



Article: Sandy Richardson

Photographs: Sandy Richardson
Stewart McIlwraith
Robert Aucoin

avoidance was unnecessary. Our kayaks seemed almost immune to the wind and waves. We could paddle in any direction we chose with relative ease; and when we stopped paddling we were not immediately blown back where we'd come from. Canoeing was never like this! Confidence soon replaced our initial caution, and after lunch we were looking for waves to play in rather than to avoid.

We put in a long day that first day out, but the boats were so comfortable and the paddling so effortless, that neither of us complained of any aches or pains. By this time I knew we were onto a good thing!

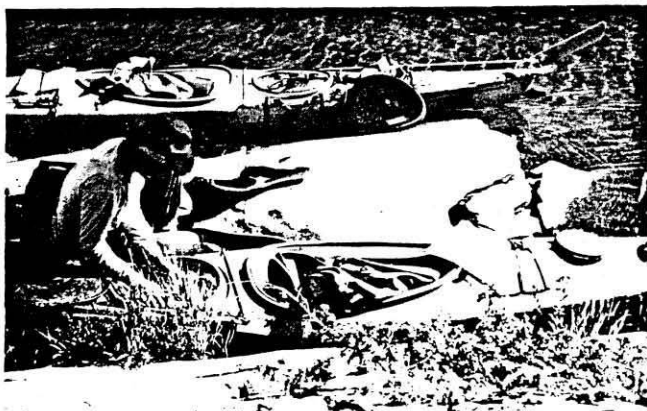
And the remainder of that initial trip did nothing to change this view. In fact, I became convinced that sea kayaks would be the ideal craft for a Lake Superior canoe trip planned for later in the summer.

One sea kayak trip on Georgian Bay had turned my initial skepticism to unabashed excitement and enthusiasm. And a number of subsequent trips of longer duration have served only to confirm and reinforce these feelings. I have become a sea kayaker; the final conformation coming, I suppose, when I gave up renting and purchased my own sea kayak.

The Eskimo hunting boat, the kayak, is a long, usually narrow, decked canoe and is commonly well finished.... The basic requirements in nearly all kayaks are the same; to paddle rapidly and easily, to work against strong wind and tide or heavy sea, to be manoeuvrable, and to be light enough to be readily lifted from the water and carried. The low freeboard required makes decking a necessity. In general, the kayak is designed to carry one paddler....

Howard Chapelle

Sea kayaks, unlike the river variety that we commonly see in Ontario, are long, sleek craft that look a great deal like the traditional Inuit skin boats from which they are descended. Most today are constructed of fiberglass or polyethylene (the main exception being folding boats, most



of which are doubles), are about 4.9 m (16 feet) long and 61 cm (24 inches) wide, and weigh about 23 to 27 kg (50 to 60 pounds).

The cockpit is generally snug and comfortable, with some sort of adjustable seat; it is fitted with a spray skirt for rough weather. Fore and aft are storage compartments sealed off from the cockpit with bulkheads; access to these is through watertight hatches on the deck. And they will hold a lot of gear, at least as much as would fit into two canoe packs. The difference, of course, from a canoeist's perspective, is the packing. Gear must be packed into many small stuff sacks which are fit through the hatches individually. Finally, deck rigging allows the paddler to carry maps, a spare paddle, and other gear, which one wants to be accessible, on the deck. (This rigging should also allow the use of a paddle as an outrigger for self-rescue in the event of a capsizing.)

Sea kayaks have little rocker and track well, but can be turned sharply by heeling them over while turning. Most today have rudders which are controlled by foot pedals in the cockpit. While these aid manoeuvring, they are most useful in maintaining a course in cross winds.

The paddles used to propel sea kayaks, different from those used with river kayaks, are long with slender blades, and are kept relatively parallel to the water while paddling. It is this design that keeps paddling a sea kayak