

create strong tidal lines that gather and corral capelin, smelt, and other fish, creating a feeding place for larger marine life. As we tossed about in this turbulent water we suddenly found ourselves amongst a pod of feeding beluga whales, their glistening white backs surfacing like rolling white caps.

Further upstream, the landscape changed. We were paddling through an industrial seaway and were inundated with all the sights, smells, tastes and sounds of man's presence, including waves of sewage and chemical wastes from the river-bank dumpings.

Branching off the St. Lawrence and up the Ottawa River we were soon greeted by the green hills of the rich agricultural land of the lower Ottawa Valley. Here it was easy to imagine the voyageurs of a bygone era packing their 36-foot birch-bark canoes with a payload of 4,000 pounds of men, equipment, food and trading supplies, paddling up the Ottawa for the annual journey to a rendez-vous near Thunder Bay. From the opposite end of the country, the voyageurs from the Athabasca would meet them near Thunder Bay for an exchange of cargo — furs from the north destined for Montreal and Europe were traded for the goods and supplies from the east and south that would sustain the following winter fur hunting. This commerce lasted for over 100 years in Canada, and is the root of many Canadian traditions and folklore.

By early June the high river water carrying pulp logs down the Ottawa reminded us of the heyday of valley lumbering and the white pine that once dominated the forest scene. The Ottawa River has since been fully developed to meet the demand for hydroelectricity — a discovery which forced us to use the old voyageur portage trails to avoid major hydroelectric dam sites that have replaced the magnificent waterfalls and rapids of years gone by. The Ottawa Valley is a

beautiful place to travel, with its spruce-clad hills rolling down to the river banks along either side of the Quebec-Ontario border.

We turned westward at the Mattawa River and continued upstream to North Bay where we crossed our first height of land. After racing across the open expanse of Lake Nipissing with a rising wind on our tail, and catapulting through the thrilling rapids of the French River, we paddled out amongst the long black shoals of Georgian Bay's coastline. We canoed the wild and unpopulated Great Lakes shoreline: the northern shores of Lake Huron and Lake Superior. Travelling under the shoreline precipices of overhanging granite, past sandy bays and boulder-strewn beaches, we were awed by the immensity of this region. Sculpted and smoothed rock formations, eroded by the constant, pounding, wave action, often lined the shore. Discovering 1,000-year-old pictographs on a sheer rock face at Agawa Bay painted by ancient Ojibwa; or sighting the wreckage of an old wooden ship scattered for miles along the rocky shore, were revelations that spoke of Superior's mysterious and powerful nature.

This northern Great Lake coast provides the Arctic caribou with their southern-most breeding grounds at Pukaskwa National Park. They and white-tailed deer, moose, black bear, and otters, would nose about our nightly campsites. The serenity and the wilderness of Superior is preserved not by park status, but by icy waters, steep cliffs and fearsome storms that make most of the coast inaccessible to all except canoeists.

The open-water traverse of seven miles across Thunder Bay from Thunder Cape to Pie Island was the longest and most exposed of the entire journey. Upon reaching Grand Portage our pace altered drastically, for instead of miles of flat-water canoeing which