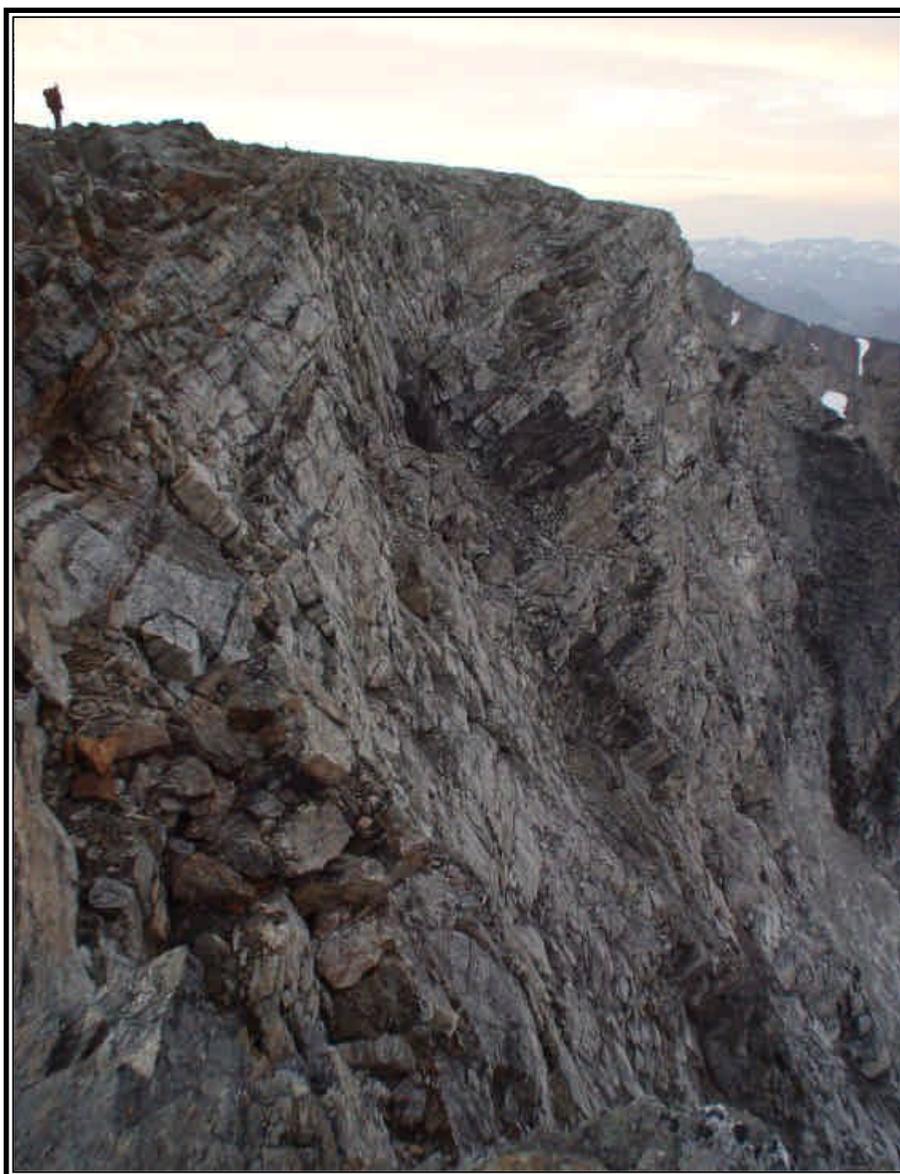




SUMMER 2004

THE JOURNAL OF CANADIAN WILDERNESS CANOEING

OUTFIT 117



Closure in the Torngats

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**Crown of a Continent
is cancelled**

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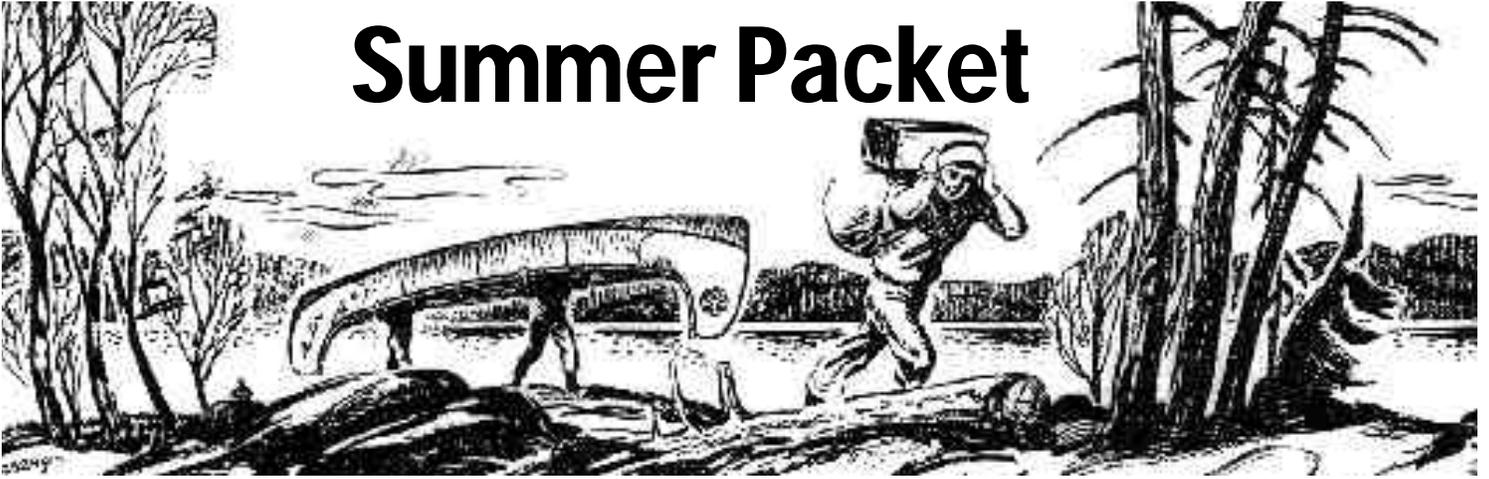
**Trip report on the
'Old' Methye Portage**

Page 9

A lone figure stands on the knife-edged Minaret Ridge running from the summit of Mt. Caubick/D'Iberville, 80 feet above the spot where the body of Susan Barnes was found in August, a year after she and fiancé Dan Pauzé perished on the summit of the Torngat peak. This summer two teams of searchers combed the remote area in search of the pair. We have a full report on the tragedy beginning on Page 6.

photo: Andrew Lavigne

Summer Packet



Erik K. Hobbie adds to the fine collection of re-action emanating from the recent Pauzé and Barnes Torngats tragedy. His thoughts echo those of many readers on risk, reward and responsibility in northern adventure travel

Although not a paid subscriber to *Che-Mun* (just haven't got around to yet, but will eventually), I have followed what has been available on-line ever since I became aware of you some years ago, and have enjoyed the HACC on-line accounts very much.

You do a very professional job of relating your wilderness river experiences to the public and should be commended for it. If it weren't for zealots like you who fork out big bucks, time and energy to do these trips, the far north of Canada might be viewed as merely a big resource pool by the powers that be, and it is doubtful its integrity would remain intact.

I have been following the tragic story of the loss of two paddlers in Labrador, and after reading the letters recently posted by Cliff Jacobson and Alan Kesselheim, I felt compelled to "give my two cents worth," so to speak.

I do this from what I feel might be viewed as a somewhat unique perspective. I ask you to make of it what you will, and, if you have time and are so inclined, to give back your two cents. If you don't have time to read this, I understand and I still think you guys are awesome.

A "pre-Cambrian junkie" since I was a wee kid, I did my first arctic trip in 1978 when I was 18 and have been a hopeless zealot ever since. With the exception of a seven year stint in my 20's during which I was completely obsessed with white-water slalom and the goal of trying (unsuccessfully) to secure a spot in C1 on the US whitewater team, I have gone back again and again, often running the

same rivers repeatedly. The 'unique' aspect of my perspective is that since 1988, I have gone 'late', almost always in September, either alone or with one other much less experienced person. As an example, I was alone in the barrens NE of Yellowknife on Sept. 11 2001, on just the second day of a 16 day trip that took me down the Barnston River to McLeod Bay (I listened to all that madness unfold on a short-wave radio, often with tears running down my cheeks). I sought that river out for the unique whitewater challenge that I knew it would offer, just as I did with the nearby Waldron, McKinley, and Beaulieu Rivers, all of which I have visited in September, sometimes repeatedly. Like you, I would categorize myself as an 'expert' but am uncomfortable with the term. This year, my wife and I will run the Thelon from Lynx to somewhere near Beverly, starting Aug. 26 and finishing Sept. 14. We will carry both a sat phone and a VHF radio.

I have done this more or less in obscurity, and I have made mistakes along the way. On one early trip I bit off more than I ended up being able to chew and had to arrange and pay for an expensive charter to get out in time. I have met loads of skepticism, and even scorn, from resort owners and bush pilots (although the folks at Air Tindi seem supportive and understanding). I realize that many people like yourself would view this as irresponsible madness and would immediately ask "why"? All I can say it is that it has nothing to do with risk and testosterone and everything to do with love. I am obsessed with that country, that season, and all that it entails. When I die (at a ripe old age, I hope), it is my wish that my remains will end up there, on an esker near treeline, so that I can watch the colors turn and the caribou pass forever.

Why that season? It is cold and wet and miserable and dangerous, but what stands out from this,

at least for me, is the color, the lack of bugs and other paddlers, the dynamic nature of the wildlife, the aurora . . . I could go on. To me, there is nothing more inspiring than waking up to a thick coating of hoarfrost on the belly of a carefully overturned canoe. All of this wouldn't matter for a hill of beans, except that last year myself, my wife, and four others ran the Seal River from Nejanilini to the Bay in the second half of September, and one of the group members (a professional photographer from Ely MN) was contacted by *Canoe & Kayak* magazine to write a story, which she and I did together (it was just submitted for publication).

Upon reading your editorial on *Risk and Responsibility*, the thought hit me . . ."what if our glowing account of this trip inspires someone to run the Seal in September and they die of hypothermia? ...will we be accountable?" Fair question, and one which has kept me up at night since. Although we give a warning at the end of our article, there is nothing to stop the inexperienced from doing just that.

It is my belief, however, that as our sport grows in popularity, more and more people will run these rivers, and I predict that 20 years from now, late and early season canoe trips in the far north will be common place. A result of this increase in use will undoubtedly be, increasingly, more tragic stories such as that of Susan Barnes and Daniel Pauze. But as long as people such as yourself convey their adventures with the proper sense of respect for the country, the residents, and the inherent risks, we are absolved. It is merely a growing pain of an activity that is by its nature quite risky. Although some will surely view this growth with disdain, I believe it will be what ends up saving vast chunks of the far north from development, and that is something we can all live happily with.

Happy trails and keep up the fine work.

Canoesworthy

The mayor of Cape Dorset, complained in CBC interview about an unexpected visit by a cruise ship that saw hundreds of tourists take his community by surprise. Oshuittuq Quvianatuliak, an employee of West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Limited in Cape Dorset, said that it "looked like they came from nowhere," and said that his store would have prepared displays for the tourists if they knew they were coming.

As a result, only a few people bought carvings while they were in town, and not one local resident got a day's works guiding tourists, or staging any kind of cultural performance.

It's a story that Nunavut Tourism has heard before. "We have no more control over cruise ship visitors than any visitors that come here." Maureen Bundgaard, Nunavut Tourism's executive director said.

Residents of Hall Beach expected to get their first cruise ship visit this summer, but Martha Gibbons, the CEDO for Hall Beach, says "the residents here weren't quite ready yet so we moved it to next summer."

In Hall Beach, a group was established last year to investigate ways the community could benefit from tourism. But the ship was cancelled until someone could be trained to serve as a tour guide for visitors.

A few communities have managed to build a well-coordinated industry. Pond Inlet has years of experience with the industry and expects eight ships to stop in this summer to see the sights and enjoy the community programs on offer.

Ice conditions recently forced Canadian Tours International to cancel a visit to Arctic Bay this summer. In general, more and more northern boast travel is expected as the warmin of the planet continues. Recent studies have shown global warming is happening fastest near the polar regions

Knud Rasmussen was a Dane, born in Greenland, who led an expedition through Canada's eastern Arctic from 1921 to 1924, collecting songs, stories and artifacts from the people he met.

Igloolik Isuma Productions' will do a feature film, which documents the life and times of many members of that famous expedition. *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* will not be a traditional feature film nor a documentary.

The resulting film will be a re-enactment of sorts, in English, Inuktitut and Danish, loosely based on the travels of Rasmussen. The goal is not to document Rasmussen's exploration, but rather to film the particular time that brought the people of Igloolik into contact with the explorers.

Two main characters are Peter Freuchen and Therkel Mathiassen, two members of the expedition who explored the northern part of Baffin Island, including the Igloolik area, during the epic trip, accompanied by Nasaitdlorsuarrssuk of Greenland and Mala of the Baffin region.

Photography was rare in 1905 but that didn't stop explorers from wanting to bring documents of their voyages home. An accepted method at the time was to cover people's faces in plaster, in order to capture a mold that could then be used to create a bust, or cast of the face. The film will also document the arrival of Christianity. The first bible came to Igloolik from Pond Inlet in 1921, and was noted by Rasmussen during a visit to Aua's camp.

The production team in Igloolik are now in the process of translating the script into Inuktitut. By January, a cast of 30 to 35 people, including 6 or 7 main characters, will be assembled, including some Greenlanders. Next, costumes and props will be made or found, and shooting for the Nunavut-Canada-Denmark production will begin in March.

From the Editor

I am sure many of you wondered what happened to the HACC and our *Crown of a Continent* trip scheduled for this past summer. The sad truth is a sudden recurrence of my wife Margaret's breast cancer, that she had battled so valiantly last year, took her life on July 11. It was not even two weeks from diagnosis to death. Her breast cancer returned to her liver and took her very swiftly.

While there is some consolation in the fact she did not suffer a prolonged decline, as is common with that accursed disease, the speed caught us all unprepared. She was diagnosed June 30, two days after we had cancelled the trip when it became obvious the abdominal pain she had was nothing trivial.

My son Tom, 8, and I were, and are, devastated. Our world has changed dramatically. But to offer a canoeing metaphor – when times are toughest – a light so often shines through. In this case, it was the tremendous support of family, friends and neigh-

bours, including many of you. It is all too overwhelming and keeps coming at you in waves. Time will heal, but it will take some while before the wounds are bearable.

Margaret McNair Peake, aka Maggie, was not a wilderness canoeist but she fulfilled the role of this canoeist's biggest fan – and critic. She was the voice behind many stories and comments in *Che-Mun* and tried her best to improve our woeful typo rate while at the same time trying to rewrite everything she edited!

That is the reason that Outfit 117 is so far behind schedule and *Crown of a Continent* was dethroned. I will continue to produce *Che-Mun* and I would ask you to bear with us as we struggle to get back to some kind of normal schedule.

Another story of death takes over these pages as well. The discovery of the bodies of Daniel Pauzé and Susan Barnes, lost in Labrador last summer came as some relief to the families of the pair of young adventurers. This story has created a great deal of interest in these pages and beyond which is why we deal with it one more time.

As for our summer of 2004, it will be remembered with great sadness and a time when both our lives changed dramatically. Tom and I did, however, return to the wonderful cottage the three of us shared last summer in Georgian Bay. Wild rocky shores and the looming presence of big water, make Georgian Bay a haven and a superb place to begin the healing.

Michael Peake



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From Reindeer to Eskimo Point

By Peter Kazaks

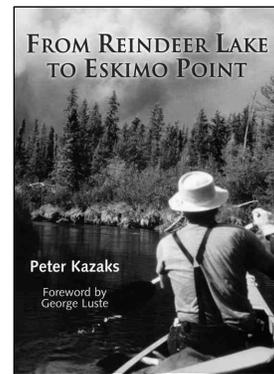
Natural Heritage Books, Toronto 2003

156 pp, \$22.95

ISBN: 1-896219-84-5

Books reviewed by Michael Peake

This book is precisely what it says it is; a trip from Reindeer Lake to Eskimo Point on Hudson Bay, which is now called Arviat. Peter Kazaks joined in with fellow-physicist and canoe veteran George Luste and two other paddlers for a long journey across the lands of P. G. Downes Sleeping Island and Farley Mowat's People of the Deer.



The trip took place in 1981 and is obviously an intense memory for the author to recount it so many years later. Kazaks' fourth child was born six weeks before departure so I am sure it was memorable for his wife as well.

The book is a modest effort told in a straightforward manner in a chronological sequence. Kazaks is an able writer and still recall many small details of what was an arduous trip. I particularly loved the novice's mention of dealing with a wet wallet that he kept in his pants while hauling up rivers. He finally clued in that a wallet is one of the least valuable items needed on a wilderness trip.

The two other trip members were economist Dave Berthelet, who died in 1998 and yet another physicist, Gerd Hartner. Kazaks is a paddler who had never been to the true north and was excited about the prospect. He recounts the pre-trip organization and the lectures from Luste on what – and what not – to bring.

The 800-mile, 38 day trip began via a long ride to Lynn Lake, on Reindeer Lake. From there the group ascended the Sawn River into Wollaston Lake following the route of David Thompson, whom Luste justly acknowledges as the greatest of the early traders. From there they headed down the

Cochrane River a ways and then over to the Thlewiaza River. It was there the Luste historic tour really begins as they wend their way through the Tha-Anne, Kognac, Padlei and Maguse rivers.

All the photos are by George Luste who is a good shooter but he is really let down by the poor, greyish black and white photos poorly reproduced – a common occurrence with many smaller publishers.

Kazaks and Luste refer to the tensions that existed during the trip. But it's part of human nature to remember the good parts. This book will especially be of interest to those traveling in this history-drenched area. A paddler's first northern trip remains the best in so many ways. But it is a personal memory that can defy explanation to others.

Up the Creek

True Stories of Canoeists in Trouble

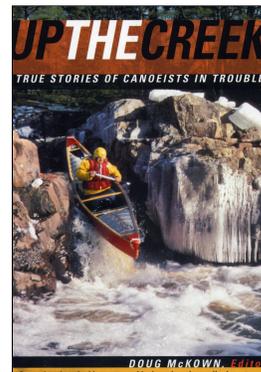
Edited by Doug McKown

Ragged Mountain Press, Camden ME

186pp, \$27.95

ISBN: 0-07-139090-1

I have a recurring dream. Despite all its variations, it is the same central theme. I have just embarked on a canoe trip and have realized the incredibly important things I forgot to pack; such as maps, food or paddles. When I awake in a sweat and realize I am not in a tent, the panic subsides.



Up the Creek is a collection of many people's real life 'dreams' and nightmares and as such is quite entertaining for us to read and them to contemplate—after the fact.

Doug McKown, who has written for *Che-Mun*, is an experienced outdoorsman from Alberta who supplies many of the tales of terror from his own experience.

Many familiar names provide the tales of woe which run for a few pages. Contributors include; George Drought, Toni Harting, Laurel Archer, Hap Wilson and Cliff Jacobson. Tales of rapids, bears,

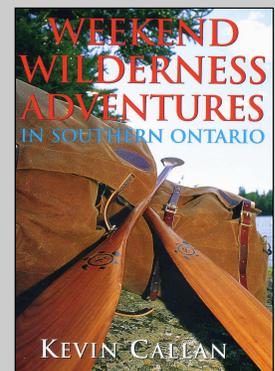
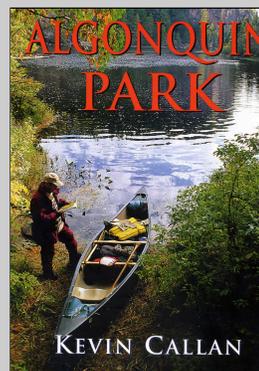
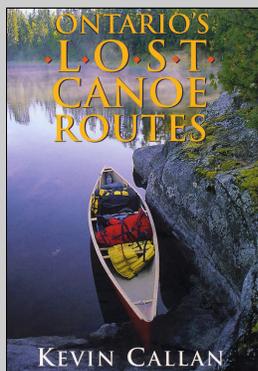
A batch of re-hatched Kevin Callans

Synergies and shakeups in the Canadian publishing industry have settled out and the rebranding of many books has begun.

Kevin Callan, the prolific and popular paddler has seen three of his previous books brought out with new titles that are more fitting to the corporate marketing culture i.e. not as clever. They are now part of the series of *A Paddler's Guide to...*

Brook Trout and Blackflies has become *Algonquin Park*; *Gone Canoeing* is now *Weekend Wilderness Adventures*; and somehow *Ontario's Lost Canoe Routes* kept its title!

The bottom line is they are all superb guide books written by a knowledgeable and entertaining author. All have up to date colour maps and are loaded with excellent colour photos.



injuries and fires abound. McKown's point in all of this, which he makes in several Editor's additions at the end of the story; is safety. Learning how to prepare and plan can make even bad situations manageable and cut down on the number of rough spots you find yourself in. Of course, pure luck, is sometimes needed. One amazing tale is of two guys practicing rapids in the still-mostly-frozen Churchill River and dumping at dusk! If someone in a boat had not arrived on the scene, precisely in those few minutes, one of them who was still in the ice-choked river would have certain perished.

We have all known many close calls and what-ifs. Let's hope we're all still around to be able to write about them and not have someone read about us!

Bark Canoes

The Art and Obsession of Tappan Adney

By John Jennings

Firefly Books, 2004 152 pp \$35

ISBN: 1-55297-733-1

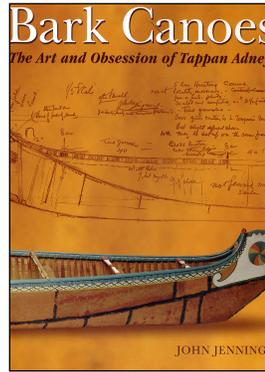
Edwin Tappan Adney is a lynch-pin in the history of the North American birchbark canoe. The talented American, who became a Canadian, almost single handedly preserved the incredibly beautiful and functional bark boats of a bygone era.

This is an extremely attractive and elegant book about Adney along with photos of 110 of his remaining exquisite scale models of an array of perfect bark canoes. John Jennings, a Trent University professor and board member of the Canadian Canoe Museum was granted access to the Adney collection housed in the Mariner's Museum in Newport News, Virginia.

The book features a 16 page biography of Adney but the bulk of the book consists of superb photos by John Pemberton, Mariner's Museum photographer. The models took an estimated 20,000 hours of work by Adney over many years. He died nearly penniless in a small cabin in New Brunswick in 1950 at 82.

His story is a heroic one, the classic case of the right man at the right time doing the right things.

Born in 1868 in Ohio, Adney led an itinerant life as a journalist, artist and model maker. A trip to New Brunswick, the home of his future wife would launch what truly became a heroic obsession with native bark craft.



Clearly Adney was a genius in his field. After some great experiences in the far west covering the Alaska gold rush in 1900 he spent the rest of his life trying to find a worthy place to buy and house his growing collection of model bark canoes.

He chose a 1:5 scale replica since that size still allowed traditional crafting methods of root, spruce and bark to be worked.

Like Van Gogh, he tried to peddle his masterpieces he found no takers. His long association with McGill University who loaned him money and tried to keep his collection makes the school look pretty cheap. And, no doubt, like many brilliant men, Adney was tough to get along with. He and his ailing wife finally quite Montreal and moved to a humble shack where he lived out his days continuing to add and assemble a treasure trove of native knowledge on bark canoes.

It took a chance find by the Mariners' Museum in 1940 to change his fortunes somewhat. The U.S. institution realized what a find these models were and purchased them, settling Adney's account at McGill and providing him with some money - most of which he gave away to his native friends.

They also purchased his extensive research papers which were eventually turned into a classic scholarly book by Howard Chappelle who transformed Adney's voluminous notes into *The Bark Canoes and Skin Boats of North America*.

Each of the model photos contains info about the boat and often references to the original full-sized models which are owned by the Canadian Canoe Museum.

It is a well known fact that no one makes money from the canoeing world. It is a love, a passion, that incorporates an esthetic sense, the stir of adventure and the love of history and nature. The reward is in

the knowing, the satisfaction of a beautiful craft in a beautiful land. These are the true rewards. Like some bark-clad Lord of the Rinds, Adney held on to his belief and passion in the beauty and history of a craft built by a forest culture. And, thanks to John Jennings, we are all the richer for it.

A Canoeist's Sketchbook

By Robert Kimber

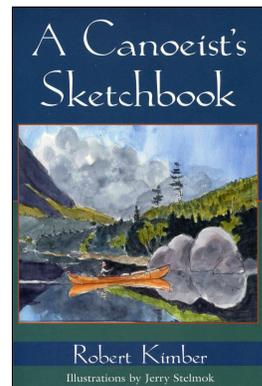
Illustrations by Jerry Stelmock

Countrysport Press, Toronto 2003

202pp, US\$14.95

ISBN: 0-89272-654-7

A Canoeist's Sketchbook is yet another issue, being originally published in 1991. I assume they are not doing all these re-



births to make this reviewer feel old, that is the effect however.

I recall with fondness this gentle book from the North Woods of Maine.

The new edition has a new watercolour cover artwork in addition to the classic pen and ink sketches by noted canoe

builder Jerry Stelmock. These drawings are in the fine, evocative tradition of Francis Lee Jacques and Robert Hines.

Robert Kimber is steeped in the Maine North Woods canoeing tradition. He has paddled with Garrett and Alexandra Conover as well as Jerry Stelmock.

The 37 short stories/essays cover a breadth of canoeing thoughts and actions - a sort of philosophy of paddling. Though mainly set in Maine, one of the longest stories is an appreciation of the unique QNS&L train which runs from the St Lawrence River to the Labrador plateau - it's a favourite of the Conovers.

Kimber's relaxed, gentle and observant style offers insight, hints and humour to like-minded folks who share that common love.

Recovery at the Summit

The closure took exactly one year. For a long, cold and lonely winter, the remains of outdoor adventurers Daniel Pauzé and Susan Barnes lay trapped in their Torngat tomb, victims of an August 2003 climbing accident.

This past August, two groups of searchers, one private, one public resumed looking for the missing pair. Bad weather last year hampered any attempts to find them.

In a superb piece of reporting and wonderful Web journalism, **Andrew Lavigne** of Ottawa, a friend of the pair and a member of the 18-person search team has put together a first rate Web site on the Dan and Susan story.

His excellent, and lengthy, report which features full stories, photos, maps and even GPS co-ordinates can be found at: <http://alavigne.net/newHomePage/Outdoors/TripReports/Torngats2004/index.jsp>. Andrew has kindly allowed us to quote from his site as well as us two of his photos.

The idea, as Andrew writes in the following story, began a couple of months following the disappearance of the pair:

A memorial service was held in Brampton, Ontario in October of 2003. As everyone searched for answers, the idea of a privately-mounted search expedition took shape. This was partly driven by the fact that the authorities appeared to lack conviction regarding further searching. Both Jack Bennett and Roland toyed with and started planning just such an expedition, eventually combining their efforts into a single venture. The expedition gradually took shape: an 18-member team, all volunteers, led by Jack and Roland, would return to the Torngats in August of 2004 to look for Sue and Dan. Also among the searchers were the Colorado couple that had been the last to see Dan and Sue alive.

There were no guarantees: everyone had to be prepared for the possibility



SUMMIT OF ALL FEARS -- Susan Barnes at the summit of Mt. Caubick August 11, 2003. Shortly after this photo was taken, a series of tragic events would unfold taking the lives of both Susan and her partner Dan Pauze who took this photo.

that not a trace of them would be found. There was word of bad weather and unusually heavy snows this year, so the team was prepared for the worst.

After hundreds of hours of planning, the private expedition was ready to go. Leaving on August 3, 2004, the team received some basic Search and Rescue training, then headed up to scour the peak. The attack was multi-pronged: 9 team members would approach and search from the north, and 9 from the south. Teams were linked by satellite phone and radios to each other and to Parks Canada, who, although not absolutely committed, were still thinking of search the area again themselves. In fact, RCMP had first authorized, then cancelled, then re-authorized the Parks Canada team, such that it looked like the private expedition would indeed be the first to search the upper mountain.

All went according to plan. What was reported as excessive snow cover turned out to be false - there was little snow on the mountain. On Saturday, August 7, the south team split up into 3

parties and simul-climbed the three southern approaches. The most important and likely places to search were (a) the location where the harness was found, (b) the summit, and (c) the so-called "Koroc Step", a more difficult section along the mostly likely ascent route Dan and Sue used.

By roughly mid-morning, the Koroc ridge search team was perhaps 45 minutes away from the first major point of interest, the Koroc Step. Parks Canada finally managed to make it in, and with their AS 350 helicopter, raced in to examine the upper mountain and the Koroc step. It was there hovering above the notch, that Dan was found, lying on his stomach, with one leg crossed over the

photos: Daniel Pauze

Torngat Tragedy

other. He was directly on the ridgecrest in the step, partly in Quebec, and partly in Labrador.

The next day, the search helicopter, scouring a section of cliffs of interest near where Christophe picked up the climbing harness, found Susan. She was found 150 feet down from the top of the thousand-foot headwall of the Minaret Glacier. It appears that both Dan and Sue succumbed to exposure. The Parks Canada helicopter airlifted both Dan and Sue to Newfoundland, along with Dan's pack, which carried their GPS, Camera and Video Camera. What took weeks and weeks last year was over in less than 24 hours of searching. The circumstances surrounding Sue and Dan's last day were now much clearer. It appears, then, that Dan and Sue successfully climbed the Koroc Ridge to the very summit, where they left a short but powerful note:

"August 11, 2003 - Daniel Pauze and Susan Barnes, in a wicked snowstorm ..."

Shortly thereafter, descending the Koroc Ridge, something happened - likely Dan was climbing back up the Koroc step when some part of their rope system failed, causing Dan to be injured. Not able to move, and in worsening weather, they both knew Sue had to go for help. She couldn't take the most direct way down, because that involved climbing the 30 foot step of rock that their rope had just fallen off of. Instead she had to climb back over the summit and over a different, almost as treacherous



The foot of Daniel Pauzé on the summit of Mt Caubvick/Mt. d'Iberville taken by the climber as he and Susan Barnes reached the peak on a stormy day in August 2003. This photo and the one on the opposite page are from the digital camera recovered a year after they perished in the treacherous Torngat range. Below, Roland Hanel, a member of the friends' rescue party sits by Dan's rope at the spot where his friend died a year earlier and tries to come to some understanding of what happened. The beautiful weather of 2004 was a startling contrast to the conditions experienced a year earlier.



knife-edged ridge of slippery, snow-dusted rock.

It would have taken a lot of bravery and courage to do this by herself, testimony to her determination and love for Dan. The fact that Sue had not climbed much in her life, and certainly never in such conditions ever before, makes it all the more amazing. At the end of the knife-edged ridge, she reached the upper football field of level ground, and left her harness behind on the ground. From there she crossed the field and was looking for some sort of way down when she either fell, was blown off or down-climbed to the spot where she was found on the Minaret glacier headwall.

Photo: Daniel Pauzé

The day after Dan was found, Roland sat down on a boulder in the Koroc step next to a water bottle that marked where Dan's body had lain for exactly one year. The day was sunny, warm, and there was not a breath of wind.

There was a haunted and contemplative look in his eyes, as he tried to make sense of what had happened here a year before to his best friend, in the driving snow and fierce wind. Later, near the cairn above the spot where Susan was found, Roland inched forward on his stomach to the cliff's edge and surveyed the ledge directly below, where Susan would have spent her last moments alive. He lay there, still, for many minutes. Then, after some quiet, gentle sobbing, Roland stood up, regained his composure, and continued on down the mountain.

Photo: Andrew Lavigne

Crown of a Continent dethroned

By MICHAEL PEAKE

Editor

Desperate events caused the last minute cancellation of the *Crown of a Continent* trip. It was all ready to go and will probably be continued at a future date. Even though there was no trip, we are going to tell you a bit more about the trip that wasn't and some info about fundraising which always fascinates many paddlers – and frustrates others.

The Hide-Away Canoe Club has always been fortunate in getting a solid level of sponsorship for our trips. Each journey brings its own success and failures despite our generally good track record of obtaining support. *Crown of a Continent* was something of a challenge. We recently had the luxury of a total sponsorship package from *Woods Canada* on our last trip – Labrador Odyssey 2001. Woods had gone in a different direction and

we could hardly complain as they had been a tremendous supporter for more than a decade. The challenge was to again find a company that understood what we do and how it would fit into their needs.

Having a continuous run of successful trips is no guarantee of landing a sponsor, though it certainly helps. Nevertheless, I have a stack of rejection letters, emails – and one preprinted kiss-off card – from five different large companies we thought would be a good fit. Undaunted I approached the people who would really care that we could draw attention to northern Saskatchewan and Alberta—the provincial tourism people.

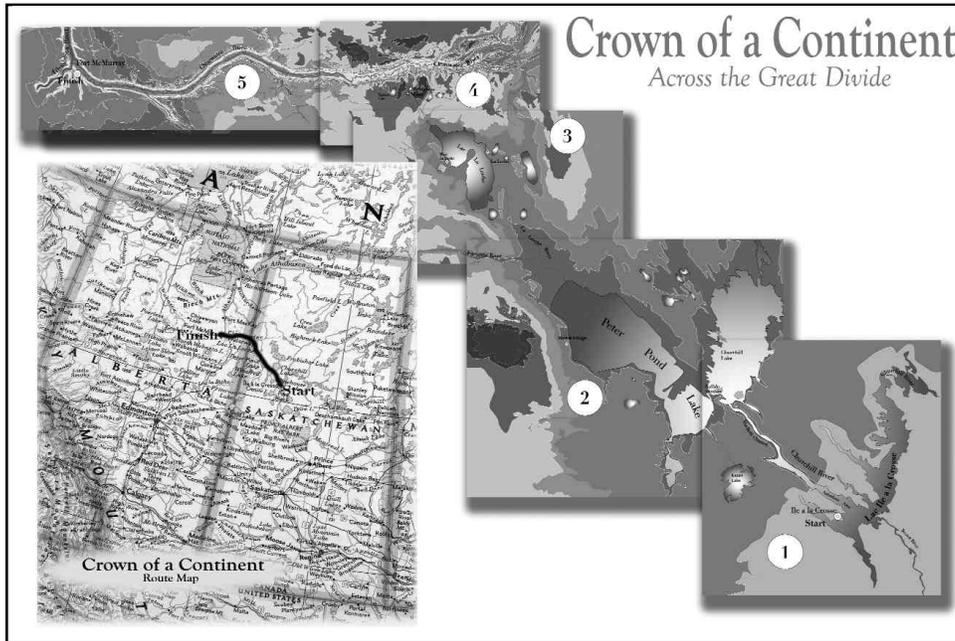
As I have written many times, obtaining sponsors is all about what you can do for them. They have to be clear about what you are offering – and so do you. In our case we have access to mass media, through the newspapers and Internet. This was the key in obtaining support from Sask Travel and Travel Alberta. We had to look what they could offer – and that's not a wad of cash – but rather support for travel within their area. We were fortunate that *Crown of a Continent* spanned two provinces - doubling the potential support.

The trip was to start in Ft McMurray, Alberta and fly into Ile-a-la-Crosse, Sask with charter operator Voyage Air who also have bases in both provinces. After the dropoff, we would paddle back to Ft, McMurray to our gear. The provincial tourism people were able to assist with the charter flight costs and

canoe rentals, a normal part of their business of supply travel costs to media who would write stories that people would see about their wonderful provinces. This is a great fit for everyone.

We were less successful with other companies for whom we thought we would be a good fit. One in particular, I really felt would be a great pairing was Tim Hortons. This Canadian institution, now American-owned, is the top purveyor of coffee and baked goods in this country. Their very clever TV ads focus on the chain's intimate 'Canadian-ness', something we thought tied into that quintessential Canadian activity – canoeing. After all, there's scarcely a canoe trip that doesn't end and/or begin at a Tim's along the way. Our ultimate result was a big donut however.

It is also very hard to penetrate a large corporation with its many layers and you really need an angel or enlightened CEO such as David Earthy at Woods Canada who wants



to make a true corporate commitment.

We were also fortunate in getting support from the following companies; Yamaha (generator), Globalstar Canada (satphone), Saw Ridge Inns (accommodation) and Canadian Tourism Commission (sked flight assistance). All in all, we covered about 75 per cent of our costs which is quite respectable. Some of that support will be there in the future but you're never really sure until you are there. We will pick up those leads next year, I hope.

The Canoe Web site was all set to host the trip once again. Indeed, most of the site had been written and a superb map had been produced by Sean Peake. We will keep all of that on ice for the next time but some of it is presented here.

Fate has reminded us never to make our plans too far ahead with much certainty. However, we hope to perhaps do this trip next year but who really knows what the year ahead will bring this time? Having a story from the same area, which begins on the next page, was a great stroke of luck and we are fortunate that Andy Breckenridge was willing and so able to provide us with an first rate trip report. One mention on our trip research, and his. It caused us to look more deeply at the book *Canoeing the Churchill* by Sid Robinson and Ted Marchildon. This is an incredible resource—absolutely brimming with info, photos, drawings of the Churchill River system and a great read for those paddling in the area or not.

Expedition

Chasing the Voyageur on the 'Old' Methye Portage



Spectacular Bald Eagle Gorge on the Clearwater River

Story, photos and maps by **ANDY BRECKENRIDGE**

"Ghosts of those days (of the voyageur) stalk the portages, and phantom brigades move down the waterways, and it is said that singing can be heard on quiet nights. I wonder when the final impact of the era is weighed on the scales of time if the voyageur himself will be remembered longer than anything else. He left a heritage of the spirit that will fire the imaginations of (paddlers) for centuries to come."

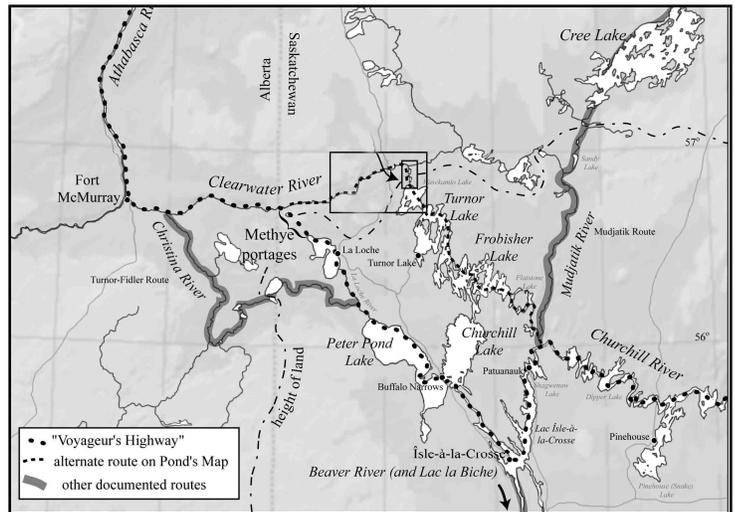
-Sigurd Olson, *The Lonely Land*

Every paddler who feels the tug of the voyageur's spirit on the bow of their canoe will eventually be drawn to the height of land between Lake Athabasca and the Churchill River. Perhaps here, echoes of the voyageur ring the loudest; but be forewarned, the sounds you may hear on quiet nights are probably not singing, but the chorus of a thousand curses made

under back breaking loads on the Methye Portage. The Methye portage is a grueling 19 kilometers, and voyageurs would be responsible for carrying six to eight pieces (90-lb bundles of goods or fur) across the trail. The pieces were carried two at a time, and the ordeal typically lasted four days. This portage links Lac la Loche on the edge of the Churchill watershed with the western flowing Clearwater River. In reality the portage is two carries that are broken by Rendezvous Lake, a small body of water named in later years when Hudson Bay Company crews from York Factory would meet and exchange goods and furs with crews from Athabasca and the greater northwest. Although Rendezvous Lake offers a brief respite, the long carries overshadow the short paddle, and the Methye is commonly referred to as a single portage.

Peter Pond was the first person of European descent to enter the Athabasca basin via the Methye. Pond was an independent trader, one among many who poured into the Saskatchewan and Churchill River basins following the end of the Seven Years War between France and England. The war resulted in the decline and collapse of the French trading posts in the Canadian interior and left the country open to enterprising individuals like Peter Pond. He allied himself with a few traders already in the area, most notably Thomas and Joseph Frobisher. In 1777 Thomas Frobisher ascended the Churchill River to Ile-à-la-Crosse where he first encountered the Athabaskan-speaking Dené whose range stretched northwest far into the Mackenzie basin. East of this region along the Churchill River were Algonquin-speaking Cree. The history of the Cree and Dené who inhabited the region is complex, but the height of land may have served as a natural divide between these two peoples. Today the most western Cree band along the Churchill is at Pinehouse, but both Cree and Dené names persist for many of the region's lakes and rivers.

Pond's guides were probably Dené. In 1778 they led him from Ile-à-la-Crosse via the Methye Portage to the lower Athabasca River where he over-wintered. His trading enterprise was so successful, that he had more furs than he could carry and he had to cache his cargo along the Athabasca to be picked up upon his return. He left the fur trade in 1788, a year before Mackenzie's voyage to the arctic. His efforts were essential elements that led to the consolidation of several traders and financial backers into



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the Northwest Company. Unfortunately Pond's journals have not survived, and his legacy rests on his maps. Pond was not a skilled surveyor, but the shortcomings in the geographic precision of his maps are surpassed by the remarkable accuracy of the general relationships between waterways in the Canadian interior. Pond's maps were the first conceptions of the interior that were based primarily on experience rather than artistic fancy.

Others followed in Pond's wake; the trail became a conduit to the northwest through which everyone passed. The list is remarkable: Mackenzie, Fraser, Thompson, Franklin, Back and Tyrrell. For this reason, the trail is a beacon for modern paddlers; there are few trails in North America seeped in so much history. Nevertheless, the Methye was not always the funnel to the northwest through which everyone passed: there were other trails.

There probably was never an "Old Methye Portage" - but I like the name. The Methye Portage is named after Methye Lake, also known as Lac la Loche. A methy is a burbot (eelpout) and loche (Fr) or loach is an Old World fish that can look similar to a burbot. Because the "Old Methye Portage" does not begin or end anywhere near Methye Lake, the name is suspect. My wife heard the name from a pilot who said he flew in some geographers around 25 years ago who "had a grant to do some work on the Old Methye Portage". This is the only name I've heard for the portages we took over the height of land, and the name seems good enough for now.

Before we began the trip, I did not even know there was a trail - we had planned to bushwhack across the divide. While the discovery of these trails was a great relief, they were not a complete surprise. Anyone who carefully inspects a map of the Clearwater-Churchill region should recognize that the classic voyageur route over the divide is circuitous: a traveler heading northwest up the Churchill River makes a major detour to the south on Ile-à-la-Crosse before heading back to the northwest. An alternate route could utilize the string of lakes north of Churchill Lake that extend far closer to the Clearwater River than Lac la Loche, and if one looks more closely, there are two long lakes that bridge this gap. There is less than 4-km of land separating the Clearwater River from Wasekamio Lake: why would the classic voyageur route follow the 19-km Methye portage when a 4-km crossing was available farther upstream? Did they not know about the route?

Pond knew about the route; the route is depicted on a detailed map he intended for the Empress of Russia, currently held in the Public Record Office in London. Pond mapped large areas that he did not explore, but the features are more or less accurate, so much of his map must be based on native accounts. On his map, Pond shows "L. Clair" separated from the Clearwater by two small lakes, I believe these are the two small lakes between

Wasekamio and the Clearwater. Under this interpretation, "L. Clair" encompasses Wasekamio, Turnor, Frobisher, and Churchill Lakes. This is no great misrepresentation of the practical geography. Wasekamio and Turnor are essentially one lake, as are Churchill and Frobisher, and only a short segment of river separates Turnor and Frobisher lakes.

Pond also maps the ultimate value of this route. A traveler coming up the Churchill could circumvent the circuitous route on Ile-à-la-Crosse by entering the Mudjatik, and after a short ways, turn to the northwest and enter "L. Clair" via a smaller lake (Flatstone). I have not explored the route, but imagine one still exists. The reasons these routes are maintained is because the area is actively trapped, hunted, and fished by people from the nearby communities of Turnor Lake and Patuanak.

This alternative to the Methye had at least one other draw, our trip would follow a relict spillway for glacial Lake Agassiz. Lake Agassiz was an enormous lake that persisted for around 6,000 years, but finally drained 8,400 years ago. The expanse of the lake varied in time, but it stretched from the Red River valley in the south, almost to Lake Superior in the east, and northwest to the Clearwater River. The great ice sheet in Hudson Bay blocked the Churchill and Nelson watersheds, so water backflooded until an outlet was reached. When the ice front was farther south, Agassiz drained via the Minnesota River. When the front receded to the north, water drained east into Superior, or northwest down the Clearwater River.

Around 11,300 years ago, the ice sheet had receded just north enough to let waters from Lake Agassiz overflow into the Clearwater River Valley. This new outlet was around 50-m lower than the previous outlet, so Agassiz's water levels dropped over one to three years and roared down the Clearwater River Valley. Because Lake Agassiz was so huge, and the drop in water level so great, the amount of water released by this flood is beyond comparison to any floods on the modern planet. Around 21,000 km³ of water spilled down the Clearwater River, enough to raise global sea level by six centimeters. At peak flow rates, the discharge down the spillway was around nine times the discharge of the Amazon River, and post-flood baseline discharge was around 42,000 m³/s. This water carved out the Clearwater Valley. Steep cliffs of limestone and dolomite rise 600 feet above the valley floor, and between them meanders the Clearwater River, a veritable trickle compared to the waters that carved the river's valley.

Those floodwaters began their descent at around the "Old Methye Portage" From near the modern divide to Contact Rapids the river drops over 320 ft, yielding a gradient of over 9 ft/mi (~1.7 m/km). This is why the "Old Methye Portage" was never a viable alternative to the Methye. Ascending the Clearwater River above Contact Rapids (the first rapids upstream from the



Crossing the "Old" Methye Portage to the Clearwater River.

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Methye Portage) would test the stubbornness and patience of even the most resolute voyageur. In stark contrast, travelling down the Clearwater over the old Agassiz spillway offers a pleasant trip for the modern paddler.

Our journey over the divide and down the Clearwater was a trip of many moods, we have never paddled a route that offered so much diversity over such a short length. The first few days were on large lakes, which offer the open horizons that I greatly enjoy. The divide trails are in decent shape, but they course predominantly through sphagnum and spruce muskeg, so there were several muddy and wet sections - but there were also pleasant stints through dry, mature polar uplands or jack pine and caribou moss. We did not find a trail out of the last small lake to the Clearwater River. A large burn, perhaps twenty years old, has swept across the land between this lake and the river. Young jack pine offer enough clearance that a bushwhack would not be terribly difficult, but the beaver-dammed creek draining the lake offered enough water to float our canoe and we opted to paddle the final leg to the Clearwater.

The scenery changes dramatically on the river. The valley is washed in sand and filled with jack pine. Sand and boulders line the streambed, and here the river lives up to its namesake. The larger rapids are restricted to a few narrows where the river shoots a gap through the crystalline bedrock of the Canadian Shield. The most notable rapids are below the Semchuk Trail, a dirt road that crosses the Clearwater en route to the Cluff Lake uranium mine. About 10-km downstream from the road crossing, the gradient increases, and the valley walls close in on the river channel. At Big Island, the river finds contact between the 300 million year old Devonian carbonates (approx. 400 million years old) and the Canadian Shield (locally at least 2,500 million years old), but the river bottom follows this contact for 60-km, so that you aren't finished paddling through the Shield until reaching Contact Rapids. Within this section, the river carves two gorges through weathered granite, Smoothrock and Bald Eagle.

Our favorite spot of the trip was near Smoothrock Falls. The river splits here with most of the water roaring over the falls in an awesome show of power. The other channel is largely abandoned, although enough water spills over to create a garden of cascades and pools over polished and sculpted rock. Without a doubt this is one of the most spectacular places I have ever visited. I expended a roll of film, but its beauty eluded my efforts. Perhaps my memories will be best served without photographic images.

Below Contact Rapids the river loses its spirited nature, and settles into a rhythm of gentle currents and long meander belts. Shades of the upper river are still apparent as pine and poplar continue to line the shores and occasionally the river cuts through a high bank of sand, but overall the change in character is striking. The Methye Portage enters the Clearwater during this stretch. A

large clearing makes the carry easy to spot. A jaunt on the famous trail was all but mandatory, but our excursion was brief. Fortunately I knew I would return, because the ancient trail deserves to be portaged in true voyageur fashion.

Downstream from the Methye the river drops again, beginning with Whitewood Falls and ending with Cascade Rapids. Within this stretch was another incredible area, the gorge through Pine Rapids. Yellowish-gray limestone cliffs confine the river, and great columns of rock, tinted with orange sunburst lichen, rise from the rapids. Even back in the woods the rock is heavily crevassed and demands exploration.

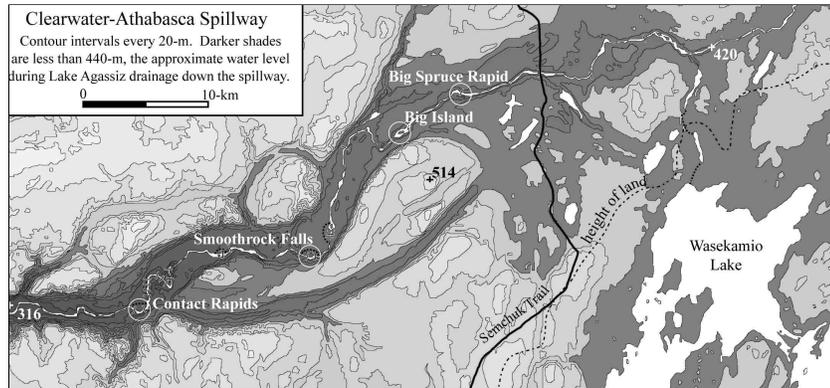
Below Cascade Rapids, the river settles down again, but flows surprisingly fast and has few large meanders. The voyageurs travelling east had their work cut out for them, but we rapidly descended the river. For the first time, balsam poplar and large white spruce are commonplace along the shore and the cut banks of sand and groves of jack

pine fade away. Perhaps the most surprising features are large, wet, grassy meadows, loaded with wild flowers and reminiscent of alpine meadows. Certainly these natural pastures once made pleasant camp spots, but now three established campgrounds exist along the river's lower stretches. The river can be easily ascended from Ft. McMurray in powerboats, so we assumed the worse, but only encountered two boats upstream from Waterways, the old town east of Ft. McMurray where the railroad from Edmonton used to reach the river. The center of activity has since moved to Ft. McMurray, a small but bustling city that seems out of place along the Clearwater-Athabasca wilderness.

The Clearwater is one of Canada's many spectacular waterways. The sole protection offered to many of these rivers is their isolation, but thankfully, this is not the case for the Clearwater. From Lloyd Lake to Whitewood Falls the river and the Methye Portage have been designated a Saskatchewan Provincial Park; the river is also part of the Canadian Heritage River System. The protection is well deserved and ensures that the beauty of the Clearwater will be protected for future generations. Perhaps more importantly the park pays tribute to the spirit of the travelers who have forged this trail and etched it into history with the soles of their feet and the blades of their paddles. We honor their legacy and spirit by following in their wake.

For more information about Lake Agassiz, Clearwater-Athabasca Spillway, and the ice sheet see: Dyke, A. S., Moore, A., Robertson, L., 2003. Deglaciation of North America. Geological Survey of Canada, Open File 1574.

Andy Breckenridge lives in Duluth, MN and is finishing a geology dissertation on the early history of Lake Superior. He paddles with his wife Rachel, and recently completed the final leg of a trip across Lake Agassiz (Grand Portage to Churchill to Ft. McMurray). He wishes the Canadian Geological Survey still messed about in canoes.



In MeMMorium



Members of the Hide-Away Canoe Club carry the remains of Maggie McNair Peake (affectionately known as MM) from Eglinton St. Georges Church in Toronto on July 15. Visible are three Peake brothers Geoffrey (left), Sean (foreground) and David (right). Michael Peake is partially blocked behind coffin and Peter Brewster is between Sean and David. Andrew Macdonald and Maggie's brother Chuck were also pallbearers. Maggie (inset) is pictured in December 2002, just after she learned she had been diagnosed with breast cancer. The photo captures her spirit and radiance. She is greatly missed.

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