



The Tri-Province Arctic Canoe Expedition

Expedition Dates: 10 June – 6 August 2012

Location: Saskatchewan, Northwest Territories, Nunavut—Canada

Team Members

- Henry Cordeal
- Jess Hernandez
- Andrew Hubb
- Chris Martella
- Kyle Terry
- Ben Woods



Expedition Overview

Over the course of 58-days of canoeing, the expedition covered approximately 1000 miles (2600 km), and ended in Queen Maud Gulf in the Arctic Ocean. The majority of the expedition was on 3 main rivers—the Dubawnt, the Morse, and the Armark.

We convened as a group at the end of May in International Falls, Minnesota. While there, we organized and packed gear and made final arrangements for the expedition. We left Minnesota for Black Lake, SK, Canada on 8 June and it took us two full days to drive up. We put our canoes in the water on the morning of 10 June at Camp Grayling, a fishing lodge, on Black Lake. The 9 days of the expedition consisted mostly of lake paddling and long portages that connected the lakes. During the first week the weather was quite warm, and there was relatively little wind, so we were able to make a lot of miles. Our greatest challenge during this section of the trip was contending with the thick swarms of bugs and our food packs, which weighed approximately 120 pounds (55 kg), and hauling them over long portage trails.

The next major section of our expedition was on the Dubawnt River. This was definitely the longest section of our expedition and the most diverse. We transitioned out of the taiga and into the tundra on this section of the trip. We shot a lot of rapids, saw a lot of musk oxen, and encountered our first ice of the trip. Dubawnt Lake, the largest lake in the Barren Lands of Canada, took us a week to cross and on it we had to negotiate large stretches of ice. This section of the expedition was much colder and generally much windier. During this section of the expedition, we picked lots of lingonberries, which deliciously supplemented many of our breakfasts. The most beautiful sections of the river were Dubawnt Canyon, a 2.5 mile (4 km) gorge we portaged, and the Dubawnt

Gates, a dramatic set of rapids where the river was separated by two 80 foot (25 m) tall, monolithic rock formations, that we shot.



Upon reaching Beverly Lake, the end of the Dubawnt River, we continued north on a small unnamed stream, starting on day 38 of our expedition. This stream led up into the Akiliniq Hills, and we spent a week dragging our canoes upstream to get to the headwaters of the Morse River. This section the trip was the most difficult—we spent 7 hours per day wading through freezing water—but also the most beautiful. The narrow canyon provided protection for trees to grow, the water was a clear aquamarine color, and there was a lot of pale sand. At times it almost looked like a tropical island. The best wildlife in this section were the Arctic wolves, including a pack of 9. The weather in this section was cold and windy, with lots of short intervals of rain. The end of this section consisted of two days of pothole portaging, where we portaged between small lakes. The portages were very rocky and austere-looking—the solid ground was made almost entirely of rocks—which prompted us to refer to this area as “Mordor”, a Lord of the Rings reference.

The Morse River was mostly shallow and sandy. At times we had to drag our canoes over shallow stretches of river. After several days, the Morse led us into Upper Garry Lake. The first half of the lake we were able to sail across, but the second half was too shallow to paddle, so we had to drag and portage our canoes over a six-mile (10 km) section of the lake. After Upper Garry Lake came Garry Lake, which was went smoothly. From the end of Garry, we had two days of upstream travel and pothole portaging to get to Armark Lake. We sailed the entirety of Armark Lake (15 miles (24 km)) in one morning, and were on the final stretch of our trip, the Armark River.



The Armark River was unlike any river any of us had ever paddled. Instead of consistent current, the river was more or less terraced—long sections of essentially flat water were connected by steep, shallow, rocky rapids. The rapids were extremely frustrating to shoot. Often, we would scrape over or get stuck on rocks, and one of our canoes was already worn quite thin. Toward the north end of the river, the rapids became more enjoyable as the river became larger. The weather on the Armark started out very cold and windy, but mellowed at the end of the river. The river cut through the Queen Maud Gulf Migratory Bird Sanctuary, a haven for many species of birds. The most populous bird there is the Ross's Goose and we saw tons of them. We made it to the Arctic Ocean on the morning of 7 August. Because of poor conditions in Cambridge Bay, NU, our pilot was unable to pick us up until the afternoon of 8 August. We spent the last day enjoying each other's company and mentally preparing ourselves for our return to civilization.

Summary of Objectives

To travel a novel route to the Arctic Ocean by canoe.

This is the first documented expedition that connected the Dubawnt, Morse, and Armark Rivers.

To complete the first ascent of the unnamed river over the Akiliniq Hills that connects Beverly Lake to the Morse River and to name the river.

To collect water samples for the International Arctic Research Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

We collected over 100 water samples from rivers, lakes, rain, etc. to contribute to isotope mapping research.

To experience the culture of an Arctic community

Visiting Cambridge Bay gave us some idea of how different it is to live there than in the continental United States.

To share the beauty of the Arctic, one of the areas of the world most dramatically affected by climate change.

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