



Cliff Speer and his crew bring the lead canoe toward the banks of the South Saskatchewan River at the site of a 1786 Hudson's Bay Company fur trading fort built by Canadian explorer David Thompson

—SP Photo by Peter Wilson

Travelling the wake left by Thompson

□ A group of canoeists, led by Cliff Speer, explore history by water

By Peter Wilson
of The StarPhoenix

BATOCHÉ — Seated at the steering end of the eight-meter-long voyageur canoe, Cliff Speer, along with his crew, made good headway, especially considering they were paddling back in time.

Speer and his fellow canoeists were riding in the slipstream of Canadian history, retracing the path of legendary explorer David Thompson. Paddling the same stretch of the South Saskatchewan River as the illustrious fur trader, surveyor and map maker, they were heading back to the 1780s.

Just a little behind schedule, Speer and his clients beached their flotilla of colourful canoes at South Branch House, the site of a former 18th century Hudson's Bay Company's (HBC) trading post that Thompson helped build.

Sometimes called the "greatest land geographer who ever lived," Thompson combined his surveying skills with a keen talent for astronomy to map almost four million square kilometres of North America.

The adventurer, who died in 1857, made many epic journeys by canoe, mapping the wilderness while expanding Canada's valuable fur trade. His travels took him to the South Saskatchewan River, explains Speer, owner of the Saskatoon-based adventure company CanoeSki Discovery Company.

"He was an amazing man, an incredible Canadian explorer right up there with Sir Alexander Mackenzie and Simon Fraser. Today we're paddling the same waters he did," Speer says.

This past weekend, these modern adventurers were part of the North American David Thompson Bicentennials, continent-wide celebrations honouring the famous explorer that began this year and continue until 2011. Departing from Batoche, the 18 canoeists paddled north, scheduling visits to the locations of two former trading posts and camping overnight near the site of one of the long abandoned historic sites.

A two-day expedition, the David Thompson Voyager Trek was organized by Speer. It's the newest addition to the series of canoeing adventures his company runs annually. Designed as a celebratory trip for aficionados of history, archaeology and Canadian heroes, the trek's first stop also brought out a contingent of local

people happy to share their perspectives on the history of the area.

For Louise Tournier, watching the five canoes pull into shore was an emotional experience, stirring up thoughts of her great-great-grandfather, Jean Baptiste Boucher. Her Metis ancestor fought alongside Louis Riel in the 1885 Northwest Rebellion at nearby Batoche, the canoeists' departure point.

Tournier, and her husband, Claude, still own a parcel of the original river lot settled by Boucher in the 1800s. She says even before they settled here permanently, as Metis traders her ancestors would have often travelled up to the area from their Red River communities in Manitoba.

"It is probable they would have visited these two forts on their journeys and possibly even knew Thompson. The ties to this place are very special to me," Tournier says.

Now the site of an archeological dig, South Branch House has a cairn describing a battle between the European fur traders and Gros Ventre Natives. The devastating attack on the stockaded post in 1794 resulted in it being burned to the ground by the Native people.

Equally intriguing, says Speer, are the still visible remains of the nearby North West Company fur trade fort that Thompson visited during his clerk's apprenticeship. Just a short paddle from the HBC post, the site was also part of the CanoeSki itinerary.

The group's overnight stay was to be highlighted with campfire readings by Speer of early explorers' journals, including extracts from the journal Thompson kept at the post in 1787.

"We're trying to give people an authentic feel of life back then. It's called giving a sense of place.

Adding to the authentic experience is the expedition's menu. Pemman appetizers, bison stew and platters of wild rice, followed by Saskatoon berry pie, should satisfy, says Speer.

What will not be included in creating that sense of place, however, is any time spent gazing up at the night sky. That's too bad, considering Thompson's skills in astronomy were even recognized by the Native people, who went so far as to honour him with the name Stargazer.

"By the time the stars come out, so do the mosquitoes, so we'll be hitting the tents right about then."

"We're trying to give people an authentic feel of life back then . . ."

—Cliff Speer

RCMP believe man attempted abduction

□ Police seek information from the public on suspect

Saskatchewan News Network

REGINA — RCMP are looking for a man in connection with what is believed to be the attempted abduction of a boy near Liberty on Saturday evening.

Police say the boy was riding a motorized scooter on a grid road south of Liberty at about 8:15 p.m. Saturday evening, when he was approached by a man in a cherry red Dodge Ram Club Cab truck.

The man offered the boy a ride into town. When the boy refused, the suspect grabbed the boy by the arm and told him to get into the vehicle, and tried to put the boy's scooter into the back of the truck.

The boy was able to get away after a struggle, and drove back to town on his scooter.

The suspect fled to a secondary grid road, and was last seen travelling east toward Etters Beach on Last Mountain Lake.

The suspect is described as a white male who is about 5-foot-10 with an average build and very short hair with grey eyebrows. The suspect also has pale blue eyes, which were very bloodshot,

and a pimply complexion with a 2.5-centimetre scar or abrasion under the left side of his chin.

He was wearing a dark green hat, a grey short sleeve T-shirt, green work pants and dirty work boots.

The man is also believed to have reduced mobility in his left arm, which was held at chest level with a partially closed fist and appeared to be twitching.

The man's voice is described as low and raspy, with garbled speech, and he appeared to have some type of mental issue or was possibly on drugs.

He is also described as smelling like cat litter.

The man's vehicle is described as a 2002 or 2003 model with a red wind visor on the windshield that matched the colour of the rest of the vehicle. RCMP say the grill of the suspect's truck was black, and the vehicle had a black tarpaulin box cover and very worn rear tires.

The truck had a white and red front licence plate with an "I" and then a heart, and a word believed to have started with a "K."

Anyone with information about the incident is asked to contact their nearest RCMP detachment or police service, or contact Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477), through the SaskTel Mobility Network at *TIPS or online at www.saskcrimestoppers.com.

(REGINA LEADER-POST)

Popular cartoonist dies in Vancouver shooting

By Kent Spencer
CanWest News Service

VANCOUVER — Friends of talented Vancouver cartoonist Paul Boyd say he was the man shot and killed by Vancouver police last week.

"His death was horrible — it was a terrible misfortune," Boyd's animation colleague Bruce Alcock said Sunday. "He was not a violent person."

Vancouver police say they shot in self-defence after two officers were injured by Boyd swinging a chain connected to a padlock at them.

Alcock said that although Boyd suffered from bipolar disorder he "was not a person who would carry weapons or get into fights."

"He had his bicycle chain with him in his bag," Alcock said. "That was normal because he had a bicycle. It's very depressing to think what state of mind he must have been in to have gotten that angry to swing the chain at police."

Boyd, 39, was killed last Monday night after police responded to a 911 call concerning a man

carrying a potentially dangerous weapon.

After Boyd's chain injured two officers, police say additional officers retreated for half a block before shooting him in self-defence.

The incident is being investigated by the RCMP's Integrated Homicide Investigations Team.

Alcock said Vancouver's tightly-knit animation community is in "shellshock" over Boyd's death.

"It's very depressing facing the reality of it. He was a sweet-natured guy and an amazingly talented animator, super-smart and very thoughtful. We were very close, both personally and professionally."

Alcock's partner in animations, Tina Ouellette, called Boyd a "great guy."

"We are having a hard time dealing with his loss. He was a good friend," she said.

Alcock, who directed commercials and TV shows with Boyd for seven years, said Boyd had been "struggling with a bipolar disorder" for some time.

(VANCOUVER PROVINCE)

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