



THE QUESNEL BLACKWATER PADDLERS

CLUB NEWSLETTER.....JULY/AUGUST 2013

INTRODUCTION

The plan was to have this third issue of the 2013 Blackwater Paddlers newsletter circulating during the month of July. Here it is, August and I'm just getting started. But I have a good excuse....I have been out paddling. Hasn't the weather been fantastic? It's like living in Hawaii or Mexico....just shorts and flip flops (oh yes and sun screen, bug dope, sun hat, water to drink, shade umbrella.....). I hope everyone has been enjoying this wonderful run of warm weather!

Where have you been paddling? The club has been out on Dragon Lake, the Cottonwood River, Quesnel River, Ghost Lake, Weldon Lake and ??????????As for my family we have enjoyed paddling on the Bowron Chain, Dragon Lake, Ten Mile Lake, the Cottonwood River, with two overnight campouts at Stony (Stoney?) Lake. We sure do have lots of paddling choices in our area.

There are no photos for this issue...partly because of the time constraints to get this newsletter in circulation before the lakes and rivers freeze, but partly because I don't really have any readily accessible photos to use. But I know that many of you have some great photos of this season's paddling events and I would invite you to forward one or two of them to me, for inclusion in the next issue.

MAY ON THE BOWRON CHAIN

Would you believe that 15 fellows made it out and around the Bowron Chain on the May 2013 long weekend. I have to admit that at no time during the trip did we celebrate Queen Victoria's birthday but we did have a great time. For anyone interested, there is a longish write-up about the trip available...it is about 15 pages long so it won't be duplicated here however if you would like to read it, please email me jdinsdale@explornet.ca and I will forward a copy of the trip report to you. It is perhaps enough to state that this was the 17th consecutive year that a group of men associated with our club have completed the circuit on this weekend...and this had to be one of the best trips yet....some of those along for this journey weren't even born 17 years ago.

PADDLING SCHEDULE

There is still time for lots more paddling. I am pasting in a copy of John Marien's last fan out email that lists upcoming events for everyone to take part in.....*I'm going to add my comments in italics...this is just a quick and easy way to get the information out to you.*

SUNDAY AUGUST 11

The **HORSEFLY RIVER** has been an annual favorite of Quesnel paddlers for many years. Although the river run is fairly short, there's lots of features and technical bits and waves to play on.

For this river, you should be experienced in moving water or an experienced flatwater paddler teamed up with someone who is.

As well as the usual safety gear, your boat should have some additional floatation.

With all the driving, this is an all day event.

For all the details, reply only to John Marien at: jcmarien@hotmail.com or 250 994 3382

SATURDAY AUGUST 17

Many years ago, the Blackwater Paddlers designated a large boulder to mark the approximate site where Alexander Mackenzie arrived at Quesnel in 1793.

This location is marked with a plaque and a flagpole flying the Canadian flag. You may have seen it.

We need your help to clean up the area around **VOYAGEUR ROCK** at Ceal Tingley Park.

This project involves removing driftwood and some accumulated river silt.

To find out how you can help reply only to Jeff Dinsdale at jdinsdale@xplornet.ca or 250 992 9143 *I would welcome any helpers with this project...it has taken quite a bit of organizing....lots of levels of bureaucracy to negotiate but we do have the go-ahead...the City will be helping out with a lot of the heavy work...but the site is actually in pretty rough shape because it is annually under water. Come with work boots, I would recommend long pants (not shorts) and work gloves.....the work will involve removing wooden debris and piling it so that the City will be able to haul it away with heavy equipment.....we also will be using a high pressure water pump to help with the clean up of the silt that has built up over the past couple of years. The interpretive sign will need to be dismantled and hopefully cleaned and reassembled and the railings on the little bridge need to be refinished, this will probably require dismantling them and taking them to someone's shop for a good sanding and refinishing. This is actually a very special spot, both Alexander Mackenzie and Simon Fraser mention this place in their journals. Please do call me if you have any questions....we will start at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday the 17th and hopefully will be finished in a couple of hours.....meet at the site...Voyageur Rock, which is accessed from Ceal Tingley Park. And if we do finish by 1:00 p.m. we will be just in time for tea (and dainties) at the Quesnel and District Museum, which will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary on this day.*

SUNDAY AUGUST 18

Note the change of date for this trip.

Here's a favorite section of a great river. The **MIDDLE QUESNEL RIVER** is the run from Beavermouth to Gravelle Ferry.

This run is not very technical but there are some big waves, strong eddies and a short canyon section to play around in.

This is suitable for paddlers experienced in moving water or experienced in flatwater and teamed up with someone who is.

As well as the usual safety gear, your boat should have additional floatation.

The time on the water is only about 4 hours, but with the shuttle driving, it's most of a day.

For all the details, reply only to John Marien at: jcmarien@hotmail.com or 250 994 3382

THURSDAY AUGUST 22

Another **INTRODUCTORY MOVING WATER** paddle on the Lower Quesnel River. This is the second to last one of these for the season.

So if you haven't been out there yet, plan to attend this one. You know you want to. Just do it ! !

This an excellent opportunity to practice your moving water skills and learn a few new things.

There may be space with an experienced paddler if you don't have a partner.

As of this writing, I'm not yet sure who will be leading this trip. Check your email for updates on this.

SATURDAY AUGUST 31

The **BLACKWATER RIVER** is a real gem. The run we plan is from the Nazko Bridge to Gilles Crossing.

This section has little or no white water and few hazards. Those being a few log jams and some shallow sections.

At this time of year we often see the Salmon in the river too !

This run is suitable for anyone with some flatwater experience and will work for canoes and small touring kayaks.

There may be space with an experienced paddler if you're looking for a partner.

As of this writing, I'm not yet sure who will be leading this trip. Check your email for updates.

LOOKING AHEAD....*This is me writing (not John M.), I note that the schedule has a Lower Quesnel paddle slated for September 4th, Poling Workshop scheduled for Saturday September 14th, The Likely Paddlefest is scheduled for September 20th – 22nd (in Likely)....Note: This is the same weekend as the Quesnel Fall Fair...but maybe it will be possible to take in both events....and then jumping to Saturday October 12th to Monday October the 14th it's the Thanksgiving Paddle to Pat's Point (see a discussion of this event in a separate section of this newsletter). And finally the club A.G.M. is slated for Thursday October 24th at Shiraoui House*

WELDON LAKE

On August 3rd 8 paddlers had a pleasant afternoon paddle on Weldon Lake...at least that is where we ended up. We actually thought that we were paddling on Hospital Lakes, which are located just outside of Barkerville off of the 3100 Road....but Google Maps doesn't lie...we were

on Weldon Lake, Hospital Lakes are located S.E. of Weldon Lake and it isn't clear if there is road access into those lakes, but the gut says that there must be.

To get to Weldon Lake, travel about 100 metres past the 3100 Road turnoff on the Bowron Lake Road there is what looks like an oil derrick but which is actually part of a large crane marking the entrance to a gold claim on the left hand side of the Bowron Lake Road....directly across the Bowron Lake Road from that "oil derrick" is a gravel roadway/path that leads to the put-in....it is safe to drive on the little access road, you can go in about 50 metres and you will see the water/put-in to your right....it looks like a small pond but it connects and opens up to larger bodies of water.

It is evident that in days past there was quite a bit of placer mining going on in this little area although now it is well grown over. The paddle is a gentle one in a nice secluded area with a beautiful view of the Cariboo Mountains. There was a bit of rain but we enjoyed a relaxing couple of hours together on the lake...and then the fun began. Once the canoes were safely tied onto the roof racks and this intrepid group of ancient hippies had changed into their "outfits", we drove into Wells to mix and mingle with a somewhat younger group that were having a ball at Arts Wells....a group that had to have numbered in the thousands. It was wonderful to see everyone with big smiles, obviously having a great time. Arts Wells must be unique in that the whole town is the venue, there is action happening everywhere....hats off to the organizers.

STONEY (?) LAKE

How do you spell the name of this lake anyway? This lake is about 5 km long, about a 2 hour drive from Quesnel, head NE on the 700 Road (turn right off of Hwy. 97 at Strathnaver). Note, this is an active logging road and during the week there is heavy logging truck traffic with trucks hauling tree-length loads directly into the Dunkley log yard. Stoney Lake, which is a well-known destination that has been used for many years by local outdoors folks is located past the Ahbau Lake turnoff which is at km 35...you have to travel past Lodi Lake and then Teapot Lake to about km 50 where there is a "Y" in the road. Stoney Lake runs in an E – W direction, if you keep left at the "Y" you are on a road that leads to the north side of the lake (and the same road will take you to Narrow Lake and eventually to Prince George) and if you keep to the right at the "Y" you will have access to the south shore of the lake. There are three Recreational Campsites located on the north shore, they are called the West, North and East campsites respectively and are well signed...there is one Recreational Campsite on the south shore but access is a bit questionable due to the overgrowth of vegetation on the access road.

The Recreational Campsites located along the north shore are for want of another word...stony. They are great for trailers, campers, motorhomes, and they offer great lake access for a put in, but they are pretty barren when it comes to wilderness camping. From my perspective, their only redeeming quality after a long drive over a dusty road is the presence of outhouses.

The real beauty of this lake is out on the water away from these campsites. There are three islands in this lake which offer some great secluded camping opportunities and there are also

several good camping spots along the shoreline. This lake offers clear water, great opportunities for day paddles, great sunrises and sunsets, good fishing, wildlife....we had a wonderful experience listening to and watching the howling wolves early in the morning.

There is an outlet flowing west from this lake into the Willow River....it is a wonderful paddle. Once on the Willow River you can safely paddle for a short distance but your take-out should be well planned before attempting to paddle down the river....or you could end up in the Fraser River and I understand that there are a few canyons to negotiate on the way. One other "must see" thing is the bridge that crosses the Willow River en route to the Recreational Campsites. There should be some kind of incentive prize for all those who summon the nerve to drive over it (and from the number of trailers and campers in the campsites, apparently a large number of people have found that nerve).

As a side note, there is some very interesting signage up along the route relating to the fact that this lake is on a winter corridor that runs between Prince George and Wells. One interesting sign referred to a shelter cabin that has been positioned for safety reasons in the event of a mid-winter breakdown. I understand that this corridor has now been opened up for ATV travel as well.

BOWRON LAKE VOLUNTEER WARDEN PROPOSAL

As indicated in the last issue of this newsletter, members of the club executive were planning to meet with senior staff responsible for the operation of Bowron Lake Provincial Park to formally present and discuss the club's proposal to develop and operate what the proposal termed the Volunteer Warden Program. Very briefly, this program would see volunteers who would be members of the Blackwater Paddlers, paddling on the Bowron Chain on a scheduled basis and that the main focus would be on having club members promoting Bowron Lake Park and wilderness canoeing in the Park with a secondary focus on being "eyes and ears" for as well as doing other tasks as indicated for Park Administration and the Park Facilities Operator. We also stated that we would be willing to follow through on our stated interest in supporting youth involvement in park enhancement projects as this was a way for our club to promote wilderness canoeing with youth.

The meeting did take place on April 24, 2013 and the end result of this two hour meeting was that the Park administrators did not feel that there was a place for a program like that being proposed by the club. The Park administration indicated that they would be interested in entertaining proposals from volunteer groups to undertake projects with a specific focus on enhancing some physical aspect of the Park, projects such as trail maintenance, even trail development and other such "hands on" projects such as building preservation. Similarly, the Park administration would consider the involvement of volunteer groups that would essentially provide an interface between the Park and the public with a view to increasing public support for Park initiatives, possibly accessing funds from sources that are not available to the Park itself and even assuming responsibility for specific projects of a technical nature such as developing educational materials that would enhance things like increased safety for all Park users.

It was explained that there is no perceived need for a program such as the proposed Volunteer Warden Program operating within the Park boundaries and that the proposed role of the Volunteer Warden is already filled by existing Park staff (contracted staff and Park Wardens). It was also stated that if volunteers such as the proposed Volunteer Wardens were to have access to the Park without paying the appropriate user fee, it would in fact take money away from the contracted Park Facilities Operator (PFO) as apparently there is a negotiated agreement in place which stipulates that revenues from user/park registration fees go directly to the PFO. If a Volunteer Warden was camping in the Park, in theory they would be taking a camping spot from someone who would otherwise be paying for that spot.

At this point, the club executive is not prepared to pursue this proposal any further.

DRAGON BOAT SHOWDOWN

If you didn't have Tuesday June 25th circled on your calendar, you probably missed the most significant Dragon Boating event of the year.....the showdown between the Dragon Lake Paddlers and the intrepid Blackwater Paddlers Voyageurs.

Heavy duty training had been taking place for two weeks leading up to this big day. The Voyageurs travelled out to Dragon Lake for some tips from the dragon boaters, they got somewhat used to the big lumbering dragon boat, they figured out what that long piece of wood that sticks out of the back of the boat is used for and they decided that they would pass on the drum beat and stick to good old fashioned voyageur paddling commands....*preparez! en avant! voulez vous?! Ooh la la!* To be candid and honest...it was hard work...hats off to the women of the Dragon Lake Paddlers, you are one very fit bunch. Actually the voyageurs were a bit intimidated on the first practice night just watching the women do their warm up exercises but they tried not to show it.

Race night, two 500 metre heats, a third tie breaking heat if needed. You could feel the tension in the air. Some of the key members of the Blackwater Paddlers Voyageurs had been laid low with injuries inflicted during the practice sessions. Who would take the crown? Heat number one, it was the Voyageurs by a narrow margin. The well-oiled voyageur machine was peaking at just the right time. Paddle into the water straight up and down, pull it out at the hip, feather it forward, use the back muscles, follow the cadence of the bow paddler....you could almost hear the men singing *c'est l'aviron*. Heat number two, it was the Dragon Lake Paddlers with their incessant "washing machine" stroke that brought them to victory....a narrow one but still a victory. Time for heat number three....which team would win? Alas, we will never know....it seems that an executive decision had been made to divide both teams in half for the final heat....half dragon boaters and half voyageurs in each boat....a mix of techniques, a bewildering flailing of paddles, water splashing, French and English....it ended in confusion....but it was sure lots of fun.

A big thank you to those who thought of this idea, and to those who made it all happen. A big thank you to the Dragon Lake Paddlers for hosting the event, for the use of their boats and paddles....and we had a great party afterward.

THANKSGIVING ON THE BOWRON

The plan is to paddle out to Pats Point which is located on Spectacle Lake on **Saturday** October 12th, leaving the put-in around noon and arriving at Pats Point in the late afternoon, in time to set up camp and to get ready for supper. It is about a 2-3 hour paddle from the put-in at the boat launch on Bowron Lake to Pat's Point. **Sunday** will be a day for relaxing, visiting, paddling, fishing, sleeping, reading, enjoying....and also time to cook the turkey and to prepare "all the trimmings" for the big Thanksgiving dinner that will take place that night. We tried to get Dave and Morley to come along and help us with the turkey but they aren't available...to be honest, I'm not sure if they even exist. This will be a first for us...actually cooking the turkey at Pat's Point, not just warming it up or frying some kind of turkey burger. **Monday** we will break camp and try to hit the water by about 10:00 a.m., we should be back at the put-in by noon or a little later and home in Quesnel about 1.5 hours after that.

The Park will be closed for the season so there will be no charge, there is every reason to believe that we will have virtually the whole campsite at Pats Point to ourselves. Come prepared to camp out, remember it is dark by 6:00 p.m., it could get chilly at night. Bring food for all meals except the Thanksgiving dinner on Sunday evening. We will share in the cost of the food for that meal.

It could be possible to travel out to Pats Point on the Sunday in time for supper if it is not possible to leave on the Saturday. It is important that everyone who is planning on taking part lets the organizer know ahead of time...we will need a pretty exact number in order to get the right sized turkey. If you are interested, please call trip organizer Jeff Dinsdale (me) at 250 992-9143. And just in case you were wondering and possibly hesitating about coming or not, I will not be the person in charge of cooking the turkey or preparing the Thanksgiving meal.

THAT'S A WRAP

Now there's a word that has taken on new meaning....I am using it to suggest that this is the end of this issue of the paddling club newsletter....but a wrap also makes a great-easy-to-prepare meal on a canoe trip...there are dinner wraps as well as breakfast wraps...but one thing that we won't do with this newsletter is start sharing recipes....that's it for this issue, please send along any paddling-related news items as well as photos...the next issue will be circulated at the beginning of November, after the AGM.