodman had brought two buddies, Josh Wolfe and Brent Goodwill, to join me and fellow Legends, Graham Bryan and Dan Bell. Two days earlier the weather had become unseasonably warm. The sky had opened up and the rain had driven down. As the snow washed away I felt a pang of anxiety – we had already been thwarted by mid-winter thaws on two previous attempts to reach Silver Peak. Then just as quickly, a flash-freeze struck. The fresh blanket of snow it brought insulated the day-old slush and prevented it from hardening.

At the outset, Drew, Josh, and Brent, all in their twenties, displayed their savvy in matters of economy. They pulled tiny pulks with neatly bundled loads that rose barely above the sides. These clever devices skittered weightlessly on the snow behind them. Graham, Dan, and I hauled conveyances piled high with all manner of camping paraphernalia: tents, stoves, fuel, skillets, a pot set, and an axe.

As we approached the first narrows on Johnnie Lake, we encountered open water. We skirted this hazard widely to the right and detoured overland past the gap. Back on the lake, the barges towed by Dan and I sank into the slush, which froze instantly to their bottoms. Growing in weight with every step, they had to be flipped on their sides and scraped so that we could strain against them anew. With each dozen or so heaves we stopped and repeated the chore. Meanwhile, the young trio bounded on ahead.

As twilight fell, Dan and I escaped the grip of the narrows and caught up to the others. Graham had abandoned his toboggan and gone ahead to scout for a campsite – we could see him appraising the far shoreline. He returned and led us tired, hungry, and happy to a spot on land spacious enough to pitch our tents and heat up a pot of chili. Tucking into our supper we marvelled at the spectacle to the northwest. Our camp offered an unobstructed view of Silver Peak. Alone on the horizon, it was magnificent. The summit trail was on the opposite flank and Drew wondered aloud if we would make it. Unwilling to jinx our chances, no one answered.

In all likelihood, there were six different reasons for our being here – we didn't talk about it – but Silver Peak had become both my Everest and my nightmare. Repeated bad weather was putting the mountain beyond my reach. Because of melting ice we'd been obliged to explore overland alternatives on two prior outings. We snowshoed up Gulch Hill one winter and hiked to the Crack the next. While both vantage points provided tremendous views, we had missed our target. At 539 metres above sea level and a little more than 300 metres higher than the surrounding lakes, it would take 15 Silver Peaks one atop the other to equal Everest, which ranges between 3,650 and 4,650 metres above its base. As long as the lakes remained frozen there would be few logistical challenges, but ascending the mountain on snowshoes would require a measure of fitness. And the difficult ice conditions had necessitated our

View from the top

making camp far short of the base.

During the night the temperature plummeted and the ice hardened. We listened to it groan in the darkness. In the morning Brent and I fumbled with frozen fingers to light a cold stove. Three or four matches later, the flame took. Josh emerged from his tent holding a coat that had stiffened in the night. Grinning, he punched his way into the frost-encrusted garment. His body warmth would thaw it out.

Beforehand, I had taken the axe out on the lake and reopened the hole I'd chipped in the ice the night before. I scooped a pot of water and returned to the kitchen. Then, using the axe, Dan chopped up the plastic containers of food that had become rock-hard and, with his hunting knife, carved our breakfast into the skillet. After washing down oatmeal, eggs, bacon, and sausage with cups of steaming cowboy coffee, we stuffed our packs with extra provisions and set out across the lake. The snow glinted in the sunlight and we were quietly optimistic.

Reaching the second Johnnie Lake narrows we were halted again by open water. To bypass it we tramped across a point of land on the right. Back on the ice we hiked to the back of a bay into which a creek trickled, keeping the water from freezing along the shore. We leaped single-file over the moat, then snowshoed up a trail that followed the creek along its west side. At the top of the trail we filled our water bottles and emerged from the woods onto Clearsilver Lake. At this point we kicked off our snowshoes; it had become clear that the popular axiom was true – a pound on the foot did equal five on the back. Then we traipsed across Clearsilver to its northern extremity.

Along the way, Dan pointed out cloven tracks in the snow – a moose and her calf had recently passed this way. A dip in the treeline to our left gave us a glimpse of Silver Peak. Shrouded by forest, we wouldn't see the peak again until we were standing on it. Stepping ashore at the end of the lake, we strapped on our snowshoes and picked up the path that would lead us to the summit trail.

We were four kilometres from our goal. The first two kilometres took us west over level groud toward the final push: a steep, rocky, snow-covered climb to the summit. Stopping for a snack by a stream at the base of the mountain, we filled our water bottles one last time. Here, the first hint of a complication arose: Drew began to rub his thighs. Preoccupied, we ignored this development. Focused on our objective, we had honed a resolute single-mindedness. We were going to summit Silver Peak and nothing else mattered. As with most mountain trails, the direction was unrelentingly up. And so we began.

Victory

My customary place on most outings is at the back of the pack – not only because I am slow-moving, but because I am comfortable viewing the Legends fanned out in front of me. Dan good-naturedly keeps me company by pretending that he too, is slow. So as the crew strung out along the path, we brought up the rear. Brent, as usual, broke trail. After a while Dan moved ahead. Drew trudged lethargically upward, matching my gait. Soon he and I were alone. Our pace slackened as Drew stopped with increasing frequency to stretch and massage his injuries. Both groins had weakened and he was in pain. Stoically he laboured on, but it was obvious that our summit bid was unraveling. Finally, he stopped altogether. "I can't take another step," he said.

I wasn't capable of bringing Drew down the mountain and back to camp single-handedly, particularly if he needed physical support. I would have to catch up to the rest of the crew and bring one of them back. I pulled a fleece from my pack and tossed it to Drew. Then I took off after the others. Hallooing up the path I found them – the trail had doubled back and led them down to a wooded plateau. Beyond them, a wall of quartzite rose to a bald crest. We were near the top. Standing on the ridge above them, I caught their attention. Dutifully, they turned back. "Just one!" I hollered. They huddled for a moment, then three of them turned and continued up the mountain.

Graham and I snowshoed back to where I'd left Drew. Taking baby steps, we arrived in camp at dusk. Drew had acquitted himself admirably. The others returned shortly after. They had summitted!

As a team, we'd succeeded. Dan, Josh and Brent had eaten lunch on top of Silver Peak, taken photographs, and followed us back down. We learned that we had turned back within 20 minutes of the top. That night I was restless; I lay awake in my sleeping bag reconciling unfinished business.

Graham and Dan ragged me afterward about dragging them back to Killarney for another go at the mountain, but I assured them that I was finished. Metaphorically, we had planted our flag – it was time to move on. A week later my wife Debby called me to the computer. "You're going to want to go back," she warned me with a smile. Brent had emailed his summit photos. As I absorbed the breathtaking images on the monitor, I knew Debby and the Canoeing Legends were right – I could feel myself shifting into expedition mode. First, I would need a few stubborn men....

The Koroc River

Story and photos by Francois Leger-Savant

Flight of Twin Otter from Kuujjuaq to the head of the Koroc. Even though it is July 1st, there is snow and ice-cold water.

Hiking in the valley to reach Iberville base camp.

More hiking in the valley

We had been dreaming of this for over two years already: the Koroc River, which originates in the Torngat Mountains. It flows next to the border of Labrador, embedded in a majestic valley, and reaches Ungava Bay. We had several months of preparation and research behind us: a lot of reading about the site and about previous expeditions, not to mention the many phone calls made to collect as much information and advice as possible from paddlers who had previously been there. After several nights lying on the floor of the living room, closely examining contour lines and river records, and as many hours on the computer screen trying to break through the blurry satellite images, craving to see more details, hoping that one more click on the zoom would help us see more. Next was the establishment of an emergency plan, just in case; then elaborating a menu, shopping, preparing food, dehydrating it, putting it under vacuum, packaging, and doing the final preparations.

This time it's true; on July 1st, 2011 we finally sit on the plane that will take us to Kuujjuaq. The belts fastened and the safety instructions given, the tires leave the ground and the plane takes us to an adventure into the unknown. When we arrive at the lovely Kuujjuaq Airport, a very nice Kuururjuaq Park employee named France is expecting us along with an Air Inuit employee who tells us that the Twin Otter we rented to get to the head of the Koroc is not going to take off today. In fact, a thick layer of fog covers the valley and nails the plane to the ground. That's how it works in the North: temperature, winds, and tides dictate the time; waiting is the only solution, as it has always been.

The sky clears out and finally the small plane is allowed to fly with our 320 kg of equipment, everything it takes for the three weeks we have planned, counting 235 km of paddling and hiking. We fly at low altitude in the clouds between the mountains. The mountains through which we travel are the highest in Eastern Canada: we are breath-taken; there are no words to describe this splendour. We then fly along the great Georges River, there are multiple lakes and rocks below us, the escarpments succeed and finally we enter the imposing Koroc valley. The flow is very strong in the gorge's hollow and the water is turquoise as in the southern seas. We can even observe a bear crossing the river nimbly. It's like a National Geographic article: but no, even if we pinch ourselves, it is real.

The plane begins its landing. The trail consists of gravel of unequal sizes, probably left there by a glacier long before our arrival. We barely have the time to unload our equipment and the aircraft has already left. Without a single word, we follow it with our eyes until it disappears behind the mountains, and spontaneously, our shouts of joy fill the valley. Finally we are there, after all this time dreaming of the river, hoping,

it is now at our feet. All of this is magical: cliffs, snow, tundra, and the silence. It is very hard to realize that this site will be our world for the next week, at the mercy of nature, without any human contact, far from everything but yet so close to something else. This site is also full of history: for several millennia, the Koroc River was a direct corridor between the east coast of Ungava Bay and the Labrador coast, used by the people to go extract the highly sought stones of Ramah. The decor probably has not changed much since the days when these men and women were treading on the same ground. It is here that we assemble our first camp of the trip, and that we recreate these ancient activities: create shelter, prepare food, and sleep with the mighty wind that sweeps these lands.

A few strokes in the river and already to our right is the valley leading to Mount Iberville, Quebec's highest mountain, which rises over 1600 metres above sea level. We leave the canoes and food supplies behind to advance into the valley, bringing with us just enough supplies to reach Iberville in a few days. We establish our camp base at the foot of the mountain. We are surrounded by hundreds of small streams which come from the snowmelt of nearby peaks. There is also a bear that is a tad too curious, who decides to come and see who these strange visitors are. A "bear banger" quickly makes it turn around. (Bear Banger is the term describing a projectile used to produce an explosion in order to scare the wildlife.) We fall asleep, on the second night of the expedition, with the sound of the river lapping at the foot of this enormous mountain.

We have an early-morning awakening, because the climb is scheduled for today. But just sticking our head out of the tent, we understand that it won't be possible. Again, the thick fog has changed our plans. We quickly understand that we cannot decide everything here. The day is therefore dedicated to small equipment repairs and rest, plenty of rest, well deserved after the frantic final preparations in Montreal.

At about 4 p.m., three of us leave the camp to go on a reconnaissance mission to find the best path for our ascension. We pick the edge of Quebec and walk a little further, just so that we move a little bit during this day of waiting. At that moment, the veil of fog lifts and we see the famous summit, as we had hoped. The mere sight of the summit brings us into a state of incredible frenzy. We decide to continue and profit from the weather by transforming our reconnaissance mission into a hiking trip. The scenery is breathtaking: a lot of snow covers the majestic mountains and a few small turquoise lakes lie between the ridges.

More than three and a half hours of walk: we are at 1350 metres above sea level and there are 300 metres left at a distance of about two kilometres. These last kilometres are the ones that require the most technique, having to walk on a very thin ridge. We are exposed to strong winds and to the moods of Mother Nature. The sky begins to cover; it is now almost 7:30 p.m. The story of Susan Barnes and Daniel

Waiting for weather to improve for the ascension of Iberville. At base camp, in our bug shelter designed especially for this trip.

Ours tents at Iberville base camp.

Attempt to climb Iberville.

Trying to pack everything in our foldable canoe.

Very happy to have those homemade spray skirts for the rapids.

Resting at Haywood summit. Beautiful hike on a day off from canoeing.

Pauze remains in our thoughts. They died here eight years ago, as they were attempting to reach the summit. Their spirits still seem to inhabit this place and their distress is still ringing from the cliffs, despite the peaceful allure of the site. The hesitation and the memory of this tragedy soon convince us to back down to the base camp to join our friend who stayed behind, and we share a good meal. The weather comforts us in this decision quickly: strong winds and rain are catching up, making the rocks very slippery and the visibility close to zero.

As we had hoped, after long hours of climbing down Iberville, a sumptuous meaty chilli is waiting for us at the campsite. We go to sleep with our fingers crossed, wishing that time would be warmer the next day and would finally allow us to tread the highest rock of Quebec.

At first light, our eyes are immediately on the mountain. It is concealed, lost in the snow and the thick clouds of mist; once again, the rising seems impossible. Without our watches, we would think that time had stopped. Neither the sun nor the clouds move; the weather is such at that time of the year in the Koroc valley. We make a call via satellite to the Kuujjuaq airport to obtain the weather report for the region. The forecast: that same veil will remain for the entire week and in addition, it will snow. Our lost hopes and the lack of food get us back to order and convince us to start walking back to our canoes and continue the expedition. Is it a failure? Maybe a little, but it is mostly a powerful reminder that despite our GoreTex, GPS, satellites, and technologies of all kinds, we cannot control anything here: the timeless feeling in the bottom of this valley has made it very clear.

The following walk marks the end of Iberville for us, for this trip at least, but at the same time the beginning of something else: it will be the beginning of the great Koroc River. One step after the other, one odour after the other: at one point the sun heats up some Labrador tea which gives off a powerful scent, then it is the wet earth that fills our nostrils, and dozens of different tundra odours that are still unknown to us.

Our walking sticks are quickly swapped for paddles and we return to our dear turquoise waters. A multitude of rocks are there waiting for us: our boats are damaged. Our first full day on the water also means our first broken canoe; a hole is even punched out. It is clear that the folding canoes are very practical, but not as strong as the Royalex ones. The landscape is rapidly changing. From rocky valleys we get to moss valleys, and to the first trees: surprise, a birch tree! The vegetation changes according to the longitudes crossed and finally it becomes possible to build a fire. Our camps are becoming very different among these trees and bushes. We drag in our canoes everything you need to build a cozy home every night. We carry our homes just like nomadic peoples have done so long ago on the same land, long before our ancestors planted the colonial flag.

We go through rapids of all sizes. Except for a few mistakes, we go through them without much difficulty. We must be alert because some impressive rapids do not appear on our maps and we cannot spot them before hearing them grunt. We have to be cautious; we cannot minimize the seriousness of the actions in such latitudes, a difficult place to reach and far from any emergency services.

Gulls fly over our boats, which makes us understand that the Ungava Bay is behind the hills. A long and unexpected portage highlights the last rapid of the river. A few more strokes and the water becomes salty, the smell reminds me of camping trips to the sea when I was little. Kelp covers the banks and its fragrance is striking. The impressive 12-metres tides also surprise us. We had established a routine in the valley, but now the challenges we confront are different. New challenges include drinking water, wind, waves, tides, and polar bears. We have four days at sea ahead of us in canoes along the treeless coast: the landscape is again composed of rocks and lichens, it is a desert we got accustomed to, where the horizon is infinite. Distances are difficult to evaluate because we have no reference point, not a tree to give us a scale in this vast expanse of water. We adapt our canoe schedules to tide times. There is no point in trying to paddle against them; we just profit from their surprising power to carry our boats to Kangiqsualujjuaq. However, we do have to portage every evening bags and canoes to take them to dry land and set up camp where the sea cannot reach us. Rain, fog, high winds, and the race against the tide are all factors which, like a metronome, beat the tempo of our days on the Ungava Bay.

We finally arrive at the village, our final destination. We set foot in the bay behind Kangiqsualujjuaq, next to the airport, the landfill and the reeking water treatment facilities. At first glance, the place does not seem very charming, but it is symbolic for us. Here, it is not only the culmination of three weeks of adventure, but also of several months to several years of planning and dreaming.

Some Kuururjuaq park staff pick us up with our equipment. They are people of the community; very friendly, cheerful, and generous. We fill the pick-up and return to the village. It happens so fast, so efficiently, and with such little effort; a funny feeling after three weeks of moving only by human mechanics. Our rhythm changes, already here in this town of 700 inhabitants, over 1900 km from Montreal, things are faster and louder. City rehab begins.

Whether by canoe, by hiking, or by other means, the North puts things in perspective, reminding us that we are so small and so few. It also reminds us of the importance of everything that happened before our time, the ice ages, and the men who long ago lived there. The North also teaches us something about those who will come after us, the impact we have on these lands which are so powerful yet so fragile. The North shapes us and reminds us to come back.

Beautiful day for paddling on Koroc turquoise waters.

Amazing ledge on Koroc River.

Portage of the last rapid. Beginning of tide and salt water.

A Paddler's Haiku for the Nisutlin River

Story and photo by S.R. Gage

The River

The Nisutlin River is one of the early, upstream feeders of the massive Yukon River drainage system. It cuts down between the Pelly Mountains and the Big Salmon Range, to the east of the Yukon itself, and then ends in an extensive delta that is designated as a national wildlife refuge. The placid, delta waters feed into Teslin Lake.

The section of the river that is usually paddled begins with a put-in 68 kilometers up the South Canol Road, from Johnson's Crossing. The take-out is at the town of Teslin, reached by paddling about 13 kilometers on Nisutlin Bay (part of Teslin Lake). The route is about 140 kilometers in length. We were five nights on the river.

At the end of August, and into September, we found the river quick flowing, but rapids-free. Water levels were low, yet passable. There were numerable, mixed gravel/sand bars for camping. The surrounding forest is dense, so finding campsites in high water (usually June) would be more difficult. Aside from a few First Nations camps (wall tent frames, etc.), there is virtually no sign of human activity until paddlers get close to Teslin Lake. The Nisutlin could be the perfect compliment to a backpacking trip over the Chilkoot Pass, or a driving trip on the Alaska Highway.

The Haiku

Haiku is a Japanese form of short poem. Originally, it contained 17 'on', or syllables. Modern haiku tend to be less rigid in structure. The poems stress the observations and experience of the poet in relation to nature. Haiku will usually contain other key markers:

- A sense of heightened awareness of the here and now
- A reference to the season
- A 'cutting' or change of direction in the poem's discourse.

The greatest master of haiku was Matsuo Basho (1644-94). He lived most of his life in Edo (Tokyo), but he traveled widely across Japan for esthetic and spiritual reasons. In an age when such 'unnecessary' travel was considered unfounded and dangerous, Basho simply set off, marching to his own drummer- an attitude which WCA members can well appreciate.

Haiku is an excellent mental challenge for the canoe tripper. The form is short enough to be retained in one's head. And, the potential for inspiration is all around you. If like me, you find yourself in the wild with limited paper and no related electronic devices, why not build your trip memory bank from haiku?

Bibliography

Basho, The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches, Translated by Nobuyuki Yuasa, Penguin Books, 1966.

Madsen, *Ken and Graham Wilson, Rivers of the Yukon*, Primrose Publishing, 1989.

Looking upstream to the Big Salmon Range

A Paddler's Haiku for the Nisutlin River

No. 1
Jet lag awakeness on gravel bar.
Boreal Owl keeps the Western Gate,
And tells me.
Great Horned, the Eastern Gate,
And tells me.
Spruce are silent.

No. 2
Pacific winds
From the White Pass and Chilkoot
Meet us in mid-river.
No escape.

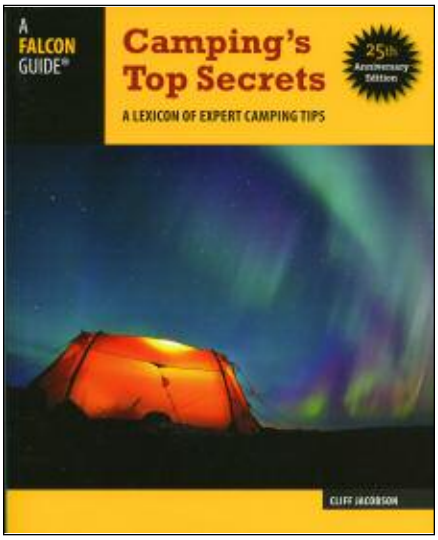
No. 3
Highbush cranberry flag the cutbanks
In September Red.
Picked, we learn again
To 'eat bitter'.

No. 4
Brown rice, mung bean and chard porridge;
Home-cooked, home-dried.
Simple fare
To warm old river boatmen.

Book Reviews

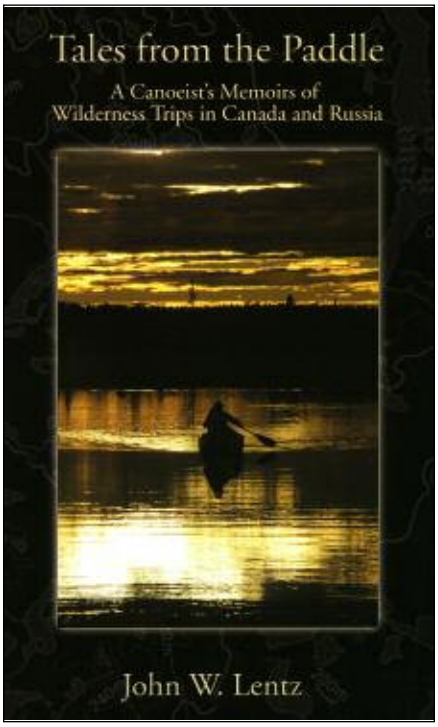
Camping's Top Secrets, A Lexicon of Expert Camping Tips by Cliff Jacobson, published by Globe Pequot Press, Guilford, CT, softcover, 211 pages, 2013, US$19.95, Can$21.95.
Review by Toni Harting.

This may very well be Cliff Jacobson's most interesting and useful book of all the many books he has produced over the years. It's an amazing collection of very clever camping tips, from the simple use of alum to help settle the silt in muddy water, to First-Aid Tips for Common Problems, to useful info on rain gear, to how to best use tumplines, and many other subjects in-between. Even tips on how to use diapers and diaper pins (!) in the Great Outdoors are presented. The Index mentions about 165 main items, many of them supplied by various paddling experts, and illustrated by wonderfully clear and colourful drawings and photographs. And everything is presented alphabetically, so all items are very easy to find. There are so many tips in this book that even old hands at the game of being in the wild can easily find something useful to add to their own collection of camping knowledge. Indeed, a superb must-have book by a master-paddler and a fine writer.



Tales from the Paddle, A Canoeist's Memoirs of Wilderness Trips in Canada and Russia, by John W. Lentz, published by Cover to Cover, Peterborough, ON, in association with The Canadian Canoe Museum, Peterborough, ON, hardcover, 223 pages. CN$25.00.
Review by Toni Harting.

It is extremely rare that a book I receive to review for *Nastawgan* literally moves me to tears at first reading. But that's exactly what happened when I started going more or less at random through the many inviting pages of this gorgeous, well-designed book, with its arresting gold-on-black cover. While reading snippets and passages of the many vignettes the author presents so cleverly, I was often thoroughly moved by his insight into what wilderness canoeing really can be once you have opened your ears and eyes and mind to what you can experience on the water and lands in-between. The author's great love and deep knowledge of wilderness canoe tripping is made abundantly clear by his absorbing descriptions of numerous situations and encounters during the about 60 years (yes, 60...!) of his paddling career. In writing the book, Lentz made the very clever decision to present the huge amount of information available to him not as one story from beginning to end of his career as a paddler, but to split up everything into longer or shorter vignettes, to some degree enabling the readers to pick and choose what they want to read. Still, this highly accessible and well-written book also presents the grand story of his adventurous life on the far-away waters of northern Canada and Russia, which started in 1946 in an outdoors camp called Temagami in Ontario where he as a young boy first held a paddle in his hands. Then his real tripping career started in 1962 with an almost-fatal trip on the Back River, followed over the years by trips down many of Canada's iconic wilderness rivers such as the: Kazan, Caniapiscau, Dubawnt, Nahanni, Rupert, Coppermine, Horton, Harricana, Bloodvein, Missinaibi, and many others, for a total of 23 major canoe and catamaran expeditions to northern Canada and Siberia. John Lentz has written stories about his adventures that have been published in many prestigious publications, notably *National Geographic* magazine. This extraordinary book presents a series of remarkable photographs showing among others the author as a young boy circa 1950 and finally as the white-haired old-timer in 2006, still paddling (or in this case, wading). The book ends with three Appendices that give information on the major trips Lentz has made, a list of his canoeing and Arctic history publications, and the author's suggested list of books for further reading. It is also truly touching to read about Lentz' love and praise for his supportive wife, Judy, who always gave her man the freedom to follow his enduring passion of wilderness canoe tripping. What a life John Lentz has had and is surely still having. Can't wait for another book by this grand old man of wilderness canoe tripping. Thanks, John, for the treasure you've given us.



Fall Meeting 2013
The reminiscences of a newcomer

By Glenn Healey

It was with some trepidation in which I tied my beat-up ABS canoe to the roof racks of the car. I was heading out to only the second activity I have ever attended as a member of the WCA. I have been a member on and off since 1986, and yet only went to one activity before now, a one-day paddle on Willow Creek up in my neck of the woods just south of Barrie, Ontario.

I arrived at the Madawaska Kanoe Centre in the late afternoon on Oct. 4th and instantly encountered some friendly faces by the front porch. It seems paddlers are paddlers wherever you go, and the talk soon turned to what else, boats and gear, then after a little while, canoe routes. I was starting to feel right at home. I have been canoe tripping since I was 16 years old. I think my first week-long trip was a circumnavigation of the Six Mile Lake Provincial Park in conjunction with the Gibson Macdonald McCrea lake loop. I was totally hooked after that experience. I then taught myself some basic strokes while at the family cottage in Dad's canoe with a copy of *"Path of the Paddle"* on top of my life jacket in front of me on the floor of the canoe, and the rest as they say is history.

On Saturday morning I decided to join the flatwater paddlers on their trip down the Little Mississippi and York rivers. As a canoe tripper I have paddled whitewater of course, but I have always viewed whitewater paddling as a subset of my skills, and not my specialty. When paddling, I am usually alone or with scoutage youth, so the old adages "when in doubt carry the boat" or "no one ever drowned on a portage" are usually the first words out of my mouth in those situations. So paddling with the flatwater folks seemed appropriate, especially after I went down and had a look at the rapids that are right across the road from MKC. The convoy set off and we eventually found the put-in. Some of the party were delayed, so it was decided to proceed as two separate groups. The scenery and fall colours were amazing along the Little Mississippi and York sections. I must say that I got quite a workout keeping up with adult tandem paddling teams and kayakers with little old me in a solo open canoe, but it was well worth it to listen to the friendly banter back and forth between the other boats. We eventually all arrived at the take-out, and the shuttle was extremely well run. We soon had all the boats, cars and paddlers safely back at MKC for a great dinner served up in the dining room. After dinner there were some fantastic presentations in an upstairs loft. One of the presentations in particular caught my attention; it was about a group of paddlers canoeing the Moisie River in Quebec. When I was a teenager dreaming about paddling a northern river I read a book entitled *"The Complete Wilderness Paddler"* which detailed a canoe trip on the Moisie River. It was quite a thrill to see it come to life in front of me on that screen.

The next day with rain threatening the sky, my arms feeling like lead (thank you, God, for Advil), and the group pictures all taken, I decided to head home. All in all, it was a great weekend. This experience has inspired me to get much more involved in my Alma Mater canoe club, the WCA.

Thanks to everyone.

Food for Paddlers

The Spanish River trip write-up (see *Nastawgan*, Spring 2012) mentioned a couple of memorable meals. One of these was Rockin' Moroccan Stew. This recipe is featured in Camp Cooking, *The Black Feather Guide* by Mark Scriver, Wendy Grater, and Joanna Baker. Gary James, the trip organizer, said they enjoyed this dish twice on the trip and he has made it since for his friends. For the Spanish River trip, he said it was great made fresh at camp (by Dave and Mary Cunningham) or dehydrated at home and rehydrated at camp (Gary). Wendy Grater has generously given permission to reprint the recipe here.

ROCKIN' MOROCCAN STEW

This is a wonderful recipe inspired by North African cuisine. It is a colourful, vegetarian dish with vibrant flavours.

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup (250 mL) vegetable broth made from bouillon
1/3 cup (80 mL) olive oil
1 onion, chopped
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 sweet potato, diced
1 cup (250 mL) dried green beans
1 red pepper, chopped
1/2 cup (125 mL) soya chunks
28 oz can (796 mL) diced tomatoes
1/2 tsp (2 mL) thyme
1/4 tsp (1 mL) ginger, ground
1/4 tsp (1 mL) nutmeg, ground
1/4 tsp (1 mL) cinnamon, ground
3 cloves
pinch chili flakes

1/2 cup (125 mL) prunes, pitted and halved
1/3 cup (80 mL) dried apricots, diced
8 oz can (250 mL) artichoke hearts, reserve juice
1/2 cup (125 mL) black olives, pitted
3 tbsp (45 mL) brown sugar
pinch saffron
1/2 lemon, juiced
1 cup (250 mL) slivered almonds, toasted
3 cups (750 mL) couscous
4 & 1/2 cups (1125 mL) boiling water

METHOD:

1. In the wok, heat the oil (or broth – see comments below) and sauté the onion and garlic.

2. Add the sweet potatoes, beans, red peppers, soy chunks, tomatoes, and all the spices except for the saffron, and cook at a high temperature for 5 minutes, stirring frequently.

3. Add the vegetable stock, prunes, apricots, and the liquid from the artichokes.

4. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes or until the vegetables are tender.

5. Stir in the artichokes, olives, brown sugar, and saffron. Simmer for another 5 to 10 minutes.

6. While you are waiting, toast the almonds in a dry frying pan.

7. In a separate stainless steel bowl, pour 3 & 1/2 cups (875 mL) of boiling water over the couscous and let it stand for 5 minutes.

8. Fluff the couscous with a fork.

9. Serve the stew over the couscous, add lemon juice, and garnish with toasted almonds.

Comments from Gary: in step 1, Gary substituted more broth for the oil to sauté the onions and garlic making the dish easier to dehydrate. He made the couscous at camp.

If you would like to share your favourite tripping recipes, please contact Barb Young, 12 Erindale Crescent, Brampton, Ont. L6W 1B5;
youngjdavid@rogers.com.

The Storm

By Greg Went

The sun is back this morning. It's been completely absent during our three-day battle with a violent storm. On the day that the storm started, we struggled mightily to make kilometres while the storm slowly gathered strength. Hoping against hope that the storm would not be a bad one and would soon blow over. Finally, the increasing winds and driving rain forced us to the shore.

All experienced wilderness canoeists will have to deal with a bad storm at least once during one of their trips. Some will encounter many. If your luck is anything like ours, you had better plan for bad storms. Lots of them. They're coming.

You reach a point during a bad storm when the kilometres that you make by fighting to get them are just not worth the efforts that you are making. Too few kilometres, too much work. We had reached that point. On day two we also had to stay put. Spent it reading and looking at maps. There was no hope of travel while we endured the full fury of the wailing winds and the rain coming at us horizontally.

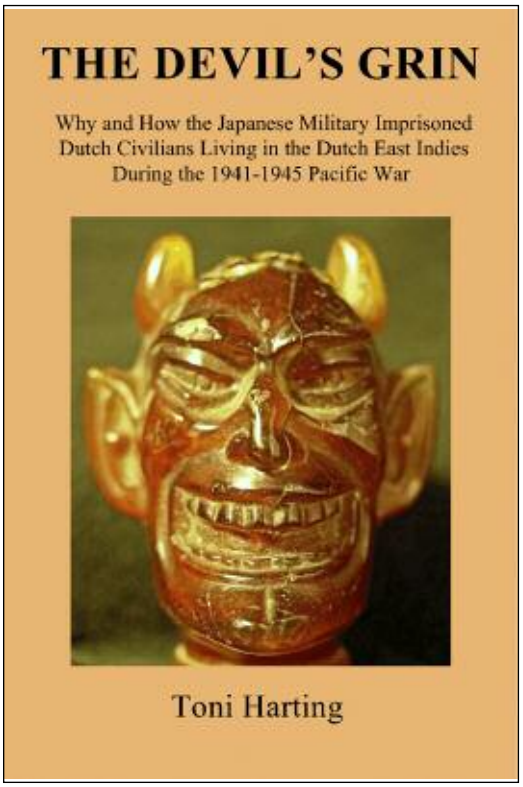
On day three it looked like the storm was letting up somewhat. We packed up and moved, but progress was again a struggle. The kilometres made were hard earned, but we were rested from our layover day and in the mood to look at new country. We paddled late and then threw up camp, thankful to be making progress at last. That night, each one of us said a fervent prayer that the winds would continue to abate and that we could continue our journey without the gargantuan efforts that we were expending to make the kilometres.

Our prayers were answered and this morning the sun is back. Warming the earth after its three-day absence. The first peek out of the tent door told us that the storm was over. Finally.

Each year when we return for another wilderness canoe trip you can sense that the wilderness is glad to see us. I think it is happy to meet travellers who understand and appreciate it. Travellers who are grateful for the wilderness experience. Travellers who long for wilderness when they are not in wilderness.

And so this morning we gave the same greeting to the returning sun that the wilderness gave to us when we returned this year: "Welcome back. We missed you."

Book Review



The Devil's Grin, by Toni Harting, self-published, March 2013, FREE digital download, or paperback, 186 pages. CN$34; US$38.
Review by Cliff Jacobson.

Paddlers who are familiar with Toni Harting's earlier books, "Shooting Paddlers (Photographic Adventures With Canoeists, Kayakers And Rafters)" and "French River (Canoeing the River of the Stick-Wavers)," will be surprised by his latest release, "The Devil's Grin." Unlike his former books, "The Devil's Grin" is not about wilderness canoeing or photography: instead, it is the gripping true story of the time that Toni and his family spent as civilian prisoners of war in Japanese concentration camps during World War II.

Background: Toni was born in Indonesia in1927 to parents Tine Pons and Anton Harting. Anton was a highly respected engineer who worked at the Geological Research Department in Bandoeng, Indonesia. The Harting's enjoyed a happy, healthy life until March, 1942 when the Japanese arrived and imprisoned all the Dutch. Toni was just 16 years old when he and his family were interned in their first camp. "The Devil's Grin" details how he and his parents survived starvation, disease, and the brutal beatings of the Japanese guards. The book examines the psychology that defined the Japanese mind during the war years – why they were so brutal and why surrender was never an option – and why it was ultimately necessary for the United States to drop the atom bomb(s).

I first met Toni at a canoe show in Canada many years ago. There, I was introduced to his exquisite, award-winning photographs, many of which would eventually find their way into his books. During our talks about canoeing, Toni shared stories about his teen life in the concentration camps – the frequent beatings, rampant disease, constant starvation, catching rats and snakes (at risk of brutal punishment) to stave off starvation and the growing death toll. Sitting across from Toni with a good Canadian beer in hand, I would never have guessed that this kind-hearted, talented man had endured such hardships. Over the years, I kept hounding Toni to record those events. Now, he has done so and the resulting book is brilliant.

I start a lot of books that I don't finish. "The Devil's Grin" was one I couldn't put down! Though Toni is best known for his award-winning photos (one of which was used in the design of a Canada Post stamp), he is an accomplished writer and a thorough researcher. There are no "slow" parts or fluff in this book. "The Devil's Grin" is an awesome and enlightening read.

Toni's blog-spot (http://aharting.blogspot.com) provides details for purchasing the paperback or the free pdf download to your computer or tablet.

A respectful criticism: The scholarly one-page synopsis that describes this book does not do the book justice.

Save Kipawa Lake

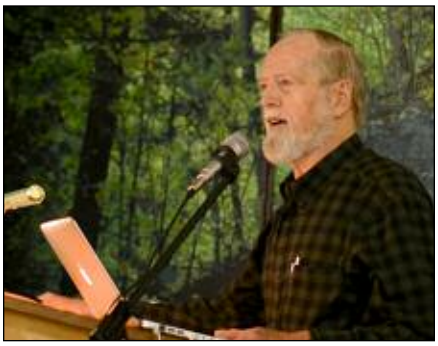
By Dave Morin

Kipawa Lake is located along the Ontario/Quebec border North of Ottawa and East of North Bay. It is the headwaters for Lake Temiscaming as well as the Ottawa River. It is a vast body of water with narrow channels and rivers that periodically open up into larger lakes. Although Kipawa Lake's overall length is only 65 km, it has roughly 965 km of shoreline. A moratorium on development was imposed in the 1980s allowing Kipawa to remain a pristine wilderness area with road access within a 1-day drive of the GTA, Ottawa, Montreal and other major centers. The area is currently at risk. Plans are in place to lift the moratorium and allow development on Kipawa's shores that will irreversibly and forever destroy this natural paradise. Proposed development includes a rare earth mine project by Matamec Explorations Inc. No rare earth element mine has operated in the world without significant damage to the environment and human health. Canada's Environmental Laws, while more stringent than many other countries, were not written with this type of project in mind. Should this project be allowed to proceed it will be the first of its kind in Canada and our environmental laws are not sufficient to protect this vulnerable wilderness area. The region is an ideal destination for wilderness paddlers of all types; it offers

The Inaugural George Luste Lecture

Story by Katie Tanz

Photos by Chris Lentz



Over 100 supporters gathered to take in the inaugural George Luste Lecture, which was given at the Canadian Canoe Museum in October, featuring John Lentz as the first speaker. After an enthusiastic introduction, I knew this was going to be an inspiring lecture. Not many paddling resumes could rival George Luste's, a man highly regarded in the wilderness canoeing community. However, if anyone else could, it may well be John Lentz. John has been on 21 major paddling expeditions in Canada, as well as 2 in Siberia and has been a member of The Explorers Club in New York City since 1963. His new book, *Tales from the Paddle: A Canoeist's Memoirs of Wilderness Trips in Canada and Russia* shares John's stories of these adventures.

While I'm sure any one of us in the Canadian Canoe Museum lecture room would have delighted in hearing about all 23 of these expeditions, John chose to highlight his adventures from three: the Dubawnt, Hood and Nahanni Rivers. He shared breathtaking photos to illustrate these tales, some captured by accompanying National Geographic photographers.

John drew on one of my favourite aspects of canoe tripping – that feeling of connection you get with the people who have paddled those ancient highways before you. On John Lentz's trips, he went further than most to foster this connection.

After reading the old journal from Franklin's trip on the Hood River, Lentz was on a mission to uncover any remnants of a cache deposited by Franklin's party. The group had left behind anything heavy and deemed unnecessary for their survival as they continued their journey towards Fort Enterprise. While many expeditions have attempted to recover any evidence of this cache, John was especially determined – bringing along metal detectors to scan the area below Wilberforce Falls, the expected site of the items. Luckily, lugging the cumbersome devices proved to be worth it for Lentz when they found an artifact at the last minute, on the same spot where their tents had stood!

Eager to absorb any sort of wisdom from such an experienced paddler, my ears perked up when he offered some advice. The simplicity of the lessons seemed to confirm the importance to "watching your weather" and to always scout to the end of the rapid, no matter what the top looks like.

Images of seemingly unnavigable ice covered lakes, epic waterfalls, startled muskoxen and mobs of migrating caribou appeared on the screen as John recalled the moments of hardships and friendship and the lessons he took from these journeys.

John captured the spirit of canoe tripping in his presentation-the humour necessary to get through the challenges, the patience and perceptiveness required to read the weather and the landscape. I was captivated by the descriptions of the raw, rugged terrain and found myself at first reminiscing about my own trips gone by, and then itching to start planning my next one.

Katie Tanz has been connected to Keewaydin Camp since it first introduced girls into its hundred-year-old canoe-tripping program in 1999. Since then, she has led teenage girls on 7 week, all-female trips through northern areas of Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba. This past summer, she traveled from Windigo Lake (north of Pickle Lake) to York Factory on the Hudson Bay.

---

white water on the Lower Kipawa River, canoe tripping on the Upper Kipawa River and flat water paddling among the islands and inlets of Kipawa Lake, all set in a pristine wilderness with little human development. You can travel this region for miles without seeing a single building. Tourists travel from all over the world to enjoy the beauty and serenity of this region. The land has a rich cultural and historical significance to the local Algonquin First Nations who still inhabit the region and rely on hunting and fishing. Rare earth mining has the ability to release radioactive isotopes, heavy metals and other contaminants that would not only be detrimental to the health of the environment, aquatic and terrestrial organisms but that would also render the water unsafe to drink, the wild plants, fish and wild game unsafe to eat and the air unsafe to breathe. The health effects on the local population could be far reaching, including chronic illnesses and the potential of elevated cancer rates. Allowing industrial development on Kipawa Lake will provide a short term economic gain whereas protecting the region from development will allow Canadians to experience the beauty of this region, escape from the city to reconnect with nature and allow First Nations to continue their traditional way of life for generations to come – this is priceless. Please visit http://www.savekipawalake.blogspot.com/ to learn more about these threats and what you can do to help save Kipawa Lake.

Where it is…

…in this issue

WCA Postal Address
P.O. Box 91068
2901 Bayview Ave.
Toronto, ON M2K 2Y6

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dave Young
(Chair)
chair@wildernesscanoe.ca
416-457-7937

Gary Ataman
Gary.Ataman@
safranmbd.com
905-683-3100 ext.1286

Geri James
Geri.james@blackrock.com
416-512-6690

Diane Lucas
lucasde@yahoo.com
905-826-0875

Dave Cunningham
DBCunningham-Appraisals
@rogers.com
905-863-2865

Bernadette Farley
mbernadette.farley
@gmail.com
416-762-8073

WCA Contacts *http://www.wildernesscanoe.ca*

Secretary
Bill King
45 Hi Mount Drive
Toronto, ON M2K 1X3
416-223-4646
lyonrex@rogers.com

WCA Outings
Bill Ness
194 Placentia Blvd.
Toronto, ON M1S 4H4
416-321-3005
bness@look.ca

Editor
Aleksandar Gusev
8 Valiant Road
Etobicoke, ON M8X 1P4
416-236-7079
aleks.gusev@gmail.com

Treasurer
Barb Young
youngjdavid@rogers.com

Webmaster
Jeff Haymer
Toronto, ON
416-635-5801
jhaymer@primus.ca

Membership and Computer Records
Emmy Hendrickx
emmy.hendrickx@bell.net

Conservation
Jeff McColl
mccolls@sympatico.ca

Editorial Team:
Aleks Gusev: Editor-in-Chief
Pegi Dover: Text Editor
James Fitton: Text Editor
Barb Young: Food Editor
Bill Ness: Outings Editor
Bon Henderson: Resource Editor
Toni Harting: Photo Editor
Peter Jaspert: Layout

MOUNTAIN EQUIPMENT CO-OP®

Ontario Trillium Foundation
Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario

WCA gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation in publishing this Journal