



WINTER 2002

THE JOURNAL OF CANADIAN WILDERNESS CANOEING

OUTFIT 107



photo: Brooke Yemans

THE MEN OF MEADOWBANK -- Mike Wolfe, stern, and Luke Manager-Lynch take a run on the Meadowbank River enroute to the Back. The Arctic Canoe Expedition paddled 85 days from Southend, Sask to the Chantrey Inlet raising US\$ 43,000 for Camp Manitou-wish in Wisconsin. They tell Che-Mun about the height-of-land crossing from the Thelon to the Back which proved more intricate than they had planned.

Second left off the Thelon
Arctic Canoe Expedition

Page 6

Saglek: A cold place for a
Cold War

Page 9 & 12



Winter Web Packet

A great source of the fun and interest in publishing CHE-MUN lies in the letters people write. But very few people have been writing lately so we'll devote this issue of The Packet to the area where people seem to be spending much of that letter-writing time - the World Wide Web.

TAKE A BITE OF OTTERTOOTH

www.ottertooth.com

There has never been a better communication and information system than the Internet. It's a great way for people of similar interests to stay in touch.

One such site is Ottertooth which is run by Brian Back who has strong links to the environmental movement and to the classic tripping Camp Keewaydin, which has paddled the Rupert River for decades. Brian keeps a very close watch on numerous environmental issues with updates as they become available.

Besides the Rupert issue which we cover on page four, here are some headlines from the current Ottertooth.

ISHPATINA ADVENTURE TO ONTARIO'S ROOFTOP

Canoeing is the most obvious way to get to Ishpatina. Ken Takabe, on his quest to scale Canada's high points, went overland. Here's an account of his bumpy journey to Ontario's highest point.

www.ottertooth.com/Temagami/Trips/ishpatina.htm

Ken is looking for partners to accompany him as he sets out to scale the rest of Canada's provincial and territorial high points. Check out his web site at www.takabe.ca/vertical/canada.htm.

RED SQUIRREL ROAD RE-OPENED

Over the past months crews have been quietly clearing the Red Squirrel Road in Temagami. MNR permitted the crews from Liskeard Lumber to open the road, in the expectation that the company will get approval to log next year.

Over 340 people were arrested on the Red Squirrel in 1989 while blocking construction crews. The road was never used for logging in the face of public opposition and was eventually abandoned. Some Queen's Park insiders at the time believed the whole Temagami battle helped to contribute to Ontario Premier David Peterson's election loss the following year. He was replaced by Bob Rae who had been arrested on the blockades.

STORY AND MAPS:

www.ottertooth.com/Temagami/News/rsr1.htm

PINETREE PEOPLE GATHER HERE

www.pinetreeline.org/homepage.html

We feature the Saglek North Warning station on Page 9. As I found during the Labrador Odyssey 2001 online canoe trip, when you make a mistake in talking about one of these Cold War relics, you hear about it from a lot of people who have a great interest in these unique facilities.

There is a variety of info available on the Internet about the Pinetree or DEWlines which were constructed in the 1950s to watch the skies for invaders over the pole.

MY CCR IS YOUR CCR

www.myccr.com

Canadian Canoe Routes is a pioneer in the world of cyberspace. Started in 1995 as Ontario

Canoe Routes by Richard Munn and run with wife Debbie now boasts canoe route info and discussion on paddling across Canada. It's greatest features are the discussion forms for all provinces and territories of Canada, though Ontario is by far the biggest section. But it also has resources info and route descriptions. As Richard says in his description - all this doesn't replace traditional sources - but rather compliments them.

MAINE-LY BECAUSE OF THE PEOPLE

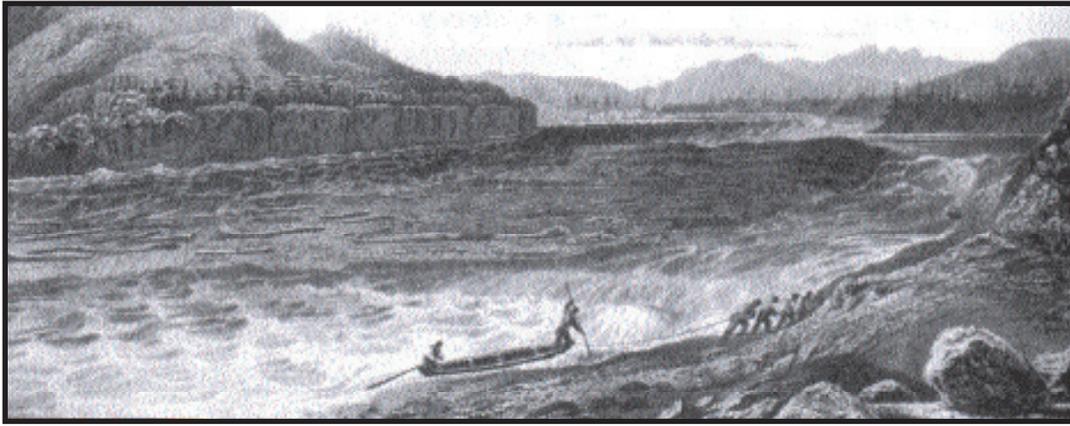
www.mainecanoesymposium.org

One of our favourite pastimes over many years has been the *Maine Canoe Symposium* held in early June each year. We missed two of the last three years but the HACC is back in force this year in what promises to be a great weekend. The Peake brothers and the Rev. Peter Scott will be presenting the *Labrador Odyssey* show on Friday night. And on Saturday, two legends present a classic tale. Jim Davidson and John Ruge, the authors of canoeing classics, *Great Heart* and *Complete Wilderness Paddler*, will speak on the Hubbard and Wallace trips that make up the wonderful tale they told so beautifully in *Great Heart*.

Those two shows are a small part of a full package that starts Friday evening June 7 and wraps up early Sunday June 9.

Their Web site is brand new and gives a great breakdown of what will be happening - and importantly - what has happened with regularity since 1986. One great bonus of the weekend is the setting. Camp Winona, is a classic Maine North Woods camp with ageing wooden buildings under the towering pines on the shores of Moose Pond.

Hop to see you there!



Capt. John Franklin's men, depicted in highly dramatic detail in the 1820s, on what was known as the Great River. Franklin urged it be named after the first man to canoe down it, Alexander Mackenzie. The engraving is one of the many superb illustrations in *First Crossing*, a new book on Mackenzie's exploits. It is reviewed on Page 5.

guard hairs, de-hairing equipment had to be built to separate the long hairs from the very fine under fur.

A weaver in PEI who has worked with raw qiviut, says it takes an experienced spinner with a delicate touch to use the fibre. "It is also expensive to buy at \$40 for four ounces for unspun fibre, which barely is enough to weave a scarf," she says. "But it is worth every penny."

Another remnant of Nunavut's warmer past, of a time when forests covered the Far North, has been uncovered on Bylot Island near Pond Inlet.

Some two million years ago, birch and spruce trees flourished on what is now a barren plateau, located not far from a valley filled with towering sandstone formations called hoodoos.

Last summer, a young researcher from Université Laval in Quebec City was walking by the river that runs through this valley and saw a branch sticking out of the melting snow.

The wood had apparently washed down from a nearby slope. Later, Fortier walked up the slope and found several other small pieces of wood

Canoesworthy

on the hillside.

But he couldn't pursue the trail. His camp was on the other side of the river, which, because of the spring melt, soon became impassable

except by helicopter. He was forced to wait for three weeks before a helicopter became available.

Touring over the terrain, Fortier and his companions found more pieces of wood and, finally, came on the apparent source on a windswept plateau, 400 metres high. After digging down through a layer of sediment, they uncovered another layer of well-preserved vegetable matter, or peat, comprised of plants, leaves and wood.

The forest lies inside Sirmiliq National Park, and Parks Canada has been advised of the new discovery within the park's borders

It's not the only forest in Nunavut where ancient trees and plants are petrified, that is, turned to stone, or mummified. Forests grew in the high latitudes from about 45 million years ago to approximately two million years ago when a colder, glacial period started.

➔ *Continued on Page 10*

From the Editor

As this issue goes to press we are deeply saddened with the passing of Peter Gzowski. The noted Canadian journalist, who hosted the landmark CBC radio program *Morningside* from 1982-1997.

Gzowski was Canada's Maple tree and we listeners, his leaves. Those first few notes of the iconic *Morningside* theme unlocked your brain and ushered in the real Canada to Canadians and the rest of the world lucky enough to listen. He loved Canada's north and canoeing as no other national source before or since. I vividly recall my first of four visits with him and Eric Morse, discussing the naming of his river, his wonderful

flow of conversation and the ability to really listen and ask the right questions.

I was always amused by American paddlers, who discovered *Morningside*, they were in awe of such a popular and real program—and all that with no commercials.

Another piece of our present has crumbled into the past as time rolls relentlessly forward. Thank you, Peter, for bringing Canada to Canadians. We needed it.

In this Outfit we feature an impressive canoe trip by a group of young American paddlers. They went about as far as they could go in one northern summer. It was interesting to note they had planned to follow the route our group took north of the Thelon in 1985 enroute to our naming of the Morse River. They thought we had taken the river at the west end of Beverly Lake

on the Thelon. We had looked at that river but determined there was probably no water so we took a small stream further west which soon evolved into a chain of lakes and many portages that led to the height-of-land.

Che-Mun will also continue to follow the latest with the Crees of Northern Quebec and their new deal with the province to harness the Rupert River for development. This is a truly interesting story that is still playing out. It marks a watershed in the management of resource development and could be the signal of the way things will be. That means - expect a surge of northern development in the upcoming years, and that's bad news for wilderness paddlers.

Michael Peake

Quebec Crees open the resource door

By BRIAN BACK

The Crees have fought with persistence and cunning for 12 years to defend the Great Whale River against one of North America's most environmentally corrupt governments. Their success created an image of an invincible defender of James Bay. Yet the Crees signed a \$3.6 billion deal with Quebec to divert the Rupert River and expand flooding of their land. What happened to the Great Northern Hope?

One day in 1971, the bulldozers entered Cree territory without notice, and when the Crees objected they were not even offered compensation. Only after the Crees launched legal action, did Quebec offer any. But to add to the tragedy, the Crees had to extinguish their rights to the land to get it. As construction continued unabated, it was obvious they had to take what was offered.

In 1975 they signed the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA). It permitted damming of the La Grande River and diversions of the Eastmain, Caniapiscou and Sakami Rivers into it. The agreement also covered two more massive projects: the Great Whale and Nottaway-Broadback-Rupert (NBR).

Fifteen years later, faced with the social and cultural impacts of the relentless loss of more land, their traditional way of life and mercury poisoning, all a result of the La Grande hydro-electric project, the Cree chose to fight the Great Whale. They succeeded in making their cause an international issue and cost Hydro-Quebec billions in lost power contracts to the United States. The project was postponed.

After Great Whale there was no pause in the onslaught of their land and their health. Clearcutting pushed north, wiping out traplines and hopes for their own economic development of the area. The water around Ouje-Bougoumou First Nation was poisoned by mine runoff. Quebec reneged on many provisions of the original agreement and held up payments. They fought back by appealing to the public, to international bodies, and to the courts. They sank into perpetual legal hell with outstanding lawsuits claiming over \$3 billion in 2001.

Meanwhile their population has exploded to over 13,000 and unemployment rages. They need money for more homes, more schools and jobs. Kids wander the streets in gangs, and alcohol and drugs take their toll. A smaller and smaller percentage of their people work, or

even travel, on the land. Their way of life has changed forever.

Now, Quebec says it wants to begin building dams again. But it had been hurt badly by the Crees in the last decade. It needs the Crees onside. The province wants to divert the Rupert River into the La Grande system, and dam and flood the upper Eastmain. In this new deal the Crees are offered money already promised, additional money, some control over logging, and the NBR project is cancelled.

The upper Rupert River will be diverted into the Eastmain and a dam and two new reservoirs will be constructed. The Cree give up their lawsuits. So what has been lost environmentally? Well, the logging

was going on without restraint. Now there will be some. The Eastmain dam and reservoir would likely have gone ahead without Cree opposition as the river had been considered lost after the lower section had been diverted in 1979. The Crees had no more legal leverage, having lost a lawsuit in the early 1990s.

The Rupert was part of the original NBR. That project would have flooded 8,000 square kilometers and destroyed three rivers, including the entire Rupert. In this deal only the upper Rupert is impacted by diversion and just 975 square kilometers flooded.

If you accept that the entire three-stage James Bay Project was inevitable,

then this is an environmental success. This is a massive reduction of the NBR. Maybe not perfect, but still huge. You could argue that the Crees could have used the same tactics they used so successfully against the Great Whale Project. But that was ten years ago. The Crees have more people and more problems. They have drifted away from the land. They are poorer today in financial resources and fighting battles is expensive. Maybe they are battle fatigued too. How successful could they be?

Maybe they wonder where we were the last ten years. Would we have given them the support they needed next time? And who would foot the bill? Maybe it was our betrayal.

This article appeared in the Ottertooth.com Web site which keeps tabs on resource development in northern Quebec and Ontario especially in regard to Hydro-Quebec and the northern Quebec Crees. Brian Back lives in Wisconsin where he keeps a keen eye on the North.



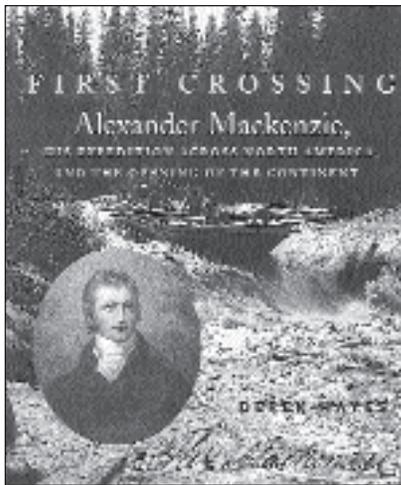
COUNT YOUR FINGERS -- It was all smiles when Quebec Premier Landry and Crees Chief Ted Moses shook on the deal in Quebec City on October 23.

First Crossing

**By Derek Hayes
Douglas & McIntyre
Vancouver, 320pp \$50
ISBN: 1-55054-866-2**

Reviewed by Michael Peake.

Alexander Mackenzie continues to bask in the adoring glow of public awareness 200 years after his deed have passed. Unlike his contemporary, David Thompson, who actually



contributed even more to the geographic history of Canada, Mackenzie and his exploits are the subject of books, trips and commemoratives.

And the reason for the is told in the title of *First Crossing*. Doing something well is noble and good but doing it first is history and Mackenzie was first. He was 12 years ahead of the vaunted American explorers Lewis & Clark to the Pacific Ocean in 1793. Four years earlier he followed the river that now bears his name to the Arctic Ocean.

This book is a very handsome volume with superb photos and maps and obviously well-researched. It looks at Mackenzie from all aspects including book reviews of his original journals and even a look at a pirated version of the original!

There were a couple of small mistakes like adding a second “u” to Iqaluit and misspelling the name of Medard du Chouart (not Chouant)

better known as Radisson’s partner Groseilliers.

The cover might be surprising since it shows a photo of a scow running a rapids - Mackenzie took canoes *before* the days of photography. The cover shot was taken many years later along the Slave River which Mackenzie followed north.

But above all, *First Crossing* is a interesting popular history of one of Canada’s greatest explorers. A very complete look supported by great artwork.

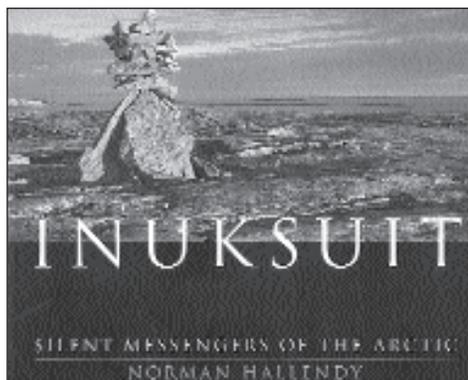
Inuksuit

Silent Messengers of the Arctic

**By Douglas Hallendy
Douglas & McIntyre/ U of
Washington Press
Vancouver, 128pp. 2001 US\$29.95
ISBN: 0-295-98172-5**

It’s nice to see the title of this book. Ever since Arctic veteran David Pelly told me that the plural of inukshuk was inuksuit, I have used it from time to time and usually corrected afterwards. Well, now it’s official with the publication of *Inuksuit*.

The hardcover version came out a year earlier but this paperback is a very handsome volume. Author David Hallendy examines the various



types of inuksuit researched though his many years in the north and the important part these stone sentinels play in the life of the Inuit. The history and meanings of inuksuit are long

and complex—far more than just a pile of stones. Their simple construction and amazing locations mean an inukshuk is a powerful symbol in a picturesque setting. The author’s lovely photos also serve the interesting text very well.

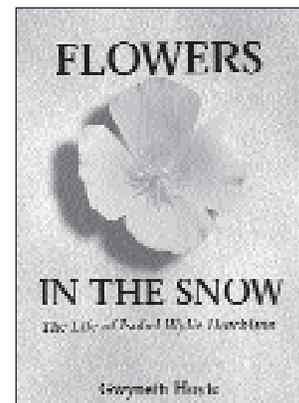
Flowers in the Snow

**By Gwyneth Hoyle
University of Nebraska Press
304 pages, May 2001
ISBN: 0-8032-2403-6**

Reviewed by Margaret McNair Peake

Isobel Hutchison was a remarkable woman, one of the lesser known northern travellers who broke the rules - and someone you’ve probably never heard of.

As a botanist (unofficial of course) for the Royal Edinburgh Society she travelled to



Greenland, the Arctic and the Aleutian Islands. She was one of the first white people to board the *Baychimo* after it became a ghost ship, adrift in the Arctic.

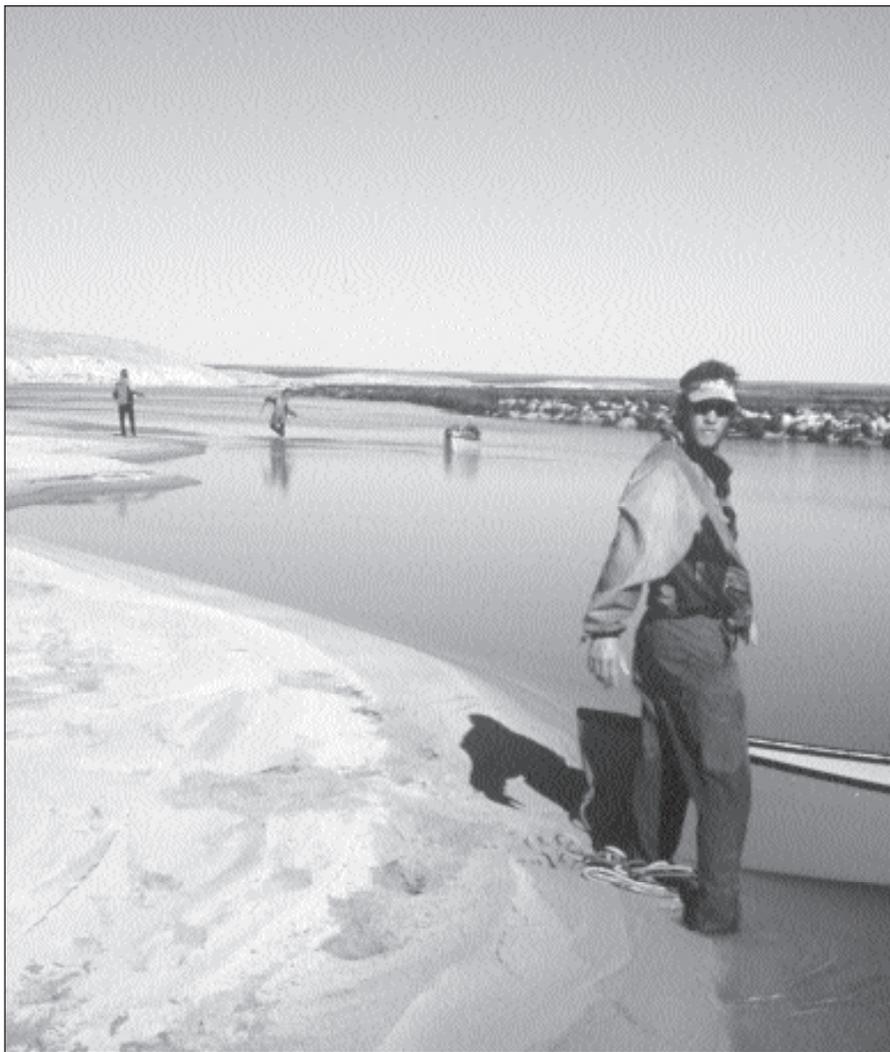
Isobel catalogued

thousands of flowers during her travels. Her contemporaries included Amelia Earhart and Isak Dinesen. She wrote several books, was published in *National Geographic* and, in an era before TV and radio, she made a living speaking and writing about the north and gave more than 500 lectures in her lifetime.

In *Flowers in the Snow*, Gwyneth Hoyle chronicles Hutchison’s achievements having spent years researching every facet of this remarkable woman’s life and allowing her worthy tale to some to light.

Hoyle is a regular *Che-Mun* contributor and co-author of the book *Canoeing North Into the Unknown*.

Crossing North of Thelon



WHAT RIVER? -- Author Luke Manger-Lynch and party work up the almost non-existent waters of the Tibielik River north of the Thelon at Beverley Lake.

We asked four young American members of the Arctic Canoe Expedition of 2001 to tell of their experiences on that long trip and especially of the toughest part of the trip—crossing to the Back River from the Thelon.

By LUKE MANGER-LYNCH

Photos by Brook Yeomans

In 1962, Eric Morse endured nine windy days without being able to paddle a single stroke on Aberdeen Lake. We had heard many similar tales, and while planning our three month, south-to-north expedition, we knew forces beyond our control would dictate our existence. Wind,

ice, and water levels would be our guide. It was humbling and unknown; it was what we wanted.

The four of us began planning the trip with a few simple ideas. Start as far south as possible and make it to the Arctic Ocean in one season. Paddle a variety of waterways. Do most of our homework, but due to a tight budget and a desire for an old-school adventure, rely primarily on 1:250,000 scale maps. (Though I imagine incorrectly ordering 1:50,000 maps at last minute wasn't technically part of the plan).

Eventually, we formulated a strategy involving 14 separate rivers, beginning at Southend on Reindeer Lake in Northern Saskatchewan, heading up the Swan and Blondeau Rivers, across Wollaston Lake, down the Fond du Lac, up the Chipman, and on and on, eventually finding our way to the Elk River, a tributary to the Thelon. From there, we hoped to ascend the Tibielik River, a route the Peake brothers pioneered in 1985, and make our final watershed crossing to the Morse River. (A tributary of the Back River, it was named for Eric Morse by the Peake brothers and company on their 1985 namesake expedition.) Our plan was to then take the Back to the Ocean, and fly out of the small town of Gjoa Haven on King William Island.

In the end, several map and p-cord sessions and numerous daily average debates later, we thought we could do it in about 90 days. Uncannily, we reached the Thelon and our sole resupply, 500 lbs. of food in two steel drums and 40 lbs. of fuel flown in from Yellowknife, on day 45. We had begun in late May, skirting ice on Reindeer Lake, veering off the main body of the lake via a "sneak" route some Saskatchewan locals recommended (I don't think they realized the mode and style in which we were traveling) only to catch up with it again on Wollaston, where favorable winds swept lingering pack ice out of the way the day before we

sought passage.

After eight serene weeks in the Hudson Bay watershed, we found ourselves on Beverley Lake, eager to dip our paddles in waters heading to the Arctic. Having enjoyed an eventful ride down the Thelon (for us, at that water level, portaging the Canyon would have been a better, safer idea), we were eager to embark on the final leg of our journey. Though we met many wonderful fellow canoeists, including old and new friends, on the majestically beautiful Thelon, we longed to regain our senses of solitude and exploration. Also, having worked our way up

Expeditions

shore, we ran almost everything. Finally, on the 78th day of our adventure, we reached the Back River. A solid rim of caribou hair three vertical feet above the river's bank confirmed that we were paddling late season, in an exceptionally low-water year.

The weather continued to worsen. The wind, with an increased bite only Arctic ice packs could create, began blowing steadily, and almost exclusively, from the Northwest. We wore two pairs of heavy socks under our rubber boots, rubber rain bibs, and several wool shirts most every day. We did jumping jacks and ran about on shore and shook out our hands. Despite gloves, three of us suffered swollen and blistering hands from exposure to wind and cold. The blackflies gone, for once we were free to leave our skin exposed, and it was now too cold to do so.

With extensive scouting and creative sneaks, we ran every set of whitewater on the lower Back our main fear being blown off course in whitewater. Tired of being windbound, we chose to paddle in conditions that earlier would have sidelined us. On a few occasions, a sustained, and exhausting "wind ferry" was our only option.

On the 83rd day, inching our way across the west shore of Franklin Lake under cold, clear conditions, the snow geese began their migration south. At the beginning of our trip, we had watched the Canada Geese migrate past us heading north. Winter was clearly on its way, and I felt it was about time for us to do the same.

The next day we reached the "countdown rapids", where Franklin Lake slides to sea level in a few massive, wide drops, pausing briefly at the abandoned Chantrey Inlet Fish Camp for the last Lake-Trout-a-

cast fishing. Below the fish camp, the Back River Delta opens into an enormous expanse of sand flats that

stretch for miles. Victoria Headland, on the east bank, is the only prominent land feature. The west bank, by contrast, is dry land until about five miles north of the confluence of the Hayes River, where open expanses of sand extend for quite a distance. Tides made for complicated navigation, and finding fresh water became an ordeal.

We continued on for a couple days under strong winds, but the cumulative affects were taking their toll. We had made it to the Ocean, and, a few large bags of potato pearls aside, were running out of food. Though we had entertained somewhat naive and ambitious thoughts of paddling all the way to Gjoa Haven, we were not in a position to do so. During a windstorm on the 86th day, we finally and somewhat reluctantly laid down our paddles for good. We made camp at one of the few hospitable spots we found along the west bank of the river (at what we later would learn is an Inuit spring fishing camp) and called our contact in Gjoa for our boat pick-up.

Suddenly, with the end game in sight, returning to the front country didn't seem so appealing. We waited, ate the rest of our food and took a dip in the Ocean. Around midnight a day and a half later, Colin and Saul, with gentle smiles and bright red survival suits, picked us up in their 22-foot aluminum "Snow Walker". They were the first people we'd seen since the chopper pilot on the Thelon three weeks before.

Though it is only about 150 miles as the crow flies from the Back River mouth to Gjoa Haven, we spent the next three days motoring north.

One canoe lashed across the bow, the other in tow (Saul sometimes tows whales he kills), and all six of us and all of our gear wedged uncomfortably in the small boat, it was a slow and comical process. In a small, protected cove somewhere along Adelaide Peninsula, we spent one of the best days of the trip waiting out the wind with some Inuit families, eating bannock and caribou stew and learning a little about their history and culture. We set nets for Arctic Char, carved soapstone and drank cup after cup of the ubiquitous Red Rose tea.

In a harrowing late night run, crashing through irregular, rolling swells with no lights or navigational aids, Saul brought us to Gjoa Haven. Still freezing from the ride and uncertain as to what to do next, we watched as the town's mayor, a surprisingly urbane-looking fellow in a hip, black leather jacket whizzed up to the beach on his four-wheeler to welcome us. A family then invited us to stay in their home, and we slowly, surreally began the long process of re-entry.

In addition to being a great adventure, Sam Moulton, Luke Manger-Lynch, Brook Yeomans, and Mike Wolfe raised US\$46,000 to send kids to Camp Manito-wish YMCA, a canoe tripping camp in Northern Wisconsin, where they all learned to love canoeing.

A PACK OF ACES -- The ACE party left to right; Manger-Lynch, Mike Wolfe, Brook Yeomans and Sam Moulton along the Meadowbank River south of the Back.

Expeditions

six different stretches of river, we were pining for the psychological edge that downriver travel offers. We were hopeful that the Tibielik River would provide passage there, and knew at least one other group the Peake expedition had made the journey.

Heading northeast from the peninsula that divides the two main sections of Beverly, we made five portages across Peninsula to reach the Tibielik. A day of solid dragging upstream followed, often sinking up to our knees in soft sand, yielded but six miles on the sinewy remains of the sandy Tibielik. A tributary entering from the west provided most of the little water left, and we realized further dragging was futile. If we could walk in a straight line, we faced at least 14 miles of overland travel through tussock and rock garden to reach the headwaters of the Morse River, which, of course, we had no reason to believe had any water either.

Having paddled, portaged, and dragged our way over 1,000 miles, it didn't seem possible that low water and a mere 14 miles of land could halt us. But we were still carrying at least 450 pounds of food, our legs had grown weak, and we had researched other, albeit less desirable routes to the Back. Interrupting my semi-rational, obdurate pleas to simply "go for it", Brook reminded me that "we are on a paddling trip, not a portaging trip." We pored over the maps. At best, because we were still triple-backing on every portage, we were looking at a minimum of 70 miles of walking. And to make matters more difficult, one of us had a potentially trip-ending muscle tear that prohibited the carrying of our heavy packs and canoes.

In the end, just barely resisting our innate, almost-logic-overriding machismo, we turned around. We knew that a few years ago, a friend of ours, after a good, long run down the Back, had gone up the Meadowbank, over land, and then down an unnamed river that dumped her and the five young women she was guiding on the Thelon, about 40 miles upstream of Baker Lake.

Though it would add about 100 miles to the expedition, our Plan B was to simply reverse their route (it they went up it, we could go down it rationale). The third option, a portage-intensive route via Deep Rose Lake we knew even less about, was quickly ruled out.

It was not an easy decision. The allure of the mighty Back had drawn us north from the get-go, propelling us up river and over land for two months, and now we would miss most of it in exchange for unnerving big lake travel and an uncertain river.

Back we went though. Two portages, some more lining and falling down, and a bit of paddling undid our previous day and a half of work. And after retracing our steps on the five initial portages, we returned to the Thelon River System. The big behemoths, Beverly, Aberdeen, and Schultz Lakes, presented the possibility of long waits for the wind, a fate we had hoped to avoid. As we paddled in fits and starts along the north shore, the 200-mile-a-week averages would become a thing of the past. August's raging winds made us bide our time, and on a good day we could tiptoe 30 miles across the belly of the sleeping giants. Several times, we never broke camp for 48 hours.

We sought refuge beneath Pegetauz Hill and a series of other substantial hills that divide the Arctic and Hudson Bay watersheds, waking at ungodly hours of the morning to find calm, enjoying the

syncopated rhythm of paddling when you can. Our days on the big lakes blended together reading, chess-playing, eating lake trout, lots of sleeping and caribou, wolf and musk oxen watching. Talking about our route, friends and family; fixing gear, doing food inventory, and watching the gregarious Harris's sparrows and the secretive Lapland Longspur. Doing headstands in the wind, doing nothing. There's a trick to enjoying being windbound I've found it helps me to put all my clothes on, climb the tallest hill, face into the wind, and overlook the vast landscape and just be thankful.

Eight long days after leaving the Tibielik, we had crossed all three. A few miles below Alekethad Rapid, we reached our Plan B; a trickle of water running between a rock-choked creek bed. Though we weren't expecting much, this was almost nothing. A fast 35 miles from Baker Lake the Thelon is really honking here and I couldn't help but dream of a steak dinner, a phone, and a shower.

I quickly traded in civilized fantasies as we once again shouldered our beloved Dagger Ventures and 100-pound packs and headed north across the dry, wide-open tundra. Almost immediately, during the first leg of our first portage, a curious helicopter pilot stopped to chat. Quite understandably, he was concerned that we were heading away from the big river, the direct route to the only pocket of civilization for hundreds of miles. Through swarms of blackflies, we explained to him that, yes, we were crazy, but, strange as it may seem, we were also heading in our chosen direction.

Our route off the Thelon, a chain of small, sometimes connected lakes, was fairly straightforward. When we ran out of lake, we'd take the maps to the top of the nearest hill and plot our next move. Three days of mostly walking 13 portages, including a two-miler towards the Meadowbank River and I wrote, "it never fails to be hot and still for our big portage days and yesterday and today were no exception. We're all much more used to the blackflies so it's really just the heat and the weight that get to us."

Like many milestones in Barrenlands canoeing, the headwaters of the Meadowbank River was as inconspicuous and unremarkable as could be imagined. A few small ponds connected a foot-wide rivulet of water. But we knew where that water was going, and that made all the difference.

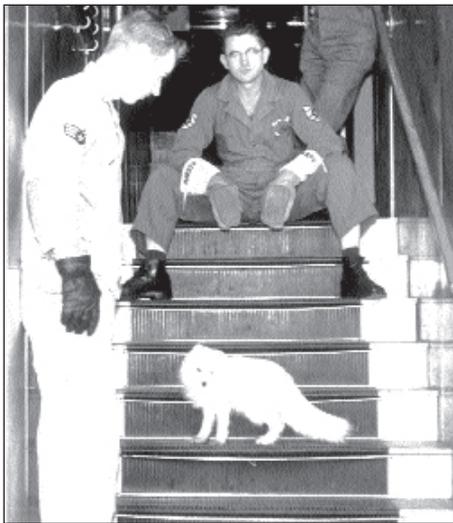
As we portaged and paddled our way down its headwaters, the Meadowbank gradually picked up water from its countless tributaries, and we steadily grew fond of her. Though the upper Meadowbank is primarily flatwater, below Nanau Lake she was cold, clear, and gentle. Large sandy eskers provide visual relief from the grey-green marbling of the tundra landscape. Numerous tent rings attested to the richness of the area, flowering Labrador tea and River Beauty alight the landscape, and fields of emerald moss dot the rocky banks. In this complex of rock and lichen, wolves watched us indifferently, defiantly, and snow geese, snow buntings and the occasional sandhill crane entertained us.

The last 60 miles of the Meadowbank, with several rollicking stretches of class II/III whitewater, is one of the most spectacular pieces of water any of us had ever paddled. With only minimal scouting from

Northern Fortress



The imposing cliff where Saglek station sits (above) a newer facility has been built but it looks similar; an arctic fox was a regular visitor to the personnel at the station; and a snowy view from the sheltered walkway that led to the main station from the sleeping areas.



Saglek Saga

Photos by John Mokren

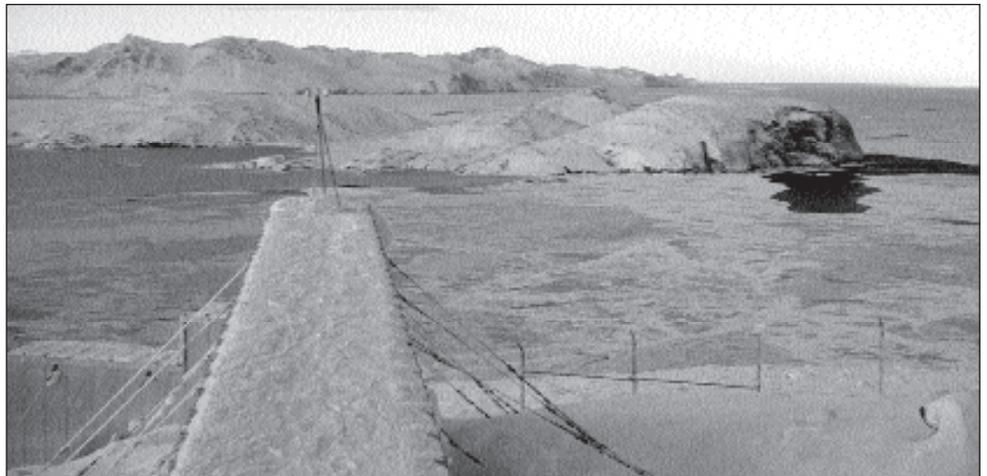
In 1955, John Mokren spent a year at the northern outpost of the Saglek. The secret facility, atop a 1500-foot cliff on the remote northern Labrador coast, was built as part of the Pinetree Line, one of 40 northern defence installations to guard against attack by the Soviet Union.

Finished in 1953 and manned by NORAD, Mokren

worked at Saglek for Bell Canada as a communications specialist. In the days before satellites, radio waves were bounced off the troposphere to other radio dishes. His job was to monitor and maintain the system. He recalls the times spent there with fondness and marvels at the forces of nature. "The buildings were built into cement blocks and held with guywires," said Mokren, now 74 and living in Burlington, Ontario. "Sometimes the wind would get up to 100 knots and blow chunks of ice off and into other buildings. Those winds were incredible."

Mokren was reminded of his time there after seeing the Labrador Odyssey trip last summer on the Canoe Web site (www.canoe.ca/labrador2001). He kindly sent us some of his 47-year-old Kodachrome slides for scanning, and they look perfect. These photos and others will appear in colour on the *Che-Mun* Web pages (www.canoe.ca/che-mun).

Saglek is currently an unmanned North Early Warning radar station and a weather facility that you can check on the Web at: www.wunderground.com/global/stations/71804.html



Canoeworthy

CANOESWORTHY Continued from Page 3

A proposed hydro line could link northern Manitoba and central Nunavut at Baker Lake.

Kevin O'Brien, the MLA for the Hudson Bay coastal town of Arviat, has lobbied for this power line in the legislature of the Northwest Territories and as a member of the Nunavut Assembly - so that electricity can come to the Kivalliq region of southern Nunavut in a more economic and environmentally friendly fashion than now.

Like most other places in the Arctic, communities in the Kivalliq region rely on expensive diesel generators for power.

Manitobans are already keen on pursuing this project, because Manitoba Hydro has spare hydroelectric power that it wants to sell.

Manitoba Hydro is convinced the power line, which would cost at least \$200 million, is feasible. Its construction wouldn't even require the additional cost of building a road, because the line would run over the most direct route, across rivers and lakes.

Bringing in a power line could make mining in the Kivalliq more attractive to companies. Money from the federal government could be the key in paying for the power line's construction. The line would also fulfill the federal government's promise to bring Internet access to the North, because it could also carry fibre-optic cable.

Right now, the Kivalliq uses about 4000 Kilowatt-hours of electricity a year, equivalent to about one-third of the amount of power that the city of Winnipeg uses.

The proposed power line could run from Gilliam, Manitoba to as far north as Baker Lake. The Nunavut Power Corporation wants Nunavut to look at alternative energy opportunities first and said the pre-feasibility study done by Manitoba Hydro and NWT Power Corporation didn't answer many basic facts about alternative energy sources like wind, hydro and solar generation.

A November sale in Toronto saw eager art collectors spent a record \$1.2 million, annual sale of Inuit art at Waddington's auction house.

More than 300 collectors and dealers crowded into room, making bids on over 700 art works and artifacts. Waddington's, says the record-breaking sale shows that prices for Inuit art are finally reaching the levels they deserve.

"It is going to be hard for art institutions and the general public to ignore Inuit art now, its place in the Canadian market, and how it is positioned in relation to other Canadian art forms like paintings by the Group of Seven and Painters Eleven, artists who are usually considered the icons of Canadian art," a Waddington's spokesman said. "The Inuit artists have muscled their way in and I think they deserve it. It's great."

One bidder paid \$58,650 for copy of Kenojuk Ashevak's famed stone-cut print *The Enchanted Owl*, released in 1960 by the West Baffin Co-operative in Cape Dorset. Since it appeared on a 1970 Canadian

OUR BACK PAGES

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

Outfit 44	Bill Mason & the Dog R., Athabasca letter	stopped	
Outfit 45	Pipe River by Eric Morse, River flow chart	Outfit 80	Warburton Pike, Wabakimi Park, Merrick's True North
Outfit 46	Hudson Bay to Ungava, Stew Coffin report	Outfit 81	Arctic Land Exped, David Hanbury, Diamond development
Outfit 48	Freshwater Saga - Morse River memoirs, slide fest	Outfit 83	Jacobson's Caribou River, Canoescapes rev, Franklin's journal
Outfit 50	Royal couple canoe the Hanbury/Thelon	Outfit 84	1955 Moffatt Exped., Winisk R., John Rae's effigy & Cloak-boat
Outfit 53	Chubb Crater in Ungava, Hubbard & Wallace	Outfit 85	Rocky Defiled, Grey Owl movie, Bill Mason bio, Canoe Museum
Outfit 54	Povungnituk 88 - Ungava, Sleeping Island rev.	Outfit 86	PBS's Backcountry, E. Merrick's Labrador photos, Summerwrap
Outfit 55	Memories of Bill Mason, Twin Otter gone	Outfit 87	Outfit 87
Outfit 57	North American Canoe Symposium, book reviews	Outfit 88	Great Whale River, Elliott Merrick's last words, Paddling the Web
Outfit 58	Churchill River trip, The Lonely Land rev.	Outfit 89	George River preview, Merrick Memorial, Stew Coffin- George R. 1967
Outfit 59	Tyrrell brothers, Water & Sky, Alberta Pulp wars	Outfit 90	Rat River 1926, George River Online, Chestnut Canoe book rev.
Outfit 60	Via Rail, Missinaibi River, James Bay, HBC exit	Outfit 91	Across Canada paddle, Schwatka's Last Search rev., Arctic Unravalled
Outfit 61	Inside Hydro-Quebec's LG2, Aki on the Barrens, Grey Owl	Outfit 92	Danes on the Barrens, Ladies & the Rat review, Grey Owl movie
Outfit 63	Canoeing in the 1930s, Hydro-Quebec chairman	Outfit 93	Mason stamp news, Letdown on the Thelon, Real Bedard profile
Outfit 64	Rupert R. 1914, Keewaydin Guide, Fur Trade Canoe Routes	Outfit 94	Mason stamp unveiled, Great Whale River, Cdn Canoe Symposium
Outfit 65	Churchill River hydro, Robert Perkins, James Bay	Outfit 95	Lost art of Arthur Heming, Mackenzie & the Rockies, Barrows Boys
Outfit 66	Lands Forlorn, HACC in Japan, Needle to the North	Outfit 96	MacFarlane R. trip report, Tom Manning profile, Nunavut book rev
Outfit 67	NWT division, Cdn. Canoe Museum, James Bay	Outfit 97	Ellice River report, Winisk online preview, Bill Mason in hall of fame
Outfit 68	Charles Camsell, Barrens Wedding, Book reviews	Outfit 98	Winisk to The Bay report, Book review: McGuffins, Callans & Kraikers
Outfit 70	Great Bear to Coppermine, Ungava photos	Outfit 99	LastList; Best of the Century, 1955; Moffatt & The Voyageurs
Outfit 72	Eric Morse River List, Ungava Journey, J.B. Tyrrell	Outfit 100	The Back River 1962 by John Lentz, Readers 'Best Of' List
Outfit 73	Petawawa River, David Thompson map, NWT regs	Outfit 101	Back River 1962 Part II, Dog River & Bill Mason, book reviews
Outfit 74	Pukaskwa River, Helen Falls cairn, Quetico trip	Outfit 102	Pierre Trudeau remembered, R.M.Patterson book rev & Nahanni info
Outfit 75	Tyrrell pictures, Hearne's route, Heritage Rivers	Outfit 103	Repluse Bay to Baker Lake, Lower Churchill R. update, Mason video
Outfit 76	HBC money, MacDougall Pass, Sig Olson, Tyrrell	Outfit 104	1912- The Last Great Year. Steel River Loop, Oberholtzer book review
Outfit 77	River stamps, Exploration of N. Canada, Book reviews	Outfit 105	Paddling to The Bay in 1925, Arctic Crossing & Fatal Passage reviews
Outfit 78	Across the Arctic Mts, LaVase Portage, Food drying	Outfit 106	Labrador Odyssey 2001 report, Angus Scott remembered
Outfit 79	Book reviews, Thompson journal, Great Whale		

CANOESWORTHY Continued from Page 2

postage stamp commemorating the centennial of the former Northwest Territories, the print has become a well-known image.

A stone sculpture by the late Puvirnituq artist, Joe Talirunili, *The Migration*, fetched \$87,500- also setting a new high for Inuit sculpture.

The carving shows a group of Inuit paddling a traditional umiaq with sail was based on a dramatic rescue in Talirunili's own life.

Bidders also set a new high for a single lot of Inuit art at \$186,300 for a complete collection of the 39 prints released in 1959 by the West Baffin Eskimo Co-op. An avid Toronto collector assembled this collection over a number of years. The Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec has the only other known complete set of that year's collection.

The mining giant Inco Ltd. has submitted a new work plan to the government of Newfoundland aimed at developing the Voisey's Bay nickel and copper deposit in northern Labrador.

After a breakdown in negotiations, the two parties are now said to be closer to a deal than before.

When Inco bought the nickel-rich Voisey's Bay property in 1996 for \$4.3 billion, it promised to build a smelter in Newfoundland to process the ore, but later pulled away from this commitment. This caused Brian Tobin, then-premier of Newfoundland, to cut off negotiations.

The province's new leadership has been more open to reaching a compromise with Inco. The company's new proposal to build a small ore processing plant in Newfoundland may re-open the way for an agreement, which needs to be signed by the end of the year for construction to begin in spring 2002.

The body of a man affectionately known as the last living hermit in Labrador was recovered on Friday from his isolated home in Zoar, on the Labrador coast.

Edward Noah, 77, is believed to have died between Nov. 27 and Dec. 14 — the day a hydro crew travelling in northern Labrador by helicopter landed near Mr. Noah's cabin and found his body.

Mr. Noah lived alone for many years. People travelling up and down the coast often stopped at his cabin to check on him and have tea.

Mr. Noah's ancestors were members of the Moravian congregation at Zoar, which has not existed as a community for many years.

The Moravians, formally known as the United Brethren, established the Zoar mission in 1866 to accommodate Inuit and settlers in the area. The area was named after the biblical village of Zoar, where Lot and his family found refuge after Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed.

Zoar is located about midway between the town of Nain and Davis Inlet.

A July 2001 survey on the two main northern caribou herds of northern Quebec has released preliminary data. Led by the Quebec Parks and Wildlife ministry and carried out jointly with the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador with help from Hydro-Québec, the Department of National Defence and Caribou Québec (a non-profit organization).

The preliminary results of the July 2001 surveys suggests that the George River herd totals about 440,000 caribou, including the calves

present in 2001. This herd comprised 776,000 caribou in 1993. The final estimate should be available in March 2002.

Moreover, field surveys conducted in October 2001 showed that this herd had an excellent recruitment level. The very high number of calves surveyed in October should enable the herd to grow beginning this year, the largest since 1983.

While the George River herd has declined in number, the good news is that it has a potential for rapid growth. A study carried out jointly with Caribou Québec (see their interesting Web site at www.caribouquebec.qc.ca) in July and October 2001 also suggests that the physical condition of George River caribou is better than what it was in 1988 and 1993, as determined at the time of similar studies. Once again, this confirms the herd's good growth potential, as it is well known that the leveling off in demographic growth in the late 1980s was attributable to the poor physical condition of caribou. Additional studies will be carried out to monitor the demographic trends of this herd.

As for the Leaf River caribou herd, the result of the preliminary analyses suggests that caribou numbers are greater than those estimated for the George River herd, which would confirm the recent growth. The two herds combined are thought to number approximately one million caribou.

The Kugluktuk (aka Coppermine) Hunters and Trappers Association has completed a feasibility study and business plan to begin operating a mill to spin the under fur of musk oxen into yarn. The yarn, which commands a price 30 times greater than sheep's wool, is used to make expensive garments that are sold in high-end retail outlets in the South.

They have been sending musk ox hides to a mill in Prince Edward Island since March 2000. There, the soft under fur, called qiviut, is removed and spun to make yarn. The KHTA receives \$150 per hide, but the cost of shipping the hides to the East Coast has been expensive.

"It is the most valuable fibre in the world," says Larry Sutherland, who owns Mini Mills, the Prince Edward Island company that processes the qiviut and designs mills to spin the yarn. "And it's a very good resource for the people of the North if they want to use it. The question is, 'Do you have people who want to work and make a good go of it?'"

Mini Mills sells the qiviut in yarn form and pulls in about \$300 per pound at the retail level. A pound of sheep's wool yarn would sell for between \$10 and \$15 per pound. Some Internet retailers command about \$1,000 for the qiviut yarn.

Much finer and softer than sheep's wool and cashmere, it's the best luxury fibre in the world available right now, Sutherland says, with sweaters selling for about \$2,500 in London, England.

Not only is it luxurious, it is also extremely warm and lightweight — and a rare Northern commodity. Even here it is in limited supply because although the animals shed qiviut in the summer, the majority of it is harvested from hides of animals killed for meat.

A limited number of animals are killed each year based on the Department of the Sustainable Development's quotas. But the region isn't even coming close to its quota. Because musk oxen have long, coarse



photo: John Mokren

TWO PASSING WORLDS MEET -- This fascinating photo was taken in 1955 at the northern defence station at Saglek Bay on the Labrador coast. An Inuk visitor, probably from the now-abandoned Moravian mission of Hebron, 20 miles south, visited the Saglek Pinetree Line station that was watching the skies for enemy missiles. The traditional dogsled was soon to virtually disappear from sight while the world according to Saglek was about to prosper.

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