



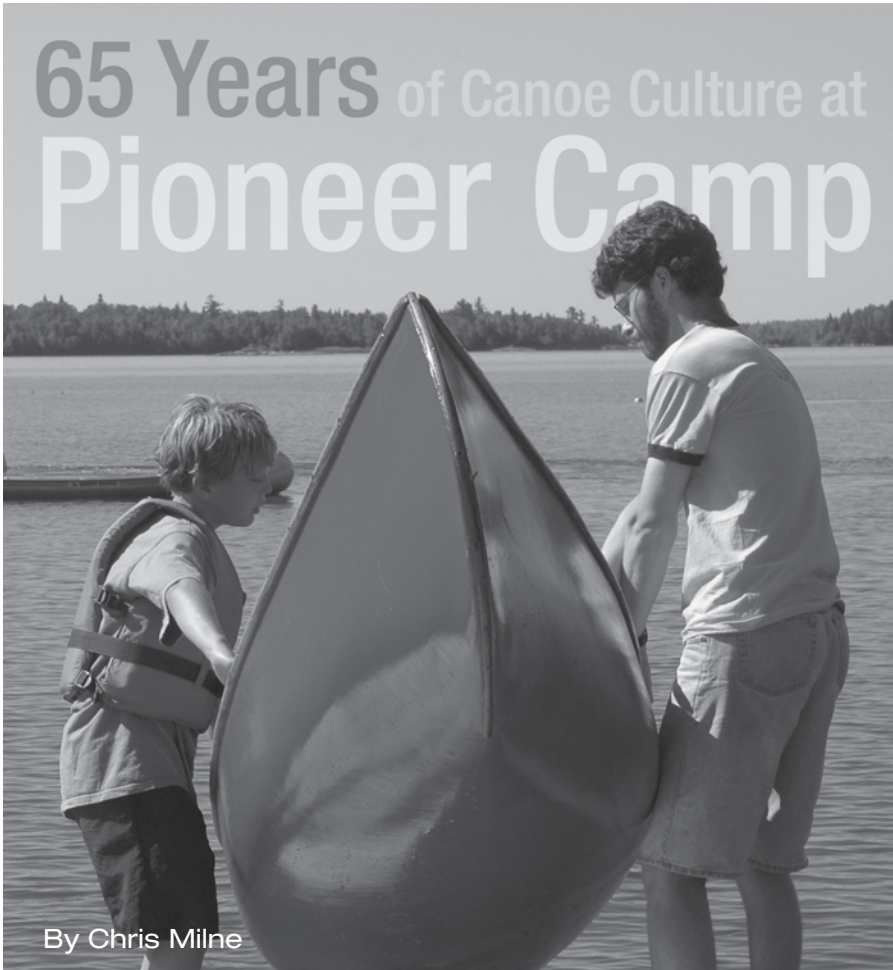
THE



# RIPPLE



*Paddle Manitoba Newsletter*



By Chris Milne

On several occasions, when I have mentioned that I work at Manitoba Pioneer Camp, I have received a similar response: "Pioneer Camp? Ah! Bill Mason, eh!?" The legendary man behind that name holds a great amount of clout at Pioneer Camp. Bill Mason has had a profound impact on both our canoe culture and our fundamental philosophy of canoe tripping. It is interesting to also note how, from an early age, Manitoba Pioneer Camp shaped the life of Bill Mason. Mentors and staff such as Stan Steinmann, Bill Steeper, and Chuck Tipp (the latter whom Bill credits for teaching him the art of canoeing), helped foster his passion and skills. It was also at Pioneer that Bill was encouraged to explore his Christian faith, the natural world around him, and to express himself through his gifts in art and film making.

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## *winter 2008*

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## Welcome New Members!

If you would like to be part of Paddle Manitoba and join in our activities both on the water and off, sign up as a member today!

Contact our Membership Convenor,  
Dusty Molinski, at 586-7536

**Contact Paddle Manitoba**  
Seeking information on Paddle Manitoba?  
Three routes will take you there:

Website: [www.paddle.mb.ca](http://www.paddle.mb.ca)

Phone: (204) 338-6722

Directly contact Convenors for information on specific programs (e.g. instruction, indoor program, etc.) contact the appropriate Convenor. See page 3 for their phone numbers and e-mails.

## Paddlers' Forum

Pose a question on our on-line **paddlers' forum** by following the links on our website, at:  
<http://www.paddle.mb.ca/communication/forum.php>

## Other Paddling Connections

Paddle Manitoba is affiliated with the following organizations:

### Paddle Canada

(613) 269-2910 or 1-888-252-6292

E-mail: [staff@crca.ca](mailto:staff@crca.ca)

Website: [www.paddlingcanada.com](http://www.paddlingcanada.com)

### Manitoba Whitewater Club

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

### Manitoba Paddling Association

(204) 925-5681; [mpa@sport.mb.ca](mailto:mpa@sport.mb.ca);

[www.mpa.mb.ca](http://www.mpa.mb.ca)

MPA is focused on competitive paddling.

## Newsletter Submission Guidelines

This newsletter is published quarterly (December, March, June, and September) on the first day of the month.

## Advertisement

Advertisements must be prepaid. Classified ads cost 25 cents per word, per issue, with a minimum of 12 words. Individual and family members may place up to 40 words free.

The cost for corporate ads per issue and per four consecutive issues are as follows:

eighth page	\$25	\$90
quarter page	\$35	\$125
half page	\$45	\$160
full page	\$75	\$270

**Ad copy and/or camera ready copy and payment must be received by the editor the month prior to the issue date.** Receipts will be mailed with a copy of the issue each quarter.

## Other Submissions

The editor welcomes submissions of articles, trip reports, paddling tips, recipes, photos, jokes, and other materials of interest to local paddlers. Photo captions should be provided, although photos need not relate directly to an article.

**Send submissions by E-MAIL, SNAIL MAIL, or FAX.**

The Ripple Newsletter

Phone: (204) 388-4465; E-mail: [theripple@nlisnet.com](mailto:theripple@nlisnet.com)

**Format Note:** Photos submitted electronically should be scanned at a setting of 250 dpi, at minimum. For electronic submissions of text, writers are asked to either provide text files in Microsoft Word format, or send text within the body of an e-mail.

## Deadline for Spring Issue

February 15, 2008

Disclaimer: The information contained in articles, advertisements or inserts in the Paddle Manitoba newsletter, The Ripple, do not necessarily reflect or represent the opinions, policies or priorities of Paddle Manitoba Board or membership. Authors are solely responsible for the content, and specifically for the accuracy and validity of information contained in their articles.

## River Secrets: Paddling the Path Less Travelled & Paddle Manitoba AGM

Fort Whyte Alive

Time: AGM 6:00 - 7:00 PM / River Secrets 7:00 - 9:00 PM

Saturday, January 19, 2008

## Paddle Manitoba officers

**President**  
Cary Chapnick  
642-7340  
chapnick@mts.net

**Vice-President**  
Cheri Villard  
261-0768  
paradisepaddler@hotmail.com

**Secretary**  
Lisa Cameron  
lisaba@mts.ca

**Treasurer**  
Sharon Touchette  
688-7385  
Sharon.Touchette@gwlim.ca

**Past President**  
Cameron White  
878-3570  
cwhites@mts.net

## convenors

**Membership**  
Dusty Molinski  
586-7536  
d\_molinski@ducks.ca

**Instruction**  
Cameron White  
878-3570  
cwhites@mts.net

**Resources**  
Ken Schykulski  
895-7121  
KenSchykulski@hotmail.com

**Indoor Program**  
Lori Slobodian  
589-2783  
lslobodian@gmail.com

**Newsletter**  
Eric Gyselman  
388-4465  
theripple@nlistnet.com

**Advocacy**  
Tim Lutz  
334-1182  
timlutz@shaw.ca

**Fundraising**  
vacant position

## design & layout

Edge Advertising  
792-3988  
edgeadvertising@shaw.ca

## President's Message

By Cary Chapnick

The water on the creeks has had a thin cover of ice a number of times this long fall. However, I believe it will remain locked until spring. Mighty Lake Winnipeg is still open and with fresh snow on the ground and heavy dark snow clouds it can make for some eerily quiet and surreal paddling.

While the waterways may be going to sleep for the winter, your board is not. Paddle Manitoba will be providing a breakfast for the David Thompson Brigade at Fort Gibraltar mid-June when the flotilla comes through Winnipeg, and we will be exploring ways Paddle Manitoba will be able to participate as an escort in voyageur canoes.

Our indoor program is off and running and reliably produces top presentations that are consistently well attended.

Paddle Manitoba is in the early planning phases of PaddleFest (June 7, 2008) which is one program that speaks to Paddle Manitoba's role as an advocate for recreational paddling in the province of Manitoba. There will be on the water clinics and workshops on GPS, demonstrations on campfire cooking, and pre and post paddle stretching by a physiotherapist. If you have ideas or have a clinic you are willing to put on, please contact any of the Paddle Manitoba board members.

By the time you read this, the calendar will have changed and so will the board. Many thanks to you who have stepped forward with commitment to become involved and guide Paddle Manitoba in the coming year.

Best of the Holiday Season!

## Editor's Message

By Eric Gyselman

No denying it – its midwinter. Unless you are lucky enough to be off to Costa Rica for a little sea kayaking, paddling is either a memory or a plan at this time of year. So plan we will!

The feature in this issue is on Pioneer Camp. I had the pleasure of attending Paddle Camp at Pioneer last spring. It was my first visit. The canoeing history at the place is almost overpowering, from the old cedar and canvas canoes in the rafters to the names and photos on the walls. I think I even saw the ghost of Bill Mason while walking back to the bunkhouse one night. I hope you enjoy Chris Milne's article and photos as much as I did. I add my 2-cents worth in my musing about my own experience becoming a Flatwater Instructor at Pioneer last spring.

Our own Brian Johnston once again leads us down another Arctic river, this time the Prince. I must admit I knew nothing about this river and had to look it up on Google Earth. Charles Burchill starts off what I hope will be an extensive series in edible plants in the Natural History column. I think I should be able to entice a number of experts to contribute to this series in subsequent issues. Finally, I take a look at the sources of error in the GPS positioning in the Navigation column.

Finally, the email address for The Ripple has changed. All future electronic submissions and chatter should be sent to: [theripple@nlistnet.com](mailto:theripple@nlistnet.com).

From your Paddle Manitoba Executive, we hope you have a Happy Holiday Season.

(continued from page 1)

# 65 Years of Canoe Culture at Pioneer Camp

By Chris Milne



Bill Mason's experience at Pioneer Camp was influential in his development both personally and professionally. But Bill Mason is not unique. Since its inception, Pioneer Camp has exposed thousands of people to a distinct "canoe culture," which recognizes how the canoe holds in perfect tension both beauty and function. However, paddling is not seen as an end in itself, but as a means to explore the deeper realities of God, beauty, brokenness, and community. This distinct culture embraces an oral tradition: familiar stories of hardship and triumph on trip are recounted time and again, on the water, around campfires or sitting at the meal table. While often entertaining, these stories have woven themselves into the psyche of Pioneer and continue to shape our identity. Although the thousands of people who have experienced this culture may not be Canadian icons like Bill Mason, these children and adults have discovered a passion for the canoe, for the wilderness and for canoe tripping.

It all began in the summer of 1942 when a local Winnipeg business owner named H.L. MacKinnon realized his vision of starting a children's camp 150 kilometers east

of Winnipeg on Shoal Lake. Even in the midst of war-time rations, when supplies and staff were hard to come by, MacKinnon worked hard and persevered to lay the foundations of Pioneer Camp. After two years of running summer camps at Prescawa, camp needed to expand. The Shoal Lake First Nations reserve generously assisted his efforts by identifying the ideal island site (christened "MacKinnon Island") and helping with construction. In 1942, camp fees were \$12 a week. Campers traveled by train to Shoal Lake and then boarded a WWII landing craft called the Pioneer II which transported them to camp. Such a long and exciting journey into the wilderness created a unique sense of leaving the modern world behind. Although there is now road access to Shoal Lake, this sense of removal has become a trademark of the Pioneer Camp experience.

On site, H.L. MacKinnon intentionally built small cabins to hold no more than eight campers along with two leaders. Intimate group dynamics were considered essential to create an atmosphere where young girls and boys would feel comfortable and be able to engage in authentic friendships. Along with small cabin groups, another distinct feature of Pioneer over the last 65 years has been single gender camps. These characteristics have promoted a safe and focused environment for children and staff to play, learn, grow and be themselves.

It was 1945 when a young Bill Mason came to Pioneer as a camper for the first time. Although canoe tripping had not yet come into its own at Pioneer, staff expressed an intrinsic love for the canoe and for nature. In particular, Chuck Tipp exemplified this enthusiasm as he taught sailing, swimming, nature lore, and astronomy. As Chuck shared both his Christian faith and his passion for the canoe with Bill Mason, no one could fathom how that influence would shape the future of Manitoba Pioneer Camp.







In the late 1950's and 60's Manitoba Pioneer Camp began to more fully embrace canoe tripping. Camp Director, Gordon Stewart brought a wealth of professional wilderness camping skills to the island with which he trained staff and encouraged them to take risks. While working in the mid-fifties, Bill Mason, known as "Paddles," began to ask the question: "We have canoes and we know how to use them, why don't we start tripping with them?" Bill helped to develop canoe tripping routes and camp sites on Shoal Lake, most of which are still in use today. He also developed a graded canoe instruction course for Pioneer, which was the precursor for Path of the Paddle. In 1962 Bill Mason's film *Wilderness Treasure* won several awards and garnered the praise of the National Film Board. He filmed this movie on Shoal Lake, following a group of boys from Pioneer. Bill's work went on to convey an environmental ethic that was years ahead of his time: his work continues to communicate a deep respect for the wilderness and the need to preserve the natural world for enjoyment by future generations.

One summer as Bill was pouring over local maps and planning canoe routes, he noticed a small creek that flowed out of Shoal Lake and ran for about 15 km into Falcon Lake. As far as he knew, no one had gone there before—which meant this was the perfect route to take his cabin of boys! When they arrived at the creek they discovered it was no more than a trickle, but this did not stop Bill. He urged the boys forward and with a sense of adventure (or was it impending doom?) they plunged into the bush, dragging their canoes behind them. As the day wore on and the mosquitoes devoured their prey, the boys began to lose faith in their wilderness guide. Half way up the creek (nothing but a dry bed by that point) a decision had to be made whether to continue trudging up the "creek" or to turn and admit defeat. Facing mutiny, Bill chose to turn back, much to the delight of his campers. This story

has taught us that even the great wilderness explorers can meet their match in nature, but Bill Mason exemplifies an unquenchable desire to explore the unknown, and the courage to take risks that become the adventures of a lifetime for those who traveled with him.

The 60's, 70's and 80's at Pioneer Camp were full of the spirit of adventure. Besides lake water paddling routes on Shoal Lake and Lake of the Woods, Pioneer staff and Counselors In Training (CIT's) also honed their whitewater skills on rivers such as the Churchill, Pigeon, Poplar, Berens, Bloodvein, Seal, Hayes and Ogoki. One incredible story comes from Donna Dunsmore, known as "Pitch," when she was asked to lead her first canoe trip down the Bloodvein (a river she had not paddled before) with a group of CIT girls in 3 cedar and canvas canoes. Although quite nervous, Donna navigated the whitewater and led the girls safely down the river. Upon reaching the Bloodvein village, they went into a store where a local woman expressed her amazement at the sight of the six girls. She was amazed because this was the first all female group to run the Bloodvein alone, and she was so moved that she presented Donna with a necklace to honour their accomplishment. When she got home, Donna wrote the woman to thank her for the necklace and her kind words of encouragement. However Donna never received a reply. Fifteen years later, Kate Benidickson, one of the CIT's who was on that canoe trip, ran the Bloodvein with her husband. After their trip they went into the same store at the Bloodvein village and met the same woman who had honoured her years before. To Kate's utter astonishment, Donna's letter was pinned to the wall!

Until the 1980's, Pioneer placed campers in cabins according to their paddling and wilderness skills, in order to plan appropriate canoe trips. Although this made for



some great trips, staff soon realized this system was not always conducive to healthy cabin dynamics. Instead, things shifted to design cabin groups in more careful and thoughtful ways. Although this change meant that some of the more “adventurous” trips were scaled down, it also made the experience of being on trip more meaningful for the campers due to a healthier sense of community. Pioneer continues to preserve this tension: one hand holds the values of risk, adventure, and facing the unknown, while the other hand holds the values of healthy relationships, community, and good group dynamics. By maintaining these values and not allowing ourselves to drift too far in either direction, they compliment each other and help create unique wilderness canoe tripping experiences for all.

Although some stories have changed, many endure and have grown to mythic proportions. Each tale contributes to our shared history and passes on our traditions. We learn from the legendary paddlers, like Bill Mason, who have gone before us. And the unique canoe culture at Manitoba Pioneer Camp perseveres today. Many of the campers and staff who have been shaped by the high caliber of canoe instruction, such as Richard Harvey, Stephen Sawchyn, Jarem Sawatsky, Heather Andres, and Christine Regehr have returned to teach skills and pass on the love of paddling to future generations. Our adventurous staff continues to challenge each other with new routes, new techniques, to go where no staff or camper trip has gone before. In recent memory, staff have successfully completed a 16 km solo paddle after supper, and a 60 km paddle (around our “short circuit”) in under 11 hours. There is also an authentic dedication to the aesthetics and the art of canoeing. On nights when the water is as smooth as glass, you will find staff and campers out paddling, working on complex solo maneuvers. Every cabin group at our two week “Classic” camps goes out on an age-appropriate canoe trip. Each camper has the opportunity to work on their canoeing skills and receive canoeing levels, and for the past several years, Paddle Canada courses have been offered at MacKinnon Island in the spring.

Each year, a diverse group of people journey to the shores of Pioneer Camp. Although children come from a variety of economic, cultural, and social backgrounds, the one thing we share in common as we enter this wilderness setting is the world we leave behind: a world that often blinds us

from the reality of our day-to-day lives. Whether it’s the speed at which we travel, the fences and walls that separate us from our neighbours, or the latest self-help book that makes us feel that everything is great, there is always something trying to distract us from the reality before our eyes. Even good things can distract us from the beauty and rhythm of the natural world: light switches confuse our days and nights; air-conditioners and thermostats diminish the wonder of the seasons; cars and planes blur the beauty of the spaces between our destinations; and television deafens us to the sounds around us, even to our own voices. In such a day and age, Pioneer Camp maintains a commitment to serve and to nurture the whole camper – the physical emotional, spiritual, and social aspects of each person.

As we have observed through Bill Mason’s artwork and filmmaking, this is why a traditional canoe culture is more important than ever. The canoe trip becomes an extraordinary space where all distractions can be stripped away to reveal the realities of God, the wilderness, and each other. While the status quo teaches a life of lonely independence, we want to teach a life of communal interdependence. As children learn to control their surroundings, canoe culture teaches us that nature is unpredictable, and how we must respect and protect our environment. As we travel through the wilderness we are exposed to the fact that there is beauty and brokenness all around us. Our hope is that children and adults will return from the wilderness with their eyes opened a little wider to see the reality around them and with hearts that are ready to engage that reality.

We have hope moving into the future not only because we know where we are going, but more importantly, because we know where we have been. Just as Bill Mason’s life and career has been shaped by Pioneer’s canoe culture, there is an excitement as we watch a young generation fall in love with the canoe and the wilderness, and we wonder at the incredible possibilities that may bring. **R**

*Chris Milne works for Pioneer Camp and is also a Paddle Canada Instructor.*







# Becoming a Paddle Canada Instructor A Personal Story!

By Eric Gyselman

**The phone call was short.**

**"It's Cam! Paddle Camp is a go. Are you going to come?"**

**"Sure"**

**"Great, you're on the mailing list. It'll be fun"**

---

That was it. I was signed up. Pioneer Camp would be my home on the May long weekend as I tried to pass my Flatwater Instructor's Certification.

Time is not the friend of someone with self doubt. That night, I lay in bed wondering what I had gotten myself into. I had canoed since I was a kid but never taken any formal courses. I certainly wasn't certified to Flatwater 'D', the prerequisite for the Flatwater Instructor. But I had canoed with Cam and he would vouch for me - the "with the permission of the course instructor" option.

A couple of weeks passed. Cam sent me the password to download the "Canoeing Program Manual" and "Canoeing Instructor's Resource Manual" from the Paddle Canada website. An evening of reading only fed my self-doubt. What had I got myself into? Two more evenings of reading; my worrying only increased. I was wearing out the manual flipping back and forth trying to figure out exactly what I was going to have to do.

Two or three weeks of fussing led me to a single conclusion: I was in over my head. I didn't have the prerequisites, I didn't understand much of the jargon, and my self confidence was definitely in question. Time to bail out before I made a fool of myself!

I forget the start of the next phone conversation with Cam. I know my intent was to find an honourable way to withdraw. Cam of course would have none of it. Instead he gave me a short list of instructions:

As soon as the ice goes off, start paddling. Paddle lots!

Wednesday night paddles start at the end of April. Call Charles!

And I remember his last sentence:

"Even if you don't pass, you'll end up with your Flatwater 'D'. You can try again next year. It'll be fun"

So that was it. I was unquestionably committed.

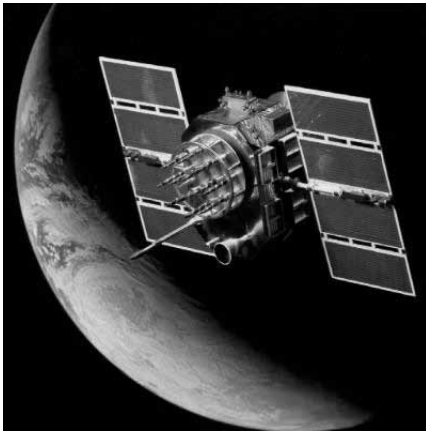
By April 15, the ice had melted enough on my backyard pond to begin canoeing. It's not a big pond but big enough to do all of the strokes and manoeuvres for the course. Dodging ice flows at first and later migrating ducks and geese wondering what this fool in the red canoe was up to, I began to practice each of the strokes and manoeuvres. I realized almost immediately I did know many of the strokes. I just wasn't familiar with the names. Still many others were new and awkward. With practice, some got a little easier but others were elusive and seemed impossible. I suspect every paddler has a stroke or two that eludes them for a frustratingly long while. For me it was the sculling pry. The sculling draw was one of my strong strokes. I found I could put the canoe anywhere I liked with the draw but for the life of me I couldn't get the canoe move predictably with the pry.

Wednesday night paddles started in late April. Charles Burchill is one of those rare individuals blessed with both the gift of teaching and seemingly endless patience. Each

*(continued on page 12)*

# navigation

By Eric Gyselman



**The Global Positioning System (GPS) truly is an amazing bit of technology. For a couple hundred dollars or less, you can buy a little electronic gizmo capable of telling where you are virtually anywhere on earth. The Navstar GPS system we use is maintained by the United States Department of Defence and with their resources you can bet it's going to be reliable. But the GPS is not perfect! New users often ask why the position has an error associated with it. So in this article, I will look at some imperfections in the system and how to deal with them.**

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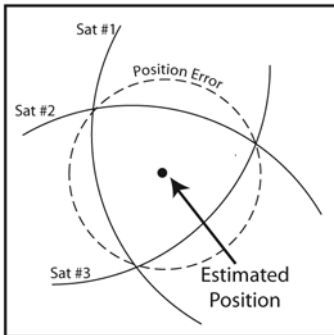


figure 1

Remember from the last instalment in this column (Fall 2007) that the GPS receiver measures the time it takes a radio signal to travel from the satellite to the receiver. From this, it calculates the distance to the satellite. Once it has the distances to 3 satellites, it can calculate its position; 4 satellites and it can calculate position and elevation. The model I used was overlapping spheres. The level of both accuracy and precision of the information needed to achieve the current level of service from the Navstar system is impressive. The position of each satellite is usually known within a meter and the time measurement within a nanosecond. This is from a series of satellites orbiting at 20,000 km above the earth. Needless to say, even small errors with these measurements can lead to significant position errors. So let's look at these errors and how they affect position estimates.

First, let's look at the history of Navstar. This is a military system. Initially, the Department of Defence was worried about others using the system against the United States and its allies. They intentionally corrupted the signal to degrade the position accuracy by up to 100-m. This was called 'selective availability' or SA. Ironically, during the Gulf War, the US military was short of GPS units for its troops and had to use civilian receivers, forcing it to turn off the selective availability. With pressure from civilian organizations primarily the Federal Aviation Administration who wanted to use Navstar for commercial aviation, the Department of Defence turned off SA permanently in 2000. So, selective availability is no longer a concern - unless the US gets itself into a major 'dustup' in which case all bets are off!

Now that we have dealt with 'intentional' errors, let's look at non-intentional errors and see how they affect position error.

Your GPS receiver calculates the time it takes for the signal to get from the satellite to the receiver and converts this into an estimate of distance called a 'pseudorange'. In a perfect world, the pseudoranges from all the satellites would all overlap at a single point. Unfortunately, they never do. Instead they look like figure 1. The receiver estimates its probable position from the pseudorange



curves (roughly in the middle of the triangular space). Almost all current receivers constantly recalculate their position using the pseudoranges from all available satellites to come up with the best estimate possible. The size of the triangular space is roughly the 'estimated position error' or EPE provided by the receiver. Watch your receiver and you can usually see it going through these mathematical iterations. When it first provides a position estimate, the error value may be 20 or 30-m. But over time, the error value will begin to drop as the receiver gets more and better information. Different manufacturers use different mathematical algorithms for calculating error, so do not be surprised if your Garmin gives you a different EPE than your buddy's Lowrance.

So why don't the pseudoranges all meet at one point?

The answer lies in environmental and equipment errors that in turn cause errors in the pseudorange estimates made by the receiver. The satellite signal travels through the atmosphere which slows down the signal and can bend the path slightly. The receiver tries to compensate for these using sophisticated mathematical gymnastics but the process is not perfect. The signal can also bounce off objects around the receiver creating some confusion about when the signal actually arrives. This is called 'Multipath distortion'. The accuracy of the time it takes the signal to travel is also based on knowing exactly where the satellite is in space - it's 'Ephemeris' data. Slight errors in this estimate occur. The atomic clocks on the satellite also have very slight errors. All together, these very small errors add up to cause the total position error. The following table shows how much each type of error can contribute.

Source	Effect
Ionosphere effects	± 5 metres
Ephemeris errors	± 2.5 metres
Satellite clock errors	± 2 metres
Multipath distortion	± 1 metre
Tropospheric effects	± 0.5 metre

So are these errors really important?

Most GPS receivers are really good at minimizing position errors. On my Garmin Vista, the error estimate is usually less than 10-m if the Almanac is reasonable. I don't think I have ever seen this error value greater than 20-m for very long. This is an estimate of the error however but I think it is reasonable to assume that most times, the real position error will be less than 30-m, particularly if the receiver is in a canoe on the water where it gets a clear view of the sky. I am happy with this level of accuracy but I suppose others may want better. It is possible.

A number of methods are available for improving the position estimate. Only 2 are even remotely practical for canoeists at the moment. The first is something called 'differential correction'. Along the Canadian coasts, a series

of land based differential correction stations have been created. Each of these consists of a GPS receiver placed at a site whose exact position is known with great precision. The GPS receiver calculates what it thinks is its position from GPS information. The difference between where the receiver thinks it is and where it actually is, is the sum of the various errors. This difference is used to calculate a correction which is broadcast by VHF radio. A special differential VHF receiver plugged into GPS receivers being used in the area can use this broadcast information to correct for the error. Often real errors of less than 10-m are achieved. However, differential correction is limited to the range of the VHF signal - usually 10s of kilometres - and the stations are limited to coastal regions. In addition, the extra equipment is a nuisance so it is not really practical for the kayakers or canoeists. It is primarily meant for marine traffic.

A more practical system is the 'Wide Area Augmentation System' or WAAS. WAAS was originally designed for aircraft navigation but it can be used for land based receivers as well. A series of ground stations similar in principal to the differential stations, calculate the GPS corrections and relay this information to 2 special WAAS satellites in geosynchronous orbit over the equator. These satellites rebroadcast the correction information to WAAS equipped GPS receivers. Many new GPS receivers are 'WAAS ready'. If the WAAS function is turned on, the receiver will listen for the correction information and automatically correct its position estimate using the WAAS data. The WAAS system is supposed to guarantee a horizontal and vertical error of less than 7.6-m more than 95% of the time. WAAS is useful, if your receiver can see the satellites. However, at our latitudes, they are very low on the horizon and the signals are easily blocked. The problem gets worse the farther north you go. On the water, you may occasionally be able to use WAAS but in the trees or hills of a portage, it will not likely be very reliable. However, the position of the WAAS satellites can be changed so it's always a good idea to check a reliable source to find out where they are. Remember though, that WAAS is like a differential station. If there is no WAAS ground station near where you are using your GPS, the corrections may not be valid. Fortunately, Winnipeg now has a station. Some newer receivers will automatically reject the WAAS corrections if there are no data applicable to the GPS's location.

The final solution for greater position precision is patience. The new Galileo system been commissioned by the European Space Agency is predicted to have a position error of less than 5-m. It is scheduled to come into service in 2011 or 2012. Similar in principal to Navstar, it is a civilian system with newer technology. It may be that future GPS receivers will be able to use either or both systems to best advantage. Only time will tell.

In the next instalment, learn about what to look for in a GPS receiver. I think you may be surprised. **R**

# Natural History

By Charles Burchill

## I Can Eat That?

**On October 20th Laura Reeves gave an excellent presentation on wild edibles to give the presentation since it is a question that comes up many times each summer. I find on my desk at work, or brought to an open paddle, a little bag of lea**



*Strawberry*



*Blueberry*



*Bunchberry*

Picking and eating fruits and vegetables that have made it on their own, in the wild, can open a delightful culinary world for you to explore. Often the tastes of wild foods are stronger than the familiar fair from Safeway or Costco. Sometimes this leads to some surprising reactions from first timers. A few years ago a participant on a trip that I was leading had a chance to try a wild strawberry. We had been out on a long hot day and came across a beautiful crop of just ripe wild strawberries hidden in the grasses and sedges of an open pine meadow. The look on Bill's face was worth every minute paddling and every second of the long portages. It was as if God had left a little bit of heaven for us to enjoy. On the other hand I remember giving a wild grape to someone who had come out for a Tuesday evening paddle in September. I thought the grapes were just perfect - but the sour face I got was something I will not soon forget. She had thought that wild grapes would be just sweet like the green or purple grapes we get at the grocery. Identifying a wild nibble sometimes makes me a little uncomfortable. There are many reasons for my feelings

and I wanted to write this short article to help reinforce what Laura brought up in her presentation. Before you stick that green stuff in your mouth you should consider a few things.

Do you really know what you are putting in your mouth? Fortunately most wild fruits and vegetables will not kill you, and many are downright delicious. Even with that in mind there are a few plants and mushrooms that will kill you in a very uncomfortable and horrible way. Before trying out a new plant take the time to ensure that you know what the plant is and that it is edible. If you are not familiar with plant identification then take a course or workshop that will provide some direction. Contact a botanist at a local university, museum, or nature centre for some help.

I like to think that I know what I am talking about when eating and selecting plants. I also know that I am really only familiar with those things that grow in the Canadian Boreal forest, Aspen Parkland and Prairies - even there, there are large gaps in my knowledge and memory. If you

o Paddle Manitoba. I was delighted that Paddle Manitoba had asked Laura to  
 nmer. I often have people asking what is edible and if it is any good. Many  
 aves or mushrooms with the unsaid question - what is this and can I eat it.



*Mint*



*Russula*



*Spiria*

are using a field guide or a personal source make sure that you are comfortable with your skills using the guide, or the skills of your guide.

When picking wild plants look around you and make a choice about if disturbing the local environment is appropriate. Remember, for most of us, this is a choice and not a necessity. Will digging up, or picking something leave a scar, noticeable blemish, or damage something sensitive? Respect the land and others' interest in enjoying the land. In some areas there are legal restrictions on picking whole or portions of plants - such as in ecological reserves and parks (nat. & prov.)

Pick only what you will use or need. If you are unsure if you will like the taste of a new find then only try a little. If you like what you find then you can expand to more. If the plant is rare in the local area then leave it for others that are more in need such as the animals that live in the environment.

There is very little public land left anymore, this itself is a little sad but we also must remember to respect land

owners and their property. If you are picking off of private property then you should obtain permission first and respect the response. Many parks and conservation areas require permits to pick anything. Make sure that you are following any local laws or bylaws before picking.

Because wild plants grow where they can, outside of normal cultivation, the area may not be suitable for growing plants for human consumption. Many very nice edible plants are ruderals that take advantage of disturbed areas - disturbed areas in the 'wild' are often that way because of human activity. Areas associated with current or past industry or waste treatment should always be avoided (e.g. sanitary waste treatment, old land fill sites, etc...).

Picking wild plants can expand your horizons and your enjoyment of the wilderness, but it also means that you have to accept some responsibility for what you are doing and for yourself. **R**





week, I would make a short list of a couple of strokes that were giving me trouble, then off I would go to the Wednesday night paddle. Charles would very carefully watch as I tried to do some stroke or other. He would make a few perceptive comments and then leave me to “figure-it-out” on my own. Rarely did I get out of sight of the La Barriere Bridge on those evenings. On his way back with rest of the evening’s paddlers, he would stop, see how I was coming along, make another suggestion or two, have a nice conversation about something totally unrelated to canoeing, and then head off to wrap the evening up. So it went every week until the May long weekend.

Paddle camp was a four day program starting on the Friday and running through to the Monday afternoon. We were to be at the dock on Shoal Lake on the Thursday afternoon to be picked up by the Pioneer Camp launch. The drive from home was much longer than the clock would suggest. I should have taken someone else for company. I was anxious to say the least! Eventually, everyone was at the dock and in several trips, we made our way to Pioneer.

In hindsight, the weekend was pretty much of a blur: long days in the canoe, long evenings in the classroom doing presentations, moments of elation when I managed to ‘pass’ one of the requirements, moments of utter frustration when some manoeuvre would elude me. The Paddle Canada program is an interesting one. It is based on achievement rather than technique. By this I mean the objective is to make the canoe do certain manoeuvres rather than perfecting a specific stroke. The instructors would make suggestions using classic strokes. After all, these have been shown effective through a long period of trial and error. Yet innovation is encouraged. Basically, anything that works is fine as long as the canoe does what it is suppose to. We all

got creative. In the end, the classic strokes almost always worked best for me but I did manage to devise a couple of unique solutions to frustrating problems. For others, the creative process was much more successful.

After four days, all nine of us were tired and sore. We had been in canoes for close to 40 hours plus another 10 hours or so in the classroom. Some passed, others went back to following weekend to finish off a couple of manoeuvres that had stumped them, and still others ‘got their Flatwater D’. But the truth is, we all enjoyed the learning, each other’s company, and the hospitality and warm welcome we received from the Pioneer Camp staff. In the middle of their busy preseason work weekend, the Pioneer Camp staff had made room for us, fed us, and shown interest in our paddling antics and sympathy for our frustrations.

So what are my recommendations for budding instructor candidates? Well first, it really was fun - hard work but fun. I did end up with my Instructors Certification but Cam was right, I would have been happy with Flatwater D. Paddling as much as possible before Paddle Camp turned out to be wise advice. The May long weekend is early in the paddling season and last year’s muscles had taken the winter off. Forty hours of paddling in four days is tough work even at the height of the canoeing season. Early season muscles will complain. Studying the Paddle Canada manual and seeking advice from an Instructor was decisive for me. By the time Paddle Camp began, I had a pretty good idea of what I would be doing and where my strengths and weakness lay. I was able to concentrate on the areas I knew were going to give me trouble. I was also able to work with other students who were much better at doing specific manoeuvres than me. They learned how to teach; I learned how to improve my strokes. By the way, I did finally begin to master the sculling pry, not because of what Charles or the course instructors taught me but because I watched the youngest student in the course. His technique was the one that clicked for me and he was prepared to spend the time to help me figure it out.

One thing I discovered but had not thought about was paddling style. Whether I realized it or not, I have my own unique style. Other paddlers do too. I found some people easier to paddle with than others, not necessarily because they were better paddlers but because we had a similar style. We all paddled with each other at some point during the weekend but I quickly realized that I paddled much better with one of the other students. He and I paddles together through most of the tandem requirements. I realized this was important for an instructor to know as well. Just because a student does not perform a stroke exactly the way we do does not make it ‘wrong’. They may just have a different style.

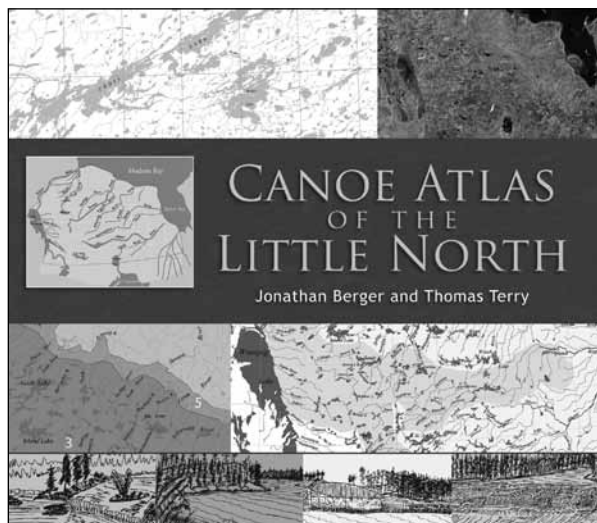
So, in the end, I did become a Paddle Canada Flatwater Instructor. More important, I had set some goals and managed to achieve them. Looking back, I realize the weekend would have been a valuable experience even if I had not passed. And Cam was right, it was fun! **R**

## Book Review

# Canoe Atlas of the Little North

*Jonathan Berger and Thomas Terry Boston Mills Press, 144 pages,*

By Dave Pancoe



Last minute Christmas shopping for the outdoor enthusiast on your list just got a whole lot easier with the release of the Canoe Atlas of the Little North (Hard Cover) by Jonathan Berger and Thomas Terry.

The Atlas covers an area known as the Little North (Le Petit Nord as it was called at the height of the fur trade era), which encompasses the land from the shores of the Hudson Bay, North-West Ontario, Eastern Manitoba, to the U.S. border.

Still to this day traveling by canoe is the only practical option in the Little North, therefore the heart of the Atlas is the detailed canoe routes of the fur trade era and First Nations. Berger and Terry show great cartography by

dividing the Little North into 57 separate maps. On one page is a map of the route at 1:400 000 with portages and rapids marked. On the facing page is a comprehensive description of the routes historic use, hydrographic features and simple landscape sketches.

Not to be mistaken as a canoe route guide book, The Canoe Atlas of the Little North is truly an Atlas in every way. Complete with thematic maps and in-depth geological descriptions and human history.

The Canoe Atlas of the Little North reminds us of a by-gone era and places where we'd still want to go. This exceptional book is an excellent addition to any reference collection. **R**

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## Conference Announcement

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23rd annual wilderness and canoeing symposium featuring numerous presentations on part VII of –

### Northern Travels and Northern Perspectives

**Dates:** Friday Feb 8, 2008 evening 7 pm – 10 pm | Saturday Feb 9, 2008 all day 9 am – 9 pm

**Sponsor:** Wilderness Canoe Association

**Contact:** George Luste (eve) 416-534-9313 (day) 416-978-4676 (fax) 416-531-8873 (email) [norbooks@interlog.com](mailto:norbooks@interlog.com)

**Location:** Monarch Park Collegiate Auditorium, One Hanson St, Toronto

# Prince of the Barrenlands

By Brian Johnston



**If there is such as thing as a beaten path between Baker Lake and the Meadowbank River it is via the Thelon River. Numerous canoe parties use the Thelon route as a means of connecting the Hudson Bay and Arctic watersheds.**

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Several years ago when I was armchair exploring various canoe trip options, I considered an expedition starting in Baker Lake and terminating at Chantrey Inlet. The route was by way of the Thelon, Meadowbank, and Back Rivers. I fondly call the lower section of the Thelon, “The Thelon Pipe”. This wide and free-flowing fast river rapidly descends into Baker Lake and creates a sand delta. Often canoe trippers employing the Thelon-Meadowbank route start their travels somewhere upstream, for example on the Dubawnt River or the upper Thelon, and travel with the current. This is advantageous. Canoeists paddling down the Thelon pass right by the creek system that connects the watersheds. Thus, they simply eddy out and portage up the creek into the Meadowbank River. Whereas our plan was to begin at Baker Lake and work our way up the Thelon River to the same creek. I was skeptical of the Thelon section—the upstream traveling—because an earlier attempt to paddle up a large northern river had been unsuccessful. Yes, upstream travel is possible through tracking and poling, but paddling against a powerful river current is futile.

A fellow canoe tripper suggested an alternate route. He mentioned that in April the Inuit of Baker Lake trek by

snow machine to Gjoa Haven utilizing parts of the frozen Prince River. The Prince River? Because I had never heard of anyone canoeing this river I set out to investigate if it would lend itself to canoe travel.

After investigating, I found the Prince River held possibilities as the means to link Baker Lake to the Arctic Ocean and the idea took hold and evolved into a plan. Instead of following the usual Thelon-Meadowbank route, we would instead opt for paddling up the narrow and small Prince River and its interconnecting lake system. True, the Prince River is a lively river with numerous rapids. Most noteworthy is its final drop into Baker Lake of near continuous whitewater. However, we could easily avoid this final downward gradient of cascading rapids. Our plan was to take the commercial scheduled flight to Baker Lake and then hire a taxi to shuttle us to the Prince River Bridge. The bridge is located just upstream of the river’s final descent. Starting our canoe trip there would avoid portaging up the worst whitewater section.

Well, the trip never materialized, but as it happened, a couple of years later an interesting opportunity presented itself. Due to the time restraints of other members of the crew, I found myself on a 2-week canoe trip on the Meadowbank and Back Rivers. My canoe partner and I were less time-limited so I dusted off the route plan from the Prince, Meadowbank, and Back Rivers trip. We would simply arrange for our return charter flight to drop us off back where we started on the Meadowbank River. This would allow the two of us to canoe back to Baker Lake (while the remainder of the crew would fly onward). More importantly, we would rely on the former route plan of the Prince River. This plan had advantages. We already had the route plan and maps. The cost of our extra week would be the extra landing charge, a small fee. Additionally, because we would be following the original route in reverse, we would be traveling with the current on the Prince River.

During past far north trips, we had seen the lower rapids of the Prince River in a photograph at the Baker Lake Airport but the headwaters as well as the portage connecting the river systems were unknowns. The topographical maps indicated several possible routes. Not surprisingly, at the upper reaches, single blue lines represent the Prince River— more uncertainties.





Over the winter, I visited several paddling friends with topos in hand, where our discussions of options would come to no real conclusion. In the end, I just picked what looked best. Of course, the other routes are still unknown to us.

What did we find? Let's start with the upper Meadowbank River. We landed on an esker and portaged to the nearest water. From there, we traversed westward into the Meadowbank River and began working upstream. By following the shoreline, paddling hard, eddy hopping, tracking, wading, and portaging we progressed upstream, camping a couple of nights. Approaching the Meadowbank headwaters gave way to rapids that had too many rocks and not enough water volume to float a canoe. The slow pace of upstream travel afforded us wildlife viewing of loons, whooping cranes, and 27 muskoxen. Our final Meadowbank portage was 200 metres accompanied by a driving wind and rain.

We had now reached the height of land portage. Our route began with a high climb and we gained enough elevation that the next two lakes were visible, revealing almost the entire route. The open tundra made for easy route finding. We could walk direct without having to alter our path because of unsuitable terrain. The first portage was 1300 metres and at the top, we stopped for lunch. Due to the adverse weather conditions, we were cold and wet but the windy weather also meant no bugs. It was a fine day to be portaging rather than paddling. Oftentimes our canoe would get pinned bow or stern to the ground by the wind, so we dragged the canoe more than solo carried. In the powerful wind, we ruddered across the tiny lakes, wave surfing the entire way. We continued from puddle to puddle traveling mostly down hill to the final short carry into the Prince River headwaters. By 5:30 pm, we had completed the last portage. We were on the Prince River!

Tired from portaging 4 km, we made camp although due to the wind, there was no other option—we were wind bound. Setting up camp was a test of skill and knowledge, including much dexterity and determination. It took the two of us an hour to erect our tent as well as our MEC Mantis tarp (our cave shelter). We put extra gear inside the tent to weigh down the windward side. Having finally

reached the Prince River we were content to rest, eat, sleep, read, and catch up on a couple of repair jobs. We were traveling in style, with a mountaineering tent and the Mantis we had lavish safe havens to wait out the weather. Upon reaching Baker Lake, we learnt that the wind was 90 km/h at the Meadowbank mine site the day we portaged the height of land.

By 8 pm of the following day, the wind had lessened and although it was late in the day and still cold, we decided to continue following the Prince River headwaters. I was wearing four layers as well as my PFD on my upper body and three layers on the lower half. It was good to be moving forward. For two days, we worked diligently. We traversed five portages including one carry near the end of a lake across an island because there was no water on either side to allow for canoe passage. The river and rapids slowly gained volume but we were still required to wade several shallow and rocky rapids before the river gained enough volume to float us consistently through rapids.

As we made our way down the Prince River, its lakes and rapids provided us with variety. The river also offered many signs of travelers, such as inuksuit and cabins. We stopped at the Prince River Bridge to visit with some residents of Baker Lake who were there to get drinking water. From the bridge, we were literally swept and raced down the final descent. On route, we met two groups of men fishing for arctic char who were using the traditional kakivik. At the mouth, unlike at the extensive sand delta of the Thelon River, it is an easy passage to the community of Baker Lake provided the expansive lake is cooperative.

In the end, we were very glad that we traveled off the beaten path. Our route successfully linked the Meadowbank River to Baker Lake. Our portage overland to the headwaters of the little known Prince River as well as the river itself, a spirited river with abundant rapids, including its rapid drop into Baker Lake was a viable option to the common Thelon route. It served us well as the means of extending our stay and connecting watersheds. **R**

*Brian Johnston is a well known member of Paddle Manitoba both as a wilderness tripper and Paddle Canada certified instructor. This article first appeared in Che-Mun, Outfit 129.*



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Corporate (Business)	<b>\$100</b>
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*Foreign (non-Canadian) members please add \$5 to cover additional mailing costs.*

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**Application Type** (circle one)    **a) New**    or    **b) Renewal**

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Applications received after November 1 expire December 31 of the next membership year.

**Member Interests** (please check all that apply)

- |                                    |                                    |   |                                   |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Canoeing     | <input type="radio"/> Kayaking     | <input type="radio"/> Beginner            | <input type="radio"/> Movingwater |
| <input type="radio"/> Family       | <input type="radio"/> Experienced  | <input type="radio"/> Whitewater          | <input type="radio"/> Tripping    |
| <input type="radio"/> Competitive  | <input type="radio"/> Intermediate | <input type="radio"/> Flatwater/Lakewater | <input type="radio"/> Instructing |
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- |                                |                                  |                                   |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
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Please tell us how **you** could help Paddle Manitoba achieve its objectives. Contact the appropriate convenor (listed on page 3) for more information on how to contribute in these areas.



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- ☐ Advocacy Committee
- ☐ Indoor Program Committee
- ☐ Newsletter (The Ripple) Committee
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**Website:** www.OntarioParks.com



### Manitoba Pioneer Camp

Manitoba Pioneer Camp offers a variety of exciting programs that specialize in wilderness canoeing and adventure programs both in our children's camps and through Wildwise, our out-tripping program. Located in pristine wilderness on two Shoal Lake islands, we have been providing traditional wilderness camping experiences for children, youth and adults since 1942.

**Address :** 640 Broadway Avenue, Winnipeg  
MB R3C 0X3

**Phone:** (204) 788-1070

**Email:** pioneercamp@mts.net

**Website:** www.manitobapioneercamp.ca

**Our members  
receive a 10%  
discount on goods  
and services from  
these businesses.**

# Paddle Manitoba Calendar of Events

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## River Secrets: Paddling the Path Less Travelled and the Paddle Manitoba Annual General Meeting

**Date:** Saturday, 19 January 2008

**Location:** Fort Whyte Alive Interpretive Centre

**Time:** AGM 6:00 - 7:00 pm / River Secrets 7:00 - 9:00 pm

**Admission:** The public is welcome. Free to all Paddle Manitoba and Fort Whyte Alive members. A \$4.00 dollar donation from non-members is gratefully accepted. Coffee and soft drinks will be served. Beer is for sale.

Manitoba's top river guides will wet your traveler's appetite with stories and pictures of faraway places that await your paddle. From the shores of Hudson Bay to the Arctic Tundra to South America - come explore the land beyond the guide books.

All members are encouraged to attend and vote at the AGM before the meeting.

## GPS and Compass Navigation

**Date:** Saturday, 16 February 2008

**Location:** Fort Whyte Alive Interpretive Centre

**Time:** 7:00 - 9:00 pm

**Admission:** The public is welcome. Free to all Paddle Manitoba and Fort Whyte Alive members. A \$4.00 dollar donation from non-members is gratefully accepted. Coffee and soft drinks will be served. Beer is for sale.

The mysteries of navigation will be explained in this informative session hosted by Paddle Canada instructors. Learn how to use your GPS functions beyond basic location finding, and prepare yourself for what to do when your GPS doesn't work.

## Wilderness First Aid

**Date:** Saturday, 19 April 2008

**Location:** Fort Whyte Alive Interpretive Centre

**Time:** 7:00 - 9:00 pm

**Admission:** The public is welcome. Free to all Paddle Manitoba and Fort Whyte Alive members. A \$4.00 dollar donation from non-members is gratefully accepted. Coffee and soft drinks will be served. Beer is for sale.

If you go out in the woods today - you just might get hurt. So how do you set that sprained ankle or treat a campfire burn? Our crack team of Paddle Manitoba doctors and paramedics will share the best options for medical treatment when you're far from the nearest hospital.

## 2008 Waterwalker Canoe and Kayak Film Festival

**Date:** Sunday, 16 March 2008

**Admission:** \$10.00 for everyone

The year's best paddling films will fire your spirits in the depths of a Manitoba winter. There's something for every enthusiast - double or single blade - from all corners of the world. Created to honour the memory of Winnipeg's own Bill Mason, this annual festival encourages us to value and preserve our wild spaces. Come and join us for a magic day of great films and paddling stories.

## Paddle Camp: Canoe and Kayak Skills Program

**Date:** 16-19 May and TBD in June 2008

**Location:** Manitoba Pioneer (Shoal Lake) and the Whitemouth River

If you are looking to improve your skills as an instructor or casual paddler then get yourself to Paddle Camp! Whether you're a scout or guide leader, camp counselor, teacher, or just an enthusiast, we have a program for your skill level. Paddle Canada certification courses in Canoeing, Canoe Tripping, Kayaking and Whitewater Canoeing will be offered for instructor and skill level candidates alike.

Enjoy a weekend with fellow paddling enthusiasts on the shores of beautiful Shoal Lake. The province's top instructors and instructor trainers will provide a progressive, personal learning environment for all experience levels. As part of your course fees you receive meals, accommodations and Paddle Canada certification.

**Registration:** Contact the Instructor Convenor, Cameron White, at (204) 878-3570 or [cwhites@mts.net](mailto:cwhites@mts.net) for more information.

## Manitoba Paddlefest

**Date:** 7 June 2008

**Location:** Fort Whyte Alive

**Time:** 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

**Admission:** No charge. Children and families welcome.

Manitoba's biggest paddling event returns. Paddlers of all skill levels and interest will enjoy the chance to take part in clinics and workshops throughout the day. Participate in a mini Paddle Canada kayak lesson, learn how to campfire cook like a gourmet, and check out the latest gear and boats to hit the water.

This event is designed for those who are interested in canoeing and kayaking, and want to explore all that is offered by these great activities. Families are welcomed and encouraged to take part in our on-water clinics hosted by Paddle Canada instructors