

**\*\*Please note that these journals are in the process of being updated on a continuous basis.\*\***

**July 27, 2006**  
**Day 57**

## **A COLD, RAINY DAY**

The rain storm finally hit us at 6:00 AM this morning with very hard, pouring rain. It was nice to listen to it hitting the tent and go back to sleep all snuggled up in my down sleeping bag. At 7:30, the rain had almost stopped. We got up and made breakfast of couscous and coffee in the cabin. Unfortunately, the roof on the cabin needs replacing so basically everything inside was wet. Our canoes and contents were even more wet. There was water all the way up to the seats! The lunch bag got very soaked and some of the Ziploc bags inside weren't waterproof anymore. At lunch time, we discovered that one bag of gorp, one bag of bars, mango and sun-dried tomatoes were ruined. So sad. It was the same tomatoes I had rescued from our upset in the rapid. Now they had died in the rain.

Today was a day for gortex, all the way, pants and jackets. It was freezing cold. Even with the four layers I wore on top, my hands were still cold. Once we had bundled ourselves into our canoes and pulled our spray skirts all the way up, we began to feel toasty warm and ready to paddle through the drizzle. Our first, invented, portage was a tricky carry across some rocks. We very carefully paddled up to a rock with the nose of the canoe sticking out over the top of the rapid. Carefully we unloaded on the slippery slope, then I heard that Nick needed a band aid.

I didn't realize yet that where we needed to put in at the other end of the portage was completely blocked with fallen trees. Nick had been chopping away at the blow down when the hatchet somehow sliced into the meaty section of his thumb. Ouch! It was quite deep. Poor Nick. Out came the first aid kit. Mark and David and various assistants played doctor to patch him back together. By the time we were done, his hand was immobilized. Holding a paddle wasn't going to be easy. He probably needed stitches, but such is life. We put him in the front of Michael and Lauren's canoe and Lauren took the back of Nick's canoe.

After lunch, we paddled hard all afternoon and well into the evening. Sometimes we had a headwind or a side wind, occasionally there was calm water. It was the hardest we had paddled, on the verge of racing speeds. Not very intelligent! Eventually the tempo slowed slightly so we didn't hurt ourselves. The sun came out with a beautiful rainbow appearing. The lighting was just spectacular for a while. We were getting closer and closer to our goal of yesterday, Sandy Bay, but it was also getting very late (8:30 PM).

We spied a sloping rock nearby and headed for it. The regular cook groups split up for supper this time because I suddenly had a notion for blueberry pancakes. Anita, Tami and Nick wished for the same. The rest wanted mashed potatoes. To our delight, our campsite rock was absolutely covered with blueberries so we threw a ton of them in the batter and threw some more on top of the syrup. We ate pancakes until we were very full. Life was complete. Yum, yum. I have to say that having an endless supply of blueberries is just so, so great.

*(David, can you fill in some of the details of Nick's injury as you told it to me on the phone? Reluctant to had out the axe, not even making it back to the canoe before he had injured himself, describe the wound, etc.)*

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**July 28, 2006**  
**Day 58**

## **THE TOWN OF SANDY BAY**

Poor David was very tired this morning but up we got anyway although it was definitely bit-by-bit. There was hardly any food left for breakfast, so David and Mark ate the leftover mashed potatoes from last night and I shared my special supply of triple berry oatmeal with Anita. Actually, before breakfast, I managed to go swimming, with my tent, accidentally, of course! I hadn't closed the bag because the ground sheet was really wet. I was spreading it on the slope and dropped the tent bag that I was holding in my other hand. Down the rock slope it went, rolling and tumbling, into the water. Drat. After I swam to its rescue, the entire tent had to be spread out to dry.

It seemed to be a slow-moving morning for everyone. I had time to wash some clothes while the water boiled for breakfast and managed to dry them on the rocks by the time we left. Before arriving at the town of Sandy Bay, there was a large dam to portage around. There was a good trail/road on the opposite side of the dam from the information we had. The village of Sandy Bay is quite large, 1500-2000 people. Two little float planes were pulled up to the dock. There was a big school, a general store, one restaurant and post office. Not bad!

A local gave us directions to the store. We found basically everything we needed except salad ingredients. We repacked the food barrels down near the airplanes. Some people ate fries and gravy at the little restaurant. A local guy, by the name of Robby, came down and chatted to us for quite awhile. It's interesting to learn about life in these little towns people call home. David made some important phone calls to Jared who is meeting us soon, and to Grey Owl about our paddles. Unfortunately, Lauren somehow lost her life jacket while we shopped and ate. Whether it floated away or was stolen, no one knows for sure. We spent lots of time looking for it and now we are even more behind. What's new?

David is actually considering having Jared meet us in Puck instead of Leaf Rapids because it is doubtful whether Tami will make her plane otherwise. Jared leaves Seattle in 36 hours so we can still change plans. We finally left Sandy Lake and swore up and down **not** to stop in Puck which is two days away.

Off we went, paddling again. It was after 6:00 PM by now. The scenery was so pretty. There was fast moving water with some fun boils and whirlpools. A small canyon we floated through was cooler and darker, way cool. We paddled for quite awhile trying to catch up some miles. The sun went down about the time we reached our goal of 20 kilometers. Of course, there were now no campsites anywhere. We ended up going through a huge rapid in half-light, a very crazy rapid that freaked us all out, especially poor Tami who was in the stern of her canoe because of Nick's injured hand. In desperation, we finally decided to split up the group with our cook group camping on a tiny island (Two Bush Island) and the others were across the lake somewhere on shore. It was crackers and dip for supper.

*(Lauren told an interesting tale about finding a replacement for her lifejacket in the town.)*

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**July 29, 2006**  
**Day 59**

## **WELCOME TO MANITOBA**

We dragged ourselves out of bed bright and early this morning, at 6:30 AM, to be precise. It was a fine morning on our private island although it really was just barely big enough for the four of us. It's a good thing we know each other really well because the bathroom consisted of one scraggly little bush to hide behind. There was quite the line-up this morning! The other four paddlers returned to our island, at 8:30 AM as planned, and away we paddled.

Although we all felt quite sleepy from getting into camp late last night and from getting up so early, it was a beautiful morning to paddle. The water was like glass and our canoes fairly flew through the water with the greatest of ease. We were able to attain quite good speed without hurting ourselves further. By lunch time, we had clocked an amazing 25 kilometers. We were absolutely starving by then and collapsed on a lovely rock to eat. After lunch, we paddled into a new province—Manitoba! Very exciting indeed. Thankfully the scenery continues to get better and better. I really didn't think that was possible.

Nick, meanwhile, was casting his line at every little break we took because we were all hoping for a fish supper. He did catch a huge jack at lunch break but threw it back. This afternoon, Anita offered to switch with Tami thus giving Tami a break from paddling stern.

There was only one portage today around Sisipuk Falls, a quick, 170 meter ordeal over several logs. Thankfully, the bugs weren't too bad and we finished the portage quickly. One or two 50's later, we began looking for a campsite. Nick had been casting again. Now he and Anita decided to just let the line troll behind them. Once again, campsites weren't terribly available but the scenery continued to be just spectacular. All the cute little islands and rocky points were perfectly mirror-imaged in the glassy water. Occasionally, a loon would call. Other than that the entire day was very quiet and peaceful.

Nick and Anita had gotten way behind while trolling and now they were totally out of sight. We decided to paddle across the lake and located a makeshift camp. The rocky shoreline is fine for cooking, but the tents are pitched way back, up in the burnt over woods on a rare flat spot. Tonight David and I took a lovely, much needed bath. Mark made a yummy supper of macaroni and cheese. Lauren built a beautiful fire which we all enjoyed. Sadly, Nick hadn't managed to catch any fish. In fact, he hadn't even gotten a nibble. Oh, well—maybe we'll have fish another night. There are 215 kilometers left for the next four days. HELP!!!

**July 30, 2006**  
**Day 60**

## **JUST MISSED A FEAST IN PUCKATOWOGAN**

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*(Large space left here. Naomi, were you going to write more or draw a picture?)*

With just 10 kilometers to accomplish today, we approached another town.

As decided earlier, we paddled very close to Puckatowogan, then paddled right on by. It looked like quite a decent sized town. Seeing it is Sunday, probably nothing was open anyway. As we paddled through the bay where the center of town seemed to be, we were suddenly surrounded by boats and canoes heading in every different direction! Then we saw a tiny island in the center of the bay with a little white shack on it. The island was crawling with action—people, flags, balloons, streamers, some kind of celebration. As we paddled past, the locals excitedly waved us in. We pulled in to chat. Apparently we had just missed a huge feast of fried fish, moose, bannock, the works. How tragic that we had missed such delectable and much needed food by a mere thirty minutes.

We found camp just before the rapids. Soon after, a boat from the island celebration came to find us. A really nice, native lady came to take down our names for their radio station and we talked quite awhile. She explained how they celebrated the return of their pilgrims to a holy site in Edmonton—an annual event called St. Annes.

**July 31, 2006**  
**Day 61**

## **CRAZY RAPID AND A CRAZY, LONG DAY**

We were up early again, at 6:30 AM. Boy, we are really beginning to wonder how much longer we can keep up this pace without killing ourselves!!! Somehow we have to get Tami to Leaf Rapids in time to connect with her plane. David is aiming for the second of August. We'll probably arrive on the third.

We kept our eyes open for the portage on the right, as the town people had told us all. This set of rapids was quite confusing. There were rapids and channels taking off in opposite directions and at least three railroad bridges. Everything seemed to be an island! We found a log portage but when Mark checked it out, it landed us in a terrible part of the rapids. Then we spotted another portage trail heading the opposite direction, right across the channel. This was one of the most ingenious log structures we have seen. There was a walkway on either side with logs in the middle, some of the logs acted as rollers to drag the canoes on. It snaked over the rocks and over quite a bit of water.

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The put-in at the far end was also quite challenging but definitely a better option than the first portage. It would take skill, thought and power to get through the very strong current which headed straight into the rapids. Poor Tami was about to have a nervous breakdown thinking about launching in the rapids. Dear Lauren bravely stepped forward to rescue her from paddling stern (Nick was still incapacitated). Mark and Anita went first and were pushed over into the edge of the rapids. Michael and Tami also received an exciting ride. Lauren and Nick really struggled but managed to stay upright. We got pushed into a terrible boil right away and had to pull out of that and try again. The second time, David tried a different approach and we gently ferried straight across the current with no problems.

With that challenge behind us, all we had left to do was to paddle many, many kilometers. It was still drizzling off and on, as it had been doing ever since we started this morning. I couldn't really get into paddling before lunch because of stomach cramps, the result of too much tension in the rapid. There was much wind today, but we eventually ended up with a good tail wind, a very unusual occurrence in our experience. The tail wind even followed us around a few corners. With another 20 kilometers to do in a straight line, we hoped the tail wind would stay with us.

It did last, and actually got stronger! Sometimes it was quite scary riding the huge waves from point to point. After lunch, we struggled with several open bay sections where the wind hit us from the side. It was really tough going. We were paddling like crazy trying to get across the open water. We ended up with very sore shoulders. Some of Marks ibuprofen taken at the next break helped quite a bit, and the wind eventually began to behave.

We paddled on and on and on. It got dark, and still we paddled on, because now there were no campsites. Eventually we spied a tiny, sandy beach and we called it home, campsite or not! After bushwhacking through the jungle a ways, we finally found some flat spots that worked for pitching tents. Supper was eaten in our tent and consisted of lentils leftover from last night eaten in tortillas. They tasted delicious. We had paddled almost 60 kilometers in eleven hours.

**August 1, 2006**  
**Day 62**

## **TREACHUROUS PORTAGE/ STUMPY IS LOST**

Somehow, we managed to pry ourselves out of bed at 7:00 AM. Most people had trouble getting up this morning. In fact, David and I were down at the canoes quite a while before anyone else so, just for fun, I dug out the violin. I was curious to learn whether my cold, stiff fingers could still play. Thankfully they could although not fast. A handful of scales, Shrediak and Bach proved to be a good start to the day.

No one was charging ahead this morning, not even Mark and Toad. Poor Toad had switched with Tami after lunch yesterday and paddled stern through all the wind. She was completely beat last night and very sore this morning. After about three 50's, we came to Twin Falls, two sets of falls separated by about two kilometers.

We found the portage easily enough but we did not get over the portage easily at all. These logs were far enough apart that you needed considerable balance to step from one to another. To make matters worse, some of the logs were no longer nailed down and, whenever you stepped on one of

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the loose ones, it rolled. Others simply broke in half when stepped on! Sometimes there was only a half meter drop under the walkway but, near the end, it was waist high. I found this escapade really dodgy and it took me a long time to get anywhere. I felt quite useless and was glad to say goodbye to that one.

The second portage over the lower Twin Falls was much easier. There were a few logs here and there just laid on the ground instead of elevated. A very steep drop to the put-in was challenging, then we were met with a small sandy beach with real swells coming in and out, created by the powerful waterfall. The several foot deviation caused by the swells made loading quite entertaining but, alas, the real fun had not yet even begun!

With 75 kilometers remaining before we would reach Leaf Rapids, we decided to paddle until 9:00 PM which should allow us to arrive on the third of August. About that time, Mark realized that Stumpy had been washed off their boat in all the crazy water. How tragic! Toad and Mark went back to look for Stumpy while we paddled on. Torrential rain followed shortly. It was a really crazy, hard rain that just soaked you through. Poor Michael and Lauren hadn't put on their jackets. They looked totally miserable. We found an awesome campsite way up high on a huge rocky bluff covered in moss. Mark and Anita returned—without Stumpy. How sad! Stumpy had traveled with us for nearly six weeks.

*(I don't think there was any mention of the finding of Stumpy. In fact, Naomi didn't include much description of that portage at all, I think.)*

*(Also, check the spelling of "Shrediak.")*

**August 2, 2006**  
**Day 63**

## **THERE IS A CHILL IN THE AIR!**

We woke up this morning very, very wet. The deep, wet moss we had pitched camp on last night had soaked right through the ground sheet and the floor of our tent. We packed everything up wet and began another hard, drizzly, overcast day. David and I took breakfast down to the rocks so we could eat by our canoe. As we ate, we wondered why Mark didn't come and didn't come for breakfast. Apparently, he had slept right through David's wake-up call and didn't know the world was ready to paddle until Lauren began taking down the tent around him! I couldn't get warm this morning so, for the first time in a month, I put on my neoprene socks inside my wellies and added every layer accessible to the rest of my body. The sun peeked out for a brief, glorious moment as I sat on the rocks eating.

Soon we were off, paddling again. David was feeling pain today in one elbow and one wrist—quite bad. After about 25 kilometers, we came to Grandville Falls and its portage going down the left side. As we pulled up to another grand, log construction portage, I prayed that these logs wouldn't be old and rotten like yesterday. The structure was almost exactly like yesterdays in structure but obviously newer and in good condition. We did our best. Some people, like Mark, David, Michael and Lauren, practically ran over the thing. I once again found the logs to be further apart than was comfortable for me, and these logs were quite small and slippery. I walked on them fearfully. When I carried the tippy barrel on my back, I used a paddle for a support between the logs and it worked

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okay. The end of the portage climaxed in the great “drop of doom,” as Lauren put it. Suddenly the landscape just dropped off below our feet with 2+ meters to the water. It would have been suicidal for me to even venture onto those logs so, from there, I carried things down the side on solid ground.

We ate lunch at the end of the portage while watching the dramatic waterfall, then loaded everything back into the canoes. While David ran back down the trail to take some pictures, I had a try at loading the canoe by myself. Toad held the boat still, Tami passed the gear and magically, it all went in beautifully. Now we just had to paddled as far as possible towards Leaf Rapids. Considering the time, there was no way we could make it all the way today with 45 kilometers left.

At 6:00 PM, we found ourselves in a beautiful bay with a camp set up on one corner and lots of gorgeous rocks and campsites. We debated back and forth as to stopping to eat now, then paddling a few more hours, or just snack and continue paddling until dark. In the end, we snacked and paddled, island hopping our way, with Mark navigating. It was so, so beautiful. The sunlight was gorgeous. David was teaching Mark the finer points of navigation as we went so it was slow-going at times. When we couldn't see well enough to paddle anymore, we found a very makeshift camp in an old, burnt out, mossy forest. Half the lodge pole pines had fallen down. It was tricky to saw out sites big enough for the tents. David brought me ramen noodles and garlic bread just before I collapsed into an exhausted state of sleep.