

CanoeSki Spring News 2009

In Saskatoon, the snow still falls and skiing is still in vogue, but the brighter days foretell spring is on the horizon. *I* could carry on skiing till the cows come home, but I know most people won't be reluctant to put a pretty bizarre winter behind them, so let's talk about what's current on the canoeing scene.

First off, the Canadian Parks & Wilderness Society is sponsoring the [Reel Paddling Film Festival](#) to appear in Saskatoon at the Broadway Theatre on April 4. I wonder if "reel" is just a play on words or a throwback to a pre-digital era! Of special interest to local voyageurs is a winning entry titled *Digging Water - a Voyage by North Canoe*, produced by the 2008 David Thompson Brigade. The film captures the Brigade's trip in voyageur canoes from Rocky Mountain House to Fort William to commemorate David Thompson's journey via the same route in 1808. I attended the Brigade's stop at Fort Carlton last May and it was an impressive event with bagpipes playing, voyageurs in period costume, dancing and entertainment to boot! Experiencing the entire trip will be even more impressive on the big screen!

Still on the voyageur theme, the CanoeSki **David Thompson Voyageur Trek**, started on the South Saskatchewan River two years ago as part of the Thompson Bicentennial Commemorations, ran again last July in concert with an open house co-sponsored by the St. Louis Historical Society and the Saskatchewan Archaeological Society at South Branch House archaeological site. The community response was overwhelming with over 200 attendees, some coming from as far away as B.C.! The event is chronicled in the current spring issue of *Prairies North* magazine by Saskatoon freelancer, Amy Jo Ehman. Pick up a copy on the news stands and take an armchair ride - till the ice goes out! After that you can jump on board this summer's version of the [DT Trek](#).

Continuing on the media/history theme, the current March/April issue of *Explore* magazine features a line-up of the Best Budget Trips in Canada for 2009. CanoeSki made the short list with the **Legends of the Shield** canoe tour and garnered a pithy capsule description of the trip under the heading *Paddle a Fur Trade Route*.

Coincidentally, that same Legends trip in August last year had a fun-loving, high energy young woman on board, who took to wilderness canoeing *and* portaging like a duck to water! She earned a few points when she insisted on carrying my canoe through all five portages on the trip - portages congested with deadfall from spruce budworm and forest fires! Fortunately, Molly also enjoys writing. [Check out the story](#) and slide show of her adventures in the great untamed wilderness of northern Saskatchewan.

It's not often that six Germans converge on a CanoeSki tour, coming from different continents. Such serendipity brought three German parties together on the Loon Magic tour last July. With typical German appetite for wild and remote places, they were introduced to a loon lover's paradise in a unique corner of Prince Albert National Park. Ines, part of a family of three, relates in [her story and photos](#) how she found the trip to be much more than a nature encounter.

Still on the story theme, I had a request last fall from the International Canoeing Federation in Switzerland to write a story on wilderness canoe camping for their annual magazine, *Planet Canoe*. It seemed like a good chance to introduce Saskatchewan's "world class" canoeing opportunities to an elite paddling fraternity. My article, including a few eye-catching photos, is entitled, *Canada's Churchill River: the Fix for a Canoeing Addict*. Unfortunately, unless you're rubbing shoulders with Olympic athletes, you're not likely to find a copy. But the editor has promised to send me the PDF, so I hope to post it soon on the CanoeSki site.

On the *not* good news front, the Conservative Government has been playing fast and loose with the ancient and sacrosanct Navigable Waters Protection Act. In an attempt to pre-empt public dissent, amendments to the act were introduced along with the much ballyhooed Bill C-10 - the Federal Budget Implementation Act. This roused the ire of paddlers and environmentalists, who protested loudly, but alas not loudly enough, as Bill C-10 got through Parliament uncontested and recently got Senate assent. More info on the anticipated threats to river users can be found online at the [Canadian Rivers Network](#).

Back home, when the ice and snow finally do go, I'll closet my skis reluctantly, take a few deep breaths and do a flip flop, figuratively into the paddling season. On the CanoeSki line-up are the time-tested winners from previous years - no new tours this year! The season starts rolling with the ever popular [Wilderness Navigation Course](#), followed by more training for adventure - in the ultimate discovery craft! After the [spring paddling courses](#) are over, it's [tour time](#) - a chance to spread your wings on eco-explorations of that great untamed Saskatchewan wilderness.

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