

MOOSE FACTORY JOURNAL

January 10, 2006 --

January 10, 2006

KASHECHEWAN, again

And, again, sadly. Very sadly.

Some time over the weekend, in the afternoon -- I think Sunday afternoon -- the jail in Kashechewan caught fire and burned. Inside were two young men, arrested and held on minor charges. They perished in the fire. Also, a police officer was injured trying to rescue them. He was flown to Moose Factory. And I think he has been flown from here to Kingston. His injuries must have been severe.

No one knows what happened -- apart from the obvious. Inquiries will come. And then we'll know more. Or maybe we won't.

Cliff Dee, priest in Waskaganish and Dean for the James Bay Deanery has already gone to Kashechewan. He went up last night on the winter road -- which is just beginning to work. Others from around the diocese may go there as well. The Moose Cree Band has sent help; they have been continuing to aid their brothers and sisters in that beleaguered community.

Meanwhile, in Moose Factory, we had a death. I'll bury Leslie tomorrow.

TORONTO

For those of you in the neighborhood -- I'll be in Toronto on FEB 3-5. There's a canoers' symposium going on there then. It's been held on this weekend for hundreds of years, but this is my first time. There will be people there whom I haven't seen since before 1970. So, you ask, what happened that I got dislodged from The Island. The answer is that they wanted me to speak at the thing. What am I going to talk about? You never know. I never know. Something about coming back after all these years. Maybe I'll chat up the archives.

It should be fun. Be sure to come!

March 1, 2006

Today is Ash Wednesday. I'm keeping quiet today. We'll have a Service this evening.

On 5 FEB I posted a transcript of my presentation to the Symposium. It's posted on the on-line version of the Journal and also on the Paddling Section of my website. The (old) folks that remembered The Eastmain (when it was) loved it. I'm not so sure about the others. Anyway, I tried to give a sense of where the culture was now -- at least as I have come to understand it these past few years.

I certainly had fun -- preparing and delivering the speech. We also got Theresa to present in the same module (about James Bay). She spoke of the doings around Attawapiskat. There was a third presenter who spoke about a cultural exchange going on between high school students in Vermont and Quebec around Chibougamau.

There were somewhere between 600 and 800 of us. The presentations started on Friday night and went through Saturday night. We presenters were invited to George & Linda Luste's home for a brunch on Sunday. Theresa, Ted Nye, and I flew out of Toronto for Timmins on Sunday afternoon. The weather kept Ted and I stranded in Timmins until Wednesday morning -- when we finally got to Moose Factory.

MOOSE FACTORY JOURNAL

January 10, 2006 --

When I got back to Moose Factory I realized I had a nasty cold. Ted kept an eye on me for a week before returning back to The States.

For the rest of the month I did the cold and a wedding and funerals -- all four of them. Each of those folks who had died was well known to me. We had been friends, in each case, for months or years.

I paced myself and managed to get the cold under control. This last Sunday, finally, I actually felt like a human being. But Monday and Tuesday I was exhausted. I'm keeping quiet these days.

Other dear friends are going back and forth to Kingston and Timmins -- for tests. We all seem to be pre-occupied looking after our collective and individual health. Maybe this has been an exceptionally bad winter. There have been serious swings in the temperature. It's been weird. The ice highway to Moosonee and the winter road up The Coast have only recently become good -- or fully functional. That's about six weeks late. The spring thaw will have begun by the end of March.

Other news.... The Moose Factory municipal bulldozer has a new name: 'Elizabeth'. Elizabeth in person is a young lady, about 35 yrs old, built like a refrigerator -- whose brains got fried when she was a very young child. She now is watched over by her Mom and sister -- and family -- and Moose Factory more generally. A few weeks ago, while the ice was still forming on The River (There were still patches of open water.) Elizabeth took a walk. Out on to The River she walked. AND she found the bulldozer. It was parked on the shore of an island and turned off. The crews were trying to get some kind of start on an ice highway. Sometimes they can begin this process by teasing some way through along the shore of an island here and there. The trick is to get the snow off the ice so that the cold can then really go to work. (Snow acts as an effective insulation against the deep cold.)

Elizabeth climbed aboard. Started the damn thing. Threw it into gear. And headed for The Bay, down the center of The River -- full gear -- full throttle.

By the time the OPP (Ontario Provincial Police) the Choppers, the Mounties, the dog teams, the family, and everyone else in all creation caught up to her, she was on Charles Island digging pits.

The next day, while being operated by a licensed heavy equipment operator, the bulldozer went THROUGH the ice. It goes through the ice every year. We're used to that.

But we're not keeping our engines running when we go inside the Store for groceries. We don't leave the keys in the car anymore. We lock the car. (!)

And EVERYONE is keeping a sharper eye on Elizabeth -- who is doing fine and enjoying her celebrity status immensely, thank you very much.