CHE-MUN

(Ojibway for canoe)

THE NEWSLETTER OF CANADIAN WILDERNESS CANOEING

OUTFIT 54 **CHE-MUN** **AUTUMN 1988**

Geoffrey Peake stands at the head of the portage trail around a formidible canyon on the lower "Flaherty River". The Povungnituk 88 canoe expedition retraced the route of Ungava pioneer Robert Flaherty and discovered his actual route is different than thought. Flaherty passed this canyon on what he called the Povungnituk River on his traverse of northern Quebec in 1927.

Povungnituk 88
A chilly success
Page 6

Sleeping Island
A re-awakening
Page 4

'Song' sings!
Mason's latest
Page 10

Fall Packet

Mark Jordan, 5 Pimentel Court, Moraga CA 94556 ran into the travelling Che-Mun road show at the third annual Maine Canoe Symposium run by L.L. Bean in Maine last June. Mark and friends are planning to canoe a very seldom travelled river this summer and wrote to tell Che-Mun about it.

"I am planning a three-week trip to Canada this summer to the Windigo River and Severn River to Fort Severn on Hudson Bay. We have been assisted in our planning by Mike Kettemer, curator of the Kanawa Museum and I communicate with the other five through a trip newsletter.

Mark included a couple of his bright and breezy four page Down the Severn newsletters with some snappy, funny diagrams. It is a great way to keep a far-flung group of canoeists together.

Mark has promised to send along a trip report which we will pass along. Che-Mun has no records of anyone canoeing the Severn - which incidentally is right on the northwestern corner of Ontario on Hudson Bay.

The ubiquitous Danish canoeist, Carl Traeholt, has surfaced again in a letter with a Malaysian postmark. Carl is on his way to obtaining his master's degree in biology but obviously still finds time to get out and canoe.

Carl is currently travelling with his girlfriend in Malaysia where he is vacationing and doing some light canoe tripping but still has his sights set on bigger things.

"A friend and I are trying to do a trip in Venezuela and Brazil in the spring of '89. We would have to go upstream on the Siapo River (side river to the Orinoco/Casiquera channel) and then cross the Tapira-Peco mountains and then down the Manaus to the Brazilian side. It's probably one of the world's most remote areas and we've been planning carefully for the trip since last year. Even today things are very uncertain due to economic problems. We will take two canoes with two other Danish guys. One of them has already left for Venezuela to try and solve some problems there.

"Otherwise, we have tried to gather together all the 'long trip' canoeists in Denmark. We have already found 15 who have been on a major trip in Canada. I am hoping we will be able to arrange get-togethers now and then. Four of those people were in Canada this summer to do the Anderson River in the NWT and if they have time, the Hood River. I will let you know how it went when I see them this fall. I have already introduced them to Che-Mun and it is strange that so few people know about Che. Most of them know of Nick Nickels, Bill Mason and Eric Morse."

Gwyneth Hoyle 469 Thompson Ave, Peterborough Ont K9J 6J2 is a scholar and writer who contributed a chapter to the book Nastawgan. She wrote about three intrepid women who travelled in the north; Mina Hubbard, Florence Tasker and Elizabeth Taylor (not THAT one).

"The latest issue of Che-Mun - Outfit 53 - is a treasure, especially for one who is as fascinated by the Hubbard-Wallace story as I am. The coincidence of Jim Davidson's meeting Hubbard's grand-daughter was similar to my own experience of finding the house in which the Hubbards lived in Congers, N.Y. from the first person I asked. Now I look forward to reading Great Heart.

"Your forthcoming trip In the Footsteps of Robert Flaherty is also of real interest to me. My current research is on the Revillon Freres Fur Trading Company; rivals to the Hudson Bay Company between 1900-1926 and very active in Ungava. It was Revillon, prompted by one of their chief officers Thierry Mallet who sponsored Flaherty in his filming of Nanook of the North based in Port Harrison (now called Inukjuak). I have done one essay on the Revillon company and it is my intention to do more work on both them and Mallet.

"I have just re-read the 1908 Field and Stream articles by Florence Tasker who with her husband and George Elson canoed from Richmond Gulf to Fort Chimo via the Larch River in 1906. The articles wouldn't add anything to the store of information for your trip. The experience was pure culture-shock for Mrs. Tasker but the following year her husband applied to the HBC for transportation so they could tackle Ungava via the Nastapoka and Leaf Rivers. the Hudson Bay Co. turned down their request.

A letter arrived a while back from Judith Niemi along with an interesting book called Rivers Running Free. We managed to misplace both but will now unveil them.

"A brief footnote to your account of the royal couple's Hanbury-Thelon canoe trip (Outfit 50). Five women from the U.S. on an eight-week trip on the Hanbury-Thelon met them near the confluence of the two rivers. Only one of them recognised the Duke and Duchess and they didn't tell the others until the royal visitors had paddled off. Sarah, they reported, was interested in the length of their trip and how they managed to portage all that gear. A few days later the parties met again; this time my friends still didn't let on that they had recognized the English/Canadian party and one mischieviously handed the Duke a few letters with a request that he mail them since they were about to fly out. He graciously agreed.

Judith's book details the experiences of women canoeists over the last century. there are stories of 35 different trips including 17 in Canada. These include Quetico (1925, 1950's), the Missinaibi, the Wenebegon, George River (1905, 1982) Hanbury-Thelon, Winisk, Saskatchewan (1908), Gatineau (1905), the Middle Track to York Factory and the Mackenzie.

For those interested in this attractive and unique book contact Judith at **566 Ottawa Ave. St Paul, MN 55107**. For Canadian orders send $20 in Cdn. funds which includes postage. For U.S. orders it's $13.50, postage included.

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CANOE CALENDAR

CANOETOONS
PAUL MASON

Editor's Notebook

This past summer was a frothy one for those canoeing in the Northwest Territories and Yukon. Water levels appeared to be abnormally high everywhere.

George Luste reports very high water during his group's trip down the entire length of the Thelon River. Thelon Canyon, always a formidable piece of water at the best of times, was virtually in flood. George, with wife Linda, Joan and Bill King and Jan and Suus Tissot, all from Toronto, actually portaged not only the entire canyon but cut the several miles across the whole peninsula to avoid it and the monstrous standing waves below. Others were not so lucky. Besides the group described in the accompanying article there was another party that failed to make the canyon test.

Two canoes with four people, two from France, also swamped after the canyon. They were not stranded however. The French duo were apparently sizing up the Thelon as a possible commercial rafting adventure. We hope that idea was dumped too. Luste's party also ran into a three-day blow on Aberdeen Lake but were able to make their appointed date in Baker Lake to stick to their 30 day schedule.

Another veteran canoeist who ventured from Labrador, his usual canoeing grounds, found very high water in the central barrens. Herb Pohl, a grizzled solo C-2 traveller, went up the Snare River and over a circuitous lake route to join the Coppermine. Herb saw no other canoeists on the Coppermine - only rafters. The river was apparently running very fast and high, Herb said, and some of them were terrifying - huge waves and some viciously strong back eddies. He also expressed disatisfaction at the old Wild Rivers Survey and their suggestions for running some of the Coppermine's more infamous rapids such as Escape. Herb saw two Old Town Trippers in Coppermine that arrived under a group of Danish canoeists.

Royal canoe guide David Thompson who has accompanied Prince Andrew on his Canadian trips headed for the Yukon and some kayaking this year. All the Yukon rivers were in flood this July according to David. Thompson and friends did select bits of several rivers including the Wolf which David describes as absolutely wild. David heard of two parties who had totally destroyed their Kevlar and ABS boats on the Wolf and had to be rescued. It became so bad that charter companies refused to fly people in because no one could make it out with their canoes.

The situation in northern Quebec was somewhat similar. Summer was quite late this year with many upper Ungava lakes still conmpletely covered in ice late in July. Given the shallow nature of the Ungava streams this proved to be a blessing.

Michael Peake

Upsetting Thelon R. experience

By JANE VAN DER VOORT
Toronto Sun

Four Southern Ontario canoeists stranded for 12 days in the Northwest Territories are mulling over ideas for their next trip.

Reg McGuire, 52, his identical twin Dan and their sons Dan, 24, and Gordon, 26, spent half their summer expedition on a diet of fish and blueberries awaiting rescue in the Thelon Game Sanctuary.

"I never want to be so tired, cold, hungry and miserable ever again in my life," said Dan, 52, a day after being rescued.

Reg said the men try a major canoe excursion every other year. He's already thinking of an expedition in Labrador.

"But I don't want to bring it up yet with the fellows — it's a bit soon " he said in a recent interview.

He recently sent a $5,000 cheque to cover the extra gas and flying time of the pickup pilot who searched for them.

It will also pay for the two Grumman canoes rented from the East Wind Arctic company in Yellowknife.

On July 22 the foursome were dropped by float plane near the headwaters of the Thelon River, 300 miles east of Yellowknife. They were to reach their pickup locaion at Lookout Point 21 days later on Aug. 12.

But 11 days into their trip, the men lost their canoes in rapids just west of the Thelon River Canyon.

They'd scouted the waters after portaging past the worst of the churning rapids. But unusually high water this summer deceived them and minutes later they were swimming for their lives. Neither canoe had a spraycover.

"I saw Reg 50 yards ahead of me take in some waves and their canoe went down.

"Then our canoe sunk under us. I heard it snap — like a cannon going off," he added.

The men were prepared. They had lined their lifejackets with survival gear. They retrieved fishing rods, a tarp and one sleeping bag.

Knowing they wouldn't be missed for 10 days, they built a shelter and moved toward the pickup point every few days.

Rations lasted three days, forcing the men onto a diet of berries and fish. It rained almost every day they were awaiting pick-up. All four are still putting on weight they lost.

Bathing was unthinkable in water "so cold it hurt to wash your hands," and temperatures dipped below 4C (40F) at night. Blackflies attacked the men's faces.

They lined the shore with white rocks, had a signal fire ready to burn and following a three-day search, were spotted Sunday, Aug. 14 "waving everything bright we could get our hands on," Reg said.

The Classics

Sleeping Island

By SEAN PEAKE

The Barren Lands can leave a deep scar on any one who travels across them. Many people can't wait to escape the blackflies, the wind, the exposure, and vow never to return.

But some people become victims. The Barrens injects them with a narcotic, unnoticable at first. Soon after they leave, however, withdrawl symptoms begin. The longer they stay away, the stronger the pains. There is only one cure — they must return.

P.G. Downes was a Barrens addict. He wasn't a great explorer or surveyor, but a young school teacher from Boston. However, in the words of an old Chipewyan quoted in his book, "It is strange for one so white, but you know some things that only old men should know. Maybe you are a born-twice and used to be here among us."

Sleeping Island is set during his trip to Nu-thel-tin-tu-eh, or Nueltin Lake, the lake of the sleeping island. Downes seems to relate his story from the viewpoint of a bow paddler. A bow paddler's perspective of a canoe trip differs from his partner's. The bowman has a chance to think, to daydream and reflect upon the landscape around him.

The stern paddler, on the other hand, must keep one foot in reality, steer the canoe and consult the map. We bowmen are indeed fortunate, especially during bad weather. Those days when the wind howls and the rain feels like pellets against your face, the only way to get through it is to put your head down and paddle.

Downes' recollections not only swirl through past canoe trips, they also tell us of the land, its people and legends. He begins Sleeping Island trying to explain to his friends why he heads north. Of course he can't, except to say "I like it there. I like the people, I am happy there."

By P.G. Downes 1943. New York and Toronto 296 pages, illustrated, 32 photographs and 6 maps

One of the "silent" classics. Downes writes of a style of wilderness travel and a feeling for the northland that even today are both timeless and timely.

His story then goes on to describe his route through Reindeer Lake, across the chain of lakes leading to Nueltin, and meeting the great Indian chief Kasmere. One thing Downes does better than most other wilderness writers, however, is relate the idiosyncracies of the tripper; the challenges, the small, but important victories, the emotions and pet peeves.

"In this first brief three-quarters of an hour I already noted one thing which was very comforting. John did not display any of the small mannerisms which can make long association with a fellow paddler torture. These eccentricities or petty habits take on an unimaginable importance. I remember particularly an Indian who once traveled with me paddling stern. He had the most aggravating habit, after an hour or two, of breaking into a timed series of small body noises. The evident complacency and satisfaction with which these regular sounds issued by the end of ten hours' paddling would drive me into a state of supressed and sullen rage. They seem to mock every effort I extended myself.

"Another time, I traveled down a long river in a canoe so small that three of us were all but touching each other. I was in the middle, and the Indian paddling bow had a peculiar crackling noise in his left shoulder. Hour after hour, my ear scarcely three inches from his inpeturbable but noisy back, I could hear the grinding of his shoulder socket. Whenever I asked him about it, in a tone of curiosity rather than reproach, he stopped and grinned and then, holding the paddle upright, ran his tongue along the blade for a drink of water. Turning without a word, he would re-commence his inexorable paddling, and it always seemed to me that the lubrication stimulated the horrible noise."

P. G. Downes on his way to the north in 1947

When Downes comes out, he relates the reluctance and the alien feelings we all have after a long trip. War had broken out in Europe, and his voyage seemed like a dream. Reality really sunk in when Downes was told he had to distort the maps he meticulously drawn for his book, to confuse the Nazis if they decided to invade North America through Hudson Bay, which accounts for their vague quality.

Sleeping Island is a voyage of a man in love with the land. It mattered little to him if he made it to Nueltin, it's the experience in between that counts. Downes views on the white man's impact on native people, quite valid today, were well ahead of society's in 1943. I imagine he was the driving force behind Farley Mowat's People of the Deer. The most unfortunate thing is that he didn't write more.

SI: The collector's view

By GEORGE LUSTE

Sleeping Island is one of my favourite books on the north.

The 1943 dust jacket of this classic book on northern canoe travel describes it thus;"This is the story of one man's adventuring in the uncharted wilds of the Canadian Northwest - poling and shooting treacherous rapids that might continue into eternity for all he knew, packing canoe and loads over mile-long portages, blinded and staggering, spinning out yarns of the north country with trappers and traders gathered around the stove in remote Hudson Bay Company posts, visiting with old friends among Indians and Eskimos."

But there is more to P.G. Downes, his travels and writings, than this dust jacket advertisment suggests. Downes was an extraordinarily sensitive and careful observer of the natural world and its northern inhabitants. He was an accomplished cartographer, ethnologist and wilderness traveller. He lived a deep-rooted fascination with the north and travelled extensively in it from 1936 to 1947.

Professor Bob Cockburn, the expert on Downes, has written and editied numerous articles on his life and travels. In a brief biographical sketch, he quotes Downes, who at age 50 and shortly before his death in 1959, remembers his travels thus: "I liked that life and I liked the people there. I saw a lot of it just as the old north was vanishing; the north of no time, of game, of Indians, Eskimos, of unlimited space and freedom . . . I remember one time after a dreadful trip, camping on the edge of the tree line, again it was one of those indescribable smokey, bright-hazy days one sometimes gets in the high latitudes. I had hit the caribou migration and there was lots of meat; it was a curious spot, for all the horizons seem to fall away from where I squatted, and I said to myself: Well I suppose I shall never be so happy again."

It is the simple eloquence of his writings and observations that are so appealing to a kindred spirit.

The original 1943 edition of Sleeping Island is not particularly rare or expensive. But it is not always easy to locate a copy on short notice. It lists in antiquarian book catalogues in the range of $20 to $40, depending on its condition and the dealer.

What happens when a reprint comes out? Not much. My guess is that the 1943 edition will slowly and surely increase in value, as Downes is 'discovered' by the growing number of northern book collectors. Collectors invariably want the first edition (in mint condition!) of any book they value and respect.

(In 1981 George Luste canoed from Reindeer Lake to Windy Lake, just west of Downes Sleeping Island (Nueltin Lake) retracing his 1938 venture.)

The classic re-awakens

Finally someone has re-issued Sleeping Island.

This October will again see the P.G. Downes classic back in print with additional original photos, new notes and a foreward from Downes scholar (and Che-Mun subscriber) Professor R.H. Cockburn.

Bob Cockburn possesses the entire Downes collection of photos and has edited his notebooks. The new paperback edition will be available in October from Western Producer Prairie Books, Box 2500, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7K 2C4.

It sells for $18.95 plus $1.50 postage for the first book and 50 cents for each subsequent book. U.S. order are welcome.

News & Notes

FLYING HOME . . . Grey Owl will again return to the land of his birth to continue spreading his philosophy of wilderness enlightenment. Phil Chester, a rural Ontario teacher, has become the embodiment of the great teacher, lecturer and conservationist Archie (Grey Owl) Belaney - who was also a fraud (see Che-Mun Outfit 52). On September 18 - the birthday of Belaney - Phil Chester spoke in Hastings, England as part of a short tour that was planned to include an official greeting at Ontario and Canada House and a lecture at Leeds University on Grey Owl "Knight Errant of the Canadian Wilderness". Phil strongly believes in the responsible stewardship of the land that Grey Owl espoused. Phil feels that wilderness canoeists such as ouselves can no longer take from the wilderness without giving something back. He asked that all Che-Mun readers dig out their copies of **Tales of an Empty Cabin** on September 18 and set aside some time to read "one of the greatest books ever written about us". It's too late for that date - but do it anyway.

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PADDLING'S PRINCELY PATRON . . . His Royal Highness - Prince Andrew, the Duke of York has accepted the invitation of the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association (CRCA) to become the Royal Patron for canoeing in Canada. After two years of correspondence with Ottawa and Buckingham Palace confirmation was recently received by the CRCA that Andrew has accepted a five year, renewable Royal Patron status. Andrew's first taste of canoeing came when he went to school at Lakefield College (near Peterborough) during his high school years. Upon graduation he received a classic Walter Walker cedar strip canoe as a present. He subsequently returned to Canada for canoe trips on the Coppermine (1979), Nahanni (1983) and the Hanbury-Thelon with his wife Sarah (1987). Andrew and Sarah have both expressed an interest in returning to Canada for future canoeing adventures in the north. The CRCA is a non-profit, volunteer organization designed to promote all forms of canoeing and appreciation of the natural world. They produce a 32-page quarterly magazine called Kanawa and numerous small publications on related canoeing matters. For further info or membership enquiries contact the CRCA, Box 500, Hyde Park, Ontario N0M 1Z0.

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PULLING THE PLUG . . . A plan to emulate Hydro-Quebec's northern power strategy has left Manitoba Hydro with a short-circuited dream. The giant $1.6 billion Limestone Falls project on the lower Nelson River was started after a big power deal with Minnesota was signed in 1986. Further study has revealed that deal will not generate as much revenue as anticipated and subsequent contracts have not been forthcoming. In fact, the Manitoba Hydro chairman has talked about holding off the next big mega-project. Like Quebec, most of Manitoba's population lives in the south and a former voyageur route, the Winnipeg River, has been dammed for years to supply the energy needs of Winnipeg and those of the surrounding area. The lower Churchill River was dammed in the 1970's and the mighty Nelson now has four generating stations on its length. The Nelson was never a canoeing river because of its immense size but there are several other routes ripe for hydro development.

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Continued on Page 12

Povungn
In the Footste

Standing on the eastern rim of the Nouveau-Quebec Crater are Povungnituk '88 canoe trip members Peter Scott, Geoffrey Peake, Michael Peake and Peter Brewster. This side of the crater offers the easiest access to the water some 250

Che-Mun Trip Report

Footsteps of Flaherty

By MICHAEL PEAKE
Editor Che-Mun

As our Air Inuit chartered Twin Otter disappeared into the wind-whipped snow of the upper Ungava Plateau we turned to each other, all four asking the same question either out loud or to ourselves.

"What the hell are we and our canoes doing here - north of summer?"

Raglan Lake, starting point for our Povungnituk '88 canoe expedition lay nestled in ice almost 2000 feet above the level of Ungava Bay - just 15 miles away.

Our 300-mile flight from Fort Chimo ended here. Our pilots seemed genuinely concerned after we'd just viewed the first 40 miles of our route on the flight in. Our view was of frozen lakes in mid-July. Summer had not yet left its calling card.

I immediately passed control of the trip over to Hide-Away Canoe Club Chief Guide Geoffrey Peake. I was in charge of planning and logistics. My year-long duties were now over and I felt I'd gotten off lightly.

Fortunately the end of the runway was only a couple of hundred feet from a babbling stream that was the meagre headwaters of the Povungnituk River. We dragged our heavy Old Town Trippers - with four bulging packs each - over the snow to the river and headed off.

Some pushing, scraping and reluctant wading later we reached Raglan proper and proceeded to slip down the narrow corridor between the thick ice and land. The area was desolate. We were virtually in the clouds on a relatively narrow part of land surrounded on three sides by arctic ocean.

Desolate was indeed the word. Only the most meagre moss grew. We bashed and pushed our way down this water sidewalk - at now 8pm - and came to our first drop of the 2000 feet to come. The shallow river drizzled through rocky shoals. Peter Brewster and Peter Scott soon had very cold and wet feet but Geoff wanted to get off that lake and at least make some progress in truly oppressive conditions - for canoeing.

Camped on frost heaves that turned to jelly when you disturbed them we barely had time to get the tents up before another snow shower hit. We had arrived in upper Ungava.

Making our way down the upper Povungnituk was a dicey, icy affair. The rapids were small, shallow and rocky. Even the lakes were very shallow. Ice was still frozen hard to the bottom of the lake but with a foot of water on top. Occasionally expansions were completely frozen over. In that case we dragged which was actually quite easy as the ice was thick, and flat. The only problems were at the edges. Naturally our lightest member, Peter Brewster, fell through - though with only one leg - Geoff got him out with a quick yank on the collar.

The river dropped quickly but with little flow - just enough in fact. In 1978 a group took four weeks to reach the crater because of shallow conditions - it took us four days. In fact ,it is perhaps only possible to canoe the upper Pov in the brief run-off season.

The land remained bleak. There were no birds, animals or plant life higher than your ankles. The weather was constantly changing - great cloud banks would roll in from the NW bringing occasional sun. At night the temperature hovered just above freezing with daytime highs around 50F.

The river soon became much bigger and we were treated to several miles of mostly runnable rapids leading down to the junction with the drainage of Lake St. Germaine. This is where we left the Povungnituk and headed upstream to the crater. We knew from our flight in that St. Germaine was frozen, though the water we waded up through its disharge, certainly told us that.

The ice-free shoreline pattern continued on St. Germaine and we were able to squeak by with a little ice-breaking. With the cold temps and lack of vegetation it also meant there was a lack of bugs. We did not see any for the first week. There is nothing to sustain them and we were not about to advertise.

As we skirted around St. Germaine the crater loomed. From lake level it appears as nothing more than a short range of rugged hills. We knew now that our intention to get within two miles of the crater by following the Vachon River's upper upstream reaches would be a pain in the butt. Those mild rocky riffles on an aerial

ituk 88
ps of Flaherty

feet below, in other spots the rim is 500 feet above lake level. Crater Lake, two and a half miles across, is still frozen in this photo taken July 23. This photograph is a composite of three pictures taken with a 35mm lens.

map are a shallow hell in real life. We went up only one set which left us three miles from the crater.

The hike in - with enough food and supplies for three days - was fairly easy. Two reasons accounted for this, 1) we weren't carrying canoes and 2) the billions of tons of boulders run into by the earlier 1950 and '51 expeditions lie on the north-westerly approach. We came at the crater from the east heading for its lowest point on the rim which has a fairly leisurely ascent. With the late day's sun piercing a crystal sky, the view coming over the rim was eerie. Here lay this large and perfectly round lake - completely covered in ice this July 21. The meteorological pockmark has a real presence. It still retains a certain aura - like the dying sound of a cataclysmic piano chord struck thousand of years ago.

We were also amazed by the fantastic view from the rim - which at one point rises 2056 feet above the plateau - the highest point in Ungava. But we were dismayed however by the rapidly approaching clouds that signalled an end to our sunshine. We set up camp in the saddle with a splendid view of the lake and awaitied the rain. It came, then blew hard and wet all the next day. We lounged in our tents and made pancakes.

In mid-afternoon the sound of an engine pulled us away from our books. On the far side of the crater was a plane - no, a helicopter. It swooped inside the crater which made you realize just how big this thing is. Halfway down the lake the chopper was a dark pinpoint. They flew right over us and soon landed. We had a nice chat with a group of Falconbridge geologists - one of whom we watched descend close to hypothermia as he chatted to us in the freezing rain with wire glasses, no hat or gloves. They all grabbed a few shots and shortly took off. They were the only people we would see in our 28 day trip.

Crater camp

The crater is a photographer's dilemma. The thing is so bloody big that you can't get it all in without a fisheye lens. I brought a tripod panorama head that enables you to use a longer lens and then match up the photos later, (as above).

The lake is stated to be an 825-foot-deep rainwater gauge. It was thawed around the edges and the water was remarkably clear. There was a lot of garbage at the lakeside area below our notch. Piles of fuel barrels and numerous items leftover from the Topographic Survey of Canada. The area is also visited by Inuit from nearby (40 miles) Wakeham Bay on snowmobiles during the long winter.

We gave ourselves almost three days at the crater. It is very quiet and peaceful and a lovely spot to camp. We did a bit of exploring and hiking but no one ventured on the eight-mile, seven hour walk around the rim.

On our walk back to the boats we discovered what appeared to be tent rings on an esker about 3 miles east. We headed back to the rocky Vachon River which would take us south where we would again cut across and jog south again to Nantais Lake.

The next few days were spent hopping and portaging through a series of lakes that took us to Nantais. The going was rough but we made good progress. One evening an arctic fox took a quick tour of our camp. He came quite close - a surprisingly small creature with a bushy tail. He marked his territory a few times and trotted off.

We finally reaching Nantais and more ice proved to be a bit of a problem. The ice was very rotten, almost gone. Nantais is a big lake, more than 25 miles long, but fairly narrow. We only had to cross less than two miles. Geoffrey and Peter Brewster charged into the semi-solid ice, crunching their way through . . for a while. Our progress slowed, and we then realized the whole pack was moving east taking us with it. We had a much harder time getting out, but made it back to a small island near where we started.

The wind was brisk from the NW so we decided to have lunch. Within 20 minutes the ice which had been 300 yards away, was crunching our canoes onto the rocky island. We waited for a while and saw a break further west, headed for it and slipped in between ice pans to head for the tumultuous Arpalirtuq River.

Before we could get there, caribou began appearing everywhere. A dozen crossed the narrows in front of us while a herd of 40 grazed the shore and groaned in approval when another group of 20 swam behind us to join them. We now understood why the river had been named - it was obviously a well-known hunting ground.

Continued on Page 8

Continued

The Arpalirtuq is an all-business river. During its relatively short ten-mile course to Klotz Lake it drops over 400 feet to Klotz' 800 foot elevation. Steep by anyone's standards. We camped at the start of the drop in a canyon-like setting. Forty-foot stone and snow banks line the rapid river as it veers steeply down and away.

We stopped to scout every section we couldn't see, and the first two miles were runable. But when you've got 400 feet to drop and only a few miles to do it, you can't waste time. Soon we were out lining and running. The steep walls had widened out so it was possible to line over the boulder-strewn river bed. On one fast run Geoff's canoe went over close to shore and he was out before it got all the way over. Both canoes had full spraycovers on.

The rollercoaster kept going and we were able to run a mile plus before the lake expansion a bit more than half-way to Klotz and 280 feet gone. The mental effort required to do a river like this is considerable so we were happy with our mileage for the day.

Following a day off for bad weather we resumed the ride and the river got even steeper. The scouting view was alarming. The river disappeared downhill very fast and all white. It would have been ideal for expert kayakers in less remote conditions with Grade IV and V water all the way. We lined. The final mile to Klotz was the toughest yet, with a narrow section that required a fast threading of the boat beside a huge standing wave. Caribou were visible for most of the river and snowmobile signs were apparent here and there. Though I don't imagine many canoeists have ventured this way, few barrens rivers have this much drop and flow.

We hit Klotz on schedule, the halfway point of our trip in time, though we had two- thirds of the distance to go since it was under more 'usual' circumstances we thought we'd be OK. It was Klotz Lake, we believe, that Robert Flaherty reached on his traverse in 1912. On two small lakes west of Klotz lies the height-of-land which will then put you on a river that joins the Pov and the sea - or just before it.

The west wind started to blow on Klotz. It would be our reluctant and constant companion for the next two weeks. We reached the next lake - Lac Calm - naturally in a gale. Windbound on Calm Lake. The following lake is called Headwind which of course we sailed through.

There is no clear path to this river, several lakes and winding passages finally take you to an impressive gorge and incredibly clear aquamarine water. We had reached Flaherty's River. The going was tough. Between the constant slogging into an ever-present west wind and the constant portaging caused by a rapidly plunging big river we were plodding along.

Ungava's weather is like a variation on the old joke; if you don't like it, wait around for an hour - it'll get worse. The wind certainly did. A relentless western blast every day. We were able to eek out a few miles here and there but realized our timetable was in disarray.

Geoffrey Peake lights the stove for an evening of bread baking.

Every time a rapid was marked or named on a 1:250,000 map it needed to be portaged. There was one 30-foot fall in the middle of a gorge that was truly impressive. The resultant pool had a permanent eight foot jet swelling up in the middle of it. Real mean or as racing kayakers would say " Narly!"

The wind gave us a break when we had to deal with Lac Couture, an eight mile open water circle of potential trouble. Following Couture the character of the river changed for a while. We had several miles of runnable rapids and our hopes were raised by a good mileage day. One falls along the way was particularly rewarding. It was the same one photographed by Flaherty during his trip that accompanied his article on the trip in the American Geographical Review.

This proved our assertion. This was the river Flaherty had canoed.

He said it was the Pov and it was marked as such on early Quebec maps. How did the other river come to be named Pov?

We thought we were being rewarded when after the falls we had a tailwind. We realized that it was the dark gray sky over Hudson Bay that was sucking in this wind,but we revelled in a few wind-assisted miles. The next 24 hours will live forever in my mind. The storm which was brewing was of unique intensity. If we'd known it at the time we'd probably have dug a bomb shelter. (See Date with the Eights story).

It was still blowing the day after - back to a more normal 25-30 mph headwind. Our now silty river, thanks to the intense winds, was much more difficult to navigate because the rocks were invisible. We were in full push mode now. Up at 5am and paddling until well into the evening. We were all in good shape at this point which undoubtedly helped matters. The river didn't quit. There were some big drops, one mile-long gorge scored a Grade VI!

In spots it looked like we were paddling the Colorado, bare hills, blue sky and silty water. As we neared Pov Lake we knew there was one big canyon left, and we came around a corner and found ourselves right on the lip. The river yawned and dropped over a series of ledges into a wide then very narrow canyon and finally over another falls. The portage followed the ridgeline on the right and provided a breathtaking view. Just pick a caribou trail and go.

Another late evening and 5 am rising the next day for the final day of slogging down silty Povungnituk Lake to Hudson Bay. The final rapids proved exciting and they flowed through a few islands to finally reach salt water. Our first sight of civilization was a rock island full of huskies left for the summer - with occasional feedings - at the foot of the rapid. They very much wanted to see us. We waved and paddled by.

The town of Pov has immediately apparent to our noses - it was garbage burning day and we were downwind. A perfect welcome back to civilization.

POV 88's

Date with the 8's

By MICHAEL PEAKE

It is a date we will never forget. No matter how hard we try.

Monday, August 8 of this past summer

Eight, eight, eighty-eight.

It was the 25th day of our trip across Ungava and we had been doing our "Slog Hog" routine for the past 10 days, paddling into a relentless west wind.

Late in a day of relative calm something wonderful happened.

A tail wind. Shortly before we'd been running a long rapid when we heard a deep rumbling. . . thunder. A rare noise in Arctic Quebec. The clouds were heavy and the rain was spitting.

Sixty miles to our west lay Hudson Bay. It was getting dark and the wind was rising behind us.

After countless miles of crawling it was a delight to have a brisk wind aiding our progress. We zipped a painless six miles before threatening skies told us to find a campsite and finally settled on a L-shaped esker island with our tents along the bottom of the 'L' at the base of the 15 foot high ridge. The east wind was rising as we started to pitch the tents. Nothing unusual except the wind direction.

The sky to the west as we pulled in was ominous. It was such a dark grey it was almost blue.

Then we noticed the clouds. That should have tipped us off.

Wild patterns. Swirling, smokey, twisted patterns of clouds so unusual we took photos of them. We found out later they are called Mamma clouds and indicate extremely high wind turbulance.

Trouble was coming.

Just as we got camp ready the rain came. Geoffrey stayed outside to make dinner while we sat smug and dry in our bombproof North Face Pole Sleeve Oval geodesic tents. Geoff's heavily curried tuna arrived an hour later and soon after we hit the hay.

About 12:30 I woke up when the tent started shaking a bit. The wind was stronger and it felt like it was switching directions. We certainly realized that it would 'blow through' but didn't realize how hard. I looked out to see Geoff scurrying around. Moments before the canoes had rolled as the wind changed. He secured them again. I was starting to have just the slightest doubts but went back to sleep.

Awake again at 4 am. It was fairly light now and blowing really hard. These North Face tents are made for the wind but being oval you get the best protection when you place the narrowest side into the wind. At 4:10 am Geoff was doing just that to his tent. I went out and did the same to mine.

"It was beyond a windy day. Beyond a storm. It was a malestrom of unimaginable fury. The wind was ripping big hunks of moss right off our tiny esker ridge. It was an effort to walk. Even at 220 lbs. I was thrown around easily."

Angled to the strong wind that was now blowing hard from the south. The Pole Sleeve's are self-standing but we had them pegged down hard to keep them from lifting. The wind was buffeting the tents hard and I mentioned to Peter Brewster that most other shelters would be in rough shape by now.

Awake again at 6:40. This storm was not about to simply blow through. These winds were scary. It was relentless.

Suddenly - snap.

Our smallest pole which wraps from front to back broke. It was the one we'd damaged at the crater and we were careful to put it away from the wind when we set the tents up. Of course with the wind switch it was now taking an unprecedented load. I raced out to look. I yelled to Geoff a few feet away. He too was awake. Our pole had snapped by the ferrule and poked through the fly. A small hole, little damage. Geoff suggested we drag my tent behind his for a bit of a windbreak. Peter Brewster got out and we carefully slid the loaded tent around behind Geoff's.

Just then from inside Peter Scott yelled. One of Geoff's poles just went. Then another. And another. Shafts of aluminium were poking out from a badly ripped fly. We were in trouble.

Four poles broke in less than a minute. Geoff's poles had been used a lot for ocean trips and were somewhat salt corroded. They couldn't take the supreme test.

With Peter Brewster holding my tent we dismantled Geoff's and stuffed it - still full of bags, clothes and Therm-a-Rests under the canoe which Geoff had already weighted down with rocks. Then we dragged my tent 50 feet down to the end of the island on the other side of the ridge slightly out of the wind. I got one of Geoff's good poles and replaced my broken one.

I finally had a chance to look around me. Our small lake was white with wind whipped spray. It looked like snow. I saw a couple of small cheeping birds hopping along the ground not daring to fly. Within minutes we realized that the wind was again shifting to the west and my tent was now getting the full weight of an oppressive wind.

We decided to take it down - no mean feat - and carried the full tent, minus the poles and fly back over the ridge to join Geoff. As I came over the top I saw an explosion of green. A corner of our tarp came loose and a Wood's pack took off and was in the lake within seconds with bottles, bags etc. flying everywhere.

I yelled at Geoff who was hiding under the canoe. He was 40 feet away but with the howling wind he might as well have been a mile. The pack and paraphernalia hit the water and in two seconds were out of reach. Gone. Fortunately nothing vital was lost just empty bottles and a pair of my shoes. We then stuffed everything under the canoe including ourselves.

It was beyond a windy day. Beyond a storm. It was a malestrom of unimaginable fury. The wind was ripping big hunks of moss right off our tiny esker ridge. It was an effort to walk. Even at 220 lbs. I was thrown around easily.

We lay there for hours in our rainsuits. It was cold. Geoff got the Peak-1 going and made some sweet, mossy tea. We gulped it down knowing it was survival food. Geoff carried our emergency radio beacon in his zippered anorak pocket - just in case. We made the canoes into a T with the broad side of one taking a fearsome blast. We stacked piles of rocks on the top, inside and outside. If the wind got hold of the canoes, we were marooned.

We lay there, like animals, totally helpless. At the mercy of a side of nature's savagery few ever see.

Slowly the wind receded. By 2 pm the sky was clearing and the wind was down by a third. It kept blowing hard all day and we finally were able to make some soup. Geoff repaired the poles but we only put one tent up that night that three slept in and not until 10pm. Geoff slept under the tarp-covered canoe.

For some weeks after the same dream repeated itself. I was on a dark, steep and windy cliff. It was a distorted view of my bedroom. I could only move very slowly. I would wake up bathed in sweat. The storm outside was over. The one inside is still calming down.

Upon checking with the weather office in Great Whale River we learned our storm was a very large and intense low pressure centered over Frobisher Bay. Winds in our area were reported in excess of 60 knots. In Povungnituk, 23 large freighter canoes were swallowed up by Hudson Bay which rose 10 feet. People living there said they could not recall a worse storm.

The melody lingers on

Bill Mason's long-awaited sequel to Path of the Paddle

Song of the Paddle is like everything else Bill Mason has done. Thorough, stylish, meticulous and superb.

As its predessor, the wildly successful Path of the Paddle, was to paddling and canoe skills, Song of the Paddle, is to campcraft and outfitting a canoe trip.

The book completes the full compliment of "Path" and "Song" films and books. The seies of films, done for the National Film Board are standard reference teaching works and now the two books put all that on paper.

Mason again takes the same format and approach as 'Path'. Chapter headings include; Tents, Cooking in the Wild, Campfires, Firesplaces and Stoves, Canoes for Wilderness Tripping and Paddling and Portage Skills. One chapter is even called Favourite Canoe Journeys.

Song of the Paddle is loaded with photos, diagrams and cartoons. These are all black and white except for a gorgeous 16-page section of beautiful full page colour photos - many from the barrenlands.

Bill Mason has always espoused a respectful approach to nature and man's place in it. He has certain views towards camping and the environment. He also has certain views about camping technique. And true to his enlightened nature those views have changed over the years reflecting an open mind.

This book gives Bill the chance to fully display some of his favourite camping items - notably the Campfire Tent. This large lean-to-type tent has a totally open side offering the camper a wide view and maximum exposure. It would seem particularly vulnerable to high winds but Mason insists that properly rigged it will withstand almost anything. He says his has blown down only twice in 30 years of camping.

The Environmental Fireplace is a Mason invention that solves the dilemma of no-trace camping - how to have a fire without scarring the landscape in heavily travelled areas. This is a folding metal box in which the fire is made. They were recently used with great success on Operation Raleigh's six-week Kazan River trip.

The sections on cooking and equipment are quite complete with many recipe suggestions proven through extensive tripping on both family and northern expeditions.

However, despite that much of this ground has been covered before, the fact that Bill Mason is now doing it means this book is worth buying. As in all his work, Mason covers the groundwork thoroughly and then heads off in his own direction dispensing good ideas and sound advice tempered by a great deal of practical experience.

For northern river paddlers, however, the core of the book is - at last - the full and truly harrowing account of Mason and Wally Schaber's and two others run through Wilberforce Canyon on the Hood River in the N.W.T.

I first heard this tale at the L. L. Bean Maine Canoe Symposium last year from Bill himself. The story is incredible but, as they say, true.

That particular canyon has never been run and with good reason. The sides are almost vertical and it comes after a huge drop on a major northern river. The photo of it, by the group's obviously sane photographer who stayed on shore, was used as the cover shot of the book Wild Waters.

Bill describes the whole thing is a riveting few pages. This story perhaps tells a lot about the qualities which make up a man like Bill Mason. He knows all the proper rules but feels compelled to push them - while advising others not to.

Ninety-nine per cent of other canoeists should be chastised for attempting a run on such a remote and dangerous piece of water. But for that one per cent of adventurers who push the limit with their own high level of skill, maybe such challenges are a necessary and vital element of their being and of the spirit of such men who have blazed a trail of daring through our history.

Because Bill Mason is a man who has made a difference. His impact on the Canadian canoeing scene is large and permanent. Not since Eric Morse has one man so shaped a country's view of canoeing and none with Bill's impact.

Song of the Paddle, which Bill has said will be his swansong, only adds to the huge legacy of the one-and-only, true Mr. Canoehead - William Mason.

Michael Peake

Operation Raleigh's

Kazan Summer

24 Venturers, 8 leaders and 300 miles of the Kazan River made for a memorable canoe trip and final segment of the 5-year long Op Raleigh

The Operation was a complete success.

Operation Raleigh completed an eventful seven-week, 300-mile canoe trip on the Kazan River.

Twenty-four youths from 11 countries along with eight group leaders combed the archeologically rich Kazan and in the process enjoyed a beautiful canoeing summer in the Barrenlands. It was the final, and only Canadian, phase of the worldwide four year project designed to involve young people in adventurous and scientific pursuits. (See Outfits 50 & 53).

Che-Mun accompanied the expedition for the first week at its starting point at the outflow of Lake Angikuni. There were four groups of canoeists each with six Venturers and two leaders. Each group had separate functions and the whole entourage got together a couple of times during the summer.

The Venturers had been together for a month of training before they got off the VIA train in uncharacteristically hot Churchill, Manitoba following the three day ride from Toronto. To say they were close-knit is an understatement. Much hugging and holding were in evidence as the three-day series of Twin Otter flights began to ferry them into the Kazan.

Base camp was at the 'riffle' flowing out of Angikuni. At least it was a riffle when several of the group leaders did it a few years back. However, it was now three weeks earlier, and the water was three feet higher, turning the riffle into a solid Grade 2 which called for much discussion and scouting before being successfully run.

I arrived on the second plane in and already scientific work was underway. We were camped less than 400 yards from two Inuit burial sites. These were examined but not disturbed since they had no permission to. Other objects found and catalogued include a soapstone pipe and pieces of a flintlock rifle. Thirty Inuit graves were found in the area of that first base camp.

It was an education for me to see how these young people looked at the land. Under the guidance of dedicated group leaders, they took their time and walked quite a number of hills and likely-looking spots where habitation was possible. All of these areas had been mapped out before hand, but it was possible for a group leader to have a look at any spot that caught their eye. Later in the trip one group uncovered the almost complete remains of a kayak near the Three Cascades.

Many wilderness canoeists speed by too quickly - easy to do on a fast flowing river like the Kazan. The wise ones know to slow down occasionally. If you want to get to know the land you must be on it. The weather was good for most of the summer with very few windy days. Several musk-ox were sighted and the group encountered a herd of caribou estimated at over 10,000. The caribou passed through several Venturers who walked out and lay down in the tundra.

Despite the numbers of rapids and relative inexperience of the group, there were only three dumpings - none serious. They had calm weather for all of their major lake crossings.

Operation Raleigh was more than a canoe trip. It is a scientific look into the most historically rich Barrenlands river. Much of the information gleaned will go toward designating the Kazan as a part of the Canadian Heritage River System.

Work was also done gathering info for the Breeding Bird Atlas of the Northwest Territories currently being assembled. One of the most significant studies, and most physically challenging, was the tree coring program. Under the direction of Dr. Glen MacDonald of McMaster University of Hamilton several trees and lake bottoms were cored to determine the their history in the area. It will give a good look at how the region has changed over the millenia. There are theories to suggest that the area was populated with Chippewyan Indians many years ago when trees were more abundant.

Expedition Leader David Pelly is to be congratulated. Under his command a diverse group of people pulled off a major exercise with no problems and abundant results.

This is not the end of Raleigh. A feature article in Canadian Geographic is being planned. There will also be a slide show of the trip. The first showing is Saturday November 5 at 9pm at the Ramada Don Valley in Toronto. The tickets cost $10 but you are advised to purchase them in advance from Canoe Ontario in Toronto. Call 495-4180 for info.

Michael Peake

BILL MASON... Need we say more?

Finally, the long awaited companion to the best-selling ***Path of the Paddle*** is here. Filled with the wisdom and knowledge of over 20 years of canoe camping, Mason's practical advice, tips and unique philosophy on wilderness camping make this an indispensable guide.

Don't miss it!

It will change the way you think about canoe tripping!

Available at better bookstores. ***$29.95*** *hardcover* ***$19.95*** *paperback*

KEY PORTER BOOKS

BARREN FUTURE . . . An interim report on the future of Canada's Inuit paints their future as desolate and bleak as a northern storm. Inuit culture, language and survival-skills are all being "lost at an alarming rate". The Inuit culture has survived the fiercest of climates but appears doomed to perhaps the most irrestistible scourge of all time - 20th century homogenous culture. The federally commissioned report will be released formally later this winter. It states that most young Inuit men cannot build an igloo or make hunting tools; most young women cannot make clothes from animal skins; and the richness of the Inuit language has been lost. It is ironic that in the present day when many traditional English names of Inuit communities are being converted to Inuktitut in the name of greater cultural preservation that the very culture they are supposedly preserving is vanishing before our eyes.

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REMEMBERING MAC . . .A five year celebration of the exploits of one of the major figures of Canadian exploration will kick-off next year when the Sir Alexander Mackenzie Canada Sea-to-Sea Bicentennial Expeditions get underway. This rather grandly organized project appears to be under the direction of John Amatt, the mountain climber who has recently been running a successful outdoor adventure and motivation seminar company for executives. The major objective of these Bicentennial Celebrations will be to re-trace and re-create the original journeys with a focus on historical authenticity and accuracy. Over the summer months from 1989-1993, three crews of students from Lakehead University in Thunder Bay will retrace Big Mac's routes in replica 36-foot Montreal, and 24-foot North canoes. Numerous communities will be visited along the way and a series of historical presentations and songs and dances involving the local audiences will be given. In 1989, as an advance event, the crews will travel from Fort McMurray to the Arctic Ocean via the Mackenzie River and return to Fort Resolution. The whole event is also blending with a mass-market media campaign to teach the public about Mackenzie through a film, theatrical events and school projects and a parallel southern canoe trip. While the event is non-profit, corporate sponsors are being sought to cover the $5.6 million cost. Another method of raising money is to create "Voyageur Friends of Mackenzie", these people will donate to the cause or purchase spaces in the canoes for week-long sections of the journeys. Two of the seven members of the National Advisory Board include Bill Mason, who pops up just about everywhere and Peter C. Newman, who is working on his third volume of Hudson Bay Company history. We'll no doubt hear a lot about this over the next few years.

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CANEXUS COLLECTION . . . Last fall's Canexus Conference in Kingston has finally yielded the promised book. **Canexus/The Canoe in Canadian Culture** is a collection of the talks given at the symposium held at Queens Univerity. This book arrived too late in Che-Mun's production schedule to permit a full review. The 6 by 9 inch, 234 page paperback lists for a hefty $19.95. There are no photographs but the book boasts a fine collection of Bill Mason drawings and was edited by Jim (Wild Waters) Raffan and Bert Horwood. Like the conference, the book appeals to the serious-minded canoeist who ponders the loftier meaning of canoeing and its place in Canadaian culture. Four of the 15 chapters include; *Motives for Mr. Canoehead* by Phil Chester; *Solitude and Kinship in Canoeing* by George Luste; *Canoeing: towards a Landscape of the Imagination* by C.E.S. Franks and *Lilly Dipping it Ain't* by Kenneth Roberts. Canexus is published by Betelgeuse Books of Toronto and is a companion volume to their very successful Nastawgan. That book won awards and received subsequent printings.

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The following back issues of Che-Mun are available for $3 each except where noted. Those with an asterisk are availale as photocopies only.

Outfit 38 - Fort William Rendezvous, Magpie River.
Outfit 39 - Trans Canada Canoe Expedition/David Pelly*
Outfit 40 - Eric Morse Tribute/Sory of "Les Voyageurs"*
Outfit 41 - Grand Canal Project/Thlewiaza River solo
Outfit 42 - The Morse River Expedition Part One ($6)
Outfit 43 - The Morse River Expedition Part Two ($6)
Outfit 44 - Bill Mason & Dog River/Athabasca letter
Outfit 45 - River flows/Pipe River by Eric Morse
Outfit 46 - Hudson to Ungava/Stew Coffin report
Outfit 47 - Heritage Rivers/Trans Canada expedition
Outfit 48 - Freshwater Saga - Morse memoirs/Slide fest
Outfit 49 - Kayaking the Queen Charlottes/HBC sell off
Outfit 50 - Royal couple canoe the Hanbury-Thelon($5)
Outfit 51 - Traditional canoeing through Quetico Park
Outfit 52 - Lands Forlorn, Atomic Arctic Proposal
Outfit 53 - Ungava Crater Expedition, Hubbard/Wallace

Upcoming Che

Once again a reminder to all Che-Mun subscribers, who wish to remain so, to check for the notice that reminds you when your subscription is up. You can also tell when your last issue is by looking at the last line in your address label

In the months ahead we will take a trip into the century-old Wood's plant where their classic canoe packs are made

More info from the Povungnituk 88 trip last summer.

Che-Mun

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