

CHE-MUN

(Ojibway for canoe)

THE NEWSLETTER OF CANADIAN WILDERNESS CANOEING

SUMMER 1990

CHE-MUN

OUTFIT 61



Visitors view at the massive La Grande 2 spillway designed to control gates are more than 2 km. away and the granite steps be used once every 20 years to relieve high water levels. The can handle the flow of the St. Lawrence River at Montreal.

Grand Dams

Inside LG2

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Summer Packet



Phil Chester is definitely one of a kind. Phil's other written contribution appears elsewhere in this issue of Che-Mun. He lists his return address as Dead Poet's Society, Box 1152, Deep River, Ontario K0J 1P0. What's that old saying - Deep Rivers still run?

"How are you, you old pot-licker. I am fine and doing well, contrary to popular belief. Please find a cheque enclosed to prove I have not transpired. (Ed. Note - it didn't bounce!)"

"I am reminded of Flavius Maximus Submergus' immortal words in this regard. "CANU IN FLUMENI EST SEMPER VALE DUCS IN ARBORE" which, if you will allow an amateur to translate, means roughly, "A CANOE IN THE RIVER IS ALWAYS WORTH TWO IN THE BUSH".

"Get the drift?"

"Apparently (at least according to classical scholars who have looked into this matter in great depth) these were Submergus' last words when, in 220 B.C., he was catapulted over the Rubicon Falls in northern Italy in a desperate attempt to outrun Hannibal's elephants which had just crossed the Alps on their way to Rome.

"A blue heritage sign, sponsored by the Italian Department of Historical Anachronism, marks the spot where Submergus drowned. Your readers may want to visit this site next time they're paddling in and about Padua".

Greg Shute, Box 714, Wicasset, Maine 04578 is one of many Americans who spend their tripping time in the Canadian wilds and was writing regarding our Otfit 60 article on northern Quebec hydro dams.

"I look forward to more updates on the Hydro-Quebec proceedings, it's hard to get the real story down here. I finally got a copy of *Power from the North* (Ed. Note -

by James Bay dam proposer, Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa). It's hard to believe one man could have such a narrow minded vision of Quebec's rivers.

"For the past five years I've guided canoe trips for the Chewonki Foundation in Wicasset on rivers to the east of Lake Mistassini (the Rupert River's headwaters) and each year the logging roads are further north than the year before. Not that I'm anti-logging but it sure seems the province of Quebec could tighten up their environmental regulations. Especially regarding roads built next to waterways".

Greg mentions an area in which Quebec has been coming under increasing criticism for. Environmentalists charge that they are cutting too many trees while just waiting for the 12 to 18 million board feet of timber to open up when clearing for the Nottaway-Broadback-Rupert (NBR) phase of the James Bay hydro dams begins later this decade.

More missives from the mystery canoe poet.

July

If we were free
Of time and due
Then you and I
Would never canoe

If life were long
And it had no end
There's be no call
Of river bend

If we never had
To age or die
There'd be always tomorrow
Or next July

A bit too warm
Or chance of rain
We'd find ourselves
At home again

Paddle long, my love, and
Do not dwell
On the gentle sound
Of distant bell

Cherish the day
Sun and rain
Tomorrow may not
Come again

June

To the buzz 'n bite of June
I donate my blood (for free)
And on the carry to Ragged Lake
Some surface parts of me

Ecologically, I rate
Reasonable high
Many fed, a few squished
(Despite a thoughtless try)

Some part of nature's inner peace
My heart takes home, I guess
My soul inspired, my body weight
Just a little less

In honour of Blackfly Month
I do my noble part
And, autographed with polka-dots
I graciously depart

HACC plans yet another Ungava cross this summer

The Hide-Away Canoe Club is off to Ungava again.

Che-Mun's tripping arm is heading from Hudson Bay to Ungava Bay in a 370 mile, 30 day trip between the 59th and 60th parallel.

On August 2, we start at the town of Povungnituk where we left our canoes last time, and head down to the Kogaluk River which drains into Hudson Bay.

We'll go up the Kogaluk and over the height-of-land to massive Payne Lake. From there we head down the fast-flowing Payne River to the village of Kangirsuk on Ungava Bay.

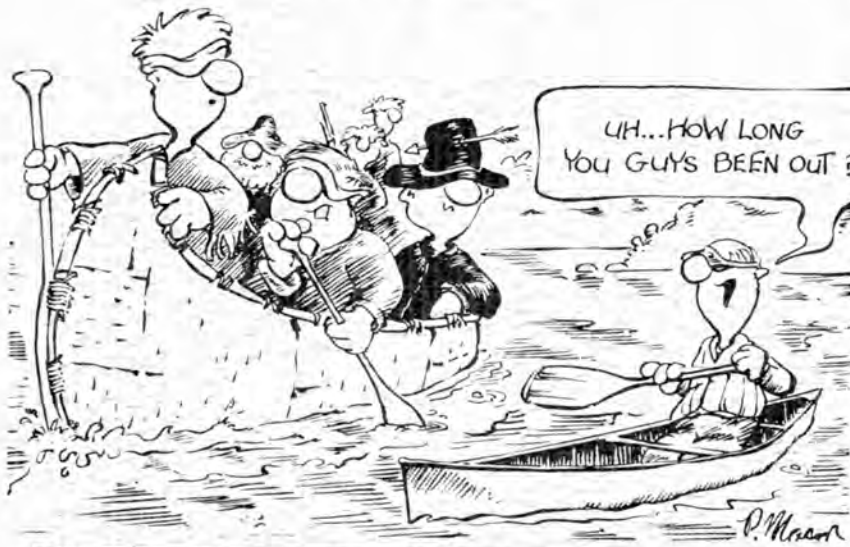
We are retracing the 1948 trip of Jacques

Rousseau, noted Quebec scientist of the north. On that trip Rousseau discovered numerous remains of settlements on Payne Lake.

They are believed to be of Norse or Icelandic origin and have remained somewhat of a mystery since.

Paddlers include Michael Peake, Peter Scott and Peter Brewster who were on 1988's gruelling Povungnituk trip. They are joined by David Thompson, a Toronto lawyer, who has guided Prince Andrew on his three northern Canadian trips.

Canadian Airlines and Loblaws supermarkets are again helping to sponsor the trip titled Across Ungava.



Editor's Notebook

Call it Cheap-Mun

Yes we've raised the price of Che-Mun. It's the first increase in five years and I hope it will be the last for another five.

I will spare you the gory details but suffice it to say with higher postal rates, printing costs and lack of advertising - we had to do it. The real question is whether you faithful readers will continue to think it's worth paying the price.

I hope so. And if you know of anyone whom you think would like Che-Mun - please tell them about it.

I'm sorry this issue is late - again - but this time with good reason. Last month I went to James Bay for a series of stories on the dam projects for my day job - the Toronto Sun.

It was a fascinating time and being inside the LG2 turbine assembly was awe-inspiring. But so was learning more fully about the problems the hydro dams have caused.

I mentioned a couple of outfits ago about Akitoshi Nishimura, Che-Mun's only subscriber in Japan. This die-hard kayaker is again traversing Canada's north this summer to add to his long list of long trips.

We profile his 1989 adventure which included a paddle from the mouth of the Back River across Simpson Strait to Gjoa Haven. Not a paddle for the faint of heart.

Che readers will also get an inside look at a new book about Grey Owl written by a man who can truly be called the Spirit of Grey Owl. Phil Chester has been enveloped by the persona of the legendary conservationist who also had a very dark side.

And finally our back cover. This photo of the Niagara Falls kayaker who went over the falls on purpose caused a great deal of commotion at the year's L.L. Bean North American Canoe Symposium. U.S. Whitewater team coach, Ken Stone, said he's scouted the drop - but wasn't ready to try it yet.

Michael Peake, Editor

Hudson Bay tougher than the Amazon

CHURCHILL, Man. - Following a harrowing ordeal, Winnipeg adventurer Don Starkell says a choice between life and death forced him to abandon his fund-raising trek by kayak through the Northwest Passage.

Starkell's journey was brought to an untimely end just three days into the planned three-month voyage when his 5.5-metre kayak capsized and left him stranded for several days.

Although disappointed with the failure of his expedition, Starkell said Tuesday he is lucky to be alive.

"I should be dead."

In 1980, he and his son, Dana, 29, gained international attention when they paddled a canoe 20,000 kilometres from Winnipeg to Brazil. The pair suffered illness, bad weather and were even held at gunpoint in Central America.

He wrote a book on the trip titled *Paddle To the Amazon*.

The trip to raise money for the Children's Cancer Fund of Manitoba was to have taken Starkell from Churchill to Tuktoyaktuk, N.W.T. - a distance of approximately 4,000 kilometres.

"I've let so damn many people down. It's such a downer."

On June 18, Starkell was about 65 kilometres from Eskimo Point, N. W.T., when his kayak hit boulders under the surface, tossing him into the frigid waters six kilometres from shore.

Knowing his chances for survival would quickly decrease the longer he was in the water, Starkell said he immediately began to bail out the water from the kayak.

"Not once did my mind say to leave the canoe and swim," he said.

"I was, believe it or not, warm for the first half hour or so, and my fear of 'This is it' and the adrenalin kept me going."

After about an hour, Starkell made it to shore, but found he was bleeding profusely from a gash in his right hand.

Starkell said he found himself trapped halfway between Churchill and Eskimo Point with a fierce wind blowing and soaked equipment.

His mind raced as he crawled inside his soaked sleeping bag, his hands numb from the cold.

Starkell said he knew he was suffering from hypothermia and that staying inside the freezing sleeping bag would kill him.

Eventually, Starkell got back in his kayak and managed to keep warm by paddling around in circles for hours.

During high tide the next day, Starkell set out again - this time for Churchill. On the way back he pitched his tent and camped for six days while the wind and sleet made travelling impossible.

On Monday, battling winds that stretched the 60-kilometre journey into 11 hours, Starkell finally made it back to Churchill.

"I think I can say it was the worst day of my life," he said.

"The kayak was taking water in and my eyes were trained on every rock in the water."

He said he doesn't intend to try the trip again.

Who? - Grey Owl



By PHIL CHESTER
Spirit of Grey Owl

"I hope you understand me, I am not particularly anxious to be known at all"

Thus spake Grey Owl on his tombstone.

A strange epitaph indeed for the man who became the most famous Canadian of his generation. If these words were intended as a death wish, then the wish did not come true, for he continues to be the subject of films, plays, radio dramas, articles, essays, poems and books, books, books.

Obviously there's something about 'The Owl' that fascinates the public even into these twilight years of the 20th century.

Trying to penetrate the psychology of this man is a little bit like beating your head

against a wall - sometimes the only consolation is that it feels good when it stops.

I ought to know. I've been at it for 15 years now, and only recently have begun to see the tunnel at the end of the light.

During my years of amateurish research into the life and times of Archibald Belaney (a.k.a. Grey Owl), I kept running across the name of Donald B. Smith. He was everywhere it mattered to me. Who was this guy I was following like a tail in search of a dog? About four years ago I'd had enough. I decide to track him down and so gave up, temporarily at least, my quest for the mysterious, eccentric, rare Strix Nebulosa of the boreal forest.

Donald B. Smith. Slowly I turned. Step by step. Inch by inch. Then - Eureka! I found him in a Department of History office at the University of Calgary. I said,

"Dr. Smith, I presume?." And from that day we've been the best of friends, having developed a kind of symbiotic relationship which revolves around our mutual, passionate and sometimes obsessive interest in the one we call 'The Owl'.

Talk about a small world! I didn't know Donald Smith from Adam Smith, yet as it turned out, we had both attended the same high school in Oakville, Ontario. I mention these things because as a reviewer of his recently published biography of Grey Owl entitled *From the Land of Shadows: The Making of Grey Owl* (Western Producer Prairie Books) I think it is only fair to Che-Mun readers that they know I had a small hand in this book and that my name appears in the footnotes, bibliography and acknowledgements.

This admission will not, I hope, invalidate what I have to say about this book. If anyone on this planet has a greater interest in what Donald Smith had to say about Grey Owl, than me - who has thrown himself into the 'Spirit of Grey Owl' - then I don't know who that person would be. In fact, I met up with him quite recently at a Canada Day weekend in Temagami to celebrate a Wilderness festival in memory of Grey Owl. Don Smith was there with his book and special slide presentation and I appeared in costume to somehow bring the true spirit of the man back to life. Don's book has helped me get closer to that truth.

What Professor Smith has done in his biography, which previous biographies by Anahareo (*Devil in Deerskins*, 1972) and Lovatt Dickson (*Wilderness Man*, 1973) failed to do was set the record straight.

After 20 years of painstaking, soul-destroying research, Smith has left no stone unturned. The footnotes and bibliography are massive and are in themselves invaluable tools for the lover of Canadian wilderness literature and history.

This was no small task in view of the fact that Grey Owl, who was something of an enfant terrible all his life, is any biographer's nightmare because his life was far from being an open book. His life story is a twisted, tangled, tormented tale and getting the facts straight is a critical first step toward analysis and interpretation.

Too many critics have been quick to dismiss Grey Owl as a flash in the pan. They cannot seem to get beyond the 'fraud mentality' which has plagued Grey Owl's memory from the moment of his death.

Anahareo's and Dickson's biographies were written in defense of that memory and therefore tended to downplay Grey Owl's serious personal problems. This is why Professor Smith's book is so useful. For a professional historian cannot afford to gloss over the more unsavoury aspects of his subject's life. Sooner or later the historian has to come to terms with the 'big' questions - How and Why.

How did Grey Owl become as famous as Lawrence of Arabia? How was it possible for a little boy, orphaned at four raised in a strict Victorian household, to take the world by storm and preach a salvationist/conservationist ethic at the same time when the world was locked in a deep depression and preparing for yet another war?

Why could he not accept the responsibilities of his actions, actions which hurt and alienated a lot of people who cared for him and counted on him. We know he was not a good parent. We know he married many times. Why couldn't the man who was touted in the popular press of the day and 'The Modern Hiawatha' and 'St. Francis of the Indians', who was determined to save the "Little People", save himself? Had he martyred himself to his cause? Was he an altruist?

Smith's book attempts to answer many of these important questions. In the end, he points to Grey Owl's childhood and upbringing. It was there, Smith concludes, in the abandonment and rejection by his parents, that the seeds of lifelong unhappiness were sown.

Grey Owl was not a happy camper. All his life he struggled for acceptance and love. That he focussed his passion, the symbol of the new Canadian wilderness, for the betterment of all Canadians is surely something we cannot condemn. Smith's book clearly points out the key role Grey Owl played in the history of conservation in this country.

"The feel of a canoe gunwale at the thigh, the splash of flying spray in the face, the rhythm of the snowshoe trail, the beckoning of the far-off hills and valleys, the majesty of the tempest, the calm and the silence of the trees that seem to muse and ponder in their silence; the trust and confidence of small living creatures, the company of simple men; these have been my inspiration and my guide. Without them I am nothing."

As it do often does, it took an outsider to tell Canadians just what it was we were - and still are - in danger of losing forever.

Grey Owl was a staunch defender of the North, of native people and Canadian wildlife. His clarion voice can still be heard and should be listened to by a new generation that is trying to come to grips with the very same problems he encountered only a few years ago. He advocated, unequivocally, the necessity for "responsible stewardship" of this planet.

"Remember," he said over and over again, "that you belong to Nature, not it to you." In asserting the moral supremacy of an organic, holistic web of life paradigm over the inorganic, mechanistic, hierarchic one, he was light years ahead of his time. And yet our native people have known this since time immemorial.

We did not listen to them for hundreds of years, but we are beginning to listen now. Grey Owl plays no small role in the initiation of that much-needed dialogue.

Books like, *From the Land of the Shadows* can only help to bring that day close to hand. I'm sure Professor Smith would not mind if we give the last words to Grey Owl as he speaks to us from his grave:

"...but my place is back in the woods, there is my home, and there I stay. But in this country of Canada to which I am intensely loyal. And whose natural heritage I am trying to interpret so that it may be better understood and appreciated, here, at least, I want to be remembered for what I am."

R.I.P.

Grey Owl in London in 1935



• Aki on the Barrens •



As you read this story, its author will be again traversing the Canadian north by kayak. Akitoshi wrote *Che-Mun* from Yellowknife at the end of June to say he is beginning a trip from there to Coppermine. The following are notes from the diary of his 1989 trip from Yellowknife to Gjoa Haven.

By AKITOSHI NISHIMURA

Yellowknife - June 28, 1989. 5 p.m. I was here in the capital of the N.W.T. to start my long trip to Gjoa Haven (pop. 600) an Inuit community on the Arctic coast.

Route: Yellowknife - Great Slave Lake - Fort Reliance - Pike's Portage - Artillery Lake - Hanbury Portage - Hanbury River - Sifton Lake - Height-of-land portage between Sifton Lake and Moraine Lake - Baillie River - Back River - Chantrey Inlet - Gjoa Haven.

I will travel through three big river systems, the Mackenzie, Thelon and Back. I've estimated the trip at 75 days, from now until the 10th of September. It is a long trip - about 1700 km - 1050 miles - passing through some of the most isolated areas of the world. So I certainly wasn't expecting any help from the outside world.

I have tried to load 75 days food into a single sea kayak.

I was not a stranger to the Barrenlands before trying this long solo trip. In 1985 from June 2 to Sept. 2, I did the Mackenzie River system (Jasper - Athabasca River - Lake Athabasca - Slave River - Great Slave Lake - Mackenzie River to Tuktoyuktuk.

In 1987 from May 7 to June 5, I did 800 km. on the Upper Churchill River system from Cold Lake to La Ronge and 1200 km on the Thelon system from June 19 to

August 9 (Snowdrift - Ft. Reliance - Pike's Portage - Artillery Lake - Hanbury River - Thelon River - Baker Lake).

And in 1988 I did a trip in an inflatable boat from July 2 to August 16, 1100 km. (near Muskox Lake - Back River - Aylmer Lake - Clinton-Colden Lake - Hanbury River - Thelon River - Baker Lake.

Over the last four years I have become enchanted by the Barrenlands, the perfect open space, silence, wind, solitude, landscape, wildlife, fishing. All those factors lead me back to the Barrens last summer.

I am happy to offer *Che-Mun* a short report of that trip.

1. *Yellowknife to Fort Reliance on Great Slave Lake.* June 28 - July 8 400 km. The weather conditions were not bad though there were some windy sections. But I was lucky that I could paddle the whole stretch without being windbound.

I had wanted to start earlier from Yellowknife because I was worried about the Arctic Ocean weather at the end of my trip. As I wanted to paddle the stretch across to Gjoa Haven in good weather and with enough time to do it in.

I was unable to begin any sooner because of the threat of ice in McLeod Bay in the east arm of Great Slave Lake. I had a bitter ice experience in 1987. I was blocked on Artillery Lake on my way to Baker at the beginning of July.

There was about 70% of the lake frozen at that time. It was my first introduction to Barrenland canoeing and I was surprised and depressed by the experience. I ended up carrying around the lake for five days

with my food, boat and equipment all on my back.

2. *Fort Reliance to Moraine Lake (Baillie River).* July 10 - July 21.

I have experienced part of this route before. The portages were a lot of work - especially Pike's portage - But I love portages. (Ed. Note Hmmm.)

Once I finally managed the portage between Sifton Lake and Moraine Lake, I was so tired. But I was also greatly relieved since I was now in the Back River system with no more watersheds to cross.

3. *Moraine Lake to junction of Back River.* July 21-28.

I had a hard time in the upper Baillie River. It was too shallow and rocky and I had to make many portages. I never expected there would be trouble here, I had thought it would be smooth paddling, so I was depressed again. If this kept up to the Back junction (140 km.) it would take a month to get there.

But I understood the importance of keeping a positive mental attitude and told myself to "just do your best and make the most of your chances." I just used my body and didn't use my brain.

Fortunately, the hard stuff finished four days later. But during that time I got a lot of holes in the bottom of my boat and my paddle cracked - and I lost about 10 pounds of body weight. It was really hard work. I had to work 12 hours a day just to get a relatively short distance. When I finally set up my tent for the evening I had no energy to eat. I just slept like a log.

On the other hand I had a good time. I saw about 150 caribou crossing the river in front of me. That scene certainly cheered me up. Before my trip I'd heard that if I was lucky I would see thousands of caribou on the upper Baillie River. Maybe I was too late. (Ed. Note - Caribou break-up into smaller groups during their summer feeding time.)

There was one more unexpected happening. There are a lot of short rapids on this river that were not marked on the map. There was enough water and I guess it would be a lot of fun for white water canoeists but not for me. If I'd known what it was like before the trip I may not have chosen this river.

I lost my fishing gear when I tried one of the rapids. I couldn't see anything forward and a standing wave washed my rod off my boat. I was depressed again because I was counting on fish as a big part of my food supply. But I had to continue the trip.

I had already lost about 10 pounds while I was eating lots of fish so I could well imagine what would happen to my weight without any fish.

I was sometimes upset at my mistake but since it wasn't a fatal one I had to keep my outlook positive. That's important for surviving in the Barrenlands, I think. Old Inuit (Inuks) don't hurry up and don't ever give up no matter what happens.

The day after I lost my fishing rod I met the only people I would see all summer during my trip. Two pilots from Winnipeg who work for Canadian Airlines International. They were vacationing up here, hopping around in a Cessna 180 for two weeks. They were visiting many spots including Chantrey Inlet, Back River, Thelon and Hanbury Rivers and Baker Lake before going back to Winnipeg.

They were quite surprised to see me. They never thought they'd run into anyone out here. We enjoyed chatting about each other's trips for about half an hour. I mentioned that I had lost my fishing rod the day before and they very kindly gave me one of their's. I was a really lucky guy, and I used their rod every day for the rest of the trip - and never tired of eating fish daily.

4. Back River to junction of Meadowbank River. July 28 - August 10.

This stretch was through the heart of 'the mighty Back River'. The Back is a really big and beautiful river with a lot of big rapids and lakes.

Frankly speaking, I was not sure if I could make it to Gjoa Haven. If I couldn't make it to the Meadowbank junction before August 15 this would be my emergency route out. I could go up the Meadowbank River and over the watershed to eventually get to Baker Lake. It is a tough route, however.

But I was able to make the rendezvous with time to spare so I continued down the Back to Gjoa Haven, with anxiousness. From here to the end there were no escape routes. No matter what, I have to get to Gjoa Haven.

5. Meadowbank to mouth of the Back River. August 10-13.

Below the Meadowbank the Back River is a chain of lakes with rapids in between. There was some rough going here when it was windy. The change of colour as fall approaches has started in the Barrens. In one of the rapids I caught the biggest lake trout of my life - over 20 pounds. That was a great moment.

6. Chantrey Inlet to Gjoa Haven. August 13 - September 6. 250 km.

This was the part of the trip I was most worried about. Most canoeists charter out of Chantrey Inlet at the mouth of the Back. I had never heard of anyone trying the route to Gjoa Haven before.

The 150 km. section along the Arctic Coast is long and dangerous. The problem is the constant cold and Arctic gales. Two years ago seven Americans at Chantrey couldn't move. They were pinned there for 10 days by Arctic storms. They had pre-arranged a charter boat from Gjoa Haven but it couldn't cross because of the weather. They ran out of food and were fortunately rescued by the Coast Guard helicopter.

They had started their trip from Muskox Lake at the head of the Back at the end of June. They reached Chantrey Inlet in mid-August.

In my case, there was no charter to miss. It was too expensive for me so I was left with only one alternative - get myself there.

On the first day the weather was fine and calm. But I was finally caught by the strong winds that herald the coming of Autumn. I was windbound for six days and

I waited for good weather to return in my small tent. The big problem was crossing Simpson Strait from the mainland to King William Island. There was an open stretch of 15 km. It would take about four hours to cross. If the weather changed suddenly halfway through the crossing, it would just be me and the freezing Arctic Ocean. So I waited for a calm day to cross.

I ended up crossing in somewhat choppy conditions. Somehow I knew I could make thought it was risky paddling. Before I reached Gjoa Haven I paddled through two sets of snow storms. Winter is just around the corner. Canoe tripping was now out of season along the Arctic coast.

Well, I got to Gjoa Haven. I just smiled and told myself "Aki, your trip was a good job, wasn't it." I was able to finish my long trip safely. Safety first had been my motto during the trip.

But my joy at reaching Gjoa Haven was mixed with other feelings. I felt sad that I would have to leave behind the Barrenlands shortly. I would like to thank the Barrens for giving me such a valuable experience in a canoe trip through the last frontier.

Aki's food list

Breakfast: Oatmeal 100 g/day, brown sugar 3 kg/70 days. Lunch: 100 g. chocolate bar. Dinner: Mashed potatoes 125 g/day.

Margarine 9 lbs/70 days, dried vegetables 80 g/day and bacon bars. Also tea, hot chocolate.

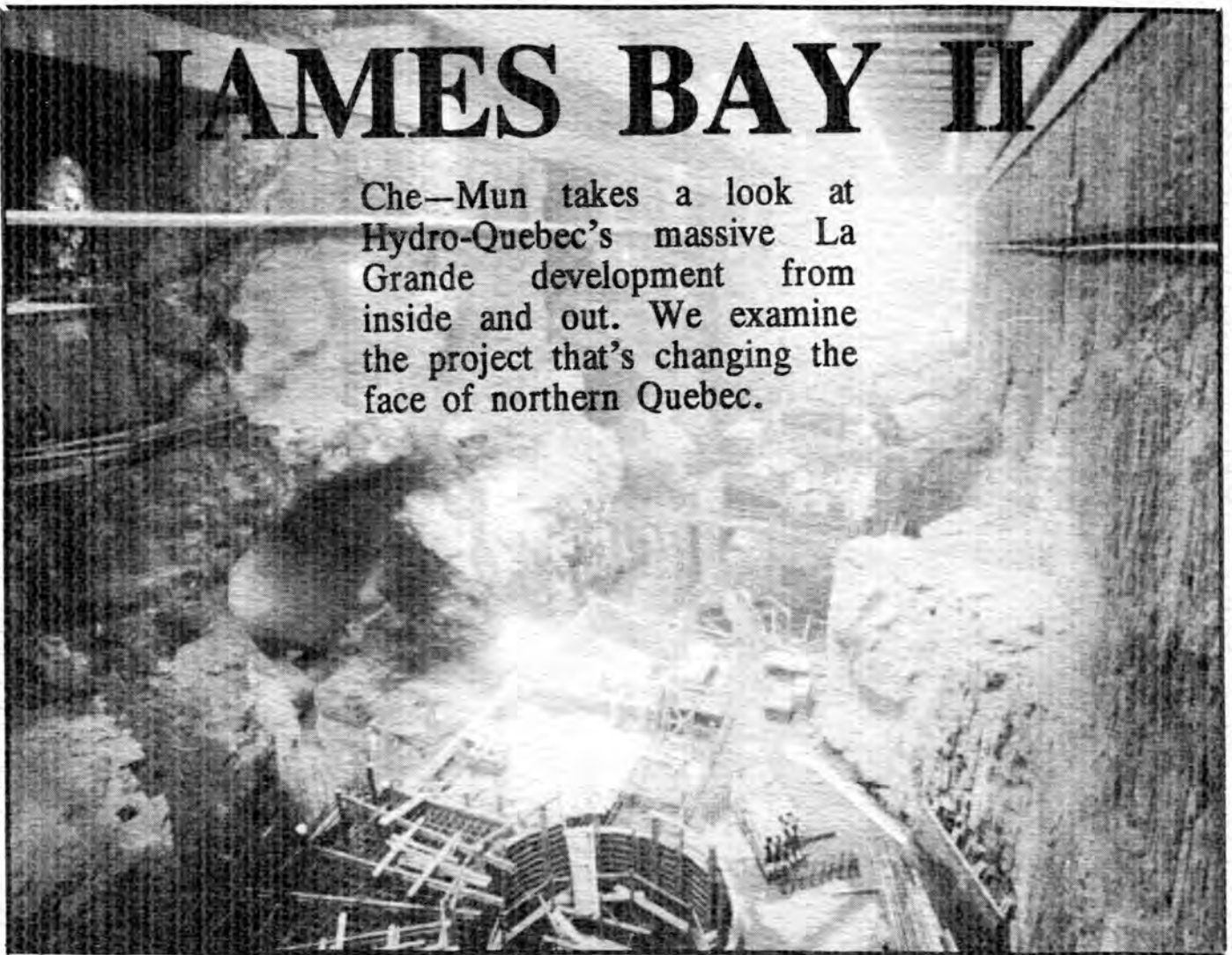
Equipment: Folding sea kayak - Feathercraft, Coleman Peak-1 stove, with 6 litres of white gas.



Long distance kayaker Akitoshi Nishimura Gjoa Haven, NWT. He was photographed on the final leg of his trip just outside of by an Inuit who was passing in a boat.

JAMES BAY II

Che-Mun takes a look at Hydro-Quebec's massive La Grande development from inside and out. We examine the project that's changing the face of northern Quebec.



LG2A--Inside the excavation for the powerhouse of the second phase of the La Grande 2 project. The hole at the bottom

left is one of water intakes that will feed one of six turbines. The form for a future turbine is taking shape at the bottom.

The entire powerhouse is carved from solid rock several hundred feet underground and is half the size of LG2.

By MICHAEL PEAKE
Che-Mun Editor

GREAT WHALE RIVER, Quebec — A battle is taking shape along the frigid shores of Hudson Bay in this town with four names.

Great Whale River is known by three other names by the non-Anglo groups that live here.

Quebecers refer to it as Poste-de-la-Baleine, the Cree Indians call it Whapmagoostui and the Inuit know it as Kuujjuarpiq.

But in any language, it means big changes ahead.

Just north of Great Whale River — roughly the dividing line between the northern Inuit and the southerly Cree — Hydro-Quebec is getting ready to start its second major hydroelectric development, the Great Whale project.

Citing future power needs, Hydro plans to divert the Great Whale River 40 km (25 miles) upstream from this town of 1,000 people. (see map - Outfit 60).

The diversion will cut flow of the Great Whale River into Hudson Bay by 85%.

It's here the battle will be renewed between Hydro-Quebec, natives and environmentalists. But unlike the low-key battle over the La Grande development in the 1970s, the war for Great Whale River will be played out in a much brighter public spotlight.

The Cree and Inuit don't want the project.

Even though they signed the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, which gave them lands and money, the natives say the agreement didn't guarantee future projects would be built.

Robbie Dick, Chief of the Whapmagoostui (Great Whale) Band for 13 years, doesn't want the changes that will inevitably come from the project.

The first change will be a road from the south into his town.

"The effect of the road would be similar to what we've seen in Chisasibi for the La

Grande project. People have access to alcohol and drugs," Dick said.

"This project should never take place. But we are running out of time. We don't have enough resources or people to do all the studies that are required."

The Great Whale scheme would also affect one of the great curiosities of the north. In a few remote lakes affected by the flooding lives a species of freshwater seal. It's believed the 200 seals who live in the lakes are a sub-species of the harbor seal, trapped inland after the last ice age.

Hydro-Quebec says their studies to date have shown the seals are also distributed outside the Great Whale drainage area.

Unlike the La Grande project, American environmentalists will be involved in opposing the Great Whale project. Two powerful groups, the National Audubon Society and the Sierra Club, with a million members between them, lead a wide-ranging group of U.S. interests. They also speak for other Canadian groups which oppose the damming schemes.

Inside the beast

The Sierra Club's Karen Lohr thinks Americans should be involved because Americans are getting much of the power generated in northern Quebec.

"I think a lot of credit must be given to the Cree," she said. "They haven't focused on the impact of their own personal losses — which are great. They are emphasizing the devastation of the environmental impacts of the project."

Environmentalists argue that the seals won't be the only animals who suffer.

James and Hudson Bays are extremely valuable feeding grounds for millions of migrating birds. Drastic changes in river flows and ice patterns, environmentalists argue, will destroy feeding and nesting habitat.

The flow of dammed rivers is managed according to power demands, which means high water season is in winter and the low season is in the spring. This is the opposite of the natural cycle.

The Crees say the La Grande project has changed the weather in that area, producing unheard of winter rains and extremely hot summer days.

Hydro-Quebec officials insist that effects of the damming are manageable.

Hydro wants approval to start building the road from the dam to Great Whale this fall despite the fact the utility has not given it an official go-ahead, said Jean-Francois Rougerie, Hydro-Quebec's environmental co-ordinator for Great Whale.

Would they construct a \$625 million road to dams they might not build?

"That's an interesting question. We intend to submit the plan for government approval. But there is an amount of risk involved," said Rougerie.

Critics charge that once the road is built it's an impetus to complete the dams. They also contend the roads create a significant environmental impact by themselves.

A recent poll of Quebecers revealed that 87% want Hydro-Quebec to concentrate on better service before building new dams. Blackouts are common in Quebec and critics charge that Hydro has devoted too much attention to James Bay at the expense of system maintenance. In Montreal, hotels have candles in the rooms, not for romantic atmosphere, but in case of blackouts.

Alan Penn, who works for the Crees on environmental matters, feels all the strings are being pulled by Premier Bourassa's office. He says there is no doubt Hydro-Quebec feels the project will proceed.

"There's a very strong political thrust behind this project," said Penn. "It's hard for an outsider to assess the extent that this project is unavoidable."

Chief Robbie Dick still thinks the Great Whale development can be stopped. When asked why, he replies in a calm tone, tinged with hope.

"To preserve our way of life and preserve nature. Because our major rivers will all be diverted and affected by this project. Our river, the Great Whale River will be totally destroyed. This is something we won't stand aside and let happen."

We finally realized that it's too much to lose."

LG2, Quebec-It's the largest and most powerful house of worship in the country.

It's the LG2 powerhouse, Quebec's massive cathedral of hydro. Its vaulted ceiling is carved from solid rock 137 metres underground. The tremors of power pulses through solid granite walls, churning megawatts for the masses.

The turbines at Hydro-Quebec's huge La Grande power project have been running for almost a decade deep beneath the spruce studded wilderness of northern Quebec. It's a massive monument to engineering know-how.

And it is treated as an object of almost religious worship by a province proud of its world class achievement. Built on the altar of technology, it serves the religion of spiralling power consumption.

It's a project that has changed the face of an ancient land. Three of Quebec's largest lakes are found in the La Grande project. All are man made. Huge reservoirs are held back by the massive arms of rock-filled dams along what was once the La Grande River.

By itself, the LG2 complex is the ninth largest hydroelectric facility in the world. Standing in the heart of the beast in an awesome experience. A roaring turbine fueled by frigid reservoir water surges just below. Overhead, a 600 ton rotor spins smoothly turning out up to 333 megawatts of power.

That's enough electricity to service a city of 80,000 in winter. And there are 15 similar turbines in the LG2 powerhouse alone. Six

Continued on Page 11.



CHANGES--In this rarely seen photo, the original rapids (above) at the site of the massive LG2 hydro facility are shown compared to what is there now (below). The above photo was taken before construction began on the project in 1971.

La Grande Zero

La Grande 2A



News & Notes

HUDSON BAY HYDRO... A Kirkland Lake, Ontario company wants to build 12 hydro-electric dams on Ontario's Severn River but native communities along the winding trail of water that once carried fur traders southwest from Hudson Bay are opposing the project.

More than 1,000 residents of Fort Severn, Bearskin Lake, Muskrat Dam, Sandy Lake, Keewaywin and Deer Lake have voted 96 per cent in favor of declaring the river a dam-free zone. The band's chief said, "We feel it's very fragile, the ecological base. We want to ensure that future generations can enjoy the natural state of the river. It's one of the longest rivers in North America and it's not polluted."

The communities are scattered along the path of the more than 600-kilometre-long river in the remote North — from Fort Severn, a former trading post on the southwest corner of Hudson Bay, to Deer Lake, about 60 kilometres east of the Manitoba border.

If there are significant problems between the bands and Frontier Power, a major environmental assessment would be required. The river is the natives' main travel route — by snowmobile in winter and motorboat and canoe in summer — to traditional hunting and trapping grounds.

The bands are worried about flooding that could occur if the river, which is also a prime source of sturgeon, is dammed. Ancient burial grounds that line the river near Muskrat Dam could be damaged. The six chiefs have also consulted other native groups such as the James Bay Cree, who opposed the giant Hydro Quebec project that flooded many of their traditional communities.

RUPERT SCHOOL...A private boys school which recently tried to alter its tough reputation by changing its name and opening up to girls is closing its doors. Rupert's Land College, formerly St. John's Cathedral Boys School, suffered from low enrolment for the last four years, board chairman Gail Doucette said in a terse release announcing the closure. The school, which opened in the late 1950s, was known for its marathon snowshoe marches and long-distance canoe trips and had a reputation as the place where Winnipeg parents sent particularly unruly children. Last year, assault charges were laid against seven of its students, alleging violence during the ritual initiation of new students.

"The board has tried to improve the perception of the school by a change of name and hiring a new headmaster," the school said in a statement. "However, time has not proven adequate to ensure enrolment at the necessary level for the next academic year."

The school changed its name two months ago, decided it would go co-ed and hired a new headmaster. But the entire board has now resigned adding that a receiver will probably be appointed to oversee the financial fate of the school.

NEW-NAVUT... Music and traditional Inuit dances highlighted a two-day signing ceremony to mark the signing of an agreement in Igloolik, N.W.T. this spring, on the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut land claim. The largest land claim in Canada's history, covering a territory almost half the size of Alberta, was signed by Indian Affairs Minister Tom Siddon and Paul Quassa, president of the federation, and Northwest Territories leader Dennis Patterson.

The agreement-in-principle will give about 17,000 Inuit from the central and eastern Arctic about two million square kilometres of land, plus offshore areas. Within the land settlement area, the federation will get ownership and surface rights to about 350,000 square kilometres and ownership and sub-surface mineral rights to about 36,000 square kilometres. The Inuit will also receive \$580 million in compensation over the next 14 years and will have decision-making power on some joint management boards on wildlife, environment, water and political development.

The deal was ratified by the federation board in February and approved in March by the federal cabinet and the government of the Northwest Territories. Negotiations which started in

Page ten

1976 on the deal will now focus on the actual land settlement and the development of a implementation plan. A final agreement is expected within 16 months.

SHORT CIRCUITS... A new National Energy Board policy takes the teeth out of the federal regulator and dismantles a public check on unbridled development, environmental and native groups say. Under the new policy — which took effect at the end of June, electricity exports and international powerlines will be routinely authorized without a public hearing. Previously, the board's policies required automatic hearings on all but minor applications for electricity exports or powerline construction.

The public hearings gained prominence recently as native and environmental groups opposed the mammoth second phase of the James Bay hydro-electric project in northern Quebec. Hydro-Quebec, however, says the revamped National Energy Board policy won't give the utility a free hand in development, maintaining that it remains subject to other environmental laws. The new policy — based on federal legislation passed last December — can recommend a public hearing, but the final decision rests with the federal cabinet.

That rankles many environmental groups, who argue the board should by definition be at arm's length from the government. The Cree fear an "emasculated" board will approve a host of small renewal and surplus electricity contracts — nickel and diming Quebec's environment to death.

PEACE STUDIES...Environmental studies costing up to \$10 million are needed on the Peace-Athabasca river system, an unreleased government study says. The Northern Rivers Intergovernmental Task Force looked at the area from the Alberta-British Columbia boundary through northern Alberta into the Northwest Territories. The joint task force examined all industrial development, not only pulp mills, within the Peace-Athabasca-Slave river basin. Alberta and the federal government agreed to create the task force last summer before a review panel started to examine Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries' proposal for a \$1.3-billion pulp mill. The Alberta-Pacific review recommended the giant pulp mill not go ahead until more is known about pollution from existing pulp mills on the river system. Task force member Jennifer Letourneau, a water-quality specialist with Indian and Northern Affairs in Yellowknife, said the recommended studies would help northeners decide whether they can safely drink the water and eat freshly caught fish.

Our Back Pages

The following back issues of Che-Mun are available for \$4 each. Those with an asterisk (*) are as photocopies only.

- Outfit 38 - Fort William Rendezvous, Magpie River
- Outfit 39 - Trans Canada Canoe Expedition/David Pelly*
- Outfit 40 - Eric Morse Tribute, Story of Les Voyageurs*
- Outfit 41 - Grand Canal Project, Thlewiaza River solo
- Outfit 42 - The Morse River Expedition Part I
- Outfit 43 - The Morse River Expedition Part II
- Outfit 44 - Bill Mason & the Dog River, Athabasca Letter
- Outfit 45 - Pipe River by Eric Morse, River flow chart
- 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 Thelon River
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- Outfit 54 - Povungnituk 88, Sleeping Island review
- Outfit 55 - Memories of Bill Mason, Twin Otter gone
- Outfit 56 - Canoeing stamps, Hanbury review, WCA slidefest
- Outfit 57 - North American Canoe Symposium, book reviews
- Outfit 58 - Churchill River trip, The Lonely Land
- Outfit 59 - Tyrrell Brothers, Water & Sky, Athabasca pulp wars
- Outfit 60 - Via Rail, Missinaibi, James Bay hydro, HBC exit

Grand Dams

Continued from Page 9

more are being constructed in LG2A a short distance away. Add that to LG1, under construction, LG3, LG4 and other tributary rivers. When the entire La Grande project is finished in 1996 it will generate almost 15,000 megawatts of electricity making it the largest hydro-electric installation in the world.

The idea is so deceptively simple. Falling water spins a turbine which in turn drives a giant alternator. The magnets at the edge of the alternator's rotor create electricity when passed at high speed, one centimeter away from coils of wire.

It's touted as the cleanest way to produce energy. The water goes through and comes out as it went in. But like everything else in this world it has a price. A price some people say is too high. Environmentalists criticize the destruction of habitat, the effects on climate, mercury contamination caused by large reservoirs and disruption of native society.

Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa announced his self-proclaimed "Project of the Century" in May, 1971. He further expanded on his vision for Quebec in a 1985 book titled *Power From the North*.

"Quebec is a vast hydro-electric plant in the bud, and every day, millions of potential kilowatt hours flow downhill and out to sea. What a waste!"

That comment has outraged environmentalists who stress the inter-connected nature of the biosphere. The powerful National Audubon Society responded to the premier's claim.

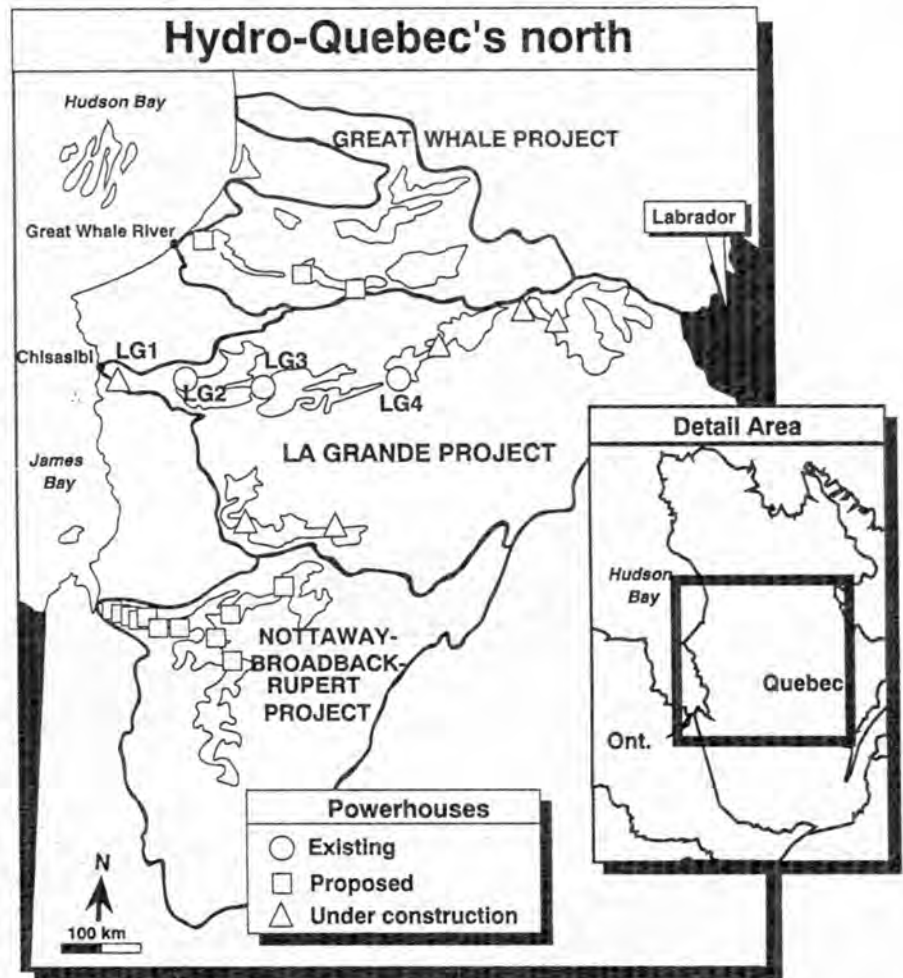
"Mr. Bourassa's belief that water serves no useful purpose after leaving the land demonstrates a lack of understanding of marine ecosystems. James Bay is an exceptionally productive habitat for migratory birds and other species precisely because of the mixing of fresh water outflow and marine waters of the Bay."

The La Grande, a powerful river, was chosen as the first of three giant hydro schemes that, when completed, would collect all the moving water in 350,000 square km. chunk of Quebec. That's an area the size of a reunited Germany.

LG2 was the first and biggest of the four main powerhouses to be located on the La Grande. Behind it, where once a river flowed, sits 2,800 sq. km. of reservoir that has drowned the graves and campsites of generations of Crees. The lake extends up to the site of LG3 where another lake extends to LG4 which holds back the Caniapisau Reservoir, the largest at 4,300 sq. km.

Along with the dams came the infrastructure. The town of Radisson, (pop. 2,000) sprang from the bush, built to house hydro workers. A network of roads and service facilities were also carved out to maintain the giant station. They brought the south to the north, airports, bars, swimming pools and even an arena to house hockey and rock stars.

There are also the transmission lines. Towers of power that stream to the south



Source: Canadian Geographic

SUN Graphics / J. Thomson

The La Grande Project (center) is nearing completion. Hydro-Quebec's next target is the Great Whale which might

start this fall. The NBR (Nottaway-Broadback-Rupert) is the final phase and will be started in a few years.

carrying current to Quebec and the United States. New York, Vermont and Massachusetts all receive Quebec power and contracts extending well into the 21st century have been signed or are pending.

Construction started in 1971 and at its peak employed 18,000 workers who completely changed the look of the river which stretches 800 km. east of James Bay. The special dams and dykes used to hold the water back required 47 million cubic yards of fill for LG2 alone. The main dam towers 168 metres above the old surface of the river. Everything about the James Bay project was, and is, a superlative.

It brought a road and a new town to the Crees of Fort George which for generation has sat on an island at the mouth of the La Grande River. The town was re-located because the island would be eroded by the new levels of the river. The new town of Chisasibi, Cree for Big River, is located a few kilometers up river from

James Bay. But the road connecting Radisson to Chisasibi runs both ways. Many natives make use of the Radisson liquor store. The road brings accessibility and trouble in the form of drugs and liquor.

Hydro is now working to complete Phase 2 of the La Grande project. It will squeeze every available kilowatt from the La Grande system. Other rivers including the Eastmain, Caniapisau and Brisay were diverted, their flows changed to add water to the La Grande reservoirs. Water is the "fuel" that powers a hydro-electric project.

A few miles upstream from Chisasibi is the site of LG1. It was supposed to be the first installation in the project but was delayed.

Most Crees are bitter that their legacy of Quebec's hydro schemes are mercury contaminated waters, loss of traplines and fish and game, dislocation and social upheaval. They don't want another massive hydro development, but that's exactly what Hydro-Quebec wants to give them - starting this fall.



YES - that is Niagara Falls. And yes, that Sharpe, a river guide from Tennessee, had early June. They found the kayak but still is a kayaker with no PFD, no helmet, apparently planned the stunt for 10 years haven't found Jesse. This illustrates the no shirt and no sense whatsoever. Jesse and went over the Canadian falls in importance of proper planning.

Founded by Nick Nickels

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*We'll have a complete report
on this summer's Across Ungava
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the central Ungava plateau
via the Kogaluk and Payne
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