



Winter 2013

The Journal of Canadian Wilderness Canoeing

Outfit 151



Photo: Chris Rush

**FALLING FOR THE NOTAKWANON** - Chris Rush gets this great shot of his trip members as they get their first view of a 60-foot falls on the very rugged Notakwanon River in Labrador as they scouted the portage route. Left to right: Jimmy Deschesnes, Joel Cyr, and twins Francis & Eric Couturier. You know a river is truly remote when a geographical feature like this has no name.

[www.hacc.ca](http://www.hacc.ca)

# Winter Packet



Our friends at Canoe North Adventures sent along their latest tidbit of promotion about their wonderful outfitting service. Al Pace and Lin Ward have built a great enterprise in Norman Wells with trips down some of the most scenic rivers in Canada.

With the help of their friends in Tourism Canada who filmed part of a Keele River trip, including great shots from a helicopter, plus other video, they have produced a lovely four minute movie of travel down the Keele River that really captures the great atmosphere of a Canoe North trip.

Having the good fortune to have done the Keele twice with Canoe North I can attest to its accuracy - there is a lot of laughing and great rapids, fishing and food - and amazing scenery. There is no better northern river for all ranges of experience. If you want to get that real northern hit - call them up! You can see it at <http://canoenorth-adventures.com/news-events/chronicle-of-a-river-journey/>

The 21st Annual Wilderness Paddlers Gathering, which began as an offshoot of the WCA Wilderness Symposium in Toronto, will take place in Fairlee, Vermont on March 8-10.

We had the good fortune to be invited last year and had a great time at the very cozy lodge nestled in the green hills of Vermont.

The format is slightly different this year as veteran organizer Deb Williams has handed off to a new group but the location remains the same. Scheduled to speak this year are Laco Kovac and Lynette Chubb who will be familiar to *Che-Mun* readers and will talk about their trip to the Ungava Crater and down the Puvirnituq River. Camp Keewaydin will report on their Ver-

mont to James Bay trip, Shawn Hodgins on the Hart River, Yukon, Zach Davis on the Attikonak River in Labrador and the ever-popular Will Lange will delight with one of his memorable readings. More speakers will be added.

You can check it out at <http://www.aloha-foundation.org/hulbert-outdoor-center/community-programs/outdoor-conferences/wilderness-paddlers-gathering/>

Google launched a Street View map of one of Canada's Arctic communities recently, giving the world a detailed

-- and digital -- look at part of the country's vast and remote North.

The new map is of Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, a small community of just under 1,500 people located on Victoria Island in the Kitikmeot Region.

It is the furthest north in Canada Google's Street View Team had ever travelled, the company Google visited Cambridge Bay in August and, with the help of community residents and non-profit group Nunavut Tunngavik, built the Street View map.

Using Google's Street View tricycles and cameras, team members and residents captured 360-degree photos of the region's sights and locations to create one of the most detailed maps of the area that's ever existed.

"This is a place with a vast amount of local knowledge and a rich history," said Nunavut Tunngavik's Christopher Kalluk. "By putting these tools in the hands of our people, we will tell Nunavut's story to the world."

And with the new maps, people from all over the world can now get a feel for life in one of Canada's northern communities.

The sites featured in the map include a Hudson Bay Company cabin, a bridge used by local fisherman and the parts of the town's extensive shoreline. Local shops, schools and recreation centres are also fea-



Hangin' out at the Northern Store in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut on Google Maps Street View.

tured in the map, giving users a feel for the everyday community life.

Users can click on any of the sites and scroll through a series of high-definition, panoramic colour photos and even a two-minute video detailing the project - you see it on YouTube. In the video, stunning photos of Cambridge Bay are shown as Kalluk describes the map-making process.

"I want people to see what it looks like, where I live," said Kalluk of his home in the video. "It will be great to see our community online finally."



## Editor's Notebook

**T**hose of you who have checked our website ([hacc.ca](http://hacc.ca)) you might have noticed info on our planned summer trip, *Tree to the Sea*. I know a couple of people have mentioned it.

*We have not written anything about it yet here as it is still in the planning stages and we are trying to cope with the current huge charter costs (\$21,000) for this remote trip. We will be able to tell you more about it in Outfit 152 I hope, once we give (or get) the green light.*

*Certainly the issue of canoes in Twin Otters is a big one. Many carriers have found a way to accommodate the new and stricter rules on carrying canoes inside. Some just don't want to bother.*

*So we may end up trying one of the folding canoes aka Pakboat which have been so heartily endorsed by Cliff Jacobson and even Chris Rush's group on the Notakwanon trip in this Outfit. They completely eliminate the canoe transport issue. So if this comes together we might be able to tell you about Pakboats first hand.*

*It has been six years since the HACC has done a full expedition and that's too long. Having now reached the 60 age plateau, I realize too keenly that such trips will soon become unrealistic. Eric Morse crossed the western cordillera via the Rat and Porcupine rivers the year he turned 60 and continued to paddle for a decade after that.*

*You typically don't think of your own canoeing in a historical perspective. After all, we are all about re-tracing historical figures. But with the new surge in technology and northern development as outlined on Page 4, it does make one reflect.*

*We look back on a time when we would travel 1000 miles and see only 6 people and no roads, bridges or mines. And we carried no satphone, only a scratchy VHF radio that would work occasionally.*

*So, yes, I do note the change. I am glad that I got to see so many thousands of miles of rivers when they all ran free - uncrossed by mining roads, unbothered by helicopters and visitor registration bureaus. Will my son be able to say that? Nope.*

*- Michael Peake*

## Canoesworthy

**A** brother and sister duo from Iqaluit is planning their latest Arctic adventure. This summer, Eric and Sarah McNair-Landry will use handmade kayaks to travel 1,000 kilometres across Baffin Island in Nunavut. They'll start in Qikiqtarjuaq and end in Cape Dorset.

But first, they have some sewing to do. They're stretching canvas over a light wood frame, then sewing it tight. Next, they'll paint the canvas with about four coats of polyurethane. The kayaks are based on the traditional Inuit one, used for thousands of years across the Arctic.

The idea to use kayaks on a trip came after several trips to Greenland where kayaking is still going strong for hunting and national competitions.

"There have been many attempts at revival through just building a kayak, but they all hang in museums or in schools, visitors' centres, what not. None of these kayaks are actually used," said Eric, who also runs Pittarak Expeditions.

The four-person team will spend 50 to 60 days on the trip – enough time to get well-acquainted with their custom-made boats.

"In Greenland, there's 36 different rolls that they can perform in competition, so that's something that I think we'd like to work towards as well," said expedition member Katherine Breen.

kayak.

The kayak they're making now is just a prototype. Later this year, the team will move their workshop to Inuksuk High School. They'll recruit students to help them build the boats which will go on the trip, and also try to get more people interested in the sport that Inuit gave to the world.

"It's not just such an important part of their history, but, I mean, Nunavut's also an amazing place to sea-kayak," said Sarah. (Nunatsiaq News)

**T**he Norwegian group looking to salvage the Maud is filming the shipwreck's final winter in Nunavut.

The group has set up a tent in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, near where the wreck has been sitting in shallow water for about 80 years.

They want to capture images of the ship before beginning next year's salvage operation.

"We will basically document the present situation of the ship, during the wintertime. This is the first time we are here during the winter and we wanted to be able to get some material, footage on film, before we actually take the ship back to Norway. And this is probably the last chance," said Jan Wanggaard, the project's leader.

The group Maud Returns Home was granted an export permit for the wreckage by the Canadian government earlier this year.

The Maud was once sailed by famed Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen. He used the Maud to attempt to cross the North Pole. Eventually, the ship was sold to the Hudson's Bay Company and sank in 1930.

The Norwegian group plans to bring the Maud back to where it was built in Norway and put it on display.

They say the ship has been severely damaged over the years, but the oak wood still seems to be in prime condition.

**I**f there were money to build a \$1.2 billion all-weather 1,200-kilometre road linking Manitoba to Nunavut, at least engineering studies could point the way.

A preferred route has been selected for the road which would join the existing Manitoba highway system at Gillam, roughly 250 km south of Churchill, with that port town, Arviat, Whale Cove and Rankin Inlet linked in by feeder routes.

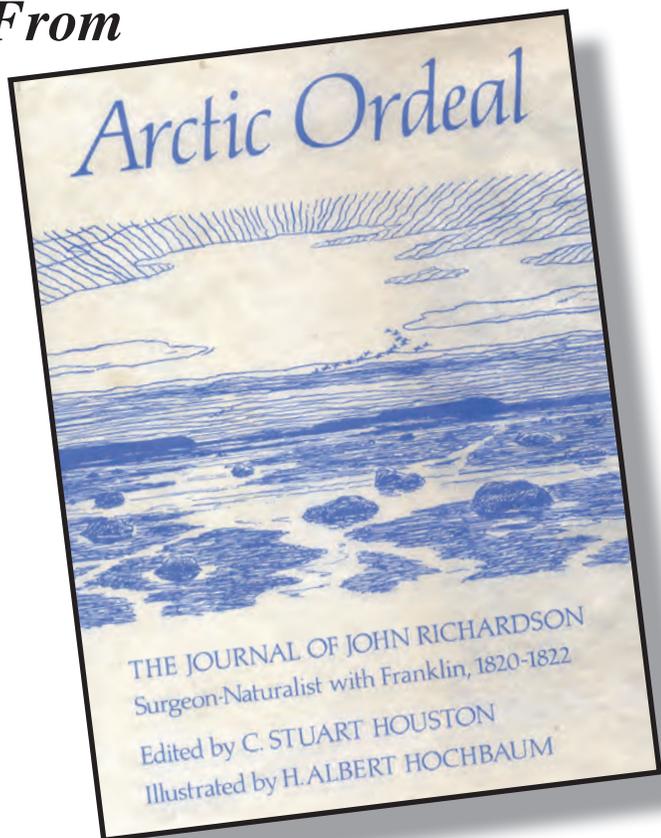
But so far it is just being studied.

Construction of the road would take 15 years after five years of preliminary planning

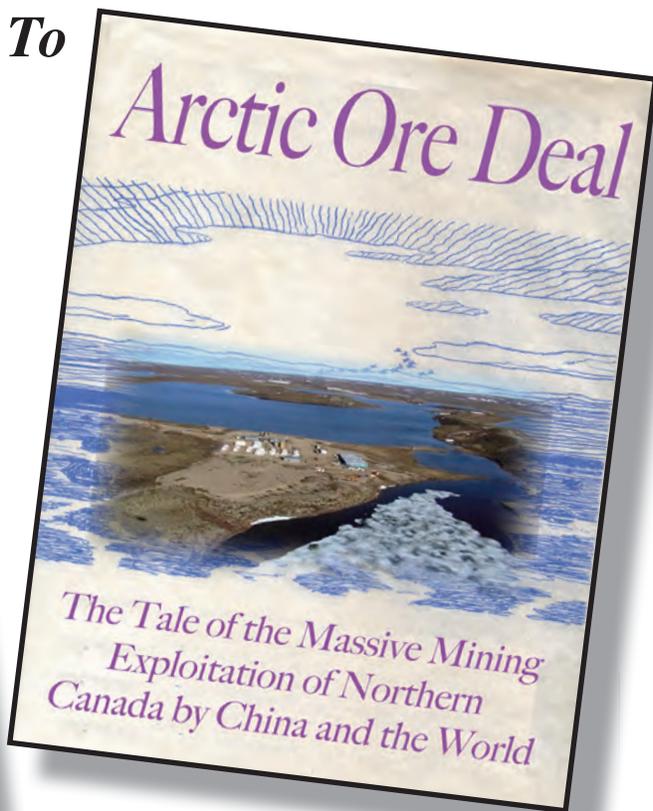
*Continued on Page 11*

# LEFT TO OUR OWN RESOURCES

*From*



*To*



*These two books, on the left, the real one, is Stuart Houston's superb volume on John Richardson, and another the result of our fertile imagination nevertheless tell the tale of the state of development in Canada's North. Of course, explorers were always looking for natural riches but modern technology and a world stage for mining have begun what we believe is the start of a new era of growth that will change the face of the north permanently and on a massive and permanent scale.*

**By MICHAEL PEAKE**

**I**t was the reason they came here in the first place. It seems the land God gave to Cain contained some buried treasures.

Development in Canada's north has been going on since well before it was called Canada. Martin Frobisher was searching for ore on Baffin Island in 1560. That began what has become a near 600 year run on this untapped continent. Frobisher ended up carrying back 1500 tones of ore over two voyages – and it was ultimately proved worthless. You'd think that might have discouraged some people. But it only whetted their appetites. And the rest is mining history.

From Franklin through A. P. Low and the Tyrrell brothers, these travellers' primary goal in exploring these lands was to determine what economic value they had. And those resources were so big and their impact so small, it seemed limitless.

*Che-Mun* has been reporting on northern development and dams and the rest for decades and the pace always seemed somewhat constant. But somehow it is different now. The world's big boys have arrived bringing with them economic leverage to do what was never realistic on a domestic scale. The 1.3 billion-plus people in the Chinese market have caught up to technology and they want the life that we have - presumably just the good things. So China, and other countries, have been spreading their



immense wealth and power around the world on a quest to lock up this planet's natural resources for their immense market. And there are few places more empty and more wealthy than Canada especially Nunavut and Nunavik.

One recent proposal, the Izok Lake Corridor, caught our eye when we learned it required an all-weather road which would run 350 km due north to a deep-water port in the Arctic Ocean (see map below). The road will cross the Hood and Burnside rivers among others, and pass through the habitat of the dwindling Bathurst Inlet caribou herd. Their plan is to start it up by 2018 and the feasibility study will run for another year.

And in this flurry of activity created by Izok whose proponent, MMG Resources, is an arm of the Chinese government, there's been a revival of the plan for a road to Bathurst Inlet first proposed a decade ago by a nearby mine. So the ball is really starting to roll in that remote area.

In Nunavik, aka Ungava or northern Quebec a similar number of large mines are in the works, many funded by China. Nunavik Nickel north of the Povungnituk River contains reserves of at least 4.29 billion tonnes of iron ore, calls their find "the largest iron ore deposit in Canada" and one of the 15 largest in the world. WISCO, one of the major subsidiaries of Wuhan Iron & Steel Corp of China, will shoulder 70 per cent of the estimated \$13 billion cost required to develop the Lac Otelnuk iron mine.

And these new era megaprojects often have a new and distinct feature from previous eras - significant secondary infrastructure which raises awareness with many people and makes the impact of a seemingly small mine much broader. Where long roads are proposed in Nunavut, in Nunavik they are looking at a 850-km railway line from Lac Otelnuk to Sept-Iles — as well as major improvements to the port there.

The current biggest mine in northern Quebec, Raglan Lake, is run by Anglo-Swiss company Xstrata and has been operating for 16 years at the head of the Povungnituk River and has expanded significantly in that period.

And it's getting easier to mine in that harsh climate. Nunavik has been melting over the last 50 years due to climate change and 50% of the province's permafrost has disappeared since the late 1950's, a trend that is expected to continue. The Canadian miner Quest Rare Minerals has one of the world's largest rare earth mineral deposits just west of the upper George River on the border with Labrador.

The Izok area, southwest of Bathurst Inlet in the Kitikmeot Region of the Nunavut, is expected to produce 180,000 tonnes of zinc in concentrate and 50,000 tonnes of copper in concentrate per year once in production. More impressive than the size of the deposits is the grade – 12-per-cent zinc and 2.5-per-cent copper – at Izok Lake, with similar grades at High Lake.

By comparison, global mining giants such as Chile's Codelco are embarking on copper projects with grades below 1 per cent in some cases.

Mining is not new to Nunavut. The underground Polaris zinc mine in the territory was closed in 2002 after more than 20 years of production. Agnico-Eagle Mines Ltd.'s Meadowbank gold mine in the Kivalliq

region of Nunavut opened in 2010 and is the company's largest gold producer at some 300,000 ounces per year.

So there is no doubt why resource companies are headed here, the minerals are plentiful and high grade. Until now, despite centuries of knowledge about the frozen north, has money, technology and climate change combined to make it all very doable.

It is a massive issue that we can only scratch the surface of here

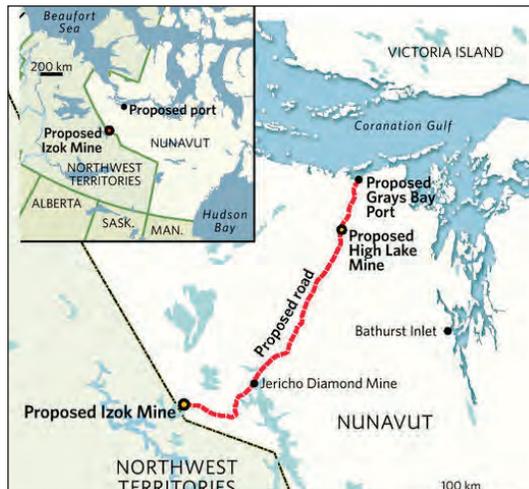
but we believe it will be one that is only getting bigger. The sparse aboriginal population benefits more in money than with jobs, as the many natives have not been able to adapt to the modern work cycle demanded by miners. The question is not if it will be done, but rather how it will be done.

Of course, there are many more environmental regulations in place than decades ago and the native people are a large part of the discussion today. Mining is essential and needed in a modern economy. Unfortunately, it makes too much economic sense to completely disregard a wilderness area which has little economic value but a massive environmental and spiritual one. Any of us who have paddled the far north,

know this association is more than just fizzy warm feelings. There is something elemental in large areas of pristine wilderness.

Because there are so many projects planned many will be approved. They will etch a permanent mark across the vast northern lands we once thought as limitless and pristine. We only view those lands in one dimension, for the miners, it is what lies below that counts. And how to get to it and get it out without ruining what lives and exists on top is the billion dollar question. And the pursuit is for that elusive and oh-so lucrative project approval.

To paraphrase that ancient Chinese expression, this journey of a thousand mines, begins with a single slip of paper.



# Attacking the Notakwanon



Photo:

Francis and Eric Couturier tackling one of the long, technical rapids typical of the upper portion of the Notakwanon River.

## STORY AND PHOTOS by CHRIS RUSH

After 18 hours of driving, in August 2007, just past the village of Churchill Falls, we were high on the Labrador Plateau but finally descending down to Goose Bay via the Trans Labrador Highway (this unpaved road is a highway in name only). Fear was beginning to brew in the back of my mind – this road seemed to just go down, down, down – a long descent that made me wonder what the descent on our chosen river was going to be like. We were planning to get a Twin Otter floatplane put-in close to the headwaters of the Notakwanon river high on this same plateau, 200km further north, meaning we would have to deal with a 1,500 foot drop over 160km. This works out to a 15 foot drop per mile but the scary part is that most of this drop is in the first 40km!

That night, in Goose Bay, the rain pounded down. In the mor-

ning, we were at the Otter Creek floatplane base bright and early. “I don’t know if we can get you in.” That was not what I wanted to hear from the air Labrador dispatcher. “The weather’s bad up north.” If we set off and couldn’t land, we were told we’d have to turn back and pay for the aborted attempt. And to make things worse, the weather had been bad all week backing up their schedule meaning if the weather cleared the next day, we’d probably be bumped for the freight flights to mining camps. I pulled the veteran Otter pilot aside and asked his opinion. He thought we were nuts, “impossible river”, he said, in that wonderful Newfoundland brogue, the last canoeists he had dropped off there were three Americans the year earlier, and apparently they lost a canoe and had to call for a pickup halfway down the river. The scare factor increased – this was a veteran pilot who knew the territory well – and he was shaking his head. On the other hand, chances were no-one had finished the river since at least



**The Notakwanon's famous unnamed falls; a hard right, hard left corner shows that the unique nature of this rough-hewn Labrador river is not for beginners.**

last year, making us want to go even more. The pilot then confided that he thought he could get us to our drop off if we were willing to chance it; low clouds were his only concern as there were mountains that we would have to fly over to get to the drop-off lake. With our trip hanging precariously we compromised – we would chance the flight and if the Notakwanon drop-off was a no-go, the pilot said he'd drop us further south in Shipiskan lake and we would canoe the Kanairiktok river instead.

So we hurriedly stuffed a 17 foot Prospector, a 16 footer and a solo Pak-boat folding canoe into the Twin Otter as quickly as we could before the pilot changed his mind, strapped in and took off. There was a feeling of trepidation on everyone's mind, but we were all smiling and laughing – relief after months of planning – two days of driving on mostly crappy roads and lots of question marks about getting the plane in the air. With dense boreal forest below, we soon lost sight of civilization. We flew over the famous Naskaupi river, the one that Hubbard and Wallace missed one hundred years earlier, ultimately leading to Hubbard's death. Soon we came to the Kanairiktok as it exits Shipiskan lake. A broad river, it disappointed as there were no rapids in sight for miles. We gained altitude slowly as the landscape became more barren.

This was the gnarly Labrador Plateau in all its glory. It looked gloomier than ever as the skies were heavy and grey with rain pelt-ing the plane. The next river we flew over was the Adlatok, narrow and frothing with almost continuous white water. Wow. Mental note – this looked like a wild river we would have to come back to. I strained out of the window to try and catch a glimpse of the legendary Harp Lake. I knew it was close, I was sitting right behind the pilot who was navigating by sight with a grubby old topo map by his side. Alas, I caught no glimpse of this supposedly spectacular lake that looks like an inland fjord - a narrow slit of water surrounded by thousand foot cliffs on either side. Thirty minutes later we circled over a series of lakes and slowly descended and landed, finally taxiing to a sandy beach. After quickly unloading the plane we huddled over the maps in a cold rain. "I dropped you here" said the pilot, pointing to a spot on his map. "The river's that way", to our right. Problem was I couldn't find the same spot on our 1:20,000 maps. I fired up the GPS and found we were 15km further west than where I had expected the drop-off, on the edge of a large lake. "No problem" was the pilot's answer, "I'll fly ahead, confirm the river is over there and waggle my wings during a fly-over if it is." And so he did, about 15 minutes later.

As Jimmy and I set up camp and assembled the Pak-boat, the other three went off to fish.



**Jimmy Deschesnes with the Arctic char that was sacrificed for sushi.**

About an hour later, Joel came running back into camp jabbering, “Get ready for the bear.” Fishing alone, he had been stalked for a kilometre by a rather large, curious black bear. Boy was he relieved to see us – he had left to fish in such haste he’d forgotten his pepper spray. As we fumbled with bear bangers and looked for the pepper spray

and duct tape plus a lot of aluminum bending made the boat serviceable again, although it now was deformed with huge rocker (both the stern and bow were fully out of the water when the canoe was loaded) and going through rapids it resembled a “Venus fly trap”, threatening to swallow Jimmy!



**Somebody lose something? Half of one that didn't make it. Anyone recognize the canoe?**

cans, the bear was standing and sniffing the air while inching closer. Before we could do anything but hold our ground, his curiosity must have been satisfied as he suddenly dropped down and ambled away. I guess he decided that it was OK for us to camp on his land. We made mental notes never to go anywhere in this wilderness without our emergency waist packs which include bear repellent.

The scenery this high on the river is truly spectacular. Taiga interspersed with caribou trails everywhere, rolling naked mountains and hills, beautiful lakes, all tempered by menacing skies. You could just pick a peak and go hike it. The next day was a leisurely paddle to the end of the lake, with many stops for fishing. Feisty lake trout were taken with lures and flies on just about every cast. The outlet river was small, perhaps fifty feet across, rocky and shallow, with 3 sets of technical R2's. This led to a cluster of small lakes that culminated in the Notakwanon proper. The first rapid was small but full of tight turns and ended in a small ledge that the Pak boat couldn't slide over- instead it wedged on a rock and started to fill with water despite a spray skirt. Before we could get to it, the boat had partially wrapped around the rock, causing considerable damage, snapping one of the aluminum gunwales and bending many other rods.

There were also multiple tears in the fabric hull. We surveyed the damage and groaned. No one mentioned it, but we knew this could be the end of the trip as it was planned. We set up a pit-stop camp and got to work. Stool legs, plastic tie wraps, wire, vinyl patches, glue

The next day was full of negotiating 13 km of almost continuous white water, R1 – R3's. Most were runnable but needed scouting and a few were lined. At the end of this section the river turned abruptly right and thundered over a 60-foot waterfall, then turned left down a one-kilometre canyon. Truly a spectacular sight, we spent the evening watching the sun descend over the horizon, drinking wine with the blackflies, with the falls as a backdrop. The better part of the next day was spent portaging the gear around the falls. The canyon looked runnable so we elected to lower everything down to the base of the waterfall with ropes. Punching through the current generated by the falls was difficult (and blind due to the mist kicked up) but was rewarded by a beautiful paddle through the canyon. A few kilometres and several rapids later a 20-foot falls followed, making a superb campsite. While fishing (for salmon!) on the other side of the river, a curious bear checked our camp out with no harm done.

A day of tough paddling followed. First came 3 km of technical R2 and R3's that required shore scouting, followed by 3 km of easy R1's that we scouted from the canoe. On one of the difficult sections we had trouble making the tight turns with our seventeen foot canoe and wound up getting wedged on a rock mid-stream. Standing on the rock as we tried to pry the canoe off, I heard a piercing scream. Unbeknownst



**Jimmy Deschesnes about to paddle through the mist of the falls.**

to my partner Joel, the safety had come off the pepper spray attached to his waist belt and he had inadvertently knocked the trigger, giving himself a face full of orange spray. Not the place to be testing the bear deterrent!

The next day we found a truly special place. It was raining lightly



as Joel turned to me and said, “there’s fish here.” He pulled out his rod and as the lure approached the canoe, three large fish were following it. A closer look revealed a shallow river bottom with literally hundreds of fish resting quietly. A quick shout brought the other boats. Out the fish came, one after another, Arctic Char, the largest ending up as fresh sushi that very night. Later that afternoon, a big ledge surrounded by cliffs required careful lining and hauling and slowed our progress. After 2 km of unrunnable rapids that we lined the river turned into a water “highway” reminiscent of western rivers – a steady drop with R1 and R2’s all seemingly scoutable from the canoe. Our complacency was undone by the sudden disappearance of the lead canoe – I was still wondering what happened to it as we flew over a well hidden five foot ledge! The 17 foot Prospector took the drop better than the solo Pak boat, crashing through the ensuing hole as we saw Jimmy swimming in the freezing water, happy to be wearing a wetsuit.



**It takes teamwork to line a ledge along the Notakwanon on Quebec’s North Shore - home to very rugged rivers.**

I soon experienced the same cold and wet feeling as the river turned nasty again with 2 km of difficult R2 – R3’s. Standing chest high in the cold water, wedged on some shallow rocks mid-stream but managing to hold onto the canoe (or else it was potentially lost!), I awaited rescue from the others on shore. Thirty minutes later, after they managed to throw me a rope, I clung shivering to the top of the overturned canoe as my partners swung it to shore. Several kilometers later we were treated to the sight of literally half a canoe sitting on an island – undoubtedly the relic of a previous unsuccessful expedition. We never found the other half of that canoe, although Joel found a paddle soon after.

The river had dropped an incredible 1,000 feet to this point, but then it’s character abruptly changed as it turned east and widened in a 30 km long valley surrounded by 2,000 foot mountains. Unbelievably beautiful, the river is reminiscent of the further north Korok River at this point. The colours that sunset were astounding,

followed by a full moon that rose over the mountains into the night sky, glittering over the still water as we huddled by a blazing fire on the broad rocky shore. “This is why we come to Labrador”, I caught myself saying. However, the thrills are not over, as at the end of this valley there’s another 300 foot drop before the Labrador sea, most coming in a 4 km section as the river turns north again. In driving

rain we were forced to line an interminably long unrunnable rapid, slipping many times on the slick rocks. At one point disaster almost struck as a canoe that had been left on the shoreline rocks so that Joel could come back and help the others line was almost knocked into the rapids by a curious mother bear and her two cubs. This rapid ended with the river narrowing to perhaps 30 feet wide, bending left as the current smashes into a smooth bedrock wall. There was some fun immediately after with a football field long torrent of big standing waves to ride rodeo style!

The last rapid on the river was a fun one

also, about a kilometre of R2 that we ran scouting from the canoe, ending in standing waves and a good fishing spot. The river turns east again, widens and slows for 40 km. Characterized by sandy banks and lined by hills up to 1,000 feet high, we were lucky to have no wind and blazing sunshine. It then meanders into Merrifield Bay which we entered at sunset, hoping to find a campsite near the river mouth. Alas, the shores were either heavily treed or marshy necessitating a 6 km moonlight paddle on the bay until we mercifully stumbled onto an abandoned Innu cabin that had enough cleared dry land for our tents. In retrospect, we were lucky to have entered the bay at high tide as it is quite shallow and we would have been otherwise dragging the canoes through mud and the plethora of dead trees lining the bottom of the bay that had been washed down the river each spring.

The next morning the Twin Otter swooped in to return us to civilization. An amazing river with something for everyone, but be prepared...



# Letters to the Granddaughter

The Story of Dillon Wallace of the Labrador Wild

By Philip Schubert 2012 \$45 eBook \$6  
<http://magma.ca/~philip18/HWSaga/OrderBiography.html>

The legendary story of the Hubbard and Wallace expeditions remains one of the great tales of Canadian northern exploration.

The story of a widowed woman, in 1905, finishing the trip that killed her husband two years earlier while his partner was also re-doing the same trip at the same time is irresistible. It was a media sensation in its day as the three books, many articles and speaking engagements which came out of those three canoe trips over two summers in remote Labrador will attest.

No book has, or in our opinion could ever will, do this story more justice than *Great Heart* by John Ruge and Jim Davidson. It is the gold standard of such work. They recaptured the story by writing with dialogue over top of the historical narrative. That is a very tricky thing to do and most wisely don't try.

And now *Letters to the Granddaughter* has come along from the pen of Labrador veteran Phillip Schubert. Some of his trips have been featured in *Che-Mun* over the years.

Schubert is a different kind of person - largely a solo traveler and this is a different kind of book - from its format to its content to its title but it is a well researched one and of that will be of great interest to fans of Labrador canoeing.

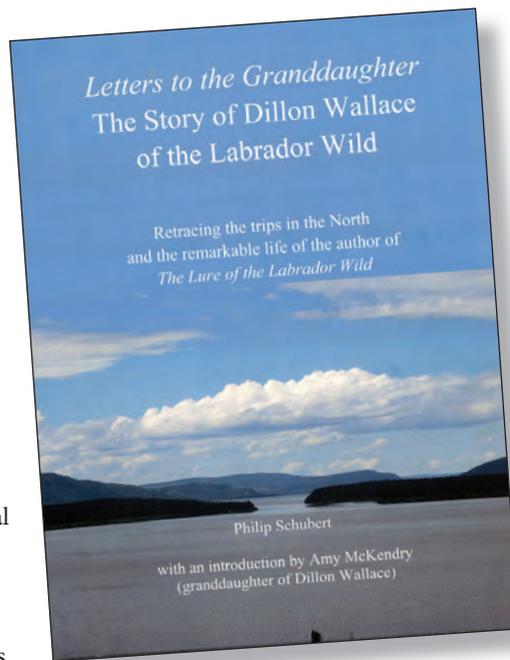
First to the title and the book's literary construct. Schubert felt it necessary to bring in the idea of telling this tale to in a series of letters to Amy McKendry, the granddaughter of the story's protagonist, Dillon Wallace. It is an interesting idea but it is uneasily grafted onto this guide book/scrapbook with its unusual softcover large format book.

There is a foreword from Amy McKendry and each chapter begins "Dear Amy" as if he is telling the story of her famous grandfather to her. But it is really an adornment and it doesn't carry through as this book is more an

intellectual report than a touching tale to a relative.

Also, just from a marketing perspective, the title is very awkward. How about *A Granddaughter's Letters* or *Dear Amy*? I realize this is a bit nit-picking but it has all to do with the feel of the book and how you approach it.

I certainly want to congratulate Schubert on his incredible research and diligent following of the tale of Wallace & Co. He is



somewhat reminiscent of a modern day Dillon Wallace and certainly defends the author's reputation. Much of the public sympathy in this story went to Mina but it appears she had her issues too. In fact, Schubert even refers to her as "psychotic" a couple of times. It just all adds to the juiciness of the tale.

Schubert criss-crossed all the routes over many years and most importantly, was armed with the full knowledge of all three trips. He is able to go to the specific spots mentioned in the accounts and show them today and relate how he fared there.

The books sometimes gets bogged down in too much detail and minutia and often strays into superfluous details clearly showing the need for an editor.

He does give a detailed and superb account of Hubbard's lonely and pitiable death which sums up all the info from their guide

George Elson and Wallace. It is a very thorough and touching study.

Though a self published book, it is loaded with numerous photos and maps, many excellent. But there are too many drab photos or ones that needed cropping. One picky point, viewing this from a photographer's perspective, is the front cover shot which shows the entrance to Grand Lake. There is the tip of a tree just sticking into the bottom of the photo. This should have been cropped out or have more trees in. Looks like a mistake.

The maps and photos, both modern and historic are a real bonus for anyone looking to explore some, or all, of these famous trips. The maps are extremely detailed and loaded with information of actual travel knowledge.

Schubert follows Dillon Wallace's travels with a historian's bent and a real sense of what it is to be there. He perhaps carries the historical reenactment too far when, like Wallace, he manages to dump (a few times) on the George River. Having done the George twice I can attest it is a mighty stream with a large a very powerful current. It is a river that must be tackled like jujutsu - use the force of the flow to get you around it. You cannot overpower this river.

Wallace dumped on the upper George and lost his rifles, pots and some gear. Schubert was lucky to lose little though he once had to call a plane to get him out.

There are numerous journal and diary excerpts reproduced along with historical letters. Many are facsimiles but needed to be imaged better as they are quite dark.

But the real strength of this fine book is in the information it has gathered and presented so well. Being able to access all known material and view it in the coolness of time allows us to assess these characters more completely. Schubert has done Wallace, and wilderness canoeists, a great service in sorting out this most tangled of tales.

However, there is one missing item that every Labrador historian would to see. George Elson's journal often said "see other book", presumably a more candid and insightful one - perhaps with details of him and Mina - the heart of *Great Heart*. But that book has never come to light. Maybe it is out there still, waiting to be discovered - yet another piece of historical kindling to keep this eternal story ablaze.

-Michael Peake



## *CANOESWORTHY continued*

and engineering — and all this after receiving guaranteed federal support for the job's various phases.

It could also be an attractive project for a public-private partnership, government officials said.

The business case study for the road highlights a number of benefits to Manitoba and Nunavut, such as a reduction in the high cost of public services in the North and an increase in the opportunities for large-scale resource development. But a lot of ground work still needs to be done, including a variety of studies and high-resolution aerial mapping.

The idea for the road first started circulating in earnest back in 2001 when Nunavut and Manitoba agreed to look together at the benefits and feasibility of the all-weather road.

Since then, the project has been backed by Nunavut Premier Eva Aariak and Greg Selinger, Manitoba Premier.

**N**unavut will be the first place in Canada to use a new tool to track search and rescue operation data.

Nunavut's search and rescue officials are hoping the Canadian Inland Search and Rescue Incident system, developed by the territorial and federal governments, will go live in the new year.

of protection services, says the new search and rescue database has so far revealed most searches are for people between the ages of 41 and 50. (CBC)

Protection Services Director Ed Zebedee and his team have been testing it for the last three months using data from 2012.

He said some of the results so far have been surprising.

"We thought a lot of our searches were younger people that we were looking for," he said. "And the one thing about this is it correlates age groups, so we've learned that it's a different age group than we actually thought."

It turns out most searches are for people aged 41 to 50.

The other surprising fact is almost 50 per cent of all searches are a result of equipment failure or running out of fuel.

Zebedee said knowing these factors, plus knowing what time of year searches occur, will help their search and rescue prevention campaigns and assist other groups such as the RCMP.

He said the database will be rolled out eventually to community search committees so they can enter data.

**A** Chinese-owned mine in Nunavik will soon see huge ice-class vessels sailing through Hudson Strait to bring nickel, copper, platinum and palladium to European markets.

After sinking \$735 million into infrastructure, Jien Canada Mining Ltd., the owner of Nunavik's second operating mine, plans to ramp up production in 2013 and hire more Nunavik workers.

The mine company, which expects to reach full production by 2014, will produce nickel, copper, palladium and platinum for at least 13 years.

Located 20 miles from Xstrata Nickel's Raglan nickel mine, the Nunavik Nickel mine sits in "one of the most inhospitable places in the world," said its president, John Caldbick in a recent interview.

But the cold, rocky plateau is rich in minerals, and early in 2013 the mine will start processing ore.

More than 650 people are now on site, living in its 428-person

main camp and other temporary camps. Some workers are excavating ore from the Expo open pit mine, while others complete essential parts of the mine's infrastructure.

By January, the mill will be ready to start producing concentrate. That will be stored at Deception Bay, with the first shipment scheduled to start next August.

If this all sounds smooth-running, that's not entirely true: the Nunavik Nickel mine project has faced numerous hurdles since 2008, when the Kativik Environmental Quality Commission issued a permit for the project.

In 2009, Chinese interests were taking advantage of low metal prices by going bargain hunting for financially-troubled Western mining assets, Jien took over the formerly Canada-owned junior mining company with a takeover bid worth \$192-million.

Jien acquired 75 per cent of the company's project shares, while 25 per cent of the shares stayed with the Vancouver-based Goldbrook Ventures. Then, Jien fought with Goldbrook until early in 2012 when Jien finally bought out that company's interest in Canadian Royalties for \$100 million.

Now the Chinese-owned company, still called Canadian Royalties, appears to have its ducks lined up in a row. Canadian Royalties now has an arrangement with Xstrata that sees the two companies sharing use of the Donaldson airport. (Nunatsiaq News)

**T**he owners of Nunavut's first and only diamond mine are nowhere to be found.

Shear Diamonds bought the Jericho mine site in 2010 after the previous owners went bankrupt. The company hoped to re-open the mine, but ended up putting the site under what it called "temporary closure".

It happened quickly last summer, on Labour Day weekend, when Shear realized it was in financial trouble. Within 48 hours, Shear had done some basic clean-up at the Jericho site, and all its staff members were flown out. Regulators found out about it a few days later.

A federal inspection of the site then found some things left undone. Hazardous waste wasn't stored properly and there was evidence of fuel spills not cleaned up.

Shear promised more cleanup, but it's not clear how much has been done.

"Realistically, we know that through the monitoring that Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development is doing under the terms of the water licence, there are significant compliance issues that they're in the process of following up with as well," said Ryan Barry, the executive director of the Nunavut Impact Review Board.

Barry said they will do their best to get a response from Shear, and find out how the company intends to comply with rules and regulations set by the board.

The board gave Shear a deadline of tomorrow to submit a series of outstanding reports. However, Ryan Barry said the board has had trouble reaching anybody from the company in recent weeks.

Calls and emails from CBC News have also gone unanswered, the company's website is gone, and now it's not even possible to leave the company a message on the phone.

The Jericho Mine, which is located 350 kilometres southwest of Cambridge Bay, is Canada's third and Nunavut's first diamond mine.



photo: Michael Peake

**THE REAL QUEBEC MAP** - Although voted out last fall, former Quebec Premier Jean Charest set forth his Plan Nord for development in northern Quebec. That plan continues under the separatist government of Pauline Marois as there is just too much money to be made to resist. Speaking to a mining conference in Toronto in 2012, Charest stands in front of a map of Quebec that shows the major mines and hydro projects under Plan Nord. The Nunavik Nickel mine is at the very top of the province. The title along the top means area affected by Plan Nord.

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