

# Wooden Canoe Heritage Association

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NORTHWEST CHAPTER

## Northwest Chapter WCHA Fall Newsletter 2023



A cool fall morning at Manning: Kurt and Laura Schmidt (in woolies and toques) launch their Kennebec canoe. Scott Christianson's White "Guide" in foreground. Mike Livdahl photo

## Fall Meet: September 13–17, 2023: Manning Park, BC

Beautiful Manning! What better place to join old and new friends to enjoy canoes in the fall? Pack your woolies, toques, musical instruments and something special for the auction, and be ready for sunny weather, loons, beavers and lovely boats. Remember, we have an extra day, Wednesday, this year to explore the area! US residents, **remember passports!** Border crossing is simpler than last year, no pre-entry registration required. Canadians, please bring **firewood** in case fires are allowed! More information follows.

# Fall Meet Details

## Directions:

- Easy to miss: From Hwy 3, east of Hope, BC, *turn right after the Manning Park Lodge*, 41 km from the Manning Park west entrance, (entrance marked by carved marmot).
- Follow signs to Lone Duck Group Camp 2, Lightning Lake, 4 km off Hwy 3

## Accommodation—Rustic:

- Brand new picnic shelter with tables and wood stove; outside fire pit. Fire bans may be on, so plan accordingly.
- Flush toilets and cold running water. Showers available at nearby Lightening Lake Campground.
- Parking lot and a large walk-in area for tents.
- Bring tarps for rain. Keep dogs on leash.
- Very limited RV space. No hook-ups.
- Potable water available.

## Reminders: Passports,

- Bring potluck supper item for Tuesday night—main, sides, salad and/or dessert.
- \$10 per person per night. Kids and grandkids are welcome! Canadians bring firewood, if there is no fire ban. Bring warm clothes, hiking boots and sticks.
- Gently used or new “valuables” for Saturday afternoon fundraising auction
- Musical instruments and voices for “campfire” sing-alongs
- Program information on our website: [nwoodencanoe.wcha.org](http://nwoodencanoe.wcha.org)



Chestnut canoe deck. Mike Livdahl photo

**Location:** Lone Duck 2 Group Campsite in E. C. Manning Provincial Park

**Cost:** \$10 per person per day. Currency @ Par

**Showers:** Available in Lightning Lakes Campground just west of our camp

**Food and Supplies:** Restaurant, Bar, Groceries, and other Supplies available at Manning Park Resort.

**Camping:** Do not camp on the very tempting grass along the lake.

**Area Information:** Brochures, etc available at Manning Park Resort. E. C. Manning Park Visitor Center may also be open.

**Fire Information:** After last years experience, we will be monitoring fire activity, and will send out notifications if there is a risk of cancellation. You can check fire status yourself on the E.C. Manning Park Website or at <https://www.emergencyinfbc.gov.bc.ca/current-wildfire-information-2023/>

## Meet Schedule:

Note that schedule is always a bit fluid, with adjustments for weather, smoke, etc. as needed

### Wednesday: Sept 13.

Check in after Noon, Set up camp..

Explore the area on your own.

Meals on own.

### Thursday: Sept 14.

Dawn Patrol.

Meals on your own.

Catch up with friends.

Explore the area on your own.

Afternoon: English Gate Practice; What is Your Favorite Knot?

Evening: Get together around the firepit and sing

### Friday: Sept 15.

Dawn Patrol

11:00 am "ish" Picnic Down the Lake. Paddle down to the end of the lakes for lunch. Bring your lunch

2:00 pm Basic Canoe Strokes Clinic - Dry Land - Boudi

Canoeing the PNW Coast Discussion, routes and tips

7:00 pm Evening program: Mike Elliott- Restoring a Sponson Canoe

Evening: Hang around the firepit weather permitting.

Meals on your own

### Saturday: Sept 16

Dawn patrol

10:30 am Boudi's Famous Balloon Race

Lunch on your own

2:00 pm Introduce your Canoe

3:00 pm Group Photo

3:30 pm Auction - contributions of canoe related items encouraged

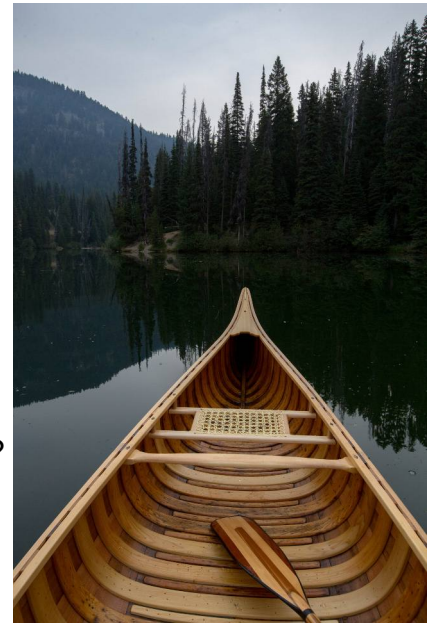
6:00 pm Potluck Dinner - bring your favorite dish / dessert to share.

Brief chapter meeting

Dusk: Songs, Jokes and Stories around the Campfire. Bring your instruments, songs from your summer camp days, and Jokes that can be told in polite company....

### Sunday: Sept 17

Dawn Patrol, Police the Camp, and Pack up



*Manning by canoe; Mike Livdahl photo*

# **Magical Strokes: Reflecting on the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Prospector Canoe**

## **by Conor Mihell; from Paddling Magazine 2023 Annual**

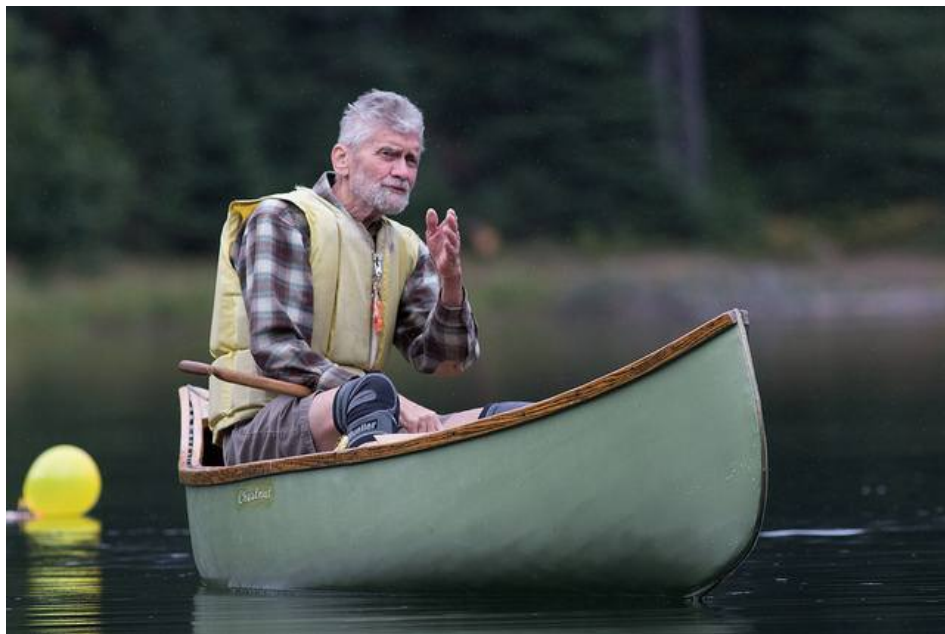
Canada's favorite canoe wears many faces. It's been that way since the beginning, when the Chestnut Canoe Company debuted the Prospector model canoes in response to demands from rockhounds of the Geological Survey of Canada (GSC). That was in 1923, and the Fredericton, New Brunswick-based wood-canvas canoe manufacturer was rebuilding from a devastating fire the year before.

A profile of the Prospector canoe design would be far simpler if its origins were tied to one builder. While the design likely originated in New Brunswick, Chestnut cannot claim sole ownership. For close to four decades, Chestnut, the Peterborough Canoe Company and the Canadian Canoe Company shared an identical lineup of canoes, including Prospectors in various lengths. Based on the original wood-canvas Prospectors remaining in service, it's clear the Chestnut decal was most common. Such a tangled genealogy sets the stage for what remains a complicated history of an iconic canoe.

Like so many personalities in Canada's past, the Prospector was born out of the colonization of the northern frontier. Before the advent of bush planes, the GSC was Chestnut's biggest customer. Its "canoemen" complained the cottage-grade pleasure canoes of the day didn't have nearly enough capacity for the heavy loads of geological exploration. At the same time, over-sized Freighter canoes were too cumbersome to paddle and portage. Wilderness journeys and claim staking demand high volume and seaworthy canoes that performed well in whitewater and on windswept lakes.

As a stop-gap measure, Chestnut and its sister companies had offered up to three inches of additional depth in the sleek Cruiser models which early builders had copied from local Indigenous birchbark canoes and early wood-canvas models from Maine. The Prospector, claimed Chestnut's 1925 catalog "embodied the good points of both our Cruiser and Pleasure model, and is sure to please anyone looking for a light canoe of large carrying capacity."

Chestnut initially offered 15, 16, 17 and 118 footers in 1923; 12 and 14 foot models came a few years later. Most were also made in a Y stern configuration to accept an outboard motor. Each model had unique proportions and personalities on the water that went beyond differences in length. For all the praise today's best-selling 16-foot Prospector receives from modern paddlers, including Bill Mason and Kevin Callan, as the "ultimate all-around canoes", it was less popular than the hulking 18-footer in the early days.



*Boudi Van Oldenborgh directs games from his Chestnut canoe. Mike Livdahl photo*

The shape of wood-canvas Prospectors evolved slightly over time as builders' forms deteriorated and were modified or replaced. The Peterborough version which went out of production when the company folded in 1961, was sleeker in the stems, and less rockered than the Chestnut. Historian Dan Miller's website, The Wooden Canoe Museum, tracks the changes over time, revealed in fractions of inches in beam and depth. More noticeable is the inflation in price: a 16-foot Prospector went from \$77 in 195 to \$624 in 1976.

Mason lamented the end of the Chestnut Prospector when the company went bankrupt in 1979. Yet Mason's lavish praise ushered the design into the modern era, and now just about every contemporary builder makes a Prospector. London, Ontario's Nova Craft Canoe was among the first, developing a composite replica in 1984. Ottawa's Trailhead Canoes took measurements from Mason's Chestnut original for its fiberglass, aramid and plastic clones.

For better or worse, limitations in molding and economies of scale encouraged most modern manufacturers to stray from the subtle differences between the Prospector models. For example, Nova Craft's Prospectors have the exact same width, depth and rocker across 15, 16, 17 and 18-foot lengths. Today the canoe is best defined as a general category of wilderness tripper with above average depth, width and rocker.

For a true Prospector, you have to go back to wood-canvas. Only one original Chestnut form remains in commercial service today. Wakefield, Quebec-based builder Headwaters Canoes still makes one or two 18 foot Prospectors per year, ordered by hard-core traditionalists. The century-old Chestnut form shows its age, and Headwaters' builders Kate Prince and Jamie Bartle must carefully align inner gunwales and stems to assure a symmetrical canoe before bending steam-bent cedar ribs over the weathered mold.

The result, after over 100 hours of manual labor, is a beautiful canoe whose graceful performance in wind, waves and rapids with an expedition load belies its behemoth dimensions and 90-pound heft. The Prospector, as Chestnut historian Roger MacGregor notes, is "one of these magical strokes, a judicious combination of the finest shapes at just the right spot along the hull."



*Many hands making light work at Manning, 2018. Mike Livdahl photo*

## Canoe Journey 2023: Paddle to Muckleshoot: “Honoring Warriors Past and Present”



*Snoqualmie Tribal canoe "la?ag(w)as" in Puget Sound, heading to Alki Beach. photo courtesy of Snoqualmie Tribe*

Nearly 100 canoes, representing tribes from Washington, Oregon, Canada and Alaska, landed on Seattle’s Alki Beach July 30, 2023, marking **Canoe Journey 2023: Paddle to Muckleshoot**. The Canoe Journeys are yearly celebrations of unity and culture by Northwest Coast/Salish Sea tribes, begun by Quinault elder Emmett Oliver in 1889 as part of Washington State’s Centennial festivities. In the years since, the Canoe Journeys have become ways for many tribes to revive traditional crafts, involve tribal youth and elders, and make connections with coastal culture ways of life since time immemorial. Paddle to Muckleshoot was the first Canoe Journey following a three-year break due to covid.

Before landing at Alki, canoes and participants including 9,000 people, gathered over two days at the Suquamish House of Awakened Culture, then traveled together to Alki. At Alki, each canoe observed traditional customs of introduction, honoring the host tribe and asking for permission to land. The landing ceremony was the beginning of Protocol, a multi-day gathering of celebration including the individual introduction of each tribe, beginning with those who had traveled farthest, and

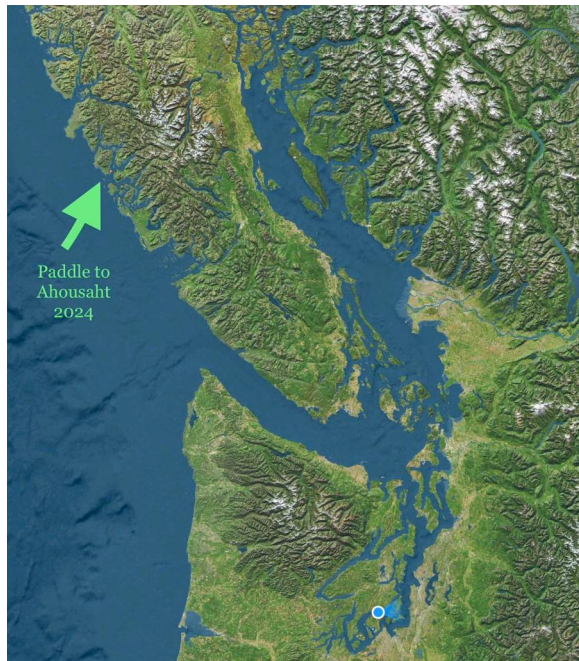
concluding with the hosting Muckleshoots. For this year's Protocol, participants and guests moved from Alki to the Muckleshoot Reservation. Each Tribe's introduction included songs, dances and gifts to the host Tribe and others, for a week of cultural celebration.

Participating in a Canoe Journey is a multi-year project for Canoe Families (teams), perhaps including canoe construction, and involving canoe care, paddling instruction and practice, traditional canoe customs, terms and (for many Salish Sea tribes,) Lushootseed language instruction, making gifts for the hosts and others, and creating traditional regalia.

Hosting a Canoe Journey is an immense logistical and multi-million dollar financial commitment for a tribe. The multi-day Protocol includes accommodating thousands of participating tribal members and an unknown number of the interested public. An informal "Paddle to Ahousaht 2024" on the outer coast of Vancouver Island has been announced, and the next formal Canoe Journey will be "Paddle to Elwha," hosted by the Elwha/Klallam Tribe, in 2025.



Multiple routes lead to Alki Beach in "Paddle to Muckleshoot 2023" map courtesy of Muckleshoot website



Location of Ahousaht Tribe hosting 2024's informal paddle. map courtesy of Ahousaht Facebook



"la'lag(w)las" launching for practice on Lake Sammamish. photo Snoqualmie Tribe



Canoe carver Wayne Price rides the Tlingit canoe ashore at Alki. *Seattle Times photo*

### Snoqualmie Tribe's Ten Rules of Canoe Journey

1. Every stroke we take is one less we have to make.
2. There is to be no abuse of self or others.
3. Be flexible.
4. The gift of each enriches all.
5. We all pull and support each other.
6. A hungry person has no charity.
7. Experiences are not enhanced by criticism.
8. The journey is what we enjoy.
9. A good teacher allows the student to learn.
10. When given any choice at all, be a worker bee—make honey!



Emma Thompson, Makah, in her grandmother's canoe. *Seattle Times photo*



Canoes gather at Alki for permission to come ashore. Sila canoe (center). *Seattle Times photo*



Paddles held at attention as canoes wait to land at Alki. *Seattle Times photo*

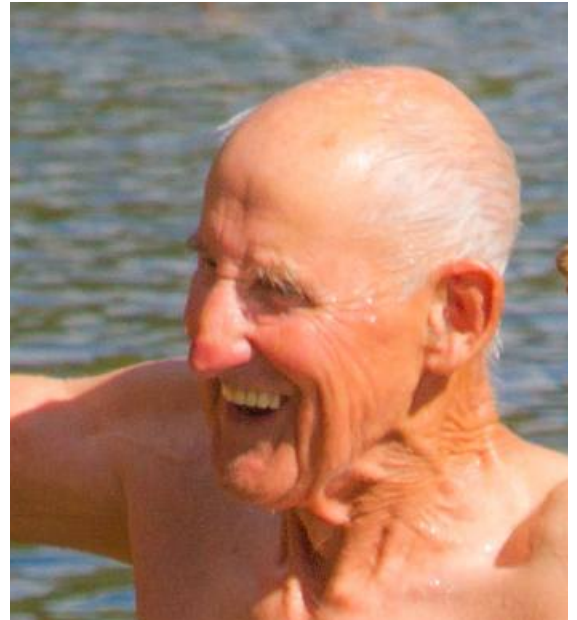


Traditional Northwest coast art graced many canoes. *Seattle Times photo*



## Remembering Frank Ward 1931–2022

Frank Ward was an enthusiastic, life-long outdoorsman, and avid hiker, skier and paddler. He and his wife Sonia lived near the ocean in Deep Cove north of Vancouver, and were known by friends for their “anytime” as well as holiday hospitality. Frank was an active member of the Dogwood Canoe Club, and the Northwest Chapter. Chapter members will remember his helpful lightning-fast demonstrations of rescue techniques, as well as being possibly the only person to swim at Manning in late September! Our condolences to Frank’s family. We will miss his enthusiasm and friendship.



*Shoreline of Lightning Lake, Manning Park, BC, at NW Chapter Meet. Bob and Petra Moore's Morely canoe in foreground. Mike Livdahl photo.*

# WILLITS CANOE GATHERING by Joan Ellsworth



*The Willits Canoes were displayed at the Gig Harbor Vintage Aero Museum, along with antique cars and planes. Ellsworth photo*



*Pat Chapman (L) and Steve Ellsworth (R) discuss the rare Willits backrest that belongs with Willits #459. Ellsworth photo*

The much-anticipated second annual **Willits Brothers Canoe Gathering** was held August 25-27, 2023 at the Tacoma Narrows Airport , Gig Harbor Vintage Aero Museum. Steve and Joan Ellsworth trailered their 1921 Willits alongside the partially restored Willits #459 (which was purchased by the Chapter from Red Galvin following our Camp Bishop meet in May 2023.)

Arriving at the Vintage Aero Museum is such an amazing treat for the eyes. There, on gleaming cement floors one could eat off of, stand about 10 fully restored (operational) vintage airplanes. A couple of immaculate vintage vehicles also grace the scene and numerous Willits canoes are displayed on wall racks and canoe stands. It's a beautiful sight and we immediately began the banter that always accompanies this kind of gathering.

Saturday, the group met up at the Aero museum as more Willits continued to arrive with their owners. Around noon 11 Willits were headed toward Fox Island, where we could launch into the saltwater of Puget Sound (Salish Sea) for a quick 20 minute paddle over to Tanglewood Island, where the boys camp (for "particular parents"), called TA-HA-DO-WA was operated from 1947 through the early 1970s.



*This immaculate showpiece Willits has it all: sailing rig, paddles, Willits canoe rug. Ellsworth photo*



Eleven Willits canoes made the salt water paddle from Fox Island to Tanglewood Island. Ellsworth photo



Vintage shed on Tanglewood Island. Ellsworth photo

We were greeted by members of the 4 families that currently live full time on the Island today. They served us delicious homemade desserts to go along with our picnic lunches and were very welcoming hosts. Resident Bob Brown, who has lived there since 1982, spoke about the history and what it was like living on such a small island. Together those families own 7 of the former camp's Willits canoes, two of which were brought out and lined up on the oh-so-dry grass with our canoes.



Tanglewood Island residents served dessert for the paddlers, to go with their picnic lunches. Ellsworth photo



Two of the seven remaining Ta-Ha-Do-Wa Willits camp canoes owned by Tanglewood residents joined the visiting Willits canoes on display at the island. Ellsworth photo



*Willits canoes lined up on dry Tanglewood Island. Ellsworth photo*



*Willits canoe rugs, an optional accessory, neatly fit the bottom of the canoe. Ellsworth photo*

We paddled back to launch point, drove back to the Aero museum and each took turns washing down our canoes to remove the saltwater. Later in the evening, we shared a memorable BBQ at the museum and shared stories of the day. In total, including the 7 Tanglewood Island canoes, there were 27 Willits accounted for at the gathering.

Sunday found us at the rented warehouse in Tacoma where the remains of the original Willits brothers shop are stored for the Foss Museum. Some folks were able to purchase left over items with all proceeds going to the Foss museum for the eventual display planned there. It was a fabulous weekend spent with well-loved canoes and comfortable people. Hopefully, another gathering will be planned for 2024. Stay tuned.

Willits #459 was offered for sale at this gathering for \$3,500, a price established on the expertise of both local Willits historian Pat Chapman and Michael Grace , National WCHA President. Ultimately, Dwight Jacobson of our NW Chapter purchased #459 for \$3000.

**For additional information on Willits canoes, contact Phil Miller at [seeeds@comcast.net](mailto:seeeds@comcast.net) OR 253-651-4503.**

**Watch for the opening of the Willits Canoe Shop exhibit coming soon at the Foss Waterway Seaport Museum in Tacoma!**



*Dawn Patrol at Manning: 2016. Mike Wooton shows off his Blue Moon Canoe. McElroy photo*

## NW Chapter Fall Meet: September 13–17, 2023

**Manning Park, BC See you there!**

### Northwest.wcha.org

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## President's Message

Chapter Members,

It has been great spending the Summer in the Pacific Northwest after spending the winter and spring out in Minnesota and the Dakotas. Nancy and I have spent the time just strolling along Alki and getting ready for her becoming a grandmother. Baby Aster was born August 8, both baby and grandmother are doing well.

The arrival of a new generation in our lives got me thinking more about the importance of heritage and what we leave for future generations. One of the things I have enjoyed so much about our chapter is how our members are not only preserving wooden canoe heritage, but are willing to share so freely, not only within our group, but with others. We are about more than just ourselves. Off the top of my head I can think of our support for the WCHA, helping fund the Camp Bishop canoe house, and we've provided support to camp Sweyolocken canoe restorations, and many other efforts.

I am pleased that with the generous donation of Red's Willits canoe and Steve and Joannie so willingly housing it and helping sell it, that our chapter will be in a position again to extend support to others.

Looking forward to seeing all of you at E.C. Manning out on Dawn Patrol.

Happy Paddling!

Mike Livdahl



*Mike Livdahl busy at Lost Lake. Dick Howland photo*