

CHE-MUN

(Ojibway for canoe)

THE JOURNAL OF CANADIAN WILDERNESS CANOEING

OUTFIT 96

CHE-MUN

SPRING 1999

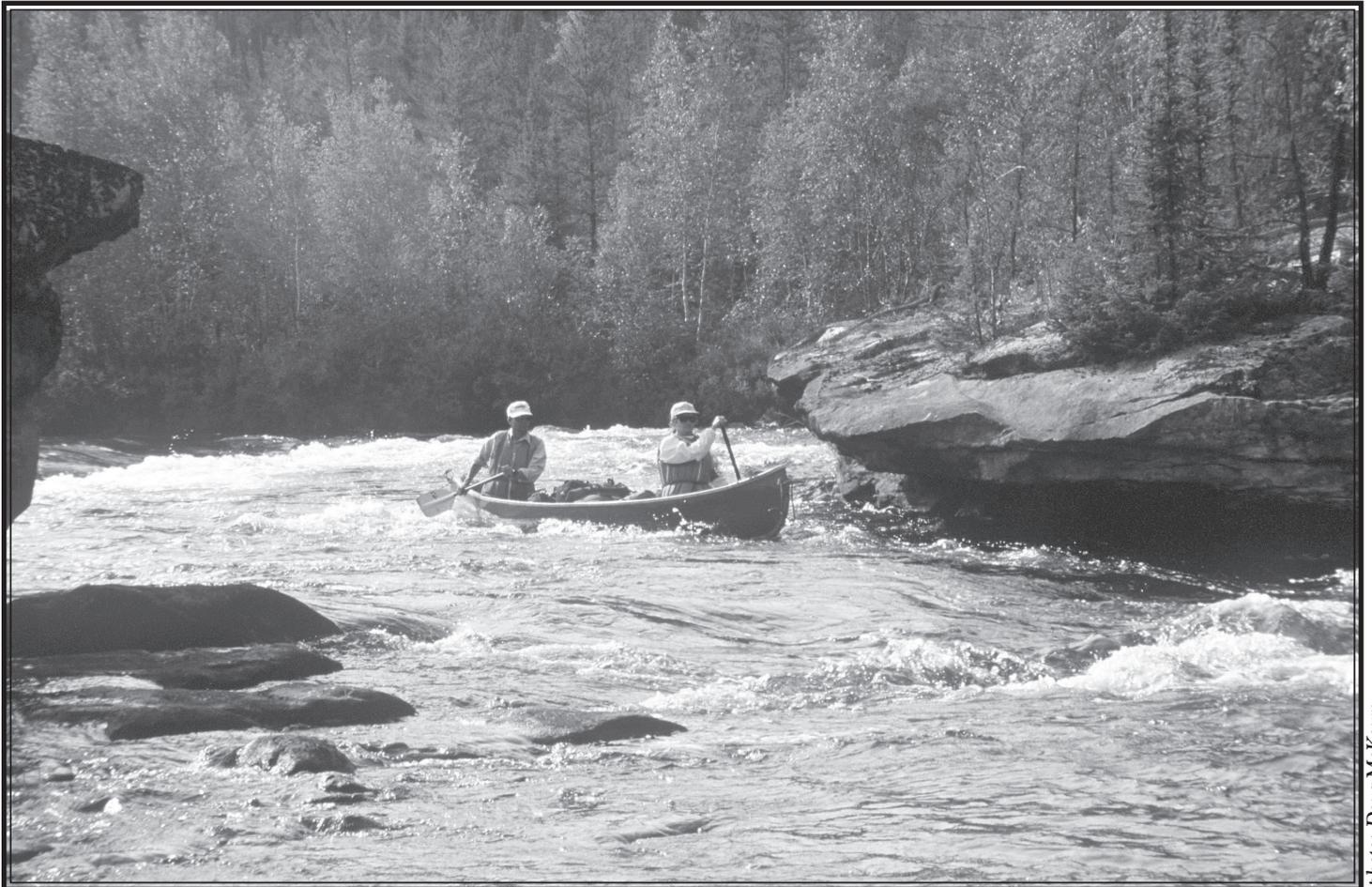


photo: Doug McKoun

DOWN THE MACFARLANE -- Heather Dempsey and Keith Webb head down one of the many rapids in Saskatchewan's MacFarlane River which rises in the centre of the prairie province and flows north to Lake Athabasca past sand dunes and black bears. See page six for a full report.

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**MacFarlane
River**

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A home & native land

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Spring Packet



The time honoured art of planning for a canoe expedition has made all of our winters more bearable. And along with the decline in purchases of carbon paper comes the increase in the use of e-mail as a planning tool. We certainly use it as does New England writer **Will Lange**, who let us peek in on this winter's planning e-mails.

The Geriatric Adventure Society

January 22, 1999.

Dear Friends,

This is a preliminary notice which I probably wouldn't send out but for the convenience of e-mail. It does, however, request a response.

A few weeks ago I proposed to Eric Sailer (The Fish Fillet King) that this summer's canoe trip descend the nameless river draining Darby Lake on Boothia Peninsula and resume the Hayes River trip where we were forced to end it (fluvius interruptus) in 1997. But looking at the map, he has come up with what looks like a more exciting idea.

So I'm tentatively planning a three-week trip, from July 10 to August 1, to canoe the Murchison River. The Murchison (I'll soon have its native name) rises just north of the big elbow in the Hayes and flows roughly northward into Rasmussen Basin, east of Gjoa Haven by 60 miles. The 1:250,000 maps show it to be sort of a lunar landscape: a flat-bottomed, steep-walled upper valley full of hundreds of kettles; a fairly large lake in mid-river; and a very flat, open delta near the sea. It has not, by local knowledge, been canoed before, but is frequented by the locals. We would be dropped off by Twin Otter and retrieved by boat from Gjoa Haven.

This would be a voyage of exploration and char fishing in country even more exotic than what we have experienced heretofore. I'm in contact with the air charter folks and the boat people for pickup, and should have their prices soon, which will help me sort out the budget.

Please let me know whether or not to leave you
2.

on this mailing list for further details. In the meantime, hang by your thwarts and write if you get work...Will.

March 10, 1999

Dear Friends

Here's an update on the Murchison River plans: I have a reasonable price from Adlair Aviation in Cambridge Bay to fly us to the river. But they can't land on the Murchison; so would take us instead to Simpson Lake, where there is a rough landing strip. Simpson Lake is about 40 miles north of Murchison Lake. From there, we would paddle southwest down a tributary of the Murchison and meet that river not far below the lake and continue to the coast.

The boat pickup is a little complicated, mostly because of "Inuit time": what's all the excitement about? Somebody'll be there. But I'm in touch by e-mail with a local schoolteacher who assures me that's the way things operate there, and the Hunters and Trappers Association really will get back to me.

So things are beginning to happen. At the moment, we have more than six guys who have expressed strong interest in going. This means I will be asking for substantial deposits (airplane tickets) sometime in the next couple of weeks.

Dates: Leave Montreal Thursday July 15.

Return Wednesday August 4.

The dates almost certainly won't change; the destination might, depending upon further negotiations with the Gjoa Haven folks. Let me know what's happening with you. If you want, you can even reserve a spot by sending a deposit. Hang by your thwarts...Will.

March 21, 1999

Dear Friends,

After three months of trying unsuccessfully to arrange reasonably priced and reliable transportation to the rivers on the east side of Rasmussen Basin, I'm returning to one of our past ideas: the Kuujjua River on Victoria Island. I've spoken with

several friends who have done this river in the past, and all rate it at the top for remoteness, wildlife, whitewater, and fishing.

The Kuujjua River rises in the Shaler Mountains in north-central Victoria Island and flows roughly westward through hilly tundra into the Arctic Ocean at Minto Inlet. There are Inuit char camps at its mouth, used by the native families of the hamlet of Holman. Previous paddlers report many muskoxen, as well as caribou, Peary caribou, wolves and foxes, and snowy owls. The surrounding terrain and views are spectacular. I can send you previous trip reports if you'd like them.

We will be using Alv Elvestad's Pak-Boat 17-foot Escape canoes, which means we'll have to buy instead of rent. Alv will demonstrate assembly and customize seat locations for us. After the trip, the canoes will be available for use by any Society member. Anyone who wants to buy a canoe at the end of the trip may do that; the proceeds will be distributed among the other party members.

Here is the schedule:

Depart: Thursday July 15.

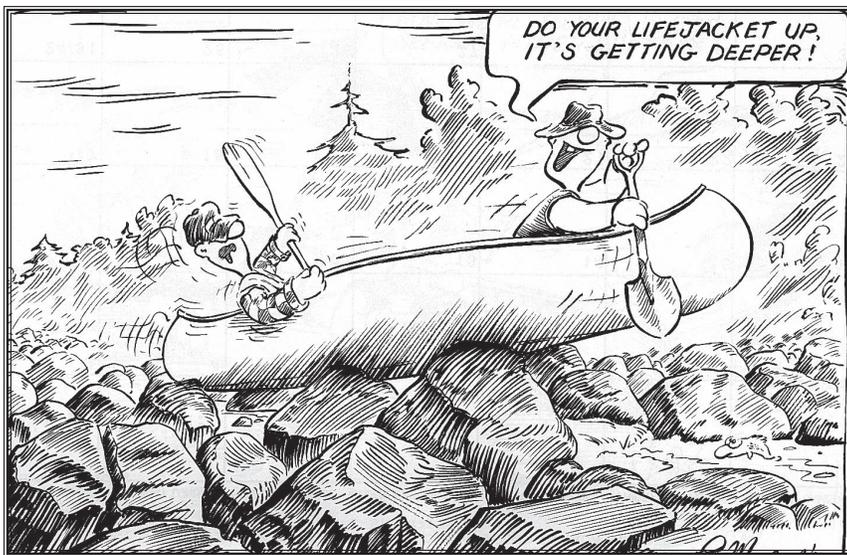
Return: Tuesday August 3.

The cost, based upon a 2800-pound maximum payload of eight men in a Twin Otter, is \$3825. This covers all expenses, door to door, except for meals en route and gifts to bring home.

I need to order airline tickets and the boats by the end of March. Ten men have expressed a lively interest in the trip. We can take eight; so I need your \$2000 deposit by the end of this month. As soon as I have that, I'll send out a roster and equipment lists. Incidentally, before I forget it (in both senses of the word), each man brings his own toilet paper this time.

Hang by your thwarts, friends, and call or write if you're in! Will

Good luck, men. To paraphrase your leader; write us a trip report if it works!



Editor's Notebook

Timing, they say, is everything. It would seem that is the case in the recent announcement by the Ontario government who a few months ago seem poised to give away much of the province's vast northland to logger and miners with their ill-conceived Lands For Life program.

The predictions and fear have been considerable over the past two years as this program inched forward. What a great surprise to discover when all was said and done, L4L will create 60 new parks, 274 conservation areas and expand 44 parks, boosting protected land to 9.5 million hectares. In addition, the program will provide \$21.5 million for forestry management, including \$7 million for fish and wildlife. And most significantly, it means Ontario has now protected that magical 12% of their land touted in than long-ago document, The Bruntland Report (remember that).

That this gesture came from a conservative government which seemed more bent on giving the resources away is even more surprising. Until you realize that an election is very near and this sort of thing plays well in the populated south – as it should. It should also be noted that a great many dedicated people and environment groups fought the initial L4L wave which seemed heavily tilted to an industry handout.

I hope many have you have something interesting planned for the last summer of the millennium. Our *Anyplace Wild* shoot in late May I told you of in *Outfit 95* has changed a bit. We wont get a chance to paddle the Blackwater owing to the timing of the shoot. There is a very large snowpack in the B.C. mountains this year which could result in some flooding problems. We'll tell you all about it in our next issue.

We are also doing *Winisk to the Bay*, another *onriver.online* adventure. This year the destination is northern Ontario's Winisk River which flows north into Polar Bear Provincial Park on Hudson Bay. The timing will be the same as the George – roughly the first two weeks of August. All our sponsors are in place including our perennial supporter Woods Canada and this year our lead patron is Canoe Frontier, a northern outfitter. Check out their website at www.canoefrontier.com. Lots more about that trip in upcoming issues.

Wishing you all great planning and better paddling!

Michael Peake, Editor.

NUNAVUT Newsline

HOW FAR NORTH?

Arctic Circle 67°
Grise Fiord 77°
Coppermine 68°
Iqaluit 64°
Rankin Inlet 63°
A few comparisons
Ottawa 45°
Stockholm 59°
Moscow 56°
Berlin 52°

POPULATION

On May 14, 1996, the census counted 24,730 people in the new Nunavut Territory, 38% of the total population of the current Northwest Territories. Men outnumbered women, 12,915 to 11,820. Most of Nunavut's population is located in small towns and hamlets spread across its vast land mass. The largest centres are the Baffin Island town of Iqaluit, the new territorial capital, with a population of 4,220, and the hamlet of Rankin Inlet, with a population of 2,058, on the coast of Hudson Bay.

Children aged 15 and under accounted for 40% of Nunavut's population in 1996, compared with 21% in the same age group in Canada. In contrast, people aged 65 and over made up only 2% of Nunavut's population, compared with 12% in Canada's population.

SOME COMPARISONS

Total Inuit Population of Nunavut: 20,490
Total Population of Canada: 30,000,000
Total Inuit Population in Canada: 25,000
Population per square kilometre : 0.01
Population per square kilometre in Canada: 2.9,
Ontario: 11.0, Germany: 220.0, China: 120.4



OTHER FACTS

Kilometres of highway: 20
Cost of two litres of milk: \$7.00
Cost of a loaf of bread: \$3.00
Average household income : \$31,471
Average household income in Canada: \$45,251

➔ *Continued on Page 11*

Manning & Wife

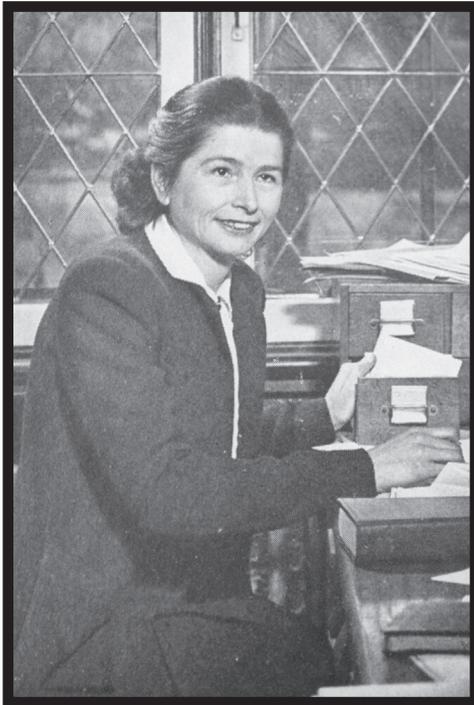
The title of this piece –*Manning and Wife*–might be immediately offensive to the sensibilities of some in these penultimate millennial moments. But taken in the context of its time, the story of Arctic explorer Thomas H. Manning and spouse Ella Wallace Manning is quite aptly titled.

Indeed, in Ella's books about the pair's northern travels her *nom de plume* was Mrs. Tom Manning. Not something you see much these days. She wrote two books about their northern adventures together just before the Second World War; *Igloo for the Night* (1943) and *A Summer on Hudson Bay* (1949).

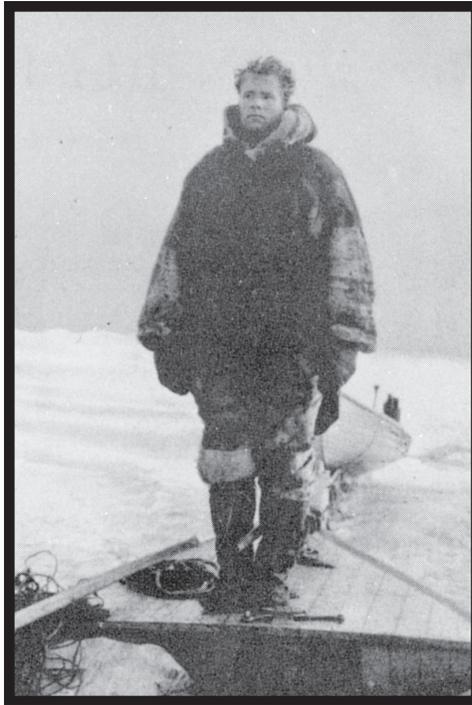
The recent passing of Mr. Manning was noted by this journal. What surprised us was the little we knew of him and we thought many of you would like to know more, so we dug a bit deeper.

One of the main reasons Manning was little known was that he published no books and relatively few technical articles. [Check out *Canadian Geographic*, or *Canadian Geographical Journal* as it was then called in Jan 1942.] Manning was obviously not in the business of promoting his trips for any of the various reasons people do so: money, ego, academic. Following in a fine tradition of Hanbury, Hornby and the like, Manning was the son of a prosperous English family, educated at Harrow and Cambridge who left it all for the colonial outreaches.

The story of what was essentially his proposal of marriage was recounted in *Che-Mun* Outfit 95. Suffice to say, a tersely worded telegram inviting a person to a foreign and hostile land is not your average overture of love. We use the term explorer rather loosely these days. Yet we call Manning one with certainty despite the fact his northern tenure was relatively modern, beginning in the the mid-30s. The far north at that point had not really changed significantly and he travelled under condition remarkable similar



Ella Wallace Manning shown in a photograph from the front of her 1949 book *A Summer on Hudson Bay*



Thomas H. Manning in a photo from his wife's book *Igloo for The Night*. He is shown standing in his boat *Polecat*.

to many years previous.

We are indebted to Ella Manning or 'Jack' as he called her (her maiden name was Jackson) for keeping a record of all of these early years, though they separated in the 1960s. The first publication of their adventures was in *The Beaver* which for many years was the chronicler of northern life in Canada and remains a treasure trove of fascinating history. In its September 1942 issue is an article entitled *Explorer's Wife* by E. Wallace Manning which recounts Ella's introduction to the North from spring

1938 until her husband joined the Royal Navy in late 1940. She later expanded the article to become a book–*Igloo for the Night*. It's a unique and fascinating story of a world that no longer exists which is why the Mannings can rightfully be called explorers. Though Ella Manning's books lack any real insight into the pair's thinking at the time they were doing these amazing trips, it remains an interesting read just the same.

Thomas Manning was employed by a number of different government agencies over the years to do work in the far north. He began with a three year study in 1936 with fellow Brits (see sidebar). He naturally adopted the ways of the Inuit in travelling using dog teams to move great distances. Manning and wife successfully survived in one of the most inhospitable climates in the world. While on the trail they built igloos each night during their winter trips and lived off the land where possible. .

Their principal work was the study of birds and flowers as well as charting the coast of Baffin island. Later Manning would chart northern coastlines for the Defense Research Board (which was headed up for several years by Omond Solandt of *The Voyageurs* fame).

Clearly Manning was a solitary person in many ways who travelled hard

Profile

and most likely reveled in that hardship for he surely had his share of it - with little complaint. They don't build them like that anymore. So many current northern expedition types write in length and great detail about their perseverance in the presence of impossible odds. Manning simply did it.

Perhaps the definitive Tom Manning story is published in *Arctic*, a journal published by the Arctic Institute of North America at the U of Calgary. In the October 1953 issue an improbably titled piece appeared – “*Narrative of an Unsuccessful Attempt to Circumnavigate Banks Island by Canoe in 1952.*” One could easily put forth the argument that the word ‘unsuccessful’ was superfluous.

Manning left Edmonton on May 7, 1952 with Andrew Macpherson, a zoology student from Ottawa with whom he had worked the three previous summers. Their goal was to investigate the harbours offered by the large Arctic island and the best way to do that and travel very close to shore was in a canoe.

Their kit was 950 lbs of food, 70 gallons of naphtha, 30 quarts of oil and a 22-foot freight canoe weighing 270 lbs. Food would be supplemented by the carcasses of the birds and mammals they would collect for specimens. Planning to be out until September 18, they made camp on the southeast corner of the large island and explored the area as the land melted.

When the ice finally permitted them to leave, in mid-July, they headed

west and began their work of sounding harbour depths and examining the coast. They looked for roomy camps where they wouldn't have to haul the carefully packed boat containing 3000 pounds of gear which took two hours to repack.

They made good progress considering the ice floes which moved in and out of their route. Manning was an avid student of history and his notes are interwoven with the recent and past explorations of the area. The pair found ample evidence of the McClure expedition which was trapped by the ice there 100 years previously. They paid a visit to McClure's raided cache and found nothing much beyond barrel staves, piece of iron and six tons of coal.

There in Mercy Bay a little more than half way around Banks Island is where the Thomsen River enters the ocean. Manning and Macpherson were forced by the signs of winter in late August to stop their trip and head up the Thomsen. They made it 12 miles before the water got too shallow and they cached the canoe and supplies and walked back with their sled some 200 miles to Sachs Harbour in two weeks! On their route back they found muskox to their surprise as they had been thought extinct there in Stefansson's time. Muskox flourish on Banks Island now.

Manning was a man of another age. One might wonder about not completing their mission of circumnavigating Banks Island and the fact that the title of his article points out it was not a success. The answer lies in a tiny

Cold Comfort *My love affair with the Arctic*

By Graham Rowley
McGill-Queen's University Press
1996. 255 pp. Cdn. \$19.95.
ISBN 0-7735-1393-0 (cloth)
ISBN 0-7735-1823-1 (paper)

Reviewed by Gwyneth Hoyle.

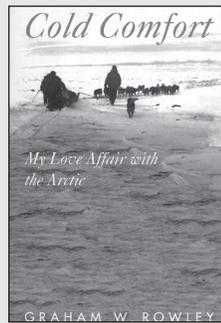
In two brief sentences, a letter written by the curator of Cambridge University Museum completely changed the course of Graham Rowley's life:

“This is to introduce Mr. Manning with whom, I hope, you will go to the Arctic. He will explain things to you.”

Tom Manning had just returned from two years alone on Southampton Island, mapping, making zoological collections and learning to live and travel in the Arctic. In 1935 he was recruiting four other Britons to join him on a scientific expedition to the Eastern Arctic. Rowley was invited to be the archaeologist. The other members were Reynold Bray, ornithologist school friend of Manning, Pat Baird, geologist and botanist, and Peter Bennett, surveyor. Bray and Baird had been on summer expeditions around Ungava and

Baffin; Rowley and Bennett with only a passing interest in polar regions had never been north. Tom Manning was the expert.

In the 1930s Oxford and Cambridge mounted expeditions to Spitsbergen, Greenland, Iceland and the Canadian Arctic but this particular British Canadian Arctic Expedition seems to have been more loosely organized than most.



After a difficult late autumn trip from Churchill north to winter quarters at Repulse Bay in Manning's

cranky, ‘uncomfortable boat, Polecat, the group began work on their own projects. Rowley and Bray chose to make a winter trip to Igloolik. Halfway there, they fell in with Inuit and discovered the comfort and interest of native travel.

In a model of understatement, Manning is described as a superb traveller who “found contentment in hardship, making him a less than easy man to live or travel with”. Manning did not resent their leaving his expedition and undoubtedly preferred to work alone. Bray proved to be

the perfect companion, and he and Rowley wintered in Igloolik with Inuit and continued in the spring to Piling to complete the map of the west coast of Baffin Island. They were adopted into Inuit homes and found Inuit who were willing to go with them to Piling.

The comfort and pleasure that Rowley and Bray find in their total immersion in Inuit life and culture make this book a joy to read. Their journeys around Foxe Basin and, for Rowley, around much of North Baffin are recounted with the simple directness of one who is living the experience.

In the second year, when travelling separately, Bray was drowned in a storm near Igloolik and Rowley's repeat of the route that he and Bray had travelled together has a quietly elegiac quality, the writing gracefully understated.

The survey of unmapped regions and the exploration of Dorset culture was the result of Rowley's two years in the North. Even greater was his understanding and love of the people and their life which he was later to put to use in government service. The outbound ship brought news of the outbreak of war and Rowley went south to join the Canadian Army. His experience of Arctic travel and Inuit life could never to be repeated. This book is a wonderful record of a

Goin' Dune the MacFarlane



BEEN THERE, DUNE THAT -- Keith, Heather and Donna walk along one of the many fascinating --and constantly moving-- sand dunes which are one of the unique features of the MacFarlane River in northern Saskatchewan.

Story and Photos
By DOUG McKOWN

It is never easy to choose a river for a wilderness canoe trip. After many nights of staring at maps and searching for elusive records, there were number of considerations which were drawing us towards the MacFarlane River in the most northern area of Saskatchewan.

The main attraction for us was the very remote location of the river. The MacFarlane River rises in the centre of northern Saskatchewan, about 30 miles north of Cree Lake. From here, the river flows north through an immense, unpopulated area, for about 225 miles to the lonely shore of vast Lake Athabasca. There are no houses, fishing camps, or any permanent settlements in the entire drainage basin of the MacFarlane River. There is also a two mile portage around the lower canyon of the river which is enough to make most canoe

outfitters think twice about bringing groups to the area.

However, one of the major drawing cards for us, are the unique, extensive sand dune formations found along the south side of Lake Athabasca. So unique are these areas that they have been protected with the formation of the Athabasca Sand Dunes Provincial Park. While a provincial park may not be everyone's idea of a remote wilderness destination, Athabasca Sand Dunes Park is a little different. Here, there are no campsites, no roads, no fences, no buildings, no park headquarters, no trails, no signs, and people. In fact, this 2000 square kilometres of wilderness park is just that, wilderness.

After a seemingly endless drive from Banff, Alberta, my wife Donna and I met our paddling partners, Keith and Heather, at the float plane dock in downtown Fort McMurray, Alberta. This is the end of the road for driving towards the MacFarlane

River.

Heather and Keith have both been naturalists for Parks Canada for many years. Though quite experienced paddlers and outdoors people, Heather and Keith had never done a long wilderness canoe trip before. They were very excited about this chance to paddle the MacFarlane.

Our initial destination was the headwaters of the MacFarlane, at the west end of Lazenby Lake, 160 miles by air. After a long, but thankfully smooth flight over the green carpet of the boreal forest, my pilot circled in to land the little Cessna on the calm waters at the west end of the lake. As we unstrapped the canoe from the pontoons, I searched the sky, hoping that the second pilot would be able to find the same spot in this endless maze of lakes and streams.

Sure enough, a few minutes later the little blue and white Beaver splashed down and we set up camp for our first night on the MacFarlane. As we

Expeditions

watched the planes disappear into the evening, the silence of our remote little lake settled gently around us. As twilight deepened, the tranquility of the calm lake was emphasized by the long, lonely cry of a loon echoing across the water—surely the most beautiful sound in the world.

We were up early on the first morning of our adventure, eager to find the river and see what we were faced with. As we finished off our breakfast, Heather glanced over my shoulder and saw a black bear ambling down a slope, out of the forest. The bear was hundred yards away, feasting on blueberries in a recently burned over area. We were quite excited about this sighting on the first morning of our trip and hoped that this was an indication of what we would see in the next couple of weeks. How true that turned out to be! After watching the bear's antics for a few minutes, we loaded up the canoes to embark, left the bruin to his breakfast and headed off down the river.

At the exit of Lazenby Lake, the MacFarlane River is a small shallow stream, flowing through the continuous boreal forest. Its banks lined with willow bushes, the river flows through the alluvial sand and sandstone formations of northern Alberta and Saskatchewan. This sand is primarily the result of an immense glacial lake which existed in this area at the end of the last ice age. Lake Athabasca, itself 150 miles long, is but a remnant of this once vast body of water.

The river, while small at the exit of Lazenby Lake, flowed with a considerable current. Initially we were quite careful in our travel because we were somewhat skeptical about the dependability of the 1:50,000 scale topographical maps that we were using. When we were planning the trip we found it interesting to see that there is actually no exit shown on the map to connect Lazenby Lake to the rest of the MacFarlane River! While there are many rapids directly indicated on the topo maps of the MacFarlane, some rapids are not where they appear on the map, and we found many rapids which do not appear on the map at all. We soon came to realize that just about any narrow place shown on the map would have some sort of rapid.

The MacFarlane is a beautiful river. The appearance of the boreal forest is ever changing, with older growth, young forests, and recently

burned areas. This is a continuous cycle of burning and regeneration which all the flora and fauna here depend on to maintain a healthy ecosystem.

Everywhere that the river had eroded through the sand to the underlying rock we would have a swiftly flowing rapid over smooth sandstone ledges, and exciting continuous rock gardens. Campsites were plentiful all along the river. Whether it was open jackpine forest with a soft carpet or crisp reindeer moss, or rocky ledges overlooking a rapid, we were never disappointed.

We chose to run the MacFarlane River in the later part of the summer. In low water years this could be a serious problem. While we took a chance on lower water levels, paddling in the later summer does have a couple of advantages. One is



One of the many black bears which kept the canoe group company down the

that the bugs are usually less ferocious. The other is the blueberries ripen this time of year. In this case we were blessed with a bountiful harvest. We had blueberry pancakes, blueberry scones, blueberry granola, blueberry muffins, and more. Every campsite provided an endless supply of this delicious fruit free for the picking. The excellent berry season had another, less foreseen bonus for us. It had to do with that black bear we saw the first morning of the trip. You see, he was not the last bear we saw on this river. In fact, bears began turning up with delightful regularity.

The second bear we saw was walking away from us around a point at the base of a ridge. As we came around the point in our canoe, I spotted the bear again about 20 yards inshore among the jackpine. I shouted and pointed for Keith and Heather so they too could have a chance to see the bear before it ran away. Little did we know about MacFarlane bears! When the bear heard me shout, it stood up on its hind legs and looked right at us.

Then it ran right down to the shore, stood up for another look, then came running right at us. It took a step or two into the water as if undecided whether to continue investigating. As we floated away, the bear eventually lost interest in us and went about his business. This behaviour quite surprised us. We are used to seeing bears around our homes in Banff National Park, and the bears usually run away at the first sight of people. It was very refreshing to see healthy, inquisitive black bears who had obviously never seen canoeists before.

It was also mildly disquieting. We continued to see this type of bear behaviour repeated numerous times during the trip. The next day, we had the canoes rafted together in a quiet, wide stretch of the river. We were all sprawled out having lunch as

a light breeze pushed us gently along. Just as we were finishing lunch, I glanced over Heather's shoulder. There, about 3 yards off shore, about 20 yards from us, was a black bear, ears perked up, swimming towards us just as fast as his little paws could paddle. As I dove for my camera, and everyone else started thrashing about, the bear began to hesitate and then decided that maybe we were a little too noisy for comfort. He headed back to shore, took one last look at us, and ambled off into the woods.

After this episode we began to be a bit concerned about having one of these bears visiting us at our campsites. We became very careful about keeping a clean camp, and hanging all our food up a tree every night. We carried pepper spray and had several interesting contingency plans for possible night encounters. However, of the 13 bears we saw on this 16 day trip, never did we have one in camp. I think this is because the bears were more curious than hungry. Luckily for us, the endless supply of blueberries, bear berries, and bunch berries, ensured that the bears were not short of tasty food. Had we come earlier in the season, it might have been quite a different story about the MacFarlane River bears.

As we travelled down the river, bears were not the only wildlife that we saw. Waterfowl were always making noisy exits, splashing and flying in front of us. Canada geese, merganser, mallards, loons, terns, and sandhill cranes, are but some of the species we followed down the river.

One morning as we came around a bend

Expeditions

towards a small rocky rapid, 26 snowy white pelicans were surprised to see us. They took off over our heads in a blur of white wings and large dark eyes. The quiet of the peaceful river was often disturbed as a family of otters would surround us. Lifting their sleek bodies out of the water for a closer look, they would snort and huff at as we floated down the river together. We also encountered muskrats, beavers, and mink making their homes along the river. The shallow river and burned over forest are excellent habitat for moose. There is little that can compare with these magnificent animals. We were privileged to see seven moose in one day along the river. They would lift their great heads at us, with a mouthful of dripping greens hanging from blubbery lips. At their leisure, they would slowly turn, and canter off in the awkward but rapid gate so characteristic of these huge animals.

Many of the rapids of the MacFarlane were Class I and II, and could be scouted from the canoe much of the time. All the major rapids occur at ledges where waterfalls roared down to the next level. The MacFarlane is one of those delightful rivers which has many rapids but few portages. The river drops about 290 yards over the approximately 180 miles that we paddled. In this distance there was only one lift over, and three portages. While there are a number of wide places in the river, the only lake of consequence is Davy Lake.

We paddled through the last turns of a broad estuary out into the wide expanse of Davy Lake on a beautiful, absolutely dead calm evening. Davy Lake is 12 miles long and almost four miles wide, and there was not a ripple in sight. We camped on an exquisite little island a half mile or so from shore. A beautiful beach, no bugs, and no bears made this an unforgettable campsite. That was just as well since in the middle of the night the wind began to blow. We woke up to a regular little gale which kept us windbound all day. The next morning we got up early and headed down the lake. The far end of Davy Lake brought us to the first of the three major canyons on the MacFarlane River.

The first canyon is 800 yards long, passing two dramatic ledges and a spectacular waterfall. The portage is quite pleasant, through open forest, followed by a less than delightful, very steep descent back down to the river. After another 12 miles we

approached the dreaded middle canyon of the MacFarlane River. A few hundred yards of shallow rapids brought us to the beginning of the long carry. We camped at the top of the portage, making one carry that evening to get the canoes to the bottom of the canyon. Two trips the next morning saw all of the gear successfully carried for the two miles of bush.

After completing the portage, we went for a hike back up the canyon to see what we had missed on the river. The MacFarlane canyon is a wildly spectacular place. We could look up river for almost a mile to see huge ledges and steep rapids rushing between the towering canyon walls. The river drops about 250 feet in its descent of this canyon. Before us was a magnificent three ledge waterfall. Just downstream were three more fantastic, wild waterfalls crashing into the bottom of the immense canyon. We hiked downstream along canyon walls broken and cracked into weird and wonderful shapes.

The lower canyon on the MacFarlane River is less distinct. Actually, from the end of the Middle Canyon down to the final lake, is about three miles of continuous grade II and III rapids. Running these rapids was great fun but also a little distracting since this is the first time that you get a clear sight of the major sand deposits of the dunes area. As we paddled out into the little lake, we could see sand ridges interrupting the trees on three sides of the lake. This was the end point of our paddling trip. While Lake Athabasca is only 3 kilometres further downstream, it is a wide open and windy place. We had a much better chance of having our float plane land on this little sheltered lake.

We were able to spend a couple of days exploring a huge area of sand dunes on the west side of the river before the arrival of our floatplane. There is a great variety of vegetation to be found in the dunes. This ranges from dry desert grasses, to the carnivorous little sundew plants. This area is the most northerly formation of active sand dunes in the world. In our static, almost instantaneous observations, we could see where an enormous dune, 30 metres high, was in the process of engulfing a living forest.

On the other side of this dune, we walked among the very tops of long dead trees in an ancient forest being slowly exposed once again by the ever shifting sands. Along with the unique vegetation, there are many types of animals which

frequent the dunes. We saw abundant tracks of wolves and heard their lonesome howls in the still of the night. On our approach to the dunes one morning we had a marvellous view of a wolf isolated in the middle of a vast sand plain. After a bold and curious look in our direction, he trotted off into the forest. There were also bear tracks, moose, and a multitude of smaller animal tracks to entice us. While wandering among the dunes, we also found some old, bleached caribou antlers being slowly uncovered by the blowing sand. The sand dunes are a fascinating area, a true desert landscape in the far north.

The dawn of our last morning broke windy and clear. As we waited for our plane to arrive, we watched impossibly long lines of Canada geese in their stately V formations, heading south on their annual journey to warmer climes. It made us realize that even on this pleasant warm day there were signs of the coming end of this brief summer, and soon the icy grip of winter would once again descend on this remote land. As we flew back up the course of the MacFarlane River we could look down on the endless expanse of untamed wilderness and be thankful at our chance to paddle this beautiful, wild, river.

If you want to go to the MacFarlane River, choose the early summer, late June, early July. Water levels are just too unpredictable after that. Plan for 12-13 days on the river and at least one or two extra to explore the dunes.

Fort McMurray is a long drive, about 450 miles from Calgary and 275 miles from Edmonton. It is a good idea to plan to stay in Fort McMurray overnight before you leave. There are plenty of good hotels.

La Loche is an even longer drive on worse roads. It is about 300 miles from Prince Albert, and there are not many good hotels.

From Fort McMurray, the flight into the headwaters of the MacFarlane takes about one and half hours. For four people and canoes, our entire cost of flights both in and out was about \$3000. From La Loche, the flight costs will be about the same. The following sources can provide you with more information about the MacFarlane River:

1. For information about canoeing, fishing, and Athabasca Sand Dunes Wilderness Park: Saskatchewan Travel, 3211 Albert St. Regina, Saskatchewan S4S 5W6 or call: 1-800-667-7191
2. Topographical Maps required: (1:50000)

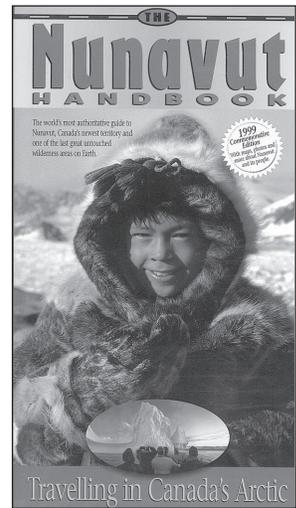
The Nunavut Handbook

Travelling in Canada's Arctic

Nortext Multimedia, Iqaluit, NT

1999 413pp. C\$29.95 US\$21.50
ISBN 1-55036-587-8

Books reviewed by Michael Peake



Well, what can you say about a book that has been praised by The Sunday Times, New York Times and various papers around the world? That they were wrong? Not very likely.

The Nunavut Handbook, in its 1999 Commemorative edition, is every inch what it

should be—the factual source for all things Nunavut. The people at Nortext have been churning out superior products from Iqaluit for years. From their weekly newspaper the Nunatsiak News, to numerous guides and printing and web services, Nortext are second to none in producing a quality product.

The Nunavut Handbook pulls the nice double play - it is good and it looks good. There's a chapter on each of the new territory's towns with contact names and numbers for a variety of services. This is the kind of stuff that was gold to those of us planning northern trips a decade or more ago.

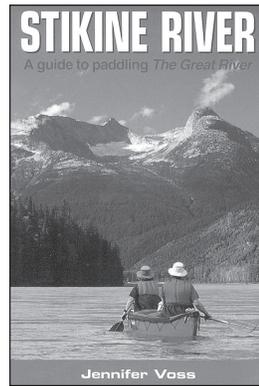
There are also chapters on the Inuit culture and the workings of Nunavut, that plus all the typical tourist stuff with a few surprises thrown in for those of us who thought we knew a lot. For example, did you know there was a Bloody Falls Territorial Park at the site of the famous last rapid on the Coppermine River? I didn't. They say you can walk the 10 miles from the town - for hardy and fit people surely. You can also rent an ATV which is the way the locals move around.

If your planning to head to Nunavut, if your thinking of heading to Nunavut if you'll never go but would like to see what it offers, get this book. You can check out their website at www.arctic-travel.com

Stikine River

A Guide to Paddling the Great River

By Jennifer Voss.
Rocky Mountain Books, Calgary
1998 224pp.
ISBN 0-921102-57-7



paddlers and whitewater fanatics but it gives each group a bit too much of the other. The Grand Canyon of the Stikine, located halfway down the river, is a roaring 50 mile long adrenaline rush that has only been done, to borrow that ultimate guide book quote, "by teams of experts under ideal conditions."

The funny thing is that the river both above and below this dangerous stretch is ideal for the paddlers without airbag, kayaks and helmets. The Stikine's Grand Canyon essentially splits the river into upper and lower sections with no real portage in between. The lower river is quite easy and the upper more challenging. The Grand Canyon is out of the question and Voss to her credit, keeps it that way with no paddle routing shown through there. The upper river can begin with a trip to the spectacular Spatsizi Plateau and the river that drains it to join the Stikine.

Your trip can end in Wrangell, Alaska, as the river passes through the panhandle or you can take out just before the border. The historic town of Telegraph Creek is also on the lower river.

Jennifer Voss has done a superb job of creating a river guide that is packed fully of pertinent river

The mighty Stikine in northern BC is a wonderful river that has always maintained a special reputation as a river with something of a split personality.

This 400 mile long wilderness jewel is both a destination for wilderness paddlers and whitewater fanatics but it gives each group a bit too much of the other. The Grand Canyon of the Stikine, located halfway down the river, is a roaring 50 mile long adrenaline rush that has only been done, to borrow that ultimate guide book quote, "by teams of experts under ideal conditions."

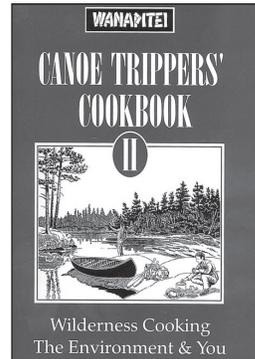
info, history, diagrams and photos—though the black and whites don't do the area justice. There are excellent maps showing the river's course. And it is a river guide, done from a paddler's perspective. The book is absolutely essential if you want to tackle the beauty and power of the Stikine.

The Wanapitei Canoe Trippers Cookbook II

Wilderness Cooking, the Environment and You

By Carol Hodgins.
Highway Book Shop, Cobalt,
1998 101pp. Cdn \$10.95
To order: 1.800.461.2062 or
E-mail: bookshop@nt.net

Okay, I have to make an admission. Before I begin to tell you about the latest edition of this camp classic, I have to come clean.



Our recipe for Hide-Away Canoe Club Chowder is included in this book (page 37) so having said that I'll try to remain objective.

Now the HACC wouldn't cough up our secret recipe to just anyone. But we couldn't resist being included

in Carol Hodgins's updating of her venerable 1982 *Canoe Tripper's Cookbook*, many copies of which have no doubt disintegrated along the trail.

There are some who say a cookbook in the wilds is superfluous since everything tastes great. There's some truth in that but there's something to be said for variety and nutrition in you daily menus. The book is thoughtfully provided with a wirebound spine for laying flat - as it surely will go on many trips and end up covered in a variety of stains.

All this grew out of the traditions of 68-year old Camp Wanapitei on Lake Temagami which was run for many years by Carol and husband Bruce Hodgins. There's a great canoeing history in this family that's now carried on by son Sean who heads up the northern tripping arm.

➔ *More Canoelit on Page 11*

Canoe Calendar

This handy update from Becky Mason not only details what she and hubby Reid McLachlan are up to this summer, it also gives the dates and locations for all the notable canoe-related events that are happening across the continent in the summer of 1999.

Becky Mason has been paddling for as long as she can remember. She acquired her paddling skills and her love for canoes from her Dad, Bill Mason, the author and filmmaker of the *Path of the Paddle* series.

In the summer, she teaches her Classic Solo Canoe courses and in the fall, she goes on canoe trips until freeze-up. Then she hangs up her paddle for the winter and paints her canoeing memories and experiences. Year around she enjoys travelling around the country talking about her life as a canoe instructor and visual artist.

Becky has a very busy schedule already booked for this summer. Apart from teaching her canoeing courses full time she will also be speaking and/or demonstrating and teaching canoeing at a number of prominent events in Canada and the U.S. On the weekend May 8th - 9th Becky and her husband Reid McLachlan will be demonstrating at the *Peterborough Heritage Festival*. In addition, as part of the evening program, the book *Canexus II* will officially be launched here. This book is a compilation of many fine writers in the canoeing community including a chapter by Becky Mason. The 14th annual *Maine Canoe Symposium* (www.mcs.gen.me.us) has invited Becky and Reid back to teach on the weekend of June 4th - 6th. Later in June (the 25th -27th) they will travel to Duluth Minnesota where Becky will speak, teach, demonstrate and

even compete in a canoe sailing race! And finally in July (23rd - 25th), as a holiday, they will be attending the **Wooden Canoe Heritage Association** annual assembly. This year the WCHA is featuring the Chestnut Canoe Company and Becky is keen to hear the different speaker's spins on this topic. She's expecting fun and games and maybe even some controversy. To wrap up the summer, August 20th - 22nd Becky will be presenting at *The Canadian Canoe Symposium* in Merrickville, Ontario featuring presenters from around North America.

Last year Becky was asked to contribute to three canoeing books. She has offered some tips, thoughts and insights to Laurie Gullion's new books, *A Woman's Guide, Canoeing, Everything You Need to Know to Get Started (and Keep Going)*. Published by Ragged Mountain Press, Box 220, Camden, ME, 04843-0220, USA and due out in the spring of 1999. The second book was *Canexus II, a Canoe in Canadian Culture* this profiles Becky's 1996 Canoescapes presentation that centered on art and canoeing. Becky also wrote a chapter called *The Canadian Connection* in Cliff Jacobson's updated version of *The Basic Essentials of Solo Canoeing*. Published by ICS Books, One Tower Plaza, 107E, 89th Avenue, Merrillville, IN, 46410, USA. It is due out this fall.

Becky Mason is a professional canoe instructor, visual artist and the owner of *Classic Solo* canoeing: Mail: Box 126, RR #1, Chelsea, Quebec, J0X 1N0. E-mail: (redcanoe@istar.ca). Her artwork and information on the Classic Solo canoeing program can be found on her website: (www.wilds.mb.ca/redcanoe).

Our Back Pages

The following back issues of *Che-Mun* are available at \$5 each which includes postage.

Outfit 44 - Bill Mason & the Dog R., Athabasca letter
Outfit 45 - Pipe River by Eric Morse, River flow chart
Outfit 46 - Hudson Bay to Ungava, Stew Coffin report
Outfit 47 - Heritage Rivers, Trans Canada Expedition
Outfit 48 - Freshwater Saga - Morse River memoirs, slide fest
Outfit 49 - Queen Charlottes kayaking, HBC sell-off
Outfit 50 - Royal couple canoe the Hanbury/Thelon*
Outfit 51 - Traditional canoeing through Quetico Park
Outfit 52 - Lands Forlorn review, Atomic Arctic proposal
Outfit 53 - Chubb Crater in Ungava, Hubbard & Wallace
Outfit 54 - Povungnituk 88 - Ungava, Sleeping Island rev.
Outfit 55 - Memories of Bill Mason, Twin Otter gone
Outfit 56 - Canoeing stamps, Hanbury review, WCA slidefest
Outfit 57 - North American Canoe Symposium, book reviews
Outfit 58 - Churchill River trip, The Lonely Land rev.
Outfit 59 - Tyrrell brothers, Water & Sky, Alberta Pulp wars
Outfit 60 - Via Rail, Missinaibi River, James Bay, HBC exit
Outfit 61 - Inside LG2, Aki on the Barrens, Grey Owl
Outfit 63 - Canoeing in the 1930s, Hydro-Quebec chairman
Outfit 64 - Rupert R. 1914, Keewaydin Guide, Fur Trade Canoe Routes
Outfit 65 - Churchill River hydro, Robert Perkins, James Bay
Outfit 66 - Lands Forlorn, HACC in Japan, Needle to the North
Outfit 67 - NWT division, Canoe Museum, James Bay
Outfit 68 - Charles Camsell, Barrens Wedding, Book reviews
Outfit 69 - Sig Olson Remembered, Historic riverflows

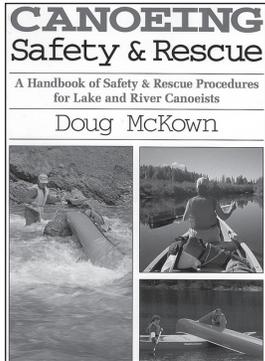
Outfit 70 - Great Bear to Coppermine, Ungava photos
Outfit 71 - Coppermine planning, Land of Feast & Famine
Outfit 72 - Eric Morse River List, Ungava Journey, J.B. Tyrrell
Outfit 73 - Petawawa River, David Thompson map, NWT regs
Outfit 74 - Pukaskwa River, Helen Falls cairn, Quetico trip
Outfit 75 - Tyrrell pictures, Hearne's route, Heritage Rivers
Outfit 76 - HBC money, MacDougall Pass, Sig Olson, Tyrrell
Outfit 77 - River stamps, Exploration of N. Canada, Book reviews
Outfit 78 - Across the Arctic Mts, LaVase Portage, Food drying
Outfit 79 - Book reviews, Thompson journal, Great Whale stopped
Outfit 80 - Warburton Pike, Wabakimi Park, Merrick's True North
Outfit 81 - Arctic Land Exped, David Hanbury, Diamond development
Outfit 82 - Arctic Land Expedition report, Book reviews, Nunavut
Outfit 83 - Jacobson's Caribou River, *Canoescapes* rev, Franklin's journal
Outfit 84 - 1955 Moffatt Exped., Winisk R., John Rae's effigy & Cloak-boat
Outfit 85 - Rocky Defiled, Grey Owl movie, Bill Mason bio, Canoe Museum
Outfit 86 - PBS's Backcountry, E. Merrick's Labrador photos, Summerwrap
Outfit 87 - Across the Barrens to Arctic Sound. Dr. John Rae, Cree wisdom
Outfit 88 - Great Whale River, Elliott Merrick's last words, Paddling the Web
Outfit 89 - George River preview, Merrick Memorial, Stew Coffin- George 1967
Outfit 90 - Rat River 1926, George River Online, Chestnut Canoe book rev.
Outfit 91 - Across Canada paddle, Schwatka's Last Search rev., Arctic Unravelled
Outfit 92 - Danes on the Barrens, Ladies & the Rat review., Grey Owl movie
Outfit 93 - Mason stamp news, Letdown on the Thelon, Real Bedard profile

Continued from Page 9

Canoeing Safety & Rescue

By Doug McKown
Rocky Mountain Books,
London
1992 Revised 1996. 128pp.
ISBN 0-921102-11-9

Doug McKown, who wrote our cover article on the McFarlane River, is a paramedic in western Canada. He sent along a copy of his book which was published and revised a few years ago but contains timeless information.



Canoeing Safety and Rescue is a quite straightforward book on river safety; including rescue techniques, first aid, equipment. The fact

LISTENING UP

On this, his Centennial Year, the family of Sigurd F. Olson announce the establishment of *The Listening Point Foundation*.

The Foundation has assumed ownership of Sigurd Olson's beloved Listening Point. It is dedicated to maintaining its natural and historic integrity for all time for the pleasure and inspiration of future generations, as it has been in the past. It will continue Sigurd Olson's work of wilderness education and will strive to keep alive his belief the "Everyone has a Listening Point somewhere... some place of quiet where the universe can be contemplated with awe."

The Listening Point Foundation, Inc. is a non-profit corporation and contributions are tax deductible (US). Persons wishing to know more about the Foundation are cordially invited to contact the Foundation at the address below.

Robert K. Olson, Chairman, *The Listening Point Foundation, Inc.* 13567 N. Uhrenholdt Dr. Hayward, WI 54843 715-634-2305.

Continued from Page 3

In a wash of national publicity that proved it was no April Fools, Nunavut was born – peeled off from the Northwest Territories seven years after the deal was struck and 24 years after it was proposed.

The Inuit-run territory which spans 2.2 million square kilometres will feature a unique legislature of 19 members with no political parties; a unique legal system with one level of courts and a unique set of problems faced by no other Canadian jurisdiction.

The challenges are many, with only 25,000 inhabitants (85% Inuit), the majority below 25 years of age. Nunavut's \$600 million annual budget will still be 90% paid by Ottawa. Running two territorial governments instead of one will cost federal taxpayers \$95 million a year, in addition to one-time costs of \$150 million.

The best hopes for Nunavut's future lie in the resource industries. The territory has proven deposits of lead, zinc, copper, gold and diamonds.

Fisheries for arctic char, shrimp and scallops are growing. So is tourism, as word spreads of Nunavut's unspoiled national parks and abundant whales, polar bears and caribou.

Most agree that giving the Inuit — who comprise 85 per cent of Nunavut's population — the opportunity to run their own show is their best chance.

Canoeists shouldn't see much difference except there will be more national and international focus on Nunavut, which contains some of the finest wilderness canoeing in the world. Paddlers are still welcome to travel without permits and a recent treaty that protects the Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary shows Nunavut highly values its unique wilderness heritage.

Nunavut Web Links:

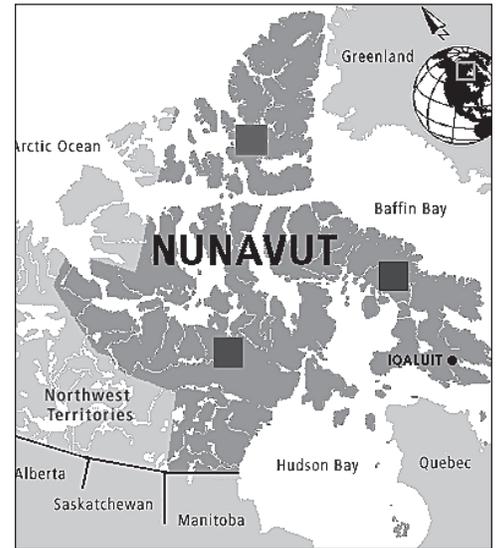
www.canoe.ca/CNEWSNunavut
www.nunavut.com
www.arctic-travel.com

The growls have turned to roars in a squabble over which half of the Northwest Territories gets to keep the polar bear-shaped licence plate as the territory prepares for division next year.

Even though almost all the great white predators live in the new Nunavut, a committee of politicians from the western side insist that one of the most recognizable symbols of the North would remain with them.

The response from the east was, well, cold.

The copyright belongs to the current Northwest Territories, a government that will no longer exist after it splits in two on April 1. Stephen Kakfwi of the western Sahtu constituency defended the west's



right to ursus maritimus.

The west is every bit as Arctic as the east, he said. While most bears live in the east, some also live along the coast as far west as Alaska. Besides, he said, Nunavut only has 27 kilometres of highway.

That cut no ice with Madeline Redford of Nunavut Tourism, who said Iqaluit's annual supply ship dropped off 180 cars this year.

"We own cars, we drive cars, and we are required by law to have license plates." If the west wants an animal, let them take the musk ox, the snowy owl or the wolf, she says.

"It's the number one image (tourists) think about when they think of Nunavut." The bear wars may turn out to be another embarrassment in the western territory's ongoing attempts to define itself.

While the east is almost entirely Inuit, the west is a complex mix of aboriginal groups and whites and has had trouble finding images everyone can rally around.

Even an attempt to find a new name stumbled when a public contest ended up with a tongue-in-cheek campaign to call the territory "Bob." It got more votes than any other entry except Northwest Territories.

NUNAVUT FACTS

Area of Nunavut 1,900,000 sq km
Area of Canada 9,970,610 sq km
A few comparisons
Greenland 2,175,600 sq km
Germany 357,047 sq km
China 9,596,961 sq km
Sweden 449,964 sq km



Photo: Donna McKown

AUTHOR, AUTHOR -- MacFarlane River trip author Doug McKown works in and around one of the scenic waterfalls on the river.

Ahead in Outfit 97

Mackenzie and the Mountains.

Following Alexander Mackenzie's historic first route to the Pacific with a PBS film crew. (We won't mention the tardy Lewis & Clark!)

Winisk to the Bay

A look ahead to this summer's *onriver.online* run to Hudson Bay with the HACC on the mighty Winisk. High tech and high water, we hope.

CHE-MUN

Founded in 1973 by Nick Nickels

The Journal of Canadian Wilderness Canoeing

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Web: www.canoe.ca/AllAboutCanoes.

Subscription rates:

One year: \$20

Two years: \$36

Che-Mun appears quarterly

Note: U.S orders in U.S. dollars

A publication of the Hide-Away Canoe Club.

