

heavy seas nullified all their strenuous efforts and they drifted steadily toward shore.

Every effort was then made to handle the boat so she would strike a cake of ice large enough to support the boat and crew, but on getting closer to shore it was seen that all the ice consisted of small floes constantly grinding together. To lessen the impact of the impending collision everything movable was thrown overboard and the crew moved to the stern to allow the bow to ride up onto the ice floes without smashing in the bow. The boat struck a few minutes later and in five minutes was ground to pieces by the churning ice.

Seeing the boat disintegrating, Inspector Philips leaped onto the ice shouting to Doak and Cornelius to follow him and jumping from floe to floe they headed for the solid shore ice some 400 yards away. They could hardly remember how they made this relatively short journey for the floes upended with their weight compelling them to make another jump immediately the ice dipped. It was a case of jump or drop into the water and be crushed. Finally they reached the shore ice and started to follow it south-west to Herschel Island. They did not go far before they came to an open lead too wide to cross, so they headed inland. Here they found the open leads narrower but still too wide to jump.

To remain still, meant death from exposure so by joining their belts and suspenders together they made a life-line. With this, one would swim the open lead then pull the other two across by the improvised life-line. This had to be done 24 times before they reached solid land and from the time of the wreck, ten hours had elapsed. The north-east gale had continued all this time and in their wet condition all three were suffering severely from the cold—most of their clothing had been discarded while swimming across the leads.

Although it was 12 miles to Herschel Harbor along the coast line there was no option but to start walking or die of exposure. After travelling about a mile Corporal Doak became delirious and had to be supported and this soon brought on cramps in the legs of the others so that they could go no farther. Cornelius then volunteered to

go for assistance while Inspector Philips built a wind-break of driftwood into which he and Doak crawled in an effort to keep warm.

At 11 p.m. July 23 a whale boat was sighted and responded to the signals of Inspector Philips. Captain Allan, master of a whaling schooner who, with a crew member, was making a trip to Herschel to pick up mail, put into the "spit" and after giving the two survivors some food and clothing, headed for the harbor along a lead which had opened up with a change of wind.

On arrival it was found that Constable Cornelius had not arrived so Constable Brockie, with two natives, took a whale boat out to search for him. He was found in an exhausted condition some ten miles away and brought in safely. All three members were laid up for several days with swollen legs and feet due to immersion in the icy water and exposure.

Inspector Philips expressed his regrets in having to report the loss of government property saying "but I think you will agree that this accident happened through circumstances over which I have no control". The Commissioner agreed.

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### Gabriel Léveillé—NWMP Scout

On July 8, 1874, Commr. George A. French led a colorful cavalcade out of Dufferin and headed westward for the Blackfoot country 800 miles away. It was the first venture into the "great lone land" by the newly-formed North-West Mounted Police and the resplendent uniforms of the men, prancing horses, creaking Red River carts and plodding oxen provided a display of ceremonial pomp never before seen in western Canada. Six weeks later, much of their finery reduced to dirty tatters, horses and men alike sick and parched with thirst, the column had reached Old Wives' Creek. Here the Police encountered a Cree half-breed and his family, who were returning to Canada after wintering at Fort Benton, Montana. One member of that family, Gabe Léveillé, then a boy of eight years, is now a resident of Maple Creek, Sask., and is probably the last living person to have seen the first Mounted Police troops in western Canada.