



# BLACKWATER PADDLERS NEWSLETTER

## OCTOBER, 2013

Welcome to the quarterly newsletter of the Quesnel Blackwater Paddlers. This is 2013 -- issue no. 4. The primary purpose of the newsletter is to share information and to inform. The editor must constantly resist the urge to get onto his high horse and to sound off about one thing or another.....but alas, sometimes he fails. I hope you enjoy reading this.

### AGM REPORT – OCTOBER 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013

About 20 members and friends of the Blackwater Paddlers attended this year's AGM, held at the Shiraoi House in Quesnel. Organizers had hoped that there might be a larger turnout for the meeting, but those in attendance had a good time and enjoyed some wonderful paddling photos. Shiraoi House is a great place for a meeting like this, it's a beautiful building and the chairs are super comfortable.

Gary Seale served as an able facilitator for the evening's activities, even though he has apparently run out of jokes and he now offers (pretty funny) limericks as a substitute. The business part of the meeting didn't take too long, there were reports from those executive members with specific responsibilities as well as an overall review of the past year from president Ron Watteyne. In his remarks, Ron suggested that the club has to take stock of its current priorities, to look at the changes that are taking place in the paddling world and to adapt in order to retain membership and to develop ways to reach out to and attract younger members and families. Financially the club retains a healthy bank balance but over the year the club expenses were slightly higher than income.

The executive members were returned by acclamation with one exception. Lynda Moon indicated her desire to step down from the position of secretary and she was thanked for her excellent efforts during the past year. President Ron Watteyne, Vice President John Havens and Treasurer Jerry McFetridge had indicated their willingness to let their names stand for these positions for the coming year. There were no other nominations and so the incumbents retained these positions by acclamation. Later in the evening Ron Watteyne indicated that on behalf of the board he had asked Irene Kopetski if she would take the position of secretary and that she had agreed to do so. In addition to the elected executive, directors are appointed by the executive but there was no indication at this meeting just who these directors will be for the upcoming season.

With that out of the way it was time for the 3C's of any good meeting, coffee, cookies and cake. Actually this was the break before the "entertainment" portion of the evening. Thank you to Ron Watteyne for sharing photos of this summer's 5 day paddle on the Columbia River. The section of the Columbia that

was highlighted (Invermere to Golden) turns out to be a birder's paradise and is the setting for an annual birder's and birding festival each year.

John Marien had two "slide" (as in powerpoint) presentations. The first was a very inspiring but all too short presentation featuring the students of the Correlieu Outdoor Rec. Program on their annual trip on the West Side of the Bowron Chain. The enthusiasm of these youth and the obvious fun and enjoyment that they were having was infectious.

John then offered the evening's feature presentation, a never-before-seen look at photos of his 2008 trip down the Coppermine River. This was a 28 day odyssey broken up by a two day layover at what could only be described as a very upscale resort owned by Max Ward (of Wardair fame) located on Point Lake and actually called Rock Haven. If you can believe John (who started the presentation trying to convince the group that a photo of a ground squirrel was actually that of a Barrenlands Grizzly), John claimed that they weren't even aware that this posh retreat even existed until they rounded a point and there it was, nestled on the rocky shore in a shallow bay. Tied up to the dock at this resort was Max Ward's incredible plane, a Turbo Otter...which is an original DeHavilland Otter that has undergone a million dollar retrofit....the back half looks like an Otter and the front half looks like a rocket. Interestingly, the pilot of this plane is a fellow named Dave Crerar, the brother of a famous canoe racer (from about 30 years ago) named Norm Crerar, one of the organizers of last year's Okanagan Lake Voyageur Brigade.

John intertwined his photos with some of the thrilling history associated with the river, sharing stories about Samuel Hearne, Sir John Franklin, George Back and Hearne's guide, the Dene chief Matonnabe.

The presentation included several photos of Bloody Falls, the site of the massacre of 25 Inuit by Matonnabe's Dene warriors and described so vividly in Hearne's story about his journey to that place in 1771. When John reached this place, there were Inuit fishing for Arctic Char just downstream from this infamous spot...the fishing is excellent in that spot, that is why the victim's of the massacre were camped in that spot 250 years earlier. Bloody Falls is not too far upstream from the Beaufort Sea and today the locals zip up and down the river in their power boats.

Finally John and his two paddling partners arrived at Kugluktuk (Coppermine) on the Bering Sea coast. Coppermine is now the home of the infamous "Blonde Eskimos" first described by Vilhjalmur Stefansson. His thesis was that these people had both Inuit and Viking ancestors, an idea that proved to be totally incorrect. It was these people who were responsible for the murders of the two missionary priests Fathers Leroux and Rouviere OMI. Known as the Copper Eskimos, these people were among the last of the Inuit to establish contact with the non-native Europeans.

After spending a night in the local campground and finding it less than warm and cozy, John and his companions were able to make arrangements to fly out to Yellowknife and their waiting vehicle.

**THANKSGIVING ON THE BOWRON -- 2013**



The weather leading up to Thanksgiving weekend 2013 was ominous. There had been a week of very heavy rainfall and the forecast was only marginally better. But there was also a hard core bunch of very committed paddlers, anxiously looking forward to sitting down at 5:00 p.m. precisely on Sunday October 13<sup>th</sup>, to turkey with all the trimmings in the Pat's Point shelter and nothing was going to prevent that from happening. In fact some of the group had been en route to Pat's Point for almost two weeks, slowly making their way around the Chain, having left on October 1<sup>st</sup>. Other participants were scattered over the Bowron landscape, either hiking high in the mountains on the upper reaches of the Cariboo River, hiking down to Cariboo Falls from Unna Lake or trying to get a good night's sleep somewhere on the Chain while the bull moose in rut were trumpeting their lusty serenade for all to hear.

The remainder of the group put in at the boat launch between Beckers and Bowron Lakes Resorts about 11:00 a.m. on Saturday October 12<sup>th</sup>. This group was transporting the Big Easy propane fired turkey cooker, 40 lbs. of propane, the venerable "equipment barrel", miscellaneous pots and pans, all of the "trimmings" for the meal and of course the turkey itself, a 15+ pounder raised on a Hutterite colony just north of Fort St. John. When you add all of the paddling and camping gear and personal equipment for 5 people as well as food for eight for four other meals, the Wannabe fairly groaned under the weight. One seat had been removed from the 26 foot canoe, a false floor had been installed to provide a level surface and all of the above "stuff" was stacked in place, not unlike the load on an ocean going container ship.



It was overcast and cool, but not raining and not windy...the paddling was good, the crew consisted of 5 of the best voyageurs (which by the way is a truly Canadian non sexist politically correct word like fishers) that Quesnel had to offer....Jules Quesnel would have been proud. Autumn was in the air, the remaining mallards and coots were mustering and obviously thinking of heading south, the foliage was beautiful. We saw a group of 5 kayakers as well as a solo paddler heading towards the take-out...we learned later that the Chain had been very busy over the past couple of weeks, it would seem that more and more people are looking to the shoulder seasons to gain yet another type of paddling adventure. And yes, there were moose and more moose.

We made Pat's Point right on schedule, around 3:30 p.m. The main campsite was deserted, we moved the Big Easy and the Big Bird into the shelter along with other cooking gear. About an hour after we arrived, a large red canoe rounded the point as you look down Spectacle Lake from the shelter....by large I mean 20 feet large....in the canoe were mom and dad with two little boys and the family dog (on a leash), it had taken them 12 days to get to this rendezvous, everyone looked fabulous, there were warm hugs all around. We proceeded to set up camp, we wanted to beat the darkness. As nightfall came, our group enjoyed a great time together settling into the shelter and preparing supper with the help of propane lights.....it was so good to be together in that place and the pasta was delicious.

But as it turns out, we were not alone....in fact Pat's Point was very very busy. Before embarking on this trip, there had been rumours of construction taking place across the lake at the site of the warden's cabin. We also knew for a fact that the former warden's cabin had been demolished and cut into firewood length pieces. Knowing this, en route to the main campsite, we paddled right to the warden's

cabin site to investigate if it would be possible to get some of the firewood that we knew was stacked there. We were a little surprised to find a crew of four or five young men who had obviously been camped at that place for a while, when we arrived they were inside a heated wall tent having coffee.

These fellows were very welcoming and said that we could help ourselves to the firewood. In later conversation we learned that they were in the final stages of completing the new replacement warden's cabin, which is actually a gorgeous, post and beam duplex with all of the mod cons. They explained that they had to get things finished that evening as early the following morning a helicopter carrying Parks officials would be arriving. This would be the final inspection of their work after which they would dismantle their camp and transport all of their gear, tools etc. out, using the same helicopter that would have brought in the Parks officials.

On Thanksgiving Sunday, we had a front row seat to the excitement of a hovering helicopter as it made six or seven return trips, transporting everything out for the construction crew in sling loads hanging from the helicopter itself. We also met one of the BC Parks Wardens who was emptying out the old shelter cabin that is located adjacent to the main campsite. He explained that while the construction was taking place, the wardens and the park contractors had moved into that cabin. He was not aware that this was not the first time this cabin had been used for this purpose.

When Bowron became a Provincial Park in 1961, there was no "Park" infrastructure in place. Decisions were made over the next few years to destroy some of the cabins, shelters and other infrastructure that existed around the Chain, while some cabins were retained. These are the shelter cabins that exist on the Chain today. One of the cabins that was not burned down was the (then) relatively new cabin at Pat's Point that had been built by Sid Dannhauer and Vinse Halverson and their families in 1959. Sid and Vinse were partners on the Pat's Point property, with Sid obtaining the property and Vinse providing all the lumber and other materials to build the cabin. Vinse owned the Wells Barkerville Sawmill and he would commute daily from Pat's Point to work at the sawmill and every night he would drag lumber and other supplies behind his 14 foot boat equipped with a 35 horsepower Evinrude motor. This cabin was taken over by the Park in 1963 or '64 and was used by "government workers" for years before the "new" Warden's cabin, the one that we were now using for firewood, was built in the late '60's or early 70's. One of the builders was Tim Cushman, the son of Frank and Ruth Cushman who were Bowron pioneers and were one of the early owners of Becker's Resort. I can't help but feel that with the loss of this perfectly sound building, some of the history and "soul" of the Chain has been lost with it.

All of the helicopter action was over by mid afternoon. The turkey was placed into the Big Easy at the pre-determined time....the instructions said "cook for 10 minutes per pound, check with the thermometer to make sure that the meat reaches the required temperature". It was odd, even weird to round the side of the shelter and to suddenly experience the succulent smell of roasting turkey. I'm not sure just what the birds in the forest were thinking. During the early afternoon two more members of our group arrived from the east, they had actually been camped down Spectacle Lake just out of sight. At exactly five minutes to five, around that same point looking eastward from the shelter another red canoe came into sight, this time containing two people and they were paddling with powerful and determined strokes....it was the last two members of our group, they had spent the previous night at Turner Creek on Lanezi Lake...they had timed their arrival perfectly.

There were 13 of us for Thanksgiving Dinner. The turkey was absolutely delicious, very moist and cooked to perfection. Mashed potatoes, carrots, yam, peas, stuffing and lots of wonderful gravy completed the main course. The Big Easy isn't an oil bath cooker, it uses infra red heat and the natural juices from the turkey are saved and can be used to make the gravy. For dessert it was a cranberry/oatmeal crisp...and there was whipped cream....delicious. As the meal came to an end, the darkness had descended, this was canoe tripping at its best, there's nothing like roughing it in the bush.



### **THIS AND THAT**

There was a great turnout for the **Paddling Is Awesome Day** organized by the Quesnel Canoe Club on September 7, 2013. The setting was Pioneer Park, site of the future boat house home of the Quesnel Canoe Club and their dragon boats and the conditions were beyond perfect, they were indeed awesome. There were three race classes, 3, 5 and 7 km. and all types of watercraft competed against each other in each of the three categories. There were solo and tandem kayaks, solo and tandem canoes, racing canoes and a Sportspal, stand up paddleboards, sit-on-top kayaks, a real menagerie of people-powered watercraft....a dragonboat even made an appearance. The races went off without a hitch, the winners in each category were awarded an edible trophy (cookie) and everyone enjoyed the BBQ that brought the event to a wonderful end....a big thanks to the Quesnel Canoe Club for a well-organized and really enjoyable event.

**Rivers Day** took place on Sunday September 29<sup>th</sup> and this year the journey was from Ceal Tingley Park to the takeout at the site of the old Alexandria Ferry. There were six canoes including one voyageur boat, a total of 17 people. The day was overcast with a strong headwind that made for a challenging paddle but for a hard won feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment at the end of the day. BC River's Day is a celebration and recognition of the many fine rivers that we have in our province. It is an awareness and appreciation builder. This year we didn't see the usual flocks of Sandhill Cranes making their distinctive croaking sound as they "corkscrew" upwards until they reach to spot where the winds are blowing just the way they like. We did see some deer and a beaver.

**Voyageur Rock** is a special place in the history of Canada. Both Alexander Mackenzie and Simon Fraser mention the location in their journals....well they don't specifically mention the rock, but they do describe the area that we now know as Ceal Tingley Park. This site was developed by our club after the 1993 Alexander Mackenzie bicentennial....if you look at the top of the flagpole, you will see the distinctive voyageur canoe weathervane that was crafted by metalworker Bert DeVink for the club. The rock has not received much TLC in recent years, it was time for a cleanup and August 17<sup>th</sup> was the chosen day. A crew of four tackled the task, we also had help from the City Public Works Department and from Dunkley Lumber, who loaned us an invaluable high pressure water pump which made the job totally possible. The Rock now looks great....really great! Take the little side walk from the Riverfront Trail to meditate and read the interpretive signage.

#### **THAT'S IT FOR THIS ISSUE**

I have enjoyed being the editor of the club newsletter this past year, I hope that it has kept everyone informed and hopefully entertained. Thank you to Dave Jorgenson for the photos in this issue. This will be my last issue but I do hope that the newsletter will continue to exist in some form. What I will be doing next year is paddling and I look forward to many opportunities to share the lake or river with each of you, whether in a tandem or solo boat or all together in the voyageur canoe. Until then I can hardly wait for the water to freeze and the snow to fall....the dog mushing trails are calling. Don't forget the Gold Rush Trail Sled Dog Mail Run which will be taking place for the 22<sup>nd</sup> time on the weekend of January 24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014, there will be lots of publicity, it would be great to see you at one of the venues, and don't forget to buy some Mail Run envelopes and send them to your family and friends....they are quite special.

Jeff Dinsdale