



feathered is a matter of some debate, the consensus probably preferring unfeathered paddles.) Like sea kayaks themselves, the paddles used to propel them represent a return to traditional Inuit designs.

Padding a kayak is a very personal thing. Once secure inside the cockpit and snug on the molded bucket seat, it soon becomes obvious to the occupant that it is a boat that is worn rather than sat in. Every mood and movement of the sea is transmitted through the hull of the kayak to the paddler's nervous system. In this way a union is built up between the man and the sea.

Derek C. Hutchinson

A description of sea kayaks or the style of paddles does little to prepare one for the sheer joy to be found in

padding one of these boats. Part of this is what Stewart and I discovered on that first day on Georgian Bay: the ease with which they glide through the water, the relatively small amount of effort needed to propel them, the lack of discomfort after a long day's paddle, the way they handle in winds and waves. These combine to make the physical activity of padding a sea kayak fun—something I would not say very often about padding a canoe, especially in adverse conditions.

But there is more to the joy of sea kayaking than this. Sitting snugly in the cockpit, the kayak and paddler seem to become one. And because you ride so low, there is a tremendous feeling of moving through the water, not over it. While padding a sea kayak I feel completely at one with the water—indeed, with the whole wilderness environment.

As conditions on the water grow wilder, the more this feeling of oneness with the environment is accentuated. On Superior we paddled in waves running two to three metres. The feeling was one of being totally enveloped in the wilderness: the only sounds were those of the wind and the waves. Waves would wash over the deck hitting us in the chest and face; and when in the troughs we could see only the water, the sky, and our own small boats. While we were padding, only these immediate sensations mattered.

This feeling is unlike any I have experienced while canoeing the small lakes and rivers of the Shield, and surely is close to the essence of the wilderness experience. Sea kayaking has extended not only the physical range of my padding, but also my mental horizons—my whole concept of wilderness.

By offering access to large bodies of water, sea kayaking opens up a fascinating new wilderness to be explored and enjoyed: the wilderness of the open sea. It is a beautiful and expansive wilderness where sky and earth merge, and where the powerful forces of wind and water have created sculptured shorelines of intriguing shapes and textures.

This is also a wilderness that most canoeists in Ontario miss, always looking inland, as they do, rather than out to our wonderful Great Lakes; much as I had done in dismissing sea kayaking as a West Coast activity. But with over 17,000 kilometres of coastline, the Great Lakes contain more shoreline than the East, West, and Gulf Coasts of North America combined. We live on the edge of a series of great

