



Early on 23 July, the 22nd day of the trip, I found myself running behind schedule and weather-bound on Selwyn Lake, with a broad expanse of water to cross. From there I would have to bushwack into Fleet Lake. After spending the whole day weather-bound watching the whitecaps and listening to the howling wind, I decided to attempt the crossing despite the conditions. If the far shore could be reached that evening, I would be in a position to search out a land route to Fleet Lake no matter the weather conditions that prevailed the following day. This way, I could minimize time losses.

No sooner had I left my protected bay and become exposed to the full force of the wind and waves than it became necessary to make a massive correction sweep with the paddle. Doing this, I broke my kayak paddle in the middle where the two canoe paddles had been joined. At that moment, the nature of the trip was altered as I was reduced to using the less effective canoe paddle. This was unsettling. I was running behind schedule, had a heavy load to paddle, and faced the prospects of continued poor weather in addition to being physically rundown. The sensible thing to do was to turn back.

Retracing my steps would not be easy. I was in a bay in the shelter of a small island. To leave this bay, it was necessary to paddle directly into the wind. This could not be done solo with a canoe paddle. I was trapped.

At 3 a.m. the following morning I got up, dressed, and walked to a point of land a couple of hundred metres from the campsite where I could look out onto the water and assess the weather. Things were not good, and I returned to the comfort of my down sleeping bag. The wind did not abate, and four or five hours later when I got up for the day it was still blowing. This was going to be my second windbound day on this forsaken island in Selwyn Lake. I knew that if I could get to the southern end of the island, the wind that trapped me would propel me down Selwyn Lake, and I decided to do this. After three hours of bushwacking and seven hours of paddling with a favorable wind under rainy, cold skies, I covered about 35 km before making camp on an island near the southern end of Selwyn Lake.

Since I was dashing back to Black Lake, I could reduce the number of loads to be carried over the portages from three to two by abandoning some food. Triple portaging involved five trips over the portage trails, whereas double portaging entailed three trips, a significant reduction in time and effort to make the transverses.

The most interesting meals were kept and the remainder (much of it rice, pasta, and bread mix) was left in an abandoned fishing cabin along with the broken kayak paddle. Perhaps a Chipewyan hunter would put this cache to good use during the following fall and winter.



At 2:15 a.m. the following morning, 25 July, I awoke to thunderous silence. There was no wind! Within a few minutes, the canoe was loaded and I was energetically paddling towards the southern extremity of Selwyn Lake. In the warmth of a bright morning sun I had breakfast at the portage to Bompas Lake. After a sustained effort, without lunch, the Chipman Portage was reached after a 55 km effort.



Even though the carryover had been reduced to two loads — one for the baggage and one for the canoe — it still required a full day's effort to cross the Chipman Portage. A stiff easterly blew during the entire day of 26 July as I worked my way down to Black Lake on the Chipman Portage. This was a favorable wind. I hurried along in the hope I could get to the lake and paddle to Morberg's Camp before the storm that was developing blew in and rendered me weather-bound.

Strangely, the storm that was brewing all day did not arrive. The easterly abated and Black Lake, though choppy, looked inviting. Although I had not stopped to eat during the day, with the aid of a pocket full of chocolates the paddle to Morberg's Camp was completed by 10:00 p.m., Friday, 26 July 1985. The return journey to Morberg's Camp on Black Lake from the north end of Selwyn Lake took three days, about one-half the time it took to get up there. The concern now was to make arrangements to have the canoe stored safely for the continuation of the voyage at another time, and to find a means of reaching my vehicle at Kinoosao. The only practical way of doing this was to charter a Cessna, and for a mere \$675 in cash, I found myself united with my station wagon.

Over the course of the 25 canoe tripping days 12½ were on rivers, 2½ were spent portaging, 6½ paddling on lakes, 3 were windbound days, and ½ was devoted to getting resupplied. Nine and one-half days were spent on lakes of which three were weather-bound days. This meant that for every two days of active lake paddling there was one weather-bound day. Had we not paddled at night this ratio would have been worse. For example, had we paddled only during daylight hours we would, perhaps, have been weather-bound as much as one-half of the time.

Since the remaining portion of the trip to Lynx Lake was almost entirely across large lakes, the decision to cut the trip short was perhaps prudent. I have reflected over this decision these past months. At the moment the decision was made, I was run-down, running behind schedule, and facing the prospect of continuing difficult weather conditions. It seemed to be the sensible thing to do at the time. In any case, the canoe is in storage, ready for the future trip to the treeline.