

Moose Factory Journal February 2004

Monday, 2 February 2004

There was another (sudden) death over the Weekend, in Cochrane. Funeral will come later this week, probably at St. Thomas'. The underground water system continues to leak. Raymond is mending. And, it's warm -- a whopping 19* (F).

Monday, 9 February 2004

Last Saturday night I brought Derek over to Moosonee for hockey practice. On the way back, just as I got back on to Moose Factory Island, I noticed Bobby's truck parked IN the ditch. Then, a second later, I noticed Bobby. His embarrassment was heart-breaking. I tried to comfort him by telling him that that ditch, actually, was my ditch. It was my own personal ditch on Christmas Eve -- when Raymond and I parked in just about the same place. I even confessed I was encouraged to know that other, more able drivers, were also prone to misfortune similar to mine. I don't think I helped Bobby very much.

Joe told me a story this week -- about one of the reasons he is here now. Joe is part Cree and part Inuit. The story is of his great great grandfather, an Inuit. The great great grandfather had a son: Joe's great grandfather. Father and son went out on the ice one day to hunt or to fish. The ice flow they were on suddenly separated from the ice attached to the mainland. Without hesitation the father took off his watertight seal skin 'boots'. He blew air into them, making a flotation device. He attached this to the son. And *ordered* the son to swim for shore. The son made it -- and survived. The father was never seen again.

Young Joe remembers. His expected child ('my future fishing partner') will also know that story. And will remember.

Still warm; at 8 PM: 12*.

Wednesday, 18 February 2004

I'm back from Waswanipi. (And I'm awake, more or less, after recuperating from the trip.)

About 20 of us left on last Thursday's Train for Cochrane, five hours later. Then, we filled three vans and drove to Waswanipi -- arriving 12 midnight. By two I was in bed and falling asleep.

Friday was a slow day. The Great Chapter opened Friday night with a supper and get-together/organizational meeting. The ball started rolling on Saturday. We did courses together in groups morning and afternoon. Saturday night had a Gospel sing which I bunked.

Sunday morning was church. Sunday afternoon brought singing and talks and chats. Sunday evening brought a feast, then an evening worship service put on by the kids.

At 8:30 PM we left in the vans. Arrived at Val d'Or at midnight. We got a few hours of sleep and were on the road again at five AM. We rolled into Cochrane a little after ten -- just about when the train was ready to be boarded.

Then the train was an hour late leaving. It was packed! Part of the delay was because the crews added another car.

Eventually, on Monday evening, I got back to the Rectory and started going through the piles of mail.

Saturday and Sunday were a bit chilly -- at -35* and with a 20 mph breeze. And, except for Sunday Morning's Worship, the whole thing was done in a tent.

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Our crowd maxed out at about 80 people. The tent would have held twice that number easily. The place was warmed by four enormous wood-burning stoves -- and endless cords of wood. I am one of those people that cannot sit still for more than an hour, so I took little walks frequently in the brisk air outside. Near the end of the conference people told me there were wolves prowling the neighborhood. Earlier that week, in Chisasibi, a doctor and a nurse had been attacked in the morning. No wolf pestered me, however, though I did notice that while several dogs were loose, none of them were wandering.

Waswanipi, Quebec is located north and east of Val d'Or. It's on the road that leaves #117 at about Senneterre, goes through Waswanipi and then Chibougamau. From this road there leaves another; and that one goes into Mistissini.

The present site of Waswanipi is relatively new. The old site is on an island in the middle of Lake Waswanipi. In the sixties (maybe) the HBC post on the island closed. The families living there drifted off in different directions.

When the new/present village was begun, the families started coming back 'home'. Some people have associated the moving of the village with the original James Bay Hydro Project. That project would have affected the Rupert, Broadback, and Nottaway Rivers. (The Rupert Project being discussed now is different. It would affect only The Rupert and would divert it into the Eastmain watershed.) But more likely a culprit is the closing of that HBC Post on the Island -- and the resulting inconvenience. That closure came well before the James Bay Hydro project/s was/were being discussed.

In any case, the present village of Waswanipi is served by a road -- and a good one, except when it is snowing. Having a road makes life much more convenient -- and cheaper. (I know.) The village of Waswanipi presently has no motel or any sort of public accomodation. If it did, it would be a serious tourist's haven. The 'tent' is part of a park sort of place on The River's edge. Even in winter (at 35 below) it's a lovely place.

There is an outfitter at Waswanipi:

Abel S. Kitchen
Dreamcatcher Adventures Outfitters
27 Rue Spruce Street
Waswanipi, Quebec J0Y 3C0
CANADA

TEL: +1 (819)753-2515
FAX: +1 (819)753-2752

Special Packages

Let experienced Cree guides take you on a week-long canoe or boat excursion into the wild rivers of the true north. They will show you how to live off the land and get in some top-notch fishing, bear or moose hunting at the same time. (extra charge applies. Advance notice required)

Cost per person, per day:

Cabin \$35 (\$10 off with boat and motor rental)
Boat \$15
Outboard motor (20-25 hp) \$15
Guide \$100

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Special Packages Extra. Please call for information.

For an additional charge of \$50, we offer transportation of boats and equipment to and from the adjacent lakes, Legoff and Tesceau.

*Rates based on 16' aluminum Misty River boats for 3 people maximum (for fewer people, call for rates).

* Federal and provincial taxes apply to all rates.

Traditional sweat lodge-a unique experience

For those interested in learning more about cree culture, Dreamcatcher Adventures provides sweat lodge ceremonies at no extra cost. A sweat lodge is cleansing and preparatory ceremony, like a spiritual sauna. (advance notice required)

Monday night, just after I had returned, Bobby called to report that the water line to the Parish Hall had frozen up (again.) We threw heat on it and muttered incantations. By morning the water flowed freely. AND, the Island's water system is patched up -- for now. We actually get water, now, 24 hours a day. (!)

Last night Adrian Tanner came by for a few gallons of tea. My Eastmain maps had just come in. Adrian had pictures of his trek in the bush up and down The Eastmain from last September when he and several people (of every generation and mostly from Eastmain Village) spent a month there digging around old camping grounds.

Adrian's September journey brought him much further into Great Bend than my trek in 1973. To avoid the Bend we got off The River on the north shore and used a route through the Village Lakes and then down The Clearwater River. Adrian's group went further down The Eastmain and took a route leaving The River on the south shore. Oh! What I'd do to poke around there -- before the water is impounded.

The new dam on The Eastmain, as best as I could tell, will go right by (or over) the campsite we used at the foot of Great Bend. And then The Bend (and The River, mostly) will be gone.

Soon after we had arrived at Waswanipi we heard of a tragedy, news of which had just broke in the Community, about a little boy from who had been abused. He was lying in a hospital in Montreal and would be unconscious for the rest of his life. Waswanipi has been keeping a vigil through all of this. There had been some talk of simply canceling the Anglican Church's Great Chapter Meeting. But the Village wanted to go through with it, and they did an absolutely splendid job. They were wonderful hosts. This afternoon Caroline called. The kids here at Moose Factory are now doing a walk for Khayden. And other kids around The bay are doing the same. Waswanipi has a special page dedicated to the walk -- as part of their website:

<http://www.waswanipi.com/khayden/index.htm>

The page may still be up by the time I post February's Journal.