



*The Purposes of the Recreational Canoeing Association of British Columbia are:*

- To coordinate, promote, and encourage all types of paddling;
- To develop safe canoeing practices and activities for canoes;
- To involve the society in appropriate conservation and environments issues around the province.

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### **Brian Creer**

A passionate paddler in the British Columbia canoe community was lost this past May. Tony Shaw has written a heartfelt article on his friend and fellow canoe aficionado, Brian Creer, featured on page 9.



### **...and the David Thompson Columbia River Brigade**

This past June/July, hundreds of paddlers took to the water to recreate David Thompson's historic journey. Participants braved grueling days, and intense conditions in order to live the life of a voyageur.

Katie Stein Sather tells of her experience on the brigade in an article on page 6.

Editor - Alanna Ray



This summer and early fall have been very busy but wonderful for me. My summer spent canoe guiding on the Bowron Lakes and the Yukon River (check out [www.bowronlakes.com](http://www.bowronlakes.com)) and a few months instructing at Strathcona Park Lodge and Outdoor Education Centre ([www.strathcona.bc.ca](http://www.strathcona.bc.ca)) have connected me with some incredible people and places in the BC (and Yukon) paddling world. It seems many other RCABCer's have also had a jam-packed summer season... enjoy some of their stories and more inside this fall edition!

# PADDLING

## PRESIDENTS REPORT (Käri-Ann Thor) - October, 2011



Welcome back everybody to this fine autumn! Hope that you all had a good summer with some time

in the outdoors and on the water! The executive took the summer off so as to have a deserved break from RCABC related tasks and more time for paddling! We have had one meeting so far and are getting back into the swing of things by attending to old business and beginning to think of where our attention is most needed for the upcoming fall and winter seasons.

Thus, there is not too much to say so far except that we plan to offer an Instructor Development Grant again this year and probably we will also offer the Big Boat Grant. The River Rescue Committee hopes to get more active again this year and hopefully the Risk Management Committee will have some time to begin discussions. We may also revisit Instructor Milestone recognitions.

*continued on page 3*

## Bill Reid and the Haida Canoe Opens at the Bill Reid Gallery

June 20, 2011 - *Bill Reid and the Haida Canoe* opens to the public at the Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art, Wednesday, June 22, 2011.

The exhibition conveys the pivotal role of the canoe in Northwest Coast art, cultures and communities. The visitor experiences the revival of canoe building and paddling along the coast and beyond.

Through vivid works of renowned photographers Phil Hersee and Robert Semeniuk, and sketches by Bill Reid, all shown for the first time, the exhibition considers the canoe as art, as a symbol of identity and community, and as a metaphor for Reid's creative journey. Dr. Martine Reid, exhibition curator explains, "Although the archetypal icon of Northwest Coast culture has become the totem pole, a far more appropriate candidate for the position would be the sea-going cedar canoe, upon which in a large measure, the unique character of coastal lifestyle was built."

*continued on page 3*

## RCABC RIVER RESCUE COURSE – TEST RUN!



**RCABC River Rescue Course  
Participants in action!**

Canoeing courses can be a lot of fun, and our test run of Level 1 and 2 of the RCABC canoe based River Rescue course in Kimberley in August was exactly that. The water was cold but the warm weather and wetsuits and drysuits enabled us to enjoy playing in the river. A huge thanks to our four participants: Hugh Westhauser, Krystal Dixon, Marta Wirell and Pete Kerckhoff, who brought and shared every ounce of their enthusiasm and experience. Allyson Phillips and I were the instructors.

We began with an evening theory and orientation session, covering the safety guidelines and equipment we'd be using. The following day we used tandem canoes on the medium sized and non-technical St. Mary River for the Level 1 portion, which covers typical capsized situations. This included standard swimming practice, self rescues and assisted rescues. *continued - page 4*

# PADDLING

*from page 2: Presidents Report*

We look forward to hearing of all the paddling that went on in the various zones as well as teaching ventures. Please let us know what you are up to - you can always submit some content for the CANEWS.

Remember to put on your calendar the dates for the 3<sup>rd</sup> AGM/IAGM/Paddle Conference to be held in Hope, BC on April 13-15, 2012. We will be planning this event starting in the late fall or New Year.

I am looking forward to working with the RCABC team again (and all the executive positions are filled). If you would like to volunteer for RCABC, let the secretary or myself know. Thanks, Kären-Ann Thor



The Steaming of Lootaas and the Lootaas in Paris

*from page 2: Bill Reid Exhibit*

Bill Reid was in awe of the elegant traditional Northern-style sea-going canoe and what it represents visually, symbolically, and culturally. To him, the canoe was more than a means of transportation; it was art. Reid was convinced that the canoe played a generic role in the evolution of Northwest Coast art. In his words, "Western art starts with the figure – West Coast Indian art starts with the canoe."

The exhibition traces four distinct phases during which the canoe played a critical role in Bill Reid's life:

- o The creation of Lootaas (Wave Eater)
- o The epic journey 950 kilometers home to Haida Gwaii
- o The international journey up the Seine to Paris

o The final journeys – The creation of the Spirit of Haida Gwaii and Reid's last journey in Lootaas to his burial site.

The exhibition runs from June 22, 2011 through January 8, 2012 at the Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art. There will be several public programs to highlight various aspects of canoe culture. The first will feature traditional canoe songs and drumming mid-July 2011.

The exhibition will travel to the Canadian Canoe Museum in Peterborough, Ontario in 2012.

For further information contact:

Paula Fairweather

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Tel: 604.682.3455 x222

# PADDLING

*From page 2* In addition to the basic capsizes scenarios, we had great success doing rescues of loaded tandem canoes and canoes with spray skirts. We also got to observe some interesting rescue scenarios thanks to the many unprepared people floating the river.

On the second day, Level 2, we used 4 solo canoes and one tandem and chose Skookumchuck Creek, a smaller, slightly more technical river. Level 2 covers what to do when things get more serious, including situations such as pinned canoes, foot entrapments, dealing with wood hazards, using the canoe as a rescue vehicle and more rope based rescues of swimmers. We introduced the techniques and then set up several scenarios that our group had to solve using methods such as wading, several methods of river crossing, swimming and getting ropes out to tricky locations. This involved teamwork and careful attention to safety and risk management, and the group handled it extremely well. Skookumchuck spills into the Kootenay River and during the 3km float down to the take out, we practiced all sorts of mid-river capsizes recoveries. To finish off the day, we had an evening BBQ with mechanical advantage systems spread all over the lawn.

In summary, the course was very rewarding and expanded everyone's knowledge, including the instructors'. Experienced paddlers were really pushing their skills and their comfort limits, but with great enthusiasm, fun and confidence in their safety. At the same time, this course would work well for anyone with basic river canoeing skills and lower experience level. I'm very much looking forward to teaching it again, or co-teaching it with another moving water instructor to share the value of this course.- By Roger Warnatsch

[kootenay@bccanoe.com](mailto:kootenay@bccanoe.com)

## Spotlight on Outdoor Leadership Programs – MAST



MAST lakewater instructor course -  
April, 2011 near Fernie

This is the second part in a series of interviews with the coordinators of Wilderness Leadership programs around the province. All of these programs include canoeing and are designed to employ people in leadership roles in a variety of outdoor, and tourism related careers.

This interview features Brian Bell, a long-time Master Instructor with RCABC, and the Program Coordinator of the Mountain Adventure Skills Training Program (MAST Program) offered through the Fernie campus of College of the Rockies.

### 1. In a sentence or two, how would you describe the MAST program?

A nine month program to prepare you for the adventure tourism industry. Relevant industry certificates, technical skills, and academic credits prepare you for safe mountain experiences and for further education in adventure tourism.

### 2. How is it different from the College of the Rockies' Golden program, the ATBO?

More back country skiing, more rafting and canoeing, less academic business courses. It's in Fernie, no sea kayaking, and more time in the field.

### 3. What kinds of jobs do MAST graduates tend to get?

Whatever they put their minds to - literally. Ski patrol and raft guiding are the main streams of employment but the following is a list of other jobs:

*Continued on page 5*

# PADDLING

From page 4

- \* Cat Ski Trail Guide
- \* Banff Hiking Guide Services
- \* Rafting Industry - guiding and operations
- \* Guide Book Research
- \* Blue Lake Environmental Centre -- Educator
- \* Fly Fishing Guide - international
- \* Municipal Recreation Centres -- field instructors
- \* Ski and Snowboard Instructor
- \* National Youth Services Programs
- \* BC Parks Ranger
- \* Summer Mountain Sport Camps -- Instructor/Guide
- \* BC Coastal Eco Tourism Guide
- \* Professional Ski Patrol
- \* Ambulance Attendant
- \* Retail Gear Sales
- \* Canoe Instructor
- \* Interpretive Guide
- \* Sea Kayak Guide
- \* Mountain Bike Guide and Repair Specialist

#### 4. How is the outdoor industry changing over time?

Clientele are more front country and day trip oriented, less back country and multi day oriented.

Risk management and land use red tape from government is crippling small business.

The 'rad' and 'extreme' nature of everyday advertising is having an effect on perceived risk and comfort levels... some people think they are not having a good time unless they are really 'rad and extreme'.

Many people misperceive the skills needed to move a canoe with skill.



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#### 5. Do you have any advice for someone interested in making a career in the canoeing industry?

Get a canoe, take a course from Roger and Allyson! Go canoeing a lot and look for that job that will allow you to be in a canoe a lot to develop your skills. One thing will lead to another and you'll be canoeing for a living.

For more information on this program, see <http://www.cotr.bc.ca/atbo/>

-By Allyson Phillips

# PADDLING

## Life is A Brigade!

How do you combine an interest in fur trade history, geography, and paddling too?

You join a Brigade, that's how. So you can get up way too early, paddle with five others in a 26-foot voyageur canoe, switching sides every few minutes—meaning moving your body across the seat and not missing a stroke. So you can shiver in the cold and rain, or drink litres of water to prevent hyperthermia. Such is the life of a modern day voyageur.

Several members of the Fort Langley Canoe Club as well as others from around BC and from across Canada and the United States formed eleven teams to become the 2011 David Thompson Columbia River Brigade. Over 200 people participated, whether the whole six weeks, or a few days. Beginning in Canal Flats, BC, paddlers followed the Kootenay River as far as the Libby Dam in Montana, then hopped by road to Thompson Falls on the Clark Fork River, which flows into Lake Pend Oreille. The journey continued on the Pend Oreille River as far as Ione, WA., followed by a land hop west to Kettle Falls on the Columbia River proper. From there, they paddled directly to Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia River. That's 1670 kilometres in all. We were both tired and glad to end the trip, and already nostalgic for the 'road' by the time of the wrap-up brunch the day after we arrived in Astoria. *Continued on page 7*

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# PADDLING

*From page 6*

All this was in celebration of the accomplishments of the master explorer and cartographer David Thompson. We arrived in Astoria two hundred years to the day after Thompson did. Like he would have done, we honoured the various communities along the way with arrival ceremonies, and had displays to inform the folks of what we were doing. Their reciprocated hospitality included meals, music and camping spots. Everybody gave speeches.

Like Thompson, we endured the heat of the Upper Columbia Basin and fought the headwinds of the Columbia Gorge and the incoming swell and tide at the river's mouth. Unlike the river that Thompson paddled, the contemporary Columbia is mostly a series of reservoirs. No rapids at all. Just dam after dam to trailer around. Sixteen of them all together. There are a couple of precious free running stretches—the Hanford Reach, home of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation and its former buffer zone, now a National Monument, and the final tidal reach, about 140 kilometres. For some of us familiar with and comfortable in the various forested regions of Canada, the Columbia Basin is a landscape both alien and fantastic. As in, “This must be some kind of fantasy.”



Paddlers on the path of David Thompson



Think of the Okanagan Valley area, only much drier. Mostly unpopulated. Much more surreal. Much of it had no trees except in coulees.

A typical day for the modern voyageurs started early, often as early as 4:30 am, for a 6:00 start on the water. The pace was not for the faint at heart: 40-60 strokes a minute for hours at a time. Bent shaft paddles were the norm, especially carbon fibre ones. Unlike the voyageurs, the early start time meant we could miss the extreme heat and the high winds for which the Columbia River, especially the Gorge, is renown. Lunch was most often a series of snacks grabbed while we drifted on the water rather than a pleasant stop on shore.

It was a great opportunity to celebrate paddling in general, to renew and make paddling friends from across Canada, and to re-enact the life of the voyageur. Such a trip is a unique experience.

Filmmaker Jay McMillan recorded the whole trip. The premiere of the film will be on November 19 in Abbotsford, at the University of the Fraser Valley. For more details, check the website [www.2011brigade.org](http://www.2011brigade.org), or email me at [ksather@shaw.ca](mailto:ksather@shaw.ca).

There is a great group of photos <http://www.yakima-herald.com/galleries/6047/photos/2>, and video at <http://landing.newsinc.com/shared/video.html?vcid=23436363&freewheel=90430&sitesection=yakima>

- By Katie Stein Sather

# PADDLING

## New Poling Instructors Reviving a Traditional Skill

A very dog-eared and much beloved copy of Bill Riviere's "Pole, Paddle & Portage" shares a hallowed shelf of canoe lore in my library with the Masons, Moores and Raffan. It was my "complete guide to canoeing" and primary source of information in the years before I undertook a path of formal instruction with the RCABC and the Victoria Canoe and Kayak Club.

The happy concurrence of warm summer weather and Cowichan River water flow too paltry for exciting downstream paddling led me to explore poling. I



devoured the information in Riviere's book and was blessed with a gift of Garrett Conover's excellent "Beyond The Paddle" (thank you, Mr. Shaw). I was hooked! The basics could be learned from trial and error on the river but a trip to Smithers for a course with Roger McColm and Lyle Dickieson helped greatly to further my skills.

There being no poling instructors on Vancouver Island, I organized a course here a few years ago for Leonard Thor and subsequently developed a small cadre of enthusiasts to accompany me on the Cowichan and Sooke Rivers by pole. Since then many of us have poled upstream and downstream the Sooke from saltwater to the Potholes and some of us more than 80% of the Cowichan.

As an avid (some would say insufferable) proponent of summer poling on the South Island's rivers the next step was to become an instructor. Thanks to an Instructor Development Grant from RCABC,

we were able to bring Master Instructor Leonard Thor to the Island for a blended course for four instructor candidates and two poling students.

Such was the backdrop to the events of the last two weekends which culminated in the certification of new poling instructors Ellie James, Alan Thomson, David Westell and Tom Staebell and a solid foundation for the revival of this traditional canoe skill. - By Tom Staebell

# PADDLING

## Brian Creer: A Passion for Paddling

It was back in 1973 when I first encountered Brian Creer. He was teaching a series of paddling courses at Strathcona Park Lodge. I was somewhat bemused as this 'little guy' not much over five foot and only just a little taller than me forced his way into the consciousness of so many future paddlers! And, little did I know at that time what a force 'Brian' was for paddling in British Columbia. Along with many other clients, we survived those challenging days on the water! It was Brian's dogged determination and curmudgeon like personality that, in a funny way, endeared us.

Brian was able to make a real personal contact with all those who were fortunate to bump into him. I remember one incident when my son Dominic was sitting on the side of the river looking expectantly at Brian as he weaved his way across a couple of waves just above the Campbell River logging bridge. Even though Brian was conducting a canoeing course, he recognized that Dominic was wishing he was in a canoe too! Minutes later, Brian and Dominic were ferrying the waves and doing eddy turns! This doesn't seem significant until you are told that Dominic was severely handicapped and couldn't even walk! I have many other stories that vouch for the sensitivity and caring that were hallmarks of Brian.

In the mid eighties, I managed to overtake Brian in a Kayak slalom race on the Campbell. I felt I had finally 'made it'! Unfortunately, just before the Square Dancing started at SPL... I was informed that Brian had appealed the result and I was summarily relegated to second place. Now, my claim to fame is that I was 'second' to Brian Creer!

I met Brian for the last time at the 'lodge'. It was the 50th anniversary for that institution and was attended by many alumni of that place. It was

plain that Brian had many great contacts and was busy most of the day shaking hands renewing many friendships! During the Kayak intro sessions being conducted by a newbie, Brian was heard yelling, "No, not that way! What's the matter with these new instructors!" The passion never left Brian while he was alive...

Although most of my notes are personal, I know of many, many people who have learned from, paddled with, and enjoyed Brian's company. He trained national level paddlers who competed in world events. He worked tirelessly on reaching people with disabilities and enabling them to paddle. He even convinced Bill Mason that there was an alternative to 'cross bow draws'! There was no end to the work ethic and consequent influence that was Brian Creer.

At a quiet swimming pool at Lord Bing Pool in Vancouver, all of Brian's friends were able to bid him a fond farewell. We heard many stories while a lone empty kayak floated gently on the blue surface of the pool. RCABC was there. and Kari-Ann spoke eloquently on our behalf. Farewell Brian, you gave us plenty... we will all paddle and take you along whenever we can!

- By Tony Shaw



L-R: Brian Creer, Geoff Evans, and Mark Creer (one of Brian's sons)

# PADDLING

## Your Volunteers, Clubs and Supporting Businesses

We are happy to recognize all those who make the Recreational Canoeing Association of British Columbia the great organization that it is. Feel free to contact any of them for more information and membership details. They are the lifeblood of the organization and will do their best to provide guidance to all paddlers seeking help and information. A special thanks to our business members whose support has been undying over many years and continues to this day. Please look for a club in your area and give them your support too! One of the best ways to get involved in paddling is to 'JOIN A CLUB.'

### Executive:

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Vice President	Leonard Thor
Secretary	Don Flowers
Treasurer	Linda Eng
Newsletter Editor	Alanna Ray
Member at Large	Lynne Smith
Member at Large	Jamie Boulding
Instructor Coordinator	Roger McColm
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Gordon Clay	Port Moody Canoe Club
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