

CanoeSki Spring News 2010 – Stories of 1885 at Centre Stage

After a brief fling in Saskatoon with summer in mid-April, we're back to reality in early May with a bit of snow, rain & enough cool weather to dampen anyone's hopes of a premature start to canoe-camping. It will soon pass and we'll be able to get on with an exciting canoeing season in earnest!

The year 2010 is turning out to be jam-packed with fascinating activities commemorating historic events all over Saskatchewan and beyond. The most significant of all is the 125th anniversary of the North West Resistance of 1885. The sites and events connected to this turbulent period of Canadian history are on centre stage across Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta through the efforts of the [Trails of 1885](#) tourism initiative. CanoeSki is one of the partners in this marketing coalition, with a couple of new river tours on its current canoeing schedule. The most significant battles of the 1885 conflict took place along the South Saskatchewan River at Turond's Coulee/Fish Creek and Batoche where Louis Riel's forces engaged the Canadian militia. The battle sites are recognized by Parks Canada as National Historic Sites, and for canoeists' convenience, they are both accessible via trails from the river. Check out [River Trails of 1885](#) for more details on CanoeSki's new historical river tours and join us on an adventure trip to re-live a momentous time in Saskatchewan's history.

Back in the year 1995, I was part of a consulting team that produced the *South Saskatchewan River EcoCanoe Guide* for the Partners for the Saskatchewan River Basin consortium. The guide had maps filled with canoeing related info, including historical points of interest along the river. We had identified a bush trail leading from the river up to the cairn marking Middleton's 1885 Fish Creek Battle Camp. In the intervening 15 years, the marker post was knocked out by flood ice and the trail had become overgrown and impassible. I've been working with Parks Canada at Batoche to open up the trail for this anniversary year. Signage and trail restoration, I'm told, is on this spring's work order. Make a note in your guidebook to test the trail on your next trip on the *Hague Ferry to Gabriel's Crossing* section of the river or join one of the CanoeSki River Trails tours to get acquainted with this pivotal place in the 1885 saga.

A trail that figured prominently during the 1885 era – the Carlton Trail -- crossed both the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers as it wended its way between Fort Garry and Fort Edmonton. On the River Trails of 1885 tour, we will hike a portion of the original trail from where it crosses the South Saskatchewan to its destination at Batoche. For paddlers on the North Saskatchewan, a short hike from the river, the Carlton Trail takes one up to [Fort Carlton](#), which is also celebrating its 200th anniversary with lots of hoopla and fur trade festivities.

Not to be outdone by southern anniversaries is a 150th year celebration in northern Saskatchewan at Stanley Mission on the Churchill River, location of the Provincial and National Historic Site of Saskatchewan's oldest church. Several of CanoeSki's [Northern Waterways](#) tours in Lac La Ronge Provincial Park have Holy Trinity Anglican Church on their itineraries to acquaint participants with this intriguing cultural and architectural treasure.

Getting off the anniversary and history train for the moment brings us to an immediate event occurring May 7 at 2:00 pm in Saskatoon's downtown Francis Morrison Library where I will be presenting a narrated slide show, entitled *Eco-explorations of Saskatchewan's Backcountry*. This will be a modified version of a similar show I did on an ecotourism theme a couple of years ago for the Saskatchewan Environmental Society. The presentation will have an overall canoeing bias, but I'll include some skiing, and hiking and biking as well. If you have a free hour or so on Friday afternoon and want to see some interesting, out of the way places to explore, come and join the crowd.

In late March, I was receiving, rather than giving a presentation, during Tourism Saskatchewan's Annual Gala Awards Ceremony. Along with award recipients in 17 different categories, CanoeSki Discovery Company was selected for the prestigious Spirit of Saskatchewan Award, competing

with two other heavyweight finalists – Fort Battleford and the Western Development Museum. The CanoeSki event attracting the award was the [David Thompson Voyageur Trek](#) – a fur trade-themed historical and archaeological tour on the South Saskatchewan River, which has run successfully since 2007 in conjunction with the International David Thompson Bicentennial Commemoration. Follow the link for media articles and photos of past tours and current trip info.

Last but not least, a reminder about CanoeSki programs on the near horizon. June 6 is slated for the ever popular [Wilderness Navigation Course](#) in which the age-old mysteries of map & compass are revealed. Paddling courses on [Launching the Discovery Craft](#) begin shortly thereafter with the [wilderness canoe tours](#) following close behind.

Getting back on the history train -- join me in making this year, one to enrich your adventures in your own Canadian heritage!

Forever exploring,

Cliff Speer

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