



Winter 2012 The Journal of Canadian Wilderness Canoeing

Outfit 147



photo: Chris Rush

WATERY GRAVE? The bureaucrats who run northern national parks would not be happy to see this photo and you certainly would never let it be published on a government website unless it was under the DON'T DO THIS section. Laco Kovac and Lynette Chubb are shown working their way across the melting Lake St. Germain in northern Quebec which drains into the Puvirnituk River. But they were told to cancel their big trip a week before it was to start. They persisted – and lived – after convincing the bureaucrat that they indeed knew what they were doing. See Page 6.

www.hacc.ca



Winter Packet

Paddle Canada's Board of Directors announced a new partnership with Rapid Media starting in 2012. As the publisher of Adventure Kayak, Canoeroots & Family Camping and Rapid magazines, Rapid Media will be the official media partner of Paddle Canada. Members will receive their choice of Rapid Media magazines which will eventually replace Paddle Canada's own long-standing publication, KANAWA which will be published up until February of 2012.

The decision has been a long-time coming. Many of the PC board members didn't want to let KANAWA go after 30 years of history. In its early years, it was the voice of paddlers when there was no other national paddling magazine. Times have changed, plus with the economic realities facing not-for-profits on a whole, it just made sense to form a partnership. Several proposals were solicited from publishers across Canada. In the end, Rapid Media's proposal seemed the best fit for us.

Paddle Canada expects members will greatly benefit from the targeted titles Rapid Media offers. KANAWA wasn't targeting many of our instructor members because of the shift in membership over the past years. Now all members will benefit from choosing the magazine that matches their paddling discipline, whether it's canoeing, sea kayaking or river kayaking (and likely paddleboarding special features).

The "KANAWA" title will be preserved as a Paddle Canada-sponsored section inside Rapid, Adventure Kayak and Canoeroots, providing readers with a snapshot of association happenings.

Just last year, the American Canoe Association (ACA) and Rapid Media announced a similar partnership and that the ACA would no longer be producing PADDLER

magazine, a long-time membership benefit also available to outside subscribers.

"In the early years, (at Rapid Media) all our big paddling initiatives were perceived as being in direct conflict with either association," said Scott MacGregor of Rapid Media. Working together with both the ACA and Paddle Canada, MacGregor sees all three organizations now "perfectly aligned to grow paddling."

The above from Paddle Canada's website. Che-Mun began publishing in 1973 and remains independent and unique.

A recent circumnavigation of Ellesmere Island was a first. John Turk and Eric Boomer completed the marathon feat last fall. You will no doubt be reading some amazing account and photos of the pair in *National Geographic* before too long.

The pair gave a number of interviews to other media in what was truly a remarkable trip. One quote from an interview in *Maclean's* magazine struck me from Turk, who at 66 is near the end of his northern expedition days - and he knows it.

"This is something that's been on my mind since 1988 and I've completed it. But that sense of accomplishment is the least of my feelings. I've had a lifetime of adventuring, and I set out to go into the ice, and to live in this landscape one last time.

"It's not like I'm going to retire and never go outside again, but I'm never going to push my body this hard again. And so for me, there was this wonderful feeling of accomplishing this goal, and also this, not really a sadness, just it is what it is. You get old. This is what happens. But just the fond reminiscing of this life I've lived, and to realize that I'm not going to go there again."

Legendary Winnipeg adventurer Don Starkell who is best remembered for a Guinness Book of World Records feat of paddling with his son Dana more than 19,000 kilometres from his prairie home to the Amazon, has died at 79, after a battle with cancer.

Orphaned as a child, Don overcame his insecurities through paddling a canoe during the great floods of Winnipeg of 1950.

A divorce from his wife changed the course of Don's life so he decided to give his two boys an adventure they'd never forget - to paddle a canoe from Winnipeg to the Amazon River.

Doug Gibson, who edited and published the story for McClelland & Stewart under the title, *Paddle to the Amazon*, said he had trouble believing that his old pal's adventurous life was over.

"To me, Don always seemed super-human, and thus, immortal, too," Gibson said.

"Even the concept -- paddling an open canoe from Winnipeg to the mouth of the Amazon -- is beyond ordinary mortals,"

The Amazon voyage won the Starkells a place in Guinness Book of World Records for the longest canoe trip, but the father wasn't satisfied.

A decade later Don tried to paddle a kayak from Churchill through the Northwest Passage. After dumping near Churchill scuttled the first attempt he went again and in the process he lost fingers to frostbite and nearly lost his life.

Almost to the end, Starkell could be seen on his daily voyage -- paddling his white kayak up and down the Red River.

The Starkell family has asked in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the YMCA at Strongkids.ca <http://www.ymcastrongkids.ca>.

Our interview of Starkell from Outfit 86 is posted on our website - www.hacc.ca.



Editor's Notebook

The minute you see a Welcome sign in a wilderness area you know you are not in one. And worse, it means the stranglehold of bureaucrats parachuted in to manage the place has begun.

Our feature story illustrates this to perfection. There's nothing like an ill-informed bureaucrat to mess up wilderness travel. When in doubt say no, is their mantra. They are so disconnected with the land they claim to manage, so at odds with the wilderness experience.

Many northern trippers have had to deal with this when heading out to the wilds. For what could be more foolhardy and terrifying to a desk jockey than the thought of travelling through an unregulated area with lack of approved infrastructure support and associated levels of interpretive and associated BS.

Technically, to travel by canoe in northern Quebec means you must be paired with a local guide for the entire trip. This rule was doubtless put in place for fishing groups. That's part of the problem. They don't understand wilderness for its own sake. Any remote and beautiful area that becomes protected or a park is suddenly straightjacketed with red tape. The new Torngat Mountains National Park in north Labrador asks for an extensive registration list of your info and of all activities you will be doing. This was precisely this attitude that drove men like John Hornby further and further into the wild country. But there's no place left to go as civilization moves inexorably north.

One of the few benefits of getting old^{oo} is to be able to say that I saw some of those areas before they were "marketed". When we visited the Ungava crater it was a lost place in a distant land. Now there is an airstrip and a welcome sign. And rules, rules, rules.

The only difference now is that Inuit are part of the bureaucracy so at least they are getting something out of it. But the mystery and raw challenge of the land is gone, as it must I suppose. Sic transit gloria mundi.

I am just glad we saw it when I did. When there was no turnstile, visitor centre or gift shop. That's the thing about priceless wilderness - it means just that, you can't put a price on it.

—Michael Peake

Canoesworthy

On Feb. 18, 24-year-old Noah Nochasak and veteran Arctic traveller Jerry Kobalenko will leave Nain to travel on foot to Kangiqsualujuaq, at the mouth of the George River - each toting 225 pounds of gear behind them.

Nochasak hopes to complete the trip as a way to connect him to the land his ancestors grew up on. He began to make his own and was the first local resident in many decades to construct a traditional qajaq (sea kayak).

"We have tourists coming up to do kayaking expeditions here, which is weird, since we hardly practice that form of travel any longer," he said.

That's how Nochasak first came across writer and photographer Jerry Kobalenko, when Kobalenko and his wife came to kayak Labrador's coast in 2011.

Kobalenko, who has twice trekked from Churchill Falls to Nain, spent the summer kayaking from Nain south to Rigolet. Nochasak took interest and joined the couple for part of the trip down the coast.

Nochasak said he was impressed with Kobalenko's ability to navigate on the land and sea, a skill Nochasak was keen to improve.

In the winter of 2011, Nochasak attempted the trek to Kangiqsualujuaq alone with a qamutik loaded with supplies over mountainous terrain. But he realized two weeks into the trip that the expedition was too difficult for him to continue on solo.

So he began to plan for another walking expedition towards the Nunavik community at the mouth of the George River, one that would take him over lakes rather than directly through the Torngat mountains. Nochasak couldn't find a fellow Inuk to travel with so he asked Kobalenko to join him. The two have different approaches to long-distance Arctic travel, but both feel the other has something valuable to bring to the experience.

Nochasak and Kobalenko plan to each haul 225 pounds of gear over 550 kilometres - a trip they estimate will take about a month to complete.

But Nochasak's gear will differ slightly from Kobalenko's: he plans to stock up on country foods to sustain him.

"Food is very important to me and I've tried lots of kinds," he said. "But what works best for me is caribou and seal. They give me the energy I need to haul gear 10 hours a day."

Most of the country food will be packaged in advance, but Nochasak also plans to hunt along the way.

While Nochasak plans to wear traditional clothing like kamiit to protect his feet, the pair will sleep in a modern tent, pull fibreglass sleds and use a gas stove. But Kobalenko, 55, who has completed some 30 Arctic expeditions, says he's impressed with Nochasak's enthusiasm and traditional approach to long-distance travel.

"Noah is the first Inuk I have met who is interested in doing long-distance travel," Kobalenko said. "He's bright and enthusiastic and he's trying to connect with roots, like not many are."

Melting icefields on Baffin Island, one of the clearest signs of climate change on Earth today, have yielded the strongest evidence yet for the timing and cause of another major climate event from the planet's past: the so-called Little Ice Age, a sudden and mysterious cooling of the globe that began about 700 years ago.

Recently exposed remains of plants that had been buried under Baffin Island ice for centuries provided the crucial clue that has led an international team of

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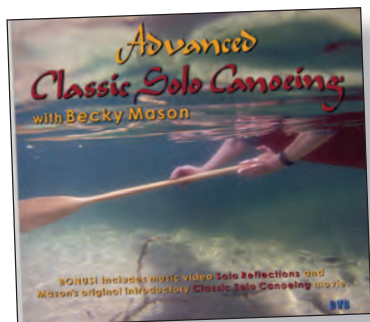
Advanced Classic Solo Canoeing DVD

By Becky Mason

recdcanoes.ca, \$31 or \$41 for Blu-Ray

Becky Mason's latest canoeing DVD is clearly her best. And I do mean clearly as there is also a Blu-Ray version.

Now, Becky is perfect as always but the production values really shine in this DVD



as nicely as the deck of her beautiful red cedar strip canoe that she masterfully paddles throughout the 93 minute

disc.

All the elements are there; a lovely original score by Ian Tamblyn, excellent sound, fine photography and nice camera shots that mesh perfectly with Becky's fine script. No surprise as the photography was directed by Ken Buck who worked with Bill Mason on most of his films.

Becky has been giving paddling courses for 25 years so she knows her stuff. I couldn't help but chuckle at the start of the film. With her first few words she really sounded like her late, great dad Bill Mason, whose easygoing banter in all his films made them stand out.

The main part is a 43 minute review of advanced paddling strokes such as the Canadian, Indian and Northwoods and the even dangerous Running Bow Pry! Plus there are three extra shorter videos. Camera angles on the water are smooth and attractive and there is also an underwater shot and remote camera (likely the ubiquitous Go-Pro) mounted above the canoe for a really great angle.

And while this is an instructional DVD, there are some lovely stories interspersed along the way. One particularly touching one is Becky teaching a James Bay Cree to paddle as his ancestors had and took that skill back north again.

Also included in the extras is a blooper

real with some nice laughs and behind the scenes moments. Bill would be very proud! And how he would have loved the digital media we now have.

Boundary Waters Canoe Camping

By Cliff Jacobson

Globe Pequot Press 2012 \$20.95

Cliff Jacobson keeps churning them out. The prodigious Midwestern US author has updated an earlier book on the Boundary Waters and it's completely revised.

Cliff is retired now, so he's likely busier than ever.

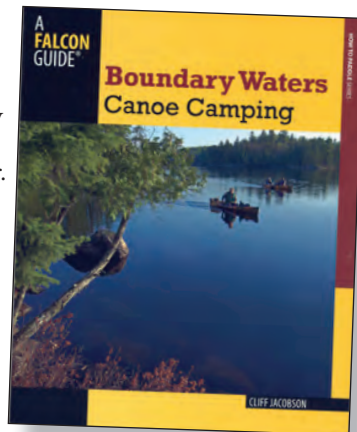
A resident of Wisconsin and was in Minnesota for many years so we have

always dubbed him as a fellow Canadian paddler. He spent many years canoeing in Canada and leading trips up north but has stayed home recently following a spat with border authorities.

Of course the Boundary Waters Canoe Area (BWCA) is what we Canucks called the soft underbelly of Quetico Park on the Ontario-US border. It is more developed than Quetico but together they form an impressive chunk of great paddling in the centre of the continent. There is a tremendous history of paddling the BWCA best exemplified by Sigurd Olson.

There are few better than Cliff Jacobson when it comes to campcraft. He knows all the gear and how best to use it. This book is meant as a guide to the area and for users of all levels so everyone can get something from this book.

Boundary Waters is both well-illustrated and written with lots of colour photos and



diagrams, the book covers all the basics from clothing, food and camp rigging.

The Sacred Headwaters

By Wade Davis

Greystone Books 2011 \$50

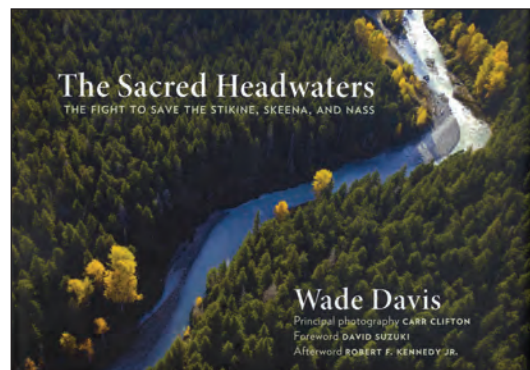
Wade Davis is a Canadian author living in BC with one of the great job titles in the world - Explorer-in-Residence at the National Geographic Society.

He has been described as "a rare combination of scientist, scholar, poet and passionate defender of all of life's diversity." And he canoes! But this book is not about paddling it is about a very special wilderness area in British Columbia.

The gorgeously photographed book is part of a project to save a sacred headwaters in northern BC where the Stikine, Skeena and Nass rivers are formed. The culprit Red Chris Mines which hope to open a 28-year copper mine in 2014 on the doorstep of the area 50 miles south of Dease Lake.

The emphasis of this book are the stunning photographs mainly by Carr Clifton. And they are also an example of the new and very high end photo editing techniques that have been developed recently which allow the full range of exposure and colour to be revealed. It is a sophisticated method not easily done but the results are spectacular.

Davis tells the story of the Tahltan natives



who inhabit the area and their understandable fight to keep this incredible area as they have known it for millennia. It is also a labour of love for the well-traveled Davis as he lives in a cabin at the edge of the area. A beautiful area with a murky future as construction is scheduled to begin in the Spring of 2012.



A Pre-Nanook Glimpse into HBC's Past

By CHRIS NIKKEL
Five Door Films

An extraordinary documentary filmed in 1919 to mark the 250th anniversary of the Hudson Bay Company has been restored for modern audiences.

In July 1919, the Royal Mail Ship *Nascopie* departed Montreal. It carried supplies bound for Arctic fur trade posts. But the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) ice-breaker had extra cargo on its annual trip. A film crew is on board.

The ship headed north. As they travelled, a cameraman filmed the *Nascopie* crashing through ice floes in 35mm.

When the ship anchored, he went overboard, trudging across the ice with a tripod cradled in his arms. A second camera rolled from the deck, recording it all.

The film crew had orders from the HBC headquarters in London. They were to make a film capturing the company's workings and commercial land holdings, holdings that once covered one twelfth of the earth's surface.

But the HBC wanted rid of the land, and were looking for people to settle on it. And thus a memo from HBC executives - the film should be "advertising the Company and incidentally its lands, without appearing to do so".

The silent film was eventually called *The Romance of the Far Fur Country*. It was used to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the historic company in 1920.

Over the course of six months, the film crew crossed Canada. They captured extraordinary footage in the most inhospitable conditions imaginable. In northern Alberta, they travelled by dogsled over a frozen river. The camera caught a sled tipping, with crates of film equipment thrown into the snow.

On the now-dammed Abitibi River, in northern Ontario, they filmed from canoes. They ran rapids, portaged hills with canoes on their shoulders and camped in the wilderness. They played with silhouettes against the flowing river, one camera filming the other.

At Lake Harbour, on Baffin Island, one of the most memorable scenes unfolded. An Inuit man named Inqmilayuk sat around a campfire, talking. A white man, who is in fact the captain of the *Nascopie*, Edmund Mack, listened intently, puffing on a pipe.

According to Canadian visual historian Peter Geller, these scenes

can place *The Romance of the Far Fur Country* in the context of the history of documentary film, a history dominated by Robert Flaherty, who British film icon John Grierson hailed as the father of the documentary.

"Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922) is seen as a pivotal moment in the history of non-fiction film," Peter says. But he adds a caveat. "What has been forgotten is that the HBC film shot in 1919

used many of the filmic and narrative techniques to tell its 'Life Story of the Eskimo' that Flaherty would later employ in his film. And outdoing Flaherty, the HBC film used titles in the Inuit language."

Nanook of the North would become a classic of early film. Commercial spin-offs like the "Nanook Fizz" soft-drink, and "Igloo" refrigeration units cashed in on its popularity. This same iconic status cannot be said of *The Romance of the Far Fur Country*. When the completed film premiered across Western Canada and in London, it was accompanied by a live orchestra. It played to packed houses. One Canadian newspaper said the film showed "Scenes Never Shown Anywhere Before".

But then the film faded from view. By the mid-1950s, the footage - more than 20 reels in mismatched order - was given to the National Film Archive, what would become the British Film Institute Archive, for safe keeping. In the 1980s, a safety print was made but the footage had only been watched by a handful of people.

The two filmmakers went to great lengths to get the right shots. And this is where the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in Winnipeg entered the story. The HBC Archives always knew the footage was in England, but it wasn't until 2011 that a transfer took place.

The film premiered on May 23, 1920, at Winnipeg's illustrious Allen Theatre. Advertisements boasted that the viewer could "travel over 2,000 miles through the North, sitting in the Allen Theatre."

The audience in Winnipeg was a mix of HBC store clerks, shoppers, and a hundred First Nations people, all dressed in traditional clothing. The First Nations community interacted with the motion pictures, calling to "get your gun," or "shoot him," when animals appeared on screen.

Five Door Films are re-editing the returned footage using the filmmakers' diaries as no original print exists. They are currently touring a two hour version of the film in Canada's North and attracting great interest and reaction. See www.returnfarfurcountry.ca for more details. It will be made in to DVD soon. (This article first appeared in a longer version in BBC Web Magazine.)



One of two unnamed cameramen who photographed northern Canada in 1919

Photo: Hudson's Bay Company Archives

Ministry of Wilderness & Infrastructure



photo: Chris Rush

That hill in the background is the rim of the Pingualuit Crater in Ungava. And that sign welcoming you in three languages means things are about to be very different.

We are printing a letter to Che-Mun from subscriber **Chris Rush** of Montreal who has clearly put his finger on a disturbing, yet inevitable, trend following his observations on a recent trip across the top of Quebec via the Puvirnituk River with veteran Ungava paddlers Laco Kovac and Lynette Chubb. As the “protection” of remote wilderness becomes a government imperative then that very wilderness is changed forever and not for the better. One of Canada’s most remote southerly areas is upper Ungava/ Nunavut which is as desolate as the northern Arctic islands in some spots. Quebec’s Plan Nord is appearing to unleash a wave of government “interest” in the north which only means the wilderness areas that northern trippers have long cherished will be permanently changed. While our needs should not dictate an area’s fate, the passing of wilderness canoesists through an area confirms its pristine status. A full article appeared in Kanawa Magazine but we are pleased to print some of Chris’ photos from that amazing area.

This past summer I was fortunate enough to be invited to join Laco Kovac and Lynette Chubb on one of their northern Quebec trips, tackling the little travelled Puvirnituk river. Its name has been changed on the maps since the HACC canoed the upper section of the river proper on your Povungnituk expedition of 1988 that followed Flaherty's route from the Ungava/Hudson watershed to Hudson's Bay. We overlapped your trip at the beginning and end of the river – from the Pingualuit Crater through Lac St. Germain and then Papittukaaq Lake through Puvirnituk Lake into the village of Puvirnituk. It was a great trip on a very wild, great little river (although at the end, it had grown to a considerable volume!). However, there were experiences that I found very troubling on this trip. As you undoubtedly know, the crater itself and the upper section of the river are now part of a Quebec “national” park, named Pingualuit Park after the crater itself. Laco and Lynette had cleared the trip with the park authorities the year before, even



photo: Chris Rush

The upper Puvirnituk River is rarely travelled, a wild river heading to Hudson Bay from the very top of Ungava. Here Laco Kovac portages a large rapid.

leaving their canoe with one of the park rangers for relocation and safekeeping. The charter flight to the crater was booked months before departure with the park authority, as were First Air flights to Kuujjuaq and return flights to from Puvirnituk to Montreal with Air Inuit (over \$1,000 each way). I had taken a month off work, expensively re-outfitted my battle-worn Pak-canoe and bought a new dry suit for the initially frozen lakes we would experience. Yet barely a **week** before departure we received this email:

"I can not authorized your trip at this time to do POV river due to unmapped river in parks boundaries, safety is our number one priority for any of our clients, like yourself, we don't know what the contention look like on Povriver [sic]..... Sorry for the inconvenience it may cause and thank-you for your understanding."

*Markusi Qisiq
Pingualuit parks director*

Because of my past experiences dealing with "red tape" situations such as this, I became depressed very quickly. I figured that once someone "in authority" had made such a decision, it would not easily be reversed. But why did they wait so long to make this decision? What had happened? They knew months (even a year) beforehand that our group wanted to canoe this river, and that the river was unmapped, this was not a new situation. They had even taken our charter flight money and park entry fees and sent me a nice "welcome to the park" package. What had changed their minds? You can imagine how

we felt – was all the planning and the hard earned cash going to go to waste? What was I going to do with my month off work? I even thought about threatening legal action to recoup non-refundable costs incurred.

Lynette replied quickly and eloquently, outlining the experience of our group (2 well equipped canoes with 4 experienced wilderness trippers, of whom two are high level canoe instructors and the others an experienced cartographer and a medical doctor, a sat phone, SPOT and a PLB) and thankfully with some additional intervention from friends, the "authorities" relented and "allowed" us to continue with the trip. Is this going to be a feature of future northern trips? Will we require permission to enter wildnerness areas? Who will decide if a group has the requisite experience to travel a specific river? I bring this up because, as you know, with Quebec's Plan du Nord, at least 12% of the area in question will be "protected", presumably as national parks. This will mean park fees and permission will be needed to enter/traverse these previously remote, little traveled areas.

This brings me to my next concern, illustrated by that photograph of the Pingualuit crater complete with the "Parks Quebec" sign. As someone who has visited this crater "the hard way", I would hazard to guess that you are not keen on seeing such blatant signs of humanity spoiling the moment. I kept staring at the sign thinking that something was "not right" here. In addition there are also now permanent living structures in the park. Added to this was the racket of frequent plane flights as well as several helicopter visits.

Is this really the best way to protect special areas such as this?

Surely the previous situation was preferable, with the area being so remote that very few committed individuals actually visited the area, generally leaving no trace of their visit. Why not simply protect the areas from greedy mining companies and Hydro Quebec, otherwise leaving them be? Instead, these “parks” scar the landscape with permanent structures and actively encourage infinitely more visitors to come and tread on the fragile ecosystems. And damage will be done – for example, there were no rules enforced on our hike up to the crater rim, or down to the crater lake itself, supposedly harbouring the second purest source of water on the planet due to its unique history.



Taking a break working down a tough stretch of the Puvurnituk River. heading to Hudson Bay.

Photo: Chris Rush

We self-regulated our behaviour, as we always do, but I can envision all sorts of future environmental faux-pas - from damaging arctic plants and lichens on the unmarked trek up to the crater rim to actually polluting the lake itself. The local lakes will become fished out quickly (at least 20 large lake trout were taken from Manarsaliuk Lake, where the permanent housing structures are located, in the 24 hours that we were actually there). I even heard the Twin Otter pilot muttering about how the new landing strip hacked out of the previously undisturbed landscape was becoming “too soft” with the repeated use it was seeing.

As for the argument that these areas should be opened to the general public for “tourism”, I would argue that they were always open to those who wanted to commit to the difficulty of visiting such a site. For years I pored over maps wondering which river would take me close enough to visit the crater and then out to the sea, it was just a question of waiting for the right time to make the trip. But now one can be flown from Montreal to the new landing strip at the crater itself in a matter of hours.... And will these parks indeed democratically attract the general public? At the time of our visit, the majority of the “guests” at the park “hotel” apart from us (and we camped) were government employees, some of whom were visiting the nearby Raglan

mine, flown in to the park by helicopter for some “tourism” (presumably all paid for by us, the taxpayers; the only other non-government employee at the site was an artist who was visiting in order to paint the crater for an art book that he was involved in producing). So, a nice perk for the civil servants who would

most likely otherwise never have visited such a site and may not even appreciate how lucky they were to see it in such a pristine state – except it is no longer in a pristine state. Is this “park” formation and its infrastructure really necessary? Is this the best way to preserve the wilderness from mining and hydroelectric projects? Will we in the not so distant future require permits to head out on any northern canoe trip? (in addition to the Puvirnituk, rivers

located in Quebec parks now include the previously rarely travelled Korok and Clearwater rivers). Will we be potentially disallowed from embarking on a wilderness adventure at the (last minute!) whim of the “authorities” again? Food for thought.

On a more sobering note, the Quebec paddling community lost a wonderful person, Jimmy Deschesnes, to complications of multiple sclerosis this past spring. Jimmy was part of my paddling group, a veteran of many wilderness canoe trips and a man dedicated to the north – he was a medical doctor who worked most of his career up in James Bay with the Cree. One of the Chisasibi village Chiefs gave an emotional eulogy at his funeral in Montreal but unfortunately a plane chartered by the community that was to bring a flight full of Cree down to pay their respects did not make it due to weather issues. Jimmy will be sadly missed by all who knew him, I know I will miss him.

Those are great questions Chris and congrats on a memorable trip in the wilds of Ungava. I think the real reason for all that infrastructure is to mask the real reason governments do things like Plan Nord. It is really all about the resource extraction. It would probably be more palatable if they just admitted that. The results would likely be the same.



With this Outfit, Che-Mun begins a new feature that will follow the happenings of Plan Nord, Quebec's ambitious northern development scheme to industrialize Nunavik, their northern frontier, led by Premier Jean Charest.

When it comes to northern development there is really no place like Quebec, at least since the USSR dissolved. The combination of a vast north-land and provincial politics that have a history shady deals makes for a massive impact on the northern landscape.

Hydro-Quebec led the way in the 1970's when they unleashed their huge hydro plans on an unsuspecting Cree nation. Borrowing from the great movie of that era when shaking our head at what went on we joked, "Forget it Jacques, it Hydrotown"

Decades have passed and the James Bay hydro is now old hat but still growing with the Rupert River now 70 per cent diverted. Those unsuspecting Crees are now co-operating and cashing in on their lands though the social costs have been high and the community is far from unanimous on the scheme.

And now we have Plan Nord which could make Hydrotown look like a village. We will bring you a series of PN-related stories and news items. Is Plan Nord really all about making the north accessible to mining companies or about securing wilderness and an economic base for northern natives?

A key part of Plan Nord changed recently with the announcement that 20 per cent of the region will be declared protected areas by 2020, nearly twice the amount of land Quebec first pledged would be granted full protection. Another 30 per cent of the land will be closed to mining and hydroelectric projects, although other development projects deemed to have less impact on the ecology, like ecotourism, for instance, will be permitted. The nature of those development projects have yet to be defined.

The announcement was met with cautious approval by conservation groups, some characterizing the government's Plan Nord vision to invest \$80 billion in energy development, forestry, mining and tourism over 25 years as a marketing plan to sell off natural resources to foreign countries

The people of Kuujuaq, a town in the predominantly Inuit region of Nunavik in Northern Quebec, are telling Transport Quebec they're not ready to accept a ground transportation link with the south.

Transport officials presented a pre-feasibility study at a town hall meeting in Kuujuaq in January.

The Quebec Government is looking to build a railway or a road to service the growing mining activity in the region. But at the meeting, speaker after speaker voiced concern about negative impacts the road could bring.

Kuujuaq Mayor Paul Parsons says it's clear Quebec has not consulted properly with the Inuit.

"Obviously we have deep concerns and this is what I wanted to get across to the provincial government... there was not enough people consulted," said Parsons.

Quebec says it could cost \$1 billion to build a road to Kuujuaq, and a lot more to build a railroad.

The newly elected Makivik Corp. president, Jobie Tukkiapiik, attended the meeting, as did Kativik Regional Government Chair Maggie Emudlak.

Quebec Premier Jean Charest touted Quebec's Plan Nord to an audience of northern government and business leaders Feb. 2, selling the scheme as a way to benefit the aboriginal people who inhabit the province's north.

Speaking to a luncheon in Ottawa, Charest told his audience that his 25-year plan to develop Quebec above its 49th parallel responds to a strong demand for natural resources, coupled with better access to the region after climate change.

But above all, Charest said the Plan Nord's main goal is to benefit all Quebecers, "most of all, for those who live in the North — in particular First Nations and Inuit."

"We set out to work very closely to work with the 120,000 who live in the North," he said. "For two years, we worked with 450 people around the same table."

The Quebec premier has spent the last 10 months selling the project on an international level, drumming up interest in the rich mineral deposits that dot the province's north.

In the face of a growing demand for natural resources, particularly from Asia, Charest said the plan represents "big opportunity."

"Only 80 per cent of this land mass has been surveyed — in other words, it hasn't been fully explored. The potential for development is extraordinary," Charest said. "Even with the ups and downs, there will be a fairly constant demand over the next 25 years."

As part of the plan, the Charest government has committed to protect 50 per cent of the landmass, with 12 per cent of those lands to be set aside as park reserves or protected areas by 2015.

Stornoway Diamond Corp. will make it a priority during 2012 to obtain all the permitting and financing needed to get its northern Quebec Renard Project in construction by mid-2013. The Renard Project is part of the provincial \$80 billion Plan Nord in northern Quebec. Progress on the government's five-year plan involving the route 167 extension will be crucial to the start of intensive work at the Renard Project.

"This year is our year to get all our ducks in a row," president and chief executive officer Matt Manson said. "It is a big focus to get all our permits in place so there's nothing impeding us mobilizing on the roads and starting construction next year."

Stornoway also is expected to sign an impact and benefits agreement (IBA) with the Cree community of Mistissini as well as the Cree Grand Council. Progress towards construction and eventual production at the Renard Project also depends on the progress of the route 167 extension.

The route 167 extension is a \$331 million provincial government project, as part of the Plan Nord project that will see the current route extended 243 kilometers into the Otish Mountains and ultimately lead to Stornoway's Renard Project.

Work on extending route 167 began in January a spokesperson for the government of Quebec said. Of the 4,000 jobs expected to be created by the extension, 2,500 jobs will be directly created by the extension while the other 1,500 jobs will come from contractual work.



CANOESWORTHY *continued*

researchers to conclude the Little Ice Age was triggered by volcanic eruptions between AD 1275 and 1300 and was sustained by changes in Arctic sea-ice cover that lasted several centuries.

Writing in a recent issue of the journal *Geophysical Research Letters*, the team of 13 scientists from the U.S., Iceland and Britain notes that, “there is no clear consensus on the timing, duration, or controlling mechanisms” of the Little Ice Age, which has been attributed by some experts to the onset of a period of reduced heat from the sun.

Without fully discounting the influence of the solar radiation cycle on the medieval cooling trend, the researchers found, however, clear indications on Baffin Island that mosses and other plants that had thrived in the centuries prior to AD 1300 were suddenly killed during a time marked by cataclysmic discharges from volcanoes erupting in the Southern Hemisphere.

A similar series of tropical volcanic eruptions around the year AD 1450 — which initially blocked sunlight but also extended Arctic ice cover and increased iceberg production in the North Atlantic — coincided with another pulse of icefield growth and the flash-freeze killing of plants at different locations on the Nunavut island.

Significantly, the authors note, the “entombed vegetation” found at sites along a 1,000-kilometre stretch of Baffin Island has only become apparent in recent years as “rapidly melting ice caps” in Arctic Canada began to reveal plant material unseen since the Middle Ages.

“From both the Canadian evidence (many sites became ice-covered in the late 13th century and remained so until the past decade) and Icelandic evidence... we can conclude that multi-decadal average summer temperatures never returned to those of Medieval times until the 20th century,” the scientists state in the journal article.

Nunavut’s age-old fur trade is finally getting a cyber-age treatment, with the territorial government developing an online inventory program to track the movement and sale of pelts.

The digital database is intended to ensure hunters are getting fair market prices for their harvest, marking a big change for a traditional industry that for generations depended on bartering, haggling and sometimes shady dealing.

Wayne Lynch, the Government of Nunavut’s fisheries manager, hopes bar-coding introduced in the online overhaul will eliminate much of the previous uncertainty.

“This gives us the ability to know exactly what we have in inventory, exactly what we paid for it, in real time, instead of having to go back and pore over inventories and data to get that information,” he said. “So it’s a cost savings, as well as a great tool for us to react to markets.”

Currently, Lynch said, a typical request to pull up records of every fur sold between a certain period of months could take “weeks and weeks” to gather.

“With this new system, we can just hit the button and every-

thing will print out,” he said. “You know exactly where it is, what it is, who’s hunted it, and what the price is.”

Most wildlife officials currently keep paper records of what they purchase, and what goes to auction. A similar digital inventory program has been used in the Northwest Territories for a decade now.

Wildlife offices in a few Nunavut communities will begin trials with the digital system in January, with a plan to introduce the online inventory territory-wide in the spring.

A plan to tow the half-submerged wreck of a ship off the shore of Nunavut’s Cambridge Bay back to Norway has hit a wall. The federal government has turned down a request for an export permit for the *Maud*, once sailed by Norway’s Roald Amundsen, the first European adventurer to travel the Northwest Passage in 1906 and the first person to reach the South Pole, a feat he achieved in December 1911.

Amundsen sailed the *Maud* on an unsuccessful attempt to sail through the Northeast Passage, then drifted in the ice toward the North Pole.

But bringing the *Maud* back to Norway is all about the enduring hoopla that surrounds the country’s homegrown hero, Amundsen.

And that’s why group of Norwegian investors wanted to raise the *Maud* with balloons, drag the hulk over to a barge and then tow it from Nunavut back to Norway — a 7,000-kilometre journey.

There, the *Maud* would be exhibited at a futuristic museum in Asker, a suburb of Oslo — where anything to do with Amundsen remains a huge draw.

The reason for the refusal of the permit: a full archeological study must be first be conducted on the wreck — a condition that came as unexpected news to the manager of the project “*Maud Returns Home*.”

“The reason for the refusal is explained as lack of information concerning the extraction of the *Baymaud*. The Export Examiner states that the ship should not be recovered without adherence to accepted archaeological standards,” Jan Wanggaard said Thursday — a day after Norway celebrated the 100th anniversary of Amundsen’s arrival at the South Pole.

But the project’s proponents plan to appeal the decision to the Canada’s cultural property export review board, Wanggaard said.

The refusal came as a surprise because the *Maud*, now owned by a Norwegian group, wasn’t listed as an archeological site. A group of Cambridge Bay residents has lobbied to keep the sunken hulk of the *Maud* — better known to them as the *Baymaud*, the name given to it by the Hudson’s Bay Co. — in the waters outside their community.

Outfitters in Nunavik didn’t receive a welcome Christmas present, as Quebec announced new restrictions for Nunavik’s sports caribou hunt on December 21. These



CANOESWORTHY *continued*

will limit sports hunting of the Leaf River and George River herds for the 2012-2013 season.

"The data collected in 2011 shows that the Leaf River herd is following the same path as the decreasing population of the George River herd, which encourages us to strengthen the hunting rules to preserve the species," said Serge Simard, Quebec's minister of natural resources and wildlife, in a Dec. 21 news release.

For the 2012-2013 season, the sports hunt of the George River herd will be closed in three different areas. The hunt of the Leaf River will follow the same regulations now in place, which limits hunters to a maximum catch of two caribou each per year.

Earlier this year, Quebec's natural resources department announced cuts to the caribou sports hunt, which takes some of the 40,000 caribou hunted every year from the Leaf and George River herds.

Quebec announced a 25 per cent cut to the number of permits handed out for the Leaf Bay herd in Nunavik, along with a shortened hunt in certain zones.

The move responds to recent surveys by biologists who say they've seen a dramatic decline in the numbers and overall health of Nunavik's caribou. Some biologists estimate there could be fewer than 300,000 caribou left in the region — that from a herd once estimated to be one-million animals strong.

That's despite reports from Nunavik's outfitters that caribou numbers looked better than ever this year. The \$20 million caribou outfitting business has been a mainstay of Nunavik's economy for more than 20 years, pouring money into local stores and airlines from August to October.

In a good year, about 3,000 to 5,000 hunters would come mainly from the United States to Nunavik for one-week hunting packages and a chance to bag two caribou.

The new regulations won't impact the Inuit caribou harvest in Nunavik, but the province says their plan encourages Inuit to monitor and manage future caribou hunts.

Inuit hunters already provide some harvest data to the province, but the department of natural resources and wildlife hopes to implement measures to make that data gathering more efficient, a department spokesperson said.

The Royal Canadian Air Force has looked at a major expansion at Resolute Bay, Nunavut, as it considers transforming it into a key base for Arctic operations, according to documents obtained by the *Ottawa Citizen*.

The construction of a 3,000-metre paved runway, hangars, fuel installations and other infrastructure has been proposed for the future as part of an effort to support government and military operations in the North.

Resolute Bay in Nunavut would be able to provide a logistics site for search-and-rescue operations as well as a base for strategic refuelling aircraft, according to the briefing from the Arctic Management Office at 1 Canadian Air Division, the air force's Winnipeg-based command and control division. The

briefing was presented in June 2010 and recently released by the Defence Department under the Access to Information law.

The long paved runway would allow fighter aircraft to operate from the site, with the suggestion in the presentation that could include NORAD jets.

Resolute Bay currently has a 1,981-metre gravel runway, according to information provided for pilots by the federal government.

Resolute Bay should be considered for expansion to become a main operating base because it is "the geostrategic center to the Arctic and [Northwest] Passage" and is an "existing regional supply hub with a permanent population/sea access," according to the briefing.

It would be seen as a "key Arctic regional development and sovereignty centerpiece," the records add.

The presentation followed a February 2010 Arctic planning directive. The Conservative government has received kudos from some for paying more attention to the Arctic but critics have raised concerns that much of that is based on a military presence while the government continues to cut back on science and research in the North.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has emphasized that Canada will increase its military presence in the region.

Geologists say Hall Peninsula, which is right next door to Iqaluit, is still a mystery so a team of researchers at the Canada-Nunavut Geosciences Office is proposing to do a major project to fill in some gaps on the geological map.

David Mate, chief geologist at the office, calls the peninsula a 'geological frontier' and said it has been overlooked by geologists and other researchers.

Mate's office is proposing a three year study which would see geologists hike over hundreds of kilometres, take samples, and study the terrain.

"We will be looking at the different kinds of minerals and what the mineral potential is, and we'll also be identifying where there's potential for carving stone, gemstones, maybe for making jewelry," said Mate.

He wants to set up a camp this summer on the peninsula and work with a team of scientists and students.

"It really is a geological frontier, so for a scientist it's really exciting because we're probably going to find all kinds of interesting new things. And I think from Nunavut's point of view, it's exciting too because it's going to allow Nunavut to understand and learn more about its land," he said.

The proposal still needs approval from regulators. It could also meet some opposition. Some local hunters are upset about helicopter traffic around the diamond exploration camp, which is also on Hall Peninsula. They say it has scared away caribou.

Andrew Nakasuk of Pangnirtung, Nunavut, is afraid the mapping project will mean more helicopters and more exploration in an area that has long served a hunting ground for that community.



photo: Chris Rush

They call it the Nahanni of Nunavik, which while somewhat overstating it nevertheless gets across the grandeur of the seldom travelled Puvirnituk, formerly Povungnituk River in northern Quebec. Lynette Chubb and Laco Kovac are shown entering the second canyon of the Puvirnituk . The river seldom sees canoeists and it crosses most of the far north of Nunavik as the height of land is close to Ungava Bay in the north and Hudson Bay in the south.

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