



Summer 2010

The Journal of Canadian Wilderness Canoeing

Outfit 141

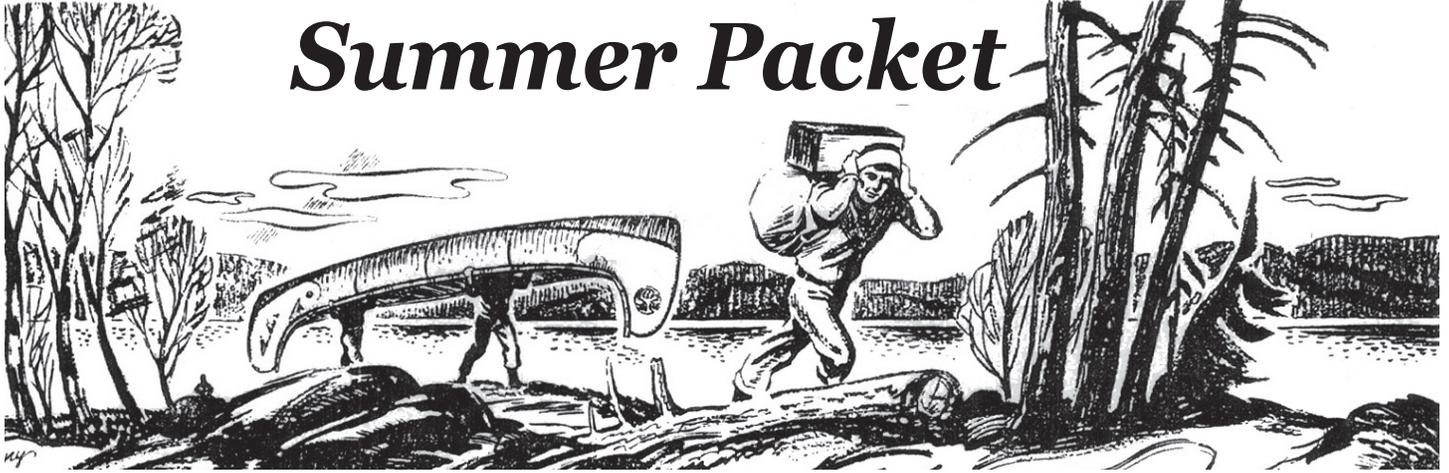


Photo: Michael Peake

ON AN UNEVEN KEELE - Keith and Joan Stevens show their stuff on the NWT's Keele River. The sixty-something couple from Woodstock, Ontario were among the group of 12 that paddled the river in July with Canoe North Adventures along with Che-Mun editor Michael Peake. For a report on the experience see Page 6.

www.ottertooth.com/che-mun

Summer Packet



Always great to hear from old friend and subscriber **Cliff Jacobson**.

I just received the latest issue of *Che-Mun*, and I must say, it is one of your best. I especially enjoyed Alex Hall's article. I remember my first trip on the Hood River in 1983--standing in the midst of around 100,000 caribou, and muskoxen on every hill.



How lucky we both are to have canoed those wonderfully wild rivers in the days before mining, hydro and climate change. On behalf of all of us who love wild places and the magic of canoes, I salute you for keeping the dream alive through *Che-Mun*.

Great post by Tim Farr of Ottawa. I concur completely that there is something magical about the printed page. Like most, I read plenty of stuff on line but the electronic version remains lacking. Maybe it's just because I'm an old-timer and have not yet learned to adapt to the new ways. When I got my first computer I found that I couldn't edit on screen, so I continued to do print-outs and cut-and-paste material the old fashioned way with tape and scissors. It took me several years before I could do all my editing on screen, in single space format. Admittedly, I am getting used to electronic versions of everything. Still, there is magic in the

printed word. Every now and then I receive a hand-written letter from a fan. I cherish it. It is the first thing opened in the mail and after it's read, it goes into a my "smile file" which will live as long as me. I don't do that with e-mails. Those that make me smile just stay in my in-box until the box is full or the computer dies. Yes, the printed page is magic.

Enough. Thank you again for your wonderful publication. I hope you know how much we readers appreciate it.

Also I am sending a shot from Little Missouri River, North Dakota (Teddy Roosevelt National Park). Yes, that is a "lump" of coal I'm standing upon.

We never met Dick Davidson but valued his many letters to Che-Mun over the years We were saddened to learn of his passing last fall but thrilled to hear what some of his "disciples" have planned. Robert Doane wrote to us a while back with this info.

Our group that is heading up to Quetico in August were "disciples" of the late Dick Davidson. We are planning a ceremony in his honor.

We will be placing a memorial to him (hidden-possibly never to be found) that includes; old photos, personal notes from those he led, a Boy Scout canoeing merit badge (Dick led Boy Scouts of America Explorer Scouts) and some of his stories to *Che-Mun* that you published to read and then bury with the other articles. The group photo (on Page 10) is from a trip to Quetico in 1978 with Dick on the far right and me fourth from the left.

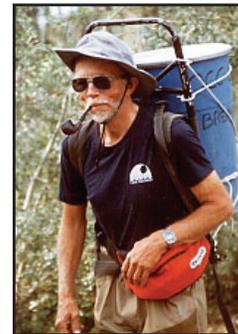
A published obit of Dick Davidson:

Dick Davidson, local canoe and Sioux Falls - Dick Davidson, local canoe and outdoor activist, passed away in Sioux Falls on October 6th 2009. He is survived by many friends

whom he met through the years doing what he loved. Dick was born on February 21st

1930 in Minneapolis, MN. His parents, Max and Dorothy Davidson, and brothers, Don and Dean, preceded him in death.

Dick enjoyed scouting and became an Eagle Scout in 1946. He worked as a sum-



mer camp assistant in 1950 to Cal Rutstrum, one of the most newsworthy wilderness travelers from the 1920s to 50s, who cultivated his interest in wilderness canoeing. They paddled together on a wilderness trip in September of 1951. Dick graduated from the University of Minnesota with a B.A. degree in Psychology. He served as a 1st Lieutenant on active duty in the Army from 1954 to 1956 and returned to the reserves until 1959. Dick moved to South Dakota as he was attracted to the hunting and outdoor opportunities.

He was a scout executive with the Sioux Council B.S.A. in the 1960s and early 70s. During that time he also served as camp director at Lake Shetek Boy Scout Camp near Currie, MN and the Lewis and Clark Scout Camp, near Yankton, SD. He passed on his love for wilderness to many scouts and youth of the community. During and after his years with the Sioux Boy Scout Council, Dick led numerous groups of adolescents and adults on trips to American and Canadian wilderness areas. He enjoyed solo and group wilderness expeditions in Alaska, the provinces of Canada, the Yukon and Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and the Arctic. His yearly canoe trips would take weeks to months. He paddled across northern

◆PACKET continues on Page 10



Editor's Notebook

Greetings in both our new *and* old formats. The new era of an electronic *Che-Mun* is here and we have also found a way to supply those who wish a printed edition with a full colour version printed on the same solid paper stock.

The reason we went with colour over black and white is to be able to get the same resolution on our photos it has to be with a digital colour printer. We hope to have this all sorted out in the months ahead but a reminder if you wish a printed copy the annual rate is now \$40.

Had a wonderful trip down the Keele River with Al Pace and Lin Ward along with their son Taylor. You can read all about it on page six and see a gallery of the trip's photos at <http://gallery.me.com/mpeake/100222>.

As we were getting ready to leave Norman Wells, I met Jack Frimeth and his 13-year-old son Dan from southern Ontario. I had read about their upcoming trip on the Mountain River online - just the two of them tackling a solid mountain waterway.

Both Al Pace and I were concerned for their safety. While obviously things went well - as you can see on Page 9 - such a trip raised issues for both Al and me. We both commented that neither of us would feel comfortable taking our sons' of that age on such a trip. The pair were great to speak with and they were well-equipped with dry suits and helmets.

This is a sticky subject for me. I often rail about the "nannyfication" of our society where kids, primarily boys, are too often coddled, prevented from doing physical things. Yet, the Eric Morse training in me says that one boat alone on an isolated river with a young teen is perhaps tipping the scale.

Nothing went wrong, thankfully. I guess you have to ask yourself who is pushing to go on such a trip - the parent or the child? There is no clear answer for such a dilemma, or rather there are a number of them depending on who you are.

But something in me thinks that great northern trips are dreams to be dreamt and best appreciated when they truly mean something. They're a goal to build up to and ponder about over the years, something you aim for and gratefully and gradually achieve. Having started in elementary school you wonder what they will be dreaming for 30 or 40 years hence.

Michael Peake.

Canoesworthy

Northern News Service reports that on August 25, 2010, Tom Faess of TT Enterprises had his camp set up and welcomed his first group of tourists to Baker Lake earlier this month. Known as *Tundra Tommy*, Faess operates the Great Canadian Wilderness Adventures.

Unfortunately for Faess and his clients they were about to embark on a totally different type of adventure, and one that would leave a sour taste in their mouths.

On Friday, August 13, Faess received a cease and desist order from Robert Connelly of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism (ED&T). The order informed Faess his outfitter's licence had been temporarily suspended, pending an investigation into a serious complaint lodged against TT Enterprises.

Faess says he was not told what the complaint was or who had filed it.

He said he'd been in Baker for about a week preparing for his popular tour.

"I had about 38 people ready to go for the next three weeks, an airplane leased, and boats and local people hired to transport tourists back and forth to camp," said Faess.

"On opening day I had 13 Taiwanese here for the first trip, when I got an e-mail and phone call from Connelly telling me they pulled my outfitter's licence and to cease and desist my operations.

"Connelly claimed it resulted from a serious customer complaint, but wouldn't give me a copy. "He'd never had any contact with me prior to this, so, to get blind-sided like this with these allegations was a tremendous shock." Despite numerous requests by Kivalliq News, ED&T refused to comment on the situation.

Faess said he might not be the Government of Nunavut's (GN) version of the perfect operator, but he's never had a single incident or emergency during his entire 39 year Northern career. He said ED&T referred to the complaint as being safety related but wouldn't explain what or why.

"The executive director of Arctic Tourism, Colleen Dupuis, contacted me and told me to contact the clients I had booked for the next two weeks and tell them their trip's off.

"They've all paid up-front, have airline tickets to Baker and their hotels booked.

"Meanwhile, I'm broke, having spent all those funds to have camps set up, aircraft leased, boats, loaders and staff prepaid, and \$8,000 in groceries at the camp."

"My company probably won't survive this."

Faess said he's operating at about one-third the capacity he was 10 years ago while trying to move to Baker. He said he's been trying to recreate tourism in a community where there's absolutely none right now.

"With the closure of all the caribou hunt camps, we're the only organized tourism operator in the Baker (Lake and) Chesterfield Inlet area. "I don't think I've done anything so wrong in my operation to justify such a dramatic manoeuvre that's going to put serious egg on Nunavut's face for tourism.

"This has destroyed my reputation in the market."

American Lee Mann of Lee And Bryce Mann Photography in Sedro Woolley, Wash., had a pair of backtoback trips to Nunavut with Faess cancelled by the suspension.

The Quebec government's "Plan Nord" includes consideration of the once-controversial Great Whale hydro-electric project, a 2,500 kilometre electric grid connecting Nunavik communities, and wind mill farms located near Hydro Quebec's huge reservoirs.

These and other recommendations are contained in a preliminary report prepared for Quebec's ambitious northern development plan obtained by *Le Soleil* newspaper in Quebec City. The report cites a suggestion, first proposed by former Quebec premier Bernard

◀ CANOESWORTHY continues on Page 11



Late Nights on Air
By Elizabeth Hay
McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, 2007
\$29.99

When my brother arranged a week at a cottage, it was to be, at least in part, a remembrance our summer days 50 plus years ago. Upon arriving in Ottawa from California, I asked my sister-in-law for some Canadian reading for the lake. The book with two canoes on the cover immediately attracted me, and my choice was cemented when I read on the jacket that the book was set in the north and featured a canoe trip on the Thelon to visit the cabin where John Hornby starved to death.

In Elizabeth Hay's novel, *Late Nights on Air*, two young women end up in Yellowknife in the summer of 1975 – 29-year old Dido, beguiling of looks and voice, and twenty-five year old Gwen, more naive but spunky. Each finds a job at the northern service radio station working for Harry, the acting manager, who had returned to the north after his career stalled and faded. Elizabeth Hay calls on her experience to describe the work at radio, its programming and announcing. But the action turns on the lives of the characters, the ones mentioned but also two older women, Eleanor and Lorna, and a couple of lesser male characters, one of whom is rough trade. All the women had experienced disappointments or frustrated loves in their earlier lives, and that continues as the story takes a number of twists and turns. The final resolution leaves two of the people dead, two eventually happily settled, and two drifting in the big cities of the south.

The north is always present in the novel – the light of the long summer days, the rocky shores, the bitter winter. The canoe trip, from Artillery Lake to Beverly Lake, is an important element as the four individuals on the trip have to live and work together even more intensely than in Yellowknife. Elizabeth Hay has done the Thelon trip and knows wilderness canoeing. On Pike's Portage: "The feeling of release once having reached the end and sank to the ground, and extricated himself from the eighty pounds of torture on his back, was like sprouting wings and floating up to heaven." She draws on George Whalley's magisterial biography of John

Hornby, and quotes from it admiringly

Elizabeth Hay also knows writing; she is the author of a number of books and the recipient of the Giller Prize for this book. *Late Nights on Air*, an old fashioned romance with interesting characters, has the art of radio, and it has the north and some wilderness canoeing – all of which engaged me.

– Peter Kazaks

Great Bear
A Journey Remembered
By Frederick B. Watt
Outcrop Press 1980. 226 pages; \$19.99

One of the things I always try to do when up north or where the opportunity presents itself is to check out interesting book stores.

On my recent trip down the Keele River I got a chance to peruse the wares of the Norman Wells Museum and Bookshop. For its size, it holds a most impressive cache of northern books including paperback copies of *Arctic Artist* and other such oddities not normally viewed in even much larger bookshops.

One book caught my eye, not for its modest title, but rather as a chance to get some background material on the Great Bear Lake area now tagged as Sahtu Region by the tourism types.

What a revelation! This superbly interesting and readable volume tells the tale of the writer's involvement in a fascinating chapter of Canadian northern history. Watt was an Edmonton-based newspaper reporter whose work dried up, like many, when the Great Depression hit in 1929. Newly married with a young child he signed on as a prospector's assistant in a small mining syndicate trying to get the jump on the rush heading to Great Bear following Gilbert Labine's mining discoveries in Echo Bay on the east side of the mighty lake.

Watt was raised with northern lore in his blood. The stories of John Hornby, George Douglas and Cosmo Melvill were part of his upbringing. He was well plugged in with the people of the north through his job as well. In February 1932 he headed to Great Bear Lake, a place he was always wanted to see with prospector Eric Beck to try and beat the

expected rush that summer. Labine's Eldorado silver and pitchblende mine was a secret for a while but the word leaked out when he began moving equipment in and the rush was on.

Writing with a journal's succinctness and eye for detail, Watt paints a fascinating picture of life in the burgeoning north. The pair were befriended by a man already encamped and raised their canvas wall tent in the midst of -50F temperatures. They began staking claims shortly after and were there to tack on to already existing claims as near as possible to the Labine motherlode.

It is an intimate look into a world that was so much a part of Canada's northern development. I found the book extremely readable and there are a good assortment of photos of the many people he mentions. Curiously absent is a map of Great Bear, which is a big omission since he continuously refers to particular bays and areas of the lake.

But what's best is that, like a true newspaperman of the day, Watt was a witness to history. Legendary pilots Wop May and Punch Dickins flew in and out. The remote corner of this frozen lake was becoming a town and you follow the progress of what that means. From wireless stations springing up, RCMP and postal officials moving in to set up the bureaucracy, ministers gathering flocks, stores opening and big time mining officials checking things out.

Watt handles the story of the problems with prospector Beck and himself with great fairness. The two eventually had a falling out after Beck nearly paralyzed himself in a cliff fall. Amazingly he made it back to his feet over a few weeks.

Great Bear covers the six month period when Watt was up there. In that time a small city grew, lured by the commerce from all over the continent. These were tough men, Watt's tales of miles of travel through rough bush and along lake ice are impressive. And he introduces us to some truly fascinating people including Pete Baker, who was really a Lebanese prince and had a magical way with a dog team.

This book is a time machine to a not-so-distant past that will never happen again. We're indebted to Mr. Watt for observing it so well. Though it brought him no riches, we are wealthier for having this book.

–Michael Peake



Duke Watson: A life fully lived

By GWYNETH HOYLE

During the research for the book, *Canoeing North into the Unknown*, I visited the Hudson's Bay Company archives in Winnipeg to look at the correspondence connected with their "U-Paddle" business. Among the letters from clients were some from R. Duke Watson of Seattle, notable not only for his detailed descriptions of trips made using the Company's canoes, but also for the beautiful, embossed writing paper on which they were written.

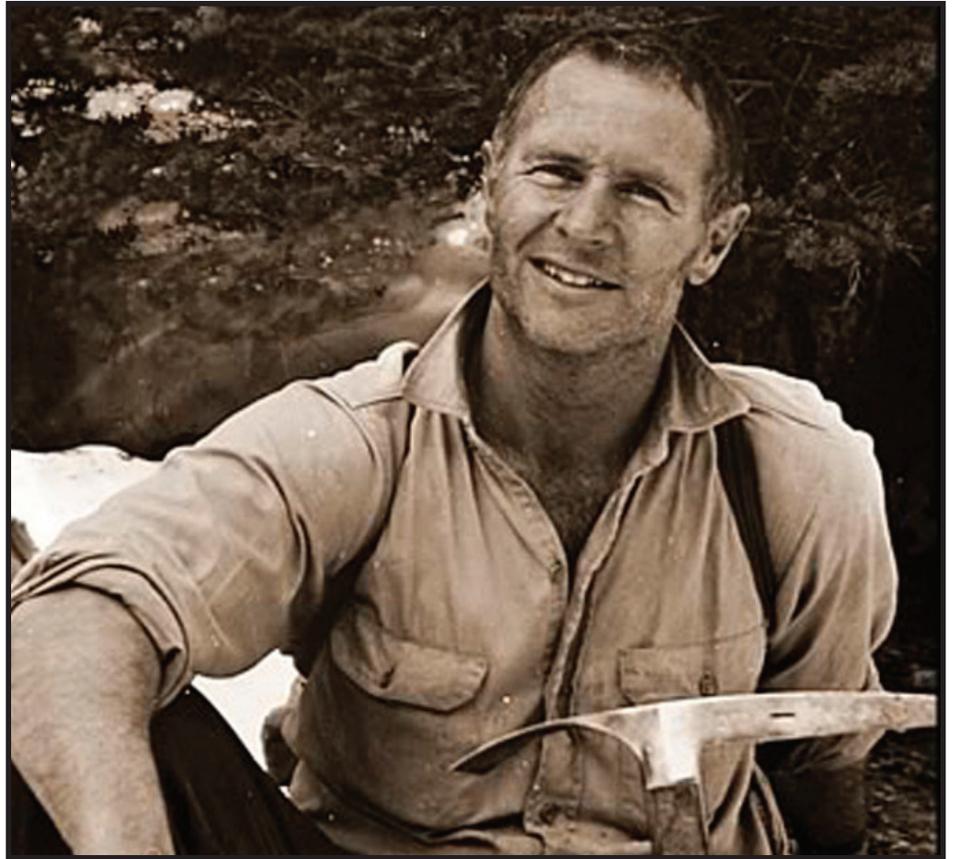
Using the address on the paper I wrote to Duke Watson asking for information about any other trips he had taken, and was disappointed when my letter was returned "address unknown". However, George Luste, the organizer of the annual Wilderness Canoe Symposium in Toronto, and also the proprietor of Northern Books, was able to supply me with a current address.

The correspondence that followed was rich in details of extensive trips taken, and complicated rosters of personnel, sometimes involving a change of crew half way along, showing skilled organization by someone who was a master of logistics. It was also the beginning of a long-distance friendship that lasted until his recent death.

On a trip to the west coast, as research was nearing completion, we visited Seattle and showed Duke the draft form of the book at his quietly elegant home with an unobstructed view overlooking the Strait of Juan de Fuca. On that visit, Duke took me into his study, two walls lined with bookcases with the classics of northern exploration on one wall and mountaineering books – his first love – on the other. On the other side of the room were built-in map drawers containing topo maps for every area of the north, and a large handsome desk where the planning for his trips took place.

Some time after *Canoeing North* was published a large parcel arrived from Duke – three substantial volumes entitled *Journals of My Northern Travels* compiled for family and friends.

In the introduction to Volume I, he told of his childhood in Illinois when he was introduced to wilderness areas in upper Michigan and northern Wisconsin. With his sons he was able to achieve his dream of northern



canoe trips, paddling the Churchill and the Back Rivers in the 1960s. After reading the writings of Eric Morse, and corresponding with him, he conceived the idea of making a series of linked canoe trips which would lead from Hudson Bay to the Bering Sea. By 1969, his family and business responsibilities had eased sufficiently to allow him to begin this quest. Volume I is sub-titled *Transcontinental Traverse, Labrador Sea to Bering Sea, 1967-1982, 7013 miles, 452 portages totalling 13,156 chains*. On every trip he routinely paced all his portages in the surveyor's measure of chains, one chain equalling 66 feet.

Duke had several dozen friends who participated at various times, and who trusted him implicitly to make all the plans, chose the routes, the starting and finishing points. So conscientious was he at completing the total traverse that sometimes puzzled companions found themselves making a detour to complete a short section which had been

missed previously because of circumstances. But so well organized and enjoyable were his trips that he never lacked for company.

Volume II is the record of canoe trips other than the Transcontinental Traverse, taken between 1935-1997, 10,353 miles by canoe, which includes such notable rivers as the George, the Back, the Fraser, the Columbia, the Stikine and the Bonnet Plume. The final volume is of his northern trips by means other than canoe.

Duke Watson was a remarkable wilderness traveller. He was a meticulous planner in everything he did. He covered a vast amount of the Canadian North, and when his canoeing days were finished he and his wife, Marilyn travelled to the Antarctic, and took rafting trips in the Yukon. Always modest and gracious, it was a privilege to have been his friend.

See www.mountaineers.org/nwmj/06/061_Watson1.html

The Keele Deal

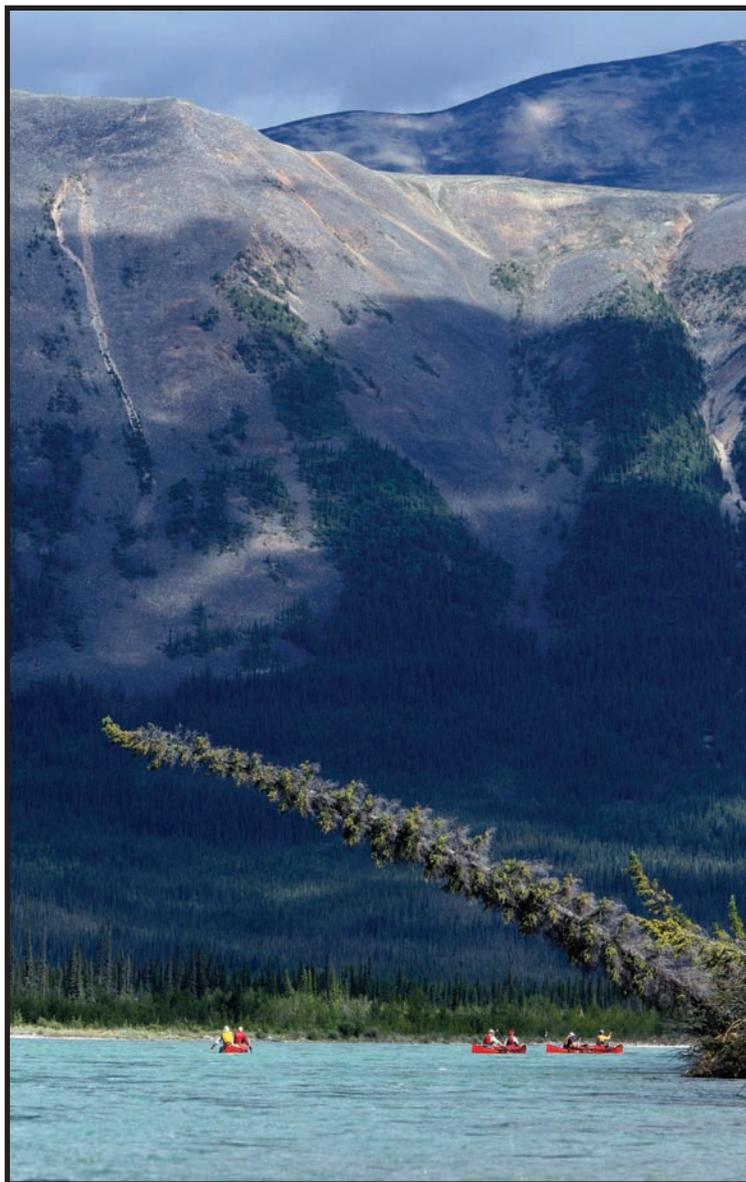
By MICHAEL PEAKE

For all the trips I have done in Canada's north, they were all with, except for one week on the Kazan River with Operation Raleigh in 1988, the same group of paddlers – the Hide-Away Canoe Club. And while I have been greatly privileged to have traveled with this amazing group, I realize there are other paddlers out there!

So when the phone rang last February with the cheery voice of veteran potter and paddler Al Pace on the end offering a chance to paddle the Keele River with *Canoe North Adventures* I jumped at the chance to go. There are a lot of commercial guiding outfits around, and it's perhaps more important to note that there are a lot that are *not* around anymore. It is a tricky business juggling a diverse group of people with different styles and interests on a demanding northern river trip. Of course, it can be very difficult to arrange and manage *any* northern expedition which is why these companies exist. I was very comfortable with our HACC group but they don't seem to be able to get out on trips any more as age, fitness, budgets and schedules don't mesh as well as they used to.

I will admit to being curious about how such trips operated. I have heard a few horror stories from both extinct and extant guiding services and they all had to do with the same problem – group dynamics. And that is the trump card played by Canoe North Adventures and Al Pace and Lin Ward who are master dealers in NWT Hold'Em!

There is no manual or exact science to picking a good canoeing crew and for outfitters it's more difficult because they pick you! So Al and Lin carefully size up prospective clients and learn how to manage the group on the river for greatest efficiency. There were 12



The Twitya Turn, where the Keele heads east to the mighty Mackenzie.

paddlers for the July Keele River trip which included four guides – Al and Lin, son Taylor, 20, and Drew Copeland, 24. I was considered sort of a quasi-guide. Normally there would be just three guides on this trip. Our wonderful clients were Joan and Keith Stevens, Lynda and Shane Baker, Joanna and Frans Grootveld and Anita Richmond all from Ontario.

I was lucky to be in the first group that enjoyed the newly constructed Sahtu Wilderness Centre in Norman Wells which includes a new log lodge built by Al and Lin. The float plane base is right at their front door run by North-Wright Air which services the Sahtu Region, one of five regions of the NWT, located in the central part of the territory encompassing the Mackenzie Mountains on the west and Great Bear Lake on the east. The Sahtu is of particular interest to discerning outdoor enthusiasts who seek remote wilderness adventure offering pristine rivers, majestic vistas and cultural experiences to canoeists, hikers and sightseers.

We left in a Twin Otter and Porter for a spectacular flight west to the headwaters of the Keele River - one of several trips CNA run. The flight through the mountains is amazing and you can catch a view of the mysterious Canol Road trail which snakes through this rugged

land. It was built during WW II to guarantee a safe supply of oil from Norman Wells during the war. An incredible feat of hardship and engineering, it was abandoned shortly after.

We landed at a gravel bar just below the confluence of the Keele and Natla rivers which join to continue as the Keele. The Natla is a challenging whitewater trip and some of that crew joined our group down the Keele which is much more forgiving. Al, Taylor and Drew joined our nine paddlers which averaged over 50 years old with



varied paddling experience. With loads quickly changed it was in the boats right away after a short talk to get our paddles and brains wet for a short distance down the fast flowing river.

For the HACC and most canoe groups, northern trips are about tradition and rituals. One of the great traditions of a Canoe North trip is the day's end Happy Hour where paddlers gather with their handmade pottery Adventure Cups fashioned by Al for a little libation of various adult cocktails. Also each person on the trip is responsible for an appetizer and a dessert. They carry a sturdy dutch-oven which can bake almost anything. I brought a traditional HACC Fruitcake®, which required only cutting and was a big hit. Rain or shine, thanks to the sturdy and functional Chlorophyll tarp, these daily rituals imbue the trip with many special and fun moments.

The Keele is perhaps the most remarkable river I have ever paddled if only for one incredible stat: we dropped 2600 feet in elevation over 200 miles with NO PORTAGES! That is astounding. We didn't even have to line a rapid. Everything is runnable with care. If you want to hit the big wave trains you can, or avoid them if you wish, but as our cover girl Joan Stevens found out with hubby Keith, when there's a professional photographer around, it makes sense to climb the white wall and play in the splash palace when you can.

Another amazing feature is the near absence of bugs!

The Keele drains down from the Yukon border into the Mackenzie River through gorgeous mountain scenery. The river is constant flow until the Mackenzie and it is easy to do 50 miles a day which means you can build in off-days for hiking, fishing, reading or whatever you like. There is no pressure on anyone to do something they don't feel like. Our group, like many I suspect, was a cheerful group of hard workers who enjoy the adventure. Clients on Canoe North trips are treated like real trippers which means they have to take part in cooking and clean-up. This is an important factor in keeping the group together and avoiding cliques which can fracture any trip. We did form one

small, but willing, clique, the Keele River Men's League which would meet intermittently along the riverside late in the evening where some of us would sample the famous fare of Scotland and Cuba! Women were welcome but too smart to attend.

Al and Lin and Taylor know this river well and are always explaining what's ahead and know the best places to camp and Al even knows the shadowed gullies where ice and be found for Happy Hour and the coolers for Happy Hour and the coolers of steaks and goodies.

On our fourth day we took a break from the river to hike up into the mountains. This is always great to remind us how easy paddling is compared to hiking! Managed to make it up about 1800 feet above camp before feeling the effects of age and weight! I was reminded by friend Peter Scott who did the Keele a year earlier that he made it all the way up the hill I made it half way. Sic transit gloria mundi!

There is of course a strong native connection to the Keele. I recall seeing a remarkable documentary years ago about natives who would construct moosehide boats and travel down their mountain river to Fort Norman to trade and then walk back. That was the Keele! We were fortunate to meet Maurice Mendo in Fort Norman – now called Tulita – who recalled those amazing days on the river he was born on.

There is also a history of exploration here and there is an old Shell Oil camp and runway along the river with a couple of hunting lodges. Even on our hikes we would find aged wooden platforms well above the river, remnants of earlier exploration. From your canoe

seat you can see Dall sheep usually motionless on impossibly steep ledges. Our first couple of canoes (not me) even saw a pack of wolves who were likely chasing a lone woodland caribou standing along the river who was likely happy to see us as we scared off his pursuers.

The daily routine was busy but not demanding. We would try to be on the river before 10am and made it sometimes by 9 and would paddle until 4pm or up to 6pm depending on weather and location. We had moody weather with a mix of clouds, sun and rain but mostly



Lunch stop in scenic Shezal Canyon on the central part of the Keele River.



nice. Typically this can be a very hot and sunny area so I was glad it wasn't too hot. The water temperature in July was 50F which is chilly but not deadly. We had no dumps on this trip though they can happen but with six boats the safety factor is great. Amazingly Al Pace has never dumped on a river. That is either a testament to his amazing paddling abilities or his amazing luck! Likely the former.

The Keele runs mainly north until it makes an abrupt 90 degree turn where the Twitya River enters from the west. The course is then almost due east and down to the Mackenzie. As with any mountain river it begins to braid in the lower sections and it is always an interesting lesson in river reading and navigation to stay alert and in the right channel. Al and the gang are great at this and it was something of a lesson for me with little mountain river experience.

While the daily routine of paddling remains somewhat constant, the makeup of the canoes changes constantly. At the HACC we had a pretty hard rule which stated you don't tent with the person you paddle with. With a trip full of guys that's easy to maintain. In a trip full of couples it can be a challenge. It is pretty well known that many couples are not always the best paddling partners. Old habits and mistakes are not tolerated for a minute which can breed acrimony – and even alimony! Canoe North has a very deft sense of who will work well together – honed through many years of experience. So our canoes pairings switched up quite a bit – even during the day. I was a stern paddler for four different people as the mix and match continued with great results.

Of course the type of river even makes it great for headwinds. As there is always somewhat of a decent current you can keep making your miles even in tough conditions. We were a pretty solid group who actually set a Canoe North record of paddling 85 km from near the end of the Keele to Police Island on the Mackenzie some 20k from Tulita.

For me it was an honour to be on the Mackenzie which will never be mistaken for a great canoeing river. But a couple of days on this legendary waterway was great. I was shocked that where we entered the river it was only 210 feet above sea level with hundreds of miles to the Arctic Ocean. But the mighty Mac rolled on with a 6km current and occasional boils to show the awesome strength which lies below. There is only one real rapid on the river – Sans Sault which is just below the mouth of the Mountain River below Norman Wells.

We would finish our trip with a visit to the former Fort Norman which was a thrill for me. This small post is at the mouth of the Great

Bear River which drains the lake of the same name. It was here in 1911 that George Douglas and company, John Hornby, Radford and Street and so many others started their journey up the Great Bear and into the great unknown. Here also, in 1959, Eric Morse and The Voyageurs ended their trip down the Camsell River then across and down the Great Bear. The Great Bear is an easy canoeing river, bringing incredibly clear and cold water to inject into the muddy Macken-



Looking upriver from high above the Keele River from whence they came are (l-r) Taylor Pace, Anita Richmond, Joan Stevens, Shane Baker, Keith Stevens, Drew Copeland and Lynda Baker.

zie. Lin Ward did an exploratory trip in August and pronounced it a great river to travel. It is also loaded with history as it was a vital link to the Barrenlands.

We slogged our way from Tulita to Great Bear Rock just upstream passing through the crystal cold Great Bear water and camping on a windy beach to await our Twin Otter charter back to Norman Wells some 70 miles north. My first canoe north with Canoe North was over. Hope it's not the last!

For a full list of their trips and info on Canoe North Adventures go to: www.canoenorthadventures.com or call toll-free in Canada: 1-888-941-6654.



Down the Mountain with Dad

By DAN FRIMETH

My father Jack has taken me on canoe trips for 8 years - since I was 5 years old. I have done flatwater trips in Temagami and Algonquin Park. When I was 7, I started doing whitewater trips with my Dad. We did the Sutton River (2003), the Missinaibi River (2005), the Petawawa River (2007), the Mara-Burnside Rivers (2008) and now the Mountain River.

When we got to Norman Wells, the weather was lousy. We stayed in town and had lunch. We also went to the Museum. It seemed everyone we met was from Ontario.

We did our final packing, while the pilot waited for the weather reports. The weather finally got better and we flew out about noon. The flight took more than one hour. When we finally started landing into Dusty Lake, the thought finally started to hit me that we were isolated from people for at least 100 km.

The portage from Dusty Lake to the Mountain River was hard. My Dad tried taking a short-cut on the second trip of three. It turned out to be a two-hour detour. I ended up waiting for him by our stuff. We went back together for the last trip to get the canoe. The alder thickets made it impossible to carry the canoe, so we dragged it a lot. When we got to our stuff, we put it all in the canoe. We tied two painter ropes to the stern handle. We lowered the loaded canoe down a big drop-off. We dragged it again and lowered it down a steep bank into the river.

We camped on the other side of the river. Next day we canoed to Black Feather Creek and got fresh water from a creek in the afternoon. We went through a small canyon. It rained all day. We put the tent up in pouring rain. Not fun! When we woke it was warm and sunny. Everything dried out. We had scrambled egg and cheese wraps for breakfast. They were delicious!

My Dad lost his watch on the portage, so we never knew what time it was. But with 24 hour daylight, we didn't care. We saw some Mountain Sheep. The river was getting bigger and more braided. We got stuck twice on gravel bars. The river was very shallow in spots.

We canoed to the place called, The Moonscape. A Black Feather guided trip was camped here. I was glad to see some other people. We talked with them and walked up the Moonscape. We saw caribou and wolf tracks at every campsite. They were big.

Next day, Black Feather left before we did. Funny, now I was hoping not to see them again. It was a long day and lots of gravel bars and white water. It was fun, but tiring. The wind was always blowing in our faces. We got to Cache Creek and First Canyon. Black Feather was already camped there. We got fresh water from the creek and saw grizzly tracks.

We walked the canoe and stuff across the river and camped across from waterfalls. I made 'smores after supper. They were delicious!

It poured all night and day. So we decided to have a layover day. We decided to only go as far as Etagochile Creek the next day, because we knew Black Feather was going to Second Canyon. It was a beautiful day. My Dad made pizza and caught an Arctic Grayling. We got more fresh water. First Canyon was long and tough. The "boils" were tricky.

The next day we made it to Battleship Rock and Second Canyon. It was not as bad as First Canyon. We paddled to Stone Knife River the next night. The Mountains here had giant "knives" coming out of them. We camped on a gravel bar and thought about not putting the fly tarp on the tent, because we were sure it would not rain. It was a cold but beautiful night.

The river and the wave trains were getting bigger. We got to the beginning of the Third Canyon that night. We camped in the canyon on a giant gravel bar. We made sure we were above the high water line and like every night, we tied the canoe to rocks. It was a beautiful high campsite surrounded by huge cliffs.

We paddled all day and did the rest of the Third and Fourth Canyons. The water was getting more tiring. You can never relax.

We stopped to get water at Powell Creek. Five minutes later, we were chased by a Grizzly Bear. We were in the canoe, when the bear came running out of the bush, then jumped into the river and started swimming after us. My father told me to, "Keep the canoe straight," while he got the camera. I figured I only had to outrun him and that would be easy. The bear went back to shore and we got two good pictures.

That night we slept with the loaded shotgun in the tent. I had soup for supper. My Dad made dehydrated Vegetable stew and beef. The expiry date was 2007 but it was still good. I tried some and it was actually good. We camped on a large gravel bar under a cliff. It seemed safe from bears. We didn't use the fly tarp, so we could see outside, in case there were bears.

The next day was very windy and we paddled a lot. We camped after doing the Fifth Canyon. You could smell the sulphur springs when we went through it. It was like rotten eggs. We camped at Ganyan Creek.

We paddled all day to the mouth to the Mountain River. We could hear the Sans Sault Rapids. We saw 2 sandhill cranes at the mouth. I put my foot into the Mackenzie River and my Dad took a picture (above). It was a long day. We ate and knew we wouldn't get pick-up until 10 o'clock the next night. We woke up and it was raining. We played cards, checkers and Connect 4 to pass the time. My Dad was not sure if the plane could pick us up. We packed up everything except for the tent. The weather got worse, but sure enough, the plane from North Wright was on time. We packed up, loaded the plane and flew back to Norman Wells. It was over. I couldn't wait to have a shower and eat in a restaurant.





SUMMER PACKET *continued*



lakes, portaged watersheds, and descended the lengths of wild rivers. He took a solo trip down the Mara-Burnside Rivers to the Bathurst Inlet of the Arctic Ocean at 65 years of age. He founded the South Dakota Canoe Association in 1981 and served as its President for many years.

Dick did not wish funeral services. His body is being laid to rest in the Black Hills National Cemetery. Friends will gather at the annual conference of the South Dakota Canoe Association this coming January 30th 2010 to remember him. Memorial donations can be made to: Sioux Council BSA, Camp Scholarship Fund, 800 N. West Avenue, Sioux Falls, SD 57104.

Longtime subscriber Greg Shute from the Chewonki Foundation in Maine writes:

Just reading through the latest *Che-Mun* and wanted to make sure you had my e-mail address for future on-line issues.

I was interested to see mention of polar bears climbing cliffs to get at bird nests. Two years ago as we were traveling through Sunday Run north of Nain we watched a polar bear scale an incredibly steep cliff. We were on our way back to Nain after a trip to Hebron.

Later in the day we were turned back because of strong winds and found a protected anchorage near Sunday Run for the night. The next morning the bear was even higher up the cliff where it had spent the night. Last summer we had an unfortunate polar bear encounter in the North Arm of Saglek fjord. We had chartered a plane from Kuujuaq to Saglek and then boarded a converted

longliner that transported us to the North Arm. We spent the night on board the boat and the next morning our party was shuttled to shore where we were to set up a base camp from which we would hike for the next week. Within 20 minutes of being on shore a bear was seen in the water. Within a few minutes the bear was in our camp. We were in the process of setting up an electric bear fence but it had not yet been activated.

We had an Inuit Guide/Bear Monitor with the group, this is now a requirement to travel near the coast in the Torngat National Park. As the bear came after us John, our monitor, calmly took aim and shot. His rifle jammed. The bear continued after our group.



I had time to shoot two hand held flares which did not deter the bear. After each shot John had to take his cleaning brush and manually jack the jammed shell out of the chamber of his rifle. A few harrowing minutes later the bear was dead. Attached are a few photo's. She was a very underweight female. Parks Canada did an autopsy and found nothing in her stomach.

I'll be returning to Saglek again in August with a group. We will spend a night at the Parks Canada Tent camp there and then board the *Robert Bradford* and travel north to Ramah and Nachvak. We will spend

nights on the boat and days hiking. Can't wait! From one of your loyal readers thanks for keeping *Che-Mun* alive. I look forward to receiving future on-line issues.

Jack Gregg from York, Maine is one of a few subscribers who has not entered the computer age and will be glad to hear of the new printed option.

Tim Farr's letter, which you ran in Outfit 140, expressed my thoughts far better than I could have. While I understand the economic advantages of publishing *Che-Mun* online, I shall lament the termination of the hard copy journal.

I don't have a computer and have no plan to change that. I have books galore and magazines galore, including complete rungs of *Nastawgan* and *Wooden Canoe*, 44 years of *The Beaver*, a complete run of *Up Here*, *Che-Mun* from Outfit 38 on and a lot more other stuff.

I like hard copy. I also prefer black and white photographs unless truly good photographers take the colour shots. Almost all amateur photography is informational, not artistic, and B&W is the choice for that.

I hope you can find a way to continue a hard copy edition of *Che-Mun*. Like Tim Farr, I would happily pay a premium rate for a hard copy *Che-Mun*. It is a bargain and would remain so at a considerably high price.

But I won't continue my subscription if the journals is available only in electronic form. I hope you can find a way to accommodate the inflexible curmedgeons among you readership - like me. Please let me know if you do!

And another Yankee, Kully Minderman from Dublin Ohio added his thoughts.

Here is my subscription renewal. Very glad you're continuing the *Che-Mun* tradition.

The subscriber who wrote about your imminent conversion to electronic journal nailed my sentiments on the head . . . I will continue my subscription in whatever format you need to survive but I will miss having a print copy to put on my bedside table or in the bathroom, two of my favourite reading haunts, if it comes to that.



CANOE SWORTHY *continued*

Landry in 2001, to link 13 of Nunavik's 14 communities to Quebec's main electrical grid.

This would reduce Nunavik's dependence on dirty, expensive diesel fuel and also help the region get a high-speed fibre optic internet line — as well as a 2,500-km road. The cost of this project would be between \$1 and 1.5 billion, *Le Soleil's* sources said.

But there would be an environmental price to pay, because the expanded grid would be fed by new hydro-electric projects on the Great Whale River.

This project, advanced by the government of Robert Bourassa in the early 1990s, met with stiff opposition from environmental groups and was shelved in 1994.

The preliminary report also recommends hydro-electric projects on the Payne and Leaf rivers, which empty into Ungava Bay. According to a story in *Le Soleil*, the report cites climate change studies by the Ouranos climate change think-tank, which say warmer temperatures may melt permafrost but could also build up water supplies in reservoirs, which could then be transformed into hydro power.

The report also mentions the idea of constructing wind power farms near the large reservoirs feeding hydro-electric projects.

But Quebec doesn't plan to relaunch the Great Whale project, Nathalie Normandeau, the minister responsible for the Plan Nord told *Le Soleil*. Normandeau said the final version of 13 preliminary documents for the northern development plan won't be finalized until autumn, with the final plan slated for release in November.

It took Parks Canada archaeologists 15 minutes to locate HMS Investigator, the Franklin expedition search vessel abandoned in 1853 in the ice of Mercy Bay off Banks Island. What's remarkable is it took them even that long. Unlike HMS Erebus and HMS Terror, the lost ships of the 1845-48 British Arctic Expedition commanded by Sir John Franklin, there is little mystery associated with the *Investigator*.

Marc-André Bernier, Parks Canada's head of underwater archaeology, declared of the find, "This is definitely of the utmost importance." Environment Minister Jim Prentice was on site to give official Government of Canada sanction for the stated importance, and to deliver additional superlatives. Certainly the opportunity to glimpse the hull of the sunken discovery vessel is exciting, especially since the crew of *Investigator* was arguably the first to complete the Northwest Passage. However, it is hard to see that, by confirming the wreck is where everyone thought it would be, we will add to our understanding of the fate of *Investigator*, or of exploration history more generally.

The *Investigator's* crew, with a couple of exceptions, survived, and the ship's captain, Robert McClure, produced an official account. Ship surgeon Alexander Armstrong also published an unofficial account, Personal narrative of the discovery of the northwest passage, and later produced an important medical study based on his Arctic travels. Still others recounted their experiences in published narratives. There is, in other words, a fairly exhaustive historical record associated with *Investigator*.

Environmentalists are reacting with dismay to a Nunavut government decision to no longer back attempts to list polar bears as threatened.

Dan Shewchuk, Nunavut's environment minister, says the ter-

ritory's polar bear population is healthy, with the exception of a couple of populations, and action is being taken to help those.

"We live in polar bear country. We understand the polar bears, and we do actually think our polar bear population is very, very healthy," Shewchuk said in justifying the reversal.

But the group that co-ordinates scientists who study polar bears around the world says the government of Nunavut is wrong to reverse its position on the listing of polar bears under Canada's Species at Risk Act.

Shewchuk's comments include "mis-statements which warranted direct rebuttal and clarification," said Andrew Derocher of the Polar Bear Study Group of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Polar bears should be listed as "threatened" because of the danger posed by climate change and the resulting decline of sea ice, Derocher said.

Part of the Nunavut government's position is that polar bears can and have adapted to changes in climate in the past, according to Inuit traditional knowledge and modern science. But Derocher says that's not so, and that "the long-term situation for polar bears is extremely dire."

An Arctic community that has seen its fire hall sink and roads buckle in the melting permafrost is now shifting future building projects away from town. The effect of vanishing permafrost -- soil normally frozen year round -- is now being felt across Canada's North, and the Quebec village of Salluit at the tip of Quebec is just one of many Arctic towns trying to adapt to an increasingly warmer climate.

Rising temperatures are being blamed for natural disturbances in the North, such as the rapidly eroding coastline of Tuktoyaktuk, N.W.T., and unprecedented floods that knocked out two bridges in Pangnirtung, Nunavut.

Salluit even considered relocating the whole town. One of Quebec's northernmost communities, Salluit saw its local fire station sink into the softening ground a year after it opened.

Across town, paved roads have crumpled, foundations of buildings have cracked and now even summertime grave-digging isn't what it used to be. A few years ago, it took considerable effort just to dig a foot into what was once ice-solid earth, says one resident.

Quebec Premier Jean Charest is set to formally announce the creation of Tursujuq, the new Quebec park located between Umiujaq and Kuujuaapik.

But the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society says the proposed boundaries of Tursujuq will not adequately protect the tiny population of freshwater seals that live in and around the park's boundaries.

Quebec should designate this species as threatened so that it protects the seals' habitat and, at the same time, enlarge Tursujuq's borders, says the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society in its review of Canadian wilderness parks, released a week before Canada's July 17 Parks Day and entitled "How is wildlife faring in Canada's parks."

Tursujuq covers an area of more than 15,500 square kilometres, which means it will become the largest park in eastern Canada.

But Tursujuq still does not include the majority of the seals' habitat because it excludes the watershed of lakes and smaller rivers which feed into the Nastapoka River, the group's review said.



Photo: Michael Peake

There are few more enticing shots than a Twin Otter at the head of a majestic northern river. Here, at the junction of the Keele and Natla rivers sits North-Wright's classic 1963 Twin about to unload one group of paddlers for the Keele and picking up most of the crew that just came down the Natla River as two Canoe North Adventure trips dovetailed on the river.

Che-Mun
Box 548, Station 0
Toronto, ON Canada M4A 2P1
E: che-mun@rogers.com
T: 416.221.3225

Che-Mun
Founded in 1973 by Nick Nickels
RATES: \$25 per year electronic \$40 printed
US orders in US dollars
Published by the Hide-Away Canoe Club

Che-Mun
The Journal of Canadian Wilderness Canoeing
Please visit our Web Site:
www.ottertooth.com/che-mun
Michael Peake, Publisher.