

Wooden Canoe Heritage Association

NORTHWEST CHAPTER

Northwest Chapter WCHA Summer Newsletter 2024



The Northwest Chapter enjoyed a special Spring Meet at YMCA Camp Bishop May 9–12, 2024. With beautiful sunny weather, interesting boats, and the Aurora Borealis providing a spectacular night time show, it was a Meet to remember. Camp Bishop itself has never looked better, thanks to several years of diligent and skillful care by site manager Dan Weber and staff.

“Work Party Day” on Thursday, the group worked to clean, scrub, and launch both the 1925 War Canoe and smaller orange canoe “Huey” owned by the Aberdeen Museum, and used at Camp Bishop. Both canoes had spent the winter in the new canoe house built by Grays Harbor Community College Carpentry classes and many volunteers. Friday was so warm, so beautiful by the lake, and so relaxed that formal plans melded into casual boating, swimming and enjoying friends. In the evening, Mike Elliott entertained the group with highlight stories behind his new book, “This Fancy Old Canoe”. Midnight found many members prowling the camp with cameras as they enjoyed the Northern Lights!

Saturday events included “Meet the Canoes”, a canoe golf tournament, group photo, and festive salmon potluck dinner (thank you, Vern and Jan Heikkila, and volunteer cooks!). After dinner, a brief chapter meeting included a moment of silence for greatly missed chapter members Jan Gunness, Barb Dobree, and Ray Arcand. The evening finished with a spirited auction. Sunday was time for last canoe trips, clean up, and saying good-bye to friends until September. It was a memorable Meet!



Mike Elliott with a newly restored Old Town sponson canoe, which will be donated to the WCHA auction at Assembly. Livdahl photo

Every Canoe has its Story! Notes on Friday Night Talk by Mike Elliott

Mike Elliott, author of *This Old Canoe*, and newly released June 2024, *This Fancy Old Canoe*, talked to the group about some of the highlights of his years as a canoe repair person and author. Mike will be a keynote speaker at this year's WCHA Assembly at Paul Smith's College in New York in July, where the focus will be on courting canoes.

Mike discussed his gradual entrance into canoe repair, first helping friends and working with at-risk young people, and eventually opening Kettle River Canoes as a business. After his repair blog proved helpful to many people, the articles in it evolved into the successful book, *This Old Canoe*. But some canoes have more complex features than those addressed in *This Old Canoe*, including closed gunwales, sponsons, long decks, etc., and soon he was collecting information for a second book. And every canoe has its own story!

The first canoe adventure Mike discussed originated with the NW Chapter. Mike gave a talk to the chapter discussing his interest in working on certain canoe features for his second book, offering to work on specific canoes with attributes he needed, such as closed gunwales. As it happened, Mary Norton and Joe McElroy had such a canoe, obtained in a trade for an ugly, heavy, plastic canoe given to their daughter—even fixed up, it was still ugly, heavy and plastic. “Would you trade for a canoe that needs work?”, a friend asked Joe, **“I think it’s an Old Town.”** Imagine our excitement on a New Year’s Day—when many people seemed to be surprisingly active on the WCHA forums—to discover that the canoe was actually a 1905 Rushton! The Indian Girl had several features that interested Mike, and is now featured in the new book, plus is set for her next graceful 100+ years with new stems, decks, gunwales, canvas and gleaming paint!



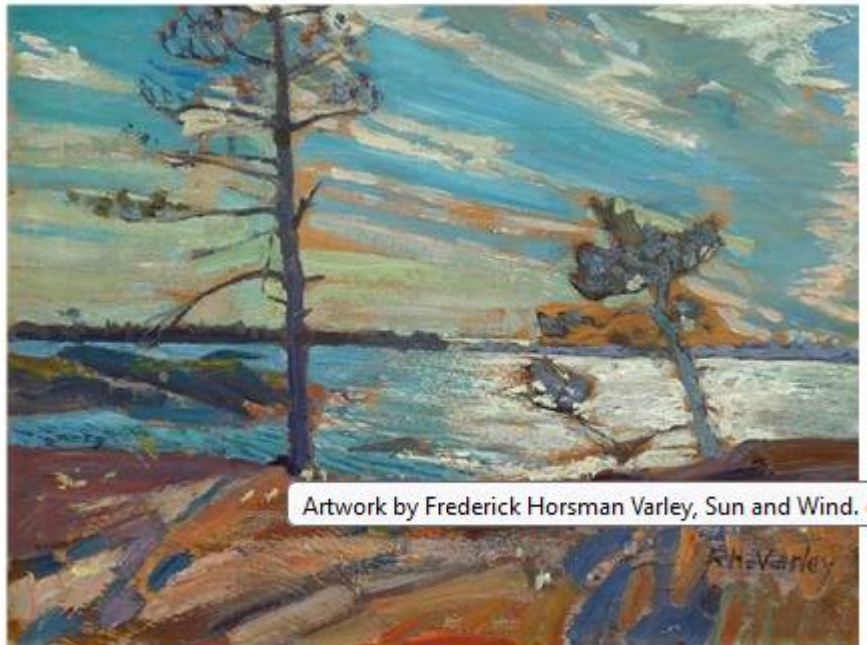
Re-launching the 1905 Rushton "Indian Girl" after restoration. M. Norton, J. McElroy. Manning, 2019. Livdahl photo

Mike collaborated with Sam Browning in the UK, to include **rib and batten canoe** restoration in the book, thanks to 280 detailed photos sent of Browning's boat restoration. The canoe was originally made of wide basswood planks with rock elm ribs, pre-drilled for copper nails, plus battens, with the keelson laid first. In the restoration the rock elm was replaced by English oak for the ribs. The outside stems were bent by steaming in a plastic bag via a wallpaper steamer. His canoe looked new!

"Serendipity" played such a part in the next canoe's story that this became the canoe's name! A Saskatchewan couple embarked on a motorcycle trip to the coast. Deciding to explore a dead end road, they stopped at a yard sale. On a whim they bought the canoe that was there, just before the next person to stop also wanted the canoe. The trip was a bit different with the motorcycles and canoe in a large truck, and they pondered how they would get the canoe—a 1915 Peterborough sailing canoe with mahogany trim-- fixed up, until they noticed they were just passing by a sign that said "Kettle River Canoes". With new mahogany trim and thwarts, custom-cast mast ring replica, sailing gear and new stem bands, the surprise find is well set up for its new life!

Canoe restorations often affect an entire family, but one epic project **restored a cultural tradition**. In the past, boat houses and clubs around Lake Okanogan, BC hosted highly popular and competitive regattas with 30' canoes racing around a triangular course. In recent years, the sport had languished and the canoes fallen into disrepair. Mike and a large crew of volunteers worked to restore a fleet of the full-floored racing canoes. In 2014, the first modern races were held with the restored canoes, and a silver cup was awarded to the winning team for the first time in 40 years!

Bonds between canoes and their people are often very strong. Mike's final story involved an elderly couple and some of their most special possessions. Their collection of Frederick Varley paintings included portraits done by the Canadian Group of Seven artist that featured the woman herself as a model when she was young. And they had a Peterborough canoe that was their wedding present to each other in 1945.



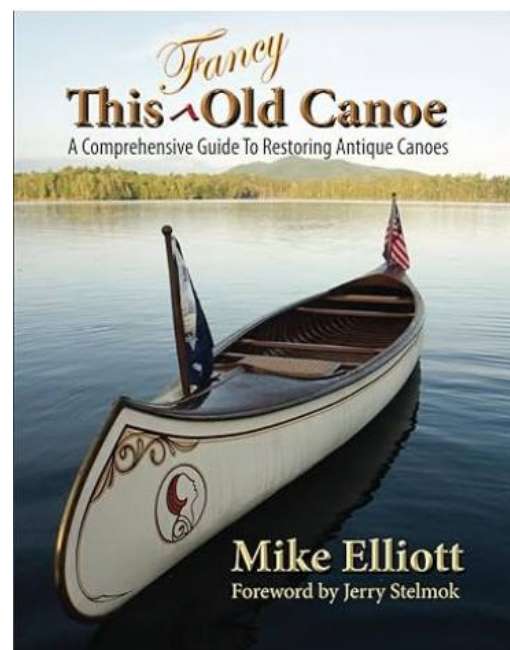
"Sun and Wind" by Frederick Varley, 1915

In 2002, they and their Kelowna home were threatened by an advancing wildfire. Even evacuation seemed doubtful. Suddenly out of the smoke, their neighbor raced up in his truck. **"Save the paintings and the canoe!"** he shouted, and with his help, the couple, canoe and paintings all were saved.

You can imagine the happy tears all around when the Peterborough wedding gift canoe –later fully restored-- was reunited with its owners. Mike has found that canoe restoration has its special moments!

The new book is available June 3, 2024, and officially to be introduced at this year's WCHA Assembly, July 16–21, 2024, at Paul Smith's College, New York.

Get your copy today at your favorite bookstore!



Meet the Canoes: Spring Meet 2024!

As usual, many interesting and varied canoes were at the Meet.

The smallest, and only passing briefly through the Meet, was a beautiful nearly scale model of the 39' "Malia", a Hawaiian outrigger racing canoe which was important in the revitalization of outrigger canoe racing in Hawaii. Vern Heikkila made the 34" model for friends Stan and Priscilla Dahlin, as part of a fund-raising raffle for the Wakinikona Outrigger Racing Canoe Club of Seattle. The Dahlins, originally from Hawaii, are long-time members of the club since its formation in the 1960's. Vern and Jan have been club members since 2001. The graceful model is made, like the original canoe, of koa wood, and the outrigger is mango wood.



Vern Heikkila's koa wood model of the Hawaiian outrigger racing canoe "Malia". Heikkila photo.

Beth Arcand brought two canoes from her and Ray's collection, including an interesting, light 16' Thompson. The unusual canoe had very thin ribs, with curly maple decks and thwarts, as well as the typical Thompson champfered rib ends, profile, and outer stems. The canoe found a new appreciative home with Jim Cullins. Beth's other canoe was the lovely skin-on-frame 14' craft built by Ray, and long admired by many chapter members. Scott Christianson will be the new custodian of this special boat.

Mike Elliott brought a newly restored green Old Town sponson canoe, with curly maple decks and wood trim, including custom seat backs. This canoe will be donation to the WCHA, to be sold at the Assembly in New York in July, where Mike will be a featured speaker.



Scott Christianson is honored to be the new caretaker of this Ray Arcand-built skin-on-frame canoe. Livdahl photo

Steve and Joan Ellsworth's Old Town Charles River happily responded to Steve's revarnishing efforts, and performed perfectly dry, still wearing its pin-striped original green-painted canvas! Josh Fliegel came with his 16' Old Town Ideal, a beautiful canoe in red. John Hockersmith brought his lightweight sleek single Northstar wood-trimmed Kevlar canoe; this canoe's weight was frequently sampled and much admired.

Vern and Jan Heikkila launched Vern's winter project, a stable, nimble skiff of Vern's design. It will spend the summer at Camp Bishop so that campers can learn to row, and recognize that there is a difference between an oar and a paddle! Vern once helped his father make a series of similar skiffs. Most of the chapter tested the new skiff and appreciated how stable and responsive it is. Soon it spent much of its time with the fishermen of the group!



Jan Heikkila tries out the new skiff Vern built for Camp Bishop. Livdahl photo

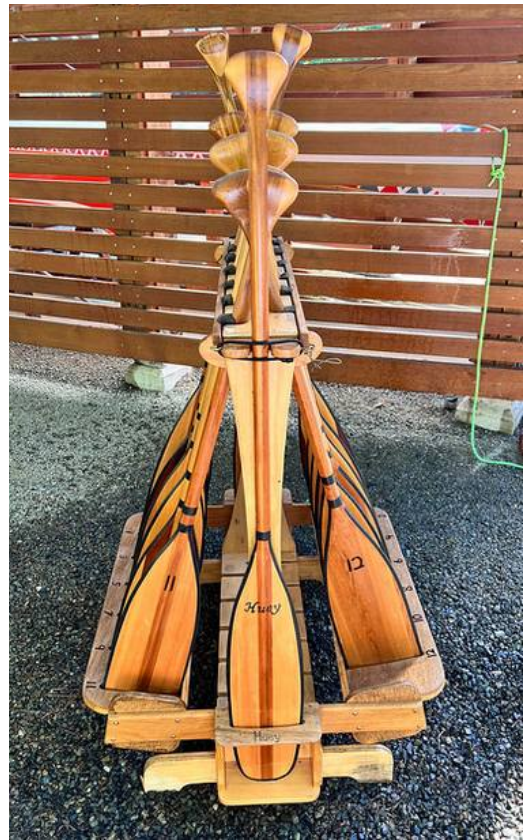
Many of the canoes at the Meet were old friends. The Heikkilas also brought their graceful Hiault racing canoe, 21' x 18", for the daring to paddle, and their sleek, fast white 18' Old Town Guide. Mike Livdahl came with his recently restored nylon covered Old Town Otca. Martin and Rebecka Ferwerda brought their Ferwerda Thompson Hiawatha, in blue with red and yellow striping. Mary Norton and Joe McElroy brought "the Explorer", the Old Town HW given to grandsons Charlie and Teddy Farmer, by Beth and Ray Arcand. Already at camp were two canoes, the 1925 Old Town War Canoe, owned by the Aberdeen Museum, restored by Vern, and now living in the Camp Bishop Canoe House. "Huey", the smaller orange canoe owned by the Museum, and living at Camp Bishop, is the last of the three matched smaller canoes. The others were lost in the fire at the Museum.



1925 Old Town War Canoe restored by Vern Heikkila and friends. Livdahl photo



After the work party, the cleaned War Canoe leaves the Canoe House. John Fliegel, left, Joan Ellsworth, center. Livdahl photo.



Custom paddle rack for the Camp Bishop canoes, built by Vern Heikkila. Livdahl photo



Vern gathers a crew for a War Canoe tour: Susannah and Allie Ebling, (left), Vern Heikkila (center) and ?? (right). Susannah is in the Grays Harbor Community College carpentry program that helped build the canoe house. Livdahl photo

Saturday at the Meet!

Saturday's events included a Canoe Golf Tournament, a group photo, the salmon barbecue/potluck, a short chapter meeting, and the fundraising auction. Canoe golf, an exciting possibly Canadian possibly soon to be Olympic sport, was introduced to the Chapter by Colleen Hovey and Claude Delisle some years previously. This year's winners, John Hockersmith and Steve Ellsworth, narrowly edged the Ferwerda team to capture the top prize of wine and Chapter drinking cups.



Rebecka Ferwerda positions Martin to sink a putt. Livdahl photo



Martin Ferwerda lines up a long drive. Livdahl photo



Vern's salmon barbecue is greatly appreciated by the group. Steve Ellsworth, Vern Heikkila and Jim Cullins cook the salmon. Livdahl photo



Beth Arcand and Teddy chat with Mike Elliott on the lakeshore. Livdahl photo



Lin McElroy, Charlie Farmer, Annie McElroy and Teddy Farmer enjoy the Old Town HW. Thank you to Ray and Beth! Livdahl photo



The Aurora Borealis was an exciting special feature at the Meet. Livdahl photo



The Auroura looks even better from a canoe!. Livdahl photo

Northwest Chapter Meeting

President Mike Livdahl convened the spring chapter meeting. First, the group held a brief moment of silence in remembrance of dear chapter members who passed this year: **Janice Gunness, Barb Dobree, and Ray Arcand.**

Mike thanked Joan Ellsworth for work as chapter treasurer, and Mary Norton for the newsletter. The group decided to return to Camp Bishop in the spring of 2025, for the location on Lost Lake, and the amenities available in case of rain. We will also return to Manning for the fall of 2025, as this needs to be booked before the fall meet this year. Other options may be explored for future fall meets, but Manning remains an exceptional location.

Discussion of possible donations from the chapter was deferred to a future email conversation, after we know the outcome of Camp Bishop costs and auction results.

Auction

Mike Elliott acted as auctioneer for the group's fund-raising auction, donning the traditional voyageur attire for the purpose. Beth Arcand brought many items to this Meet, reflecting Ray's many interests: boxes of books from his canoe, woodworking and tool interests, equipment items, paddle blanks, and wood to find new homes, and also benefit the chapter. Her generous donations filled the auction.

A beautiful new small wannigan, an antique fishing creel, a wine selection, voyageur paintings, a native-style cedar flute made by John Hockersmith all were coveted items. Two people went home with new Shaw and Tenney paddles, and pounds of copper tacks were purchased by the auctioneer. Spruce and red cedar wood went home with a number of people with projects in mind.

Books from Ray's collection were sold separately to benefit the chapter, and many beautiful books found appreciative new homes.

Auction proceeds totaled \$602, and books contributed \$225. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the auction, and especially to Beth!



Mike Elliott as the voyageur-auctioneer. Livdahl photo

Remembering Friends: Janice Gunness

Janice Bjerke Gunness came in to this world on July 12, 1951, and departed March 28, 2024. Her family moved to McMinnville, Oregon, when Janice was four years old. She was born on her father's birthday, and sharing the same birthday was something they both treasured. She is survived by her husband of 41 years, Frank, children Tony and Khara, and a close extended family and many friends.

When you remember Jan, think of "a life well lived." Her family and friends are missing her good humor and contagious enthusiasm . . . that person who often said, "It'll be fun!" She swam a mile at the Mac pool three times a week for over 40 years, and swam in the Cross Channel Swim on the Columbia River several times. She loved being with her swim buddies, but her favorites were savoring her coffee on the deck at sunrise and tending her plantings in her greenhouse. She loved working with plants, and enjoyed her work at Mac Rental Nursery and Wilco, where she could "talk plants." She was generous with her knowledge and helped many with their gardening decisions.



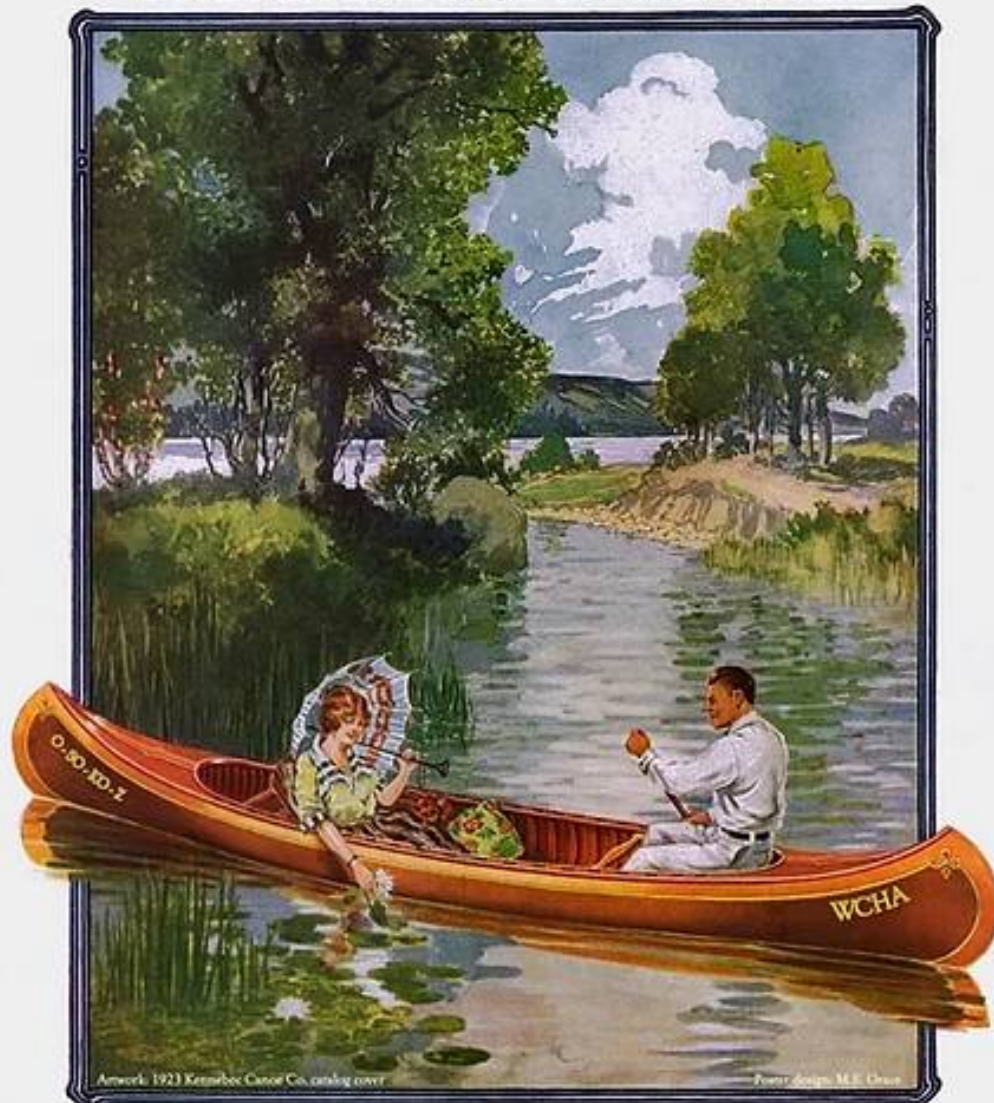
Jan was a graduate of McMinnville High School, and earned a BS degree from Oregon State University in 1973. She played tennis for both Mac High and OSU. She worked for many years for the US Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management in Alaska, Oregon and Idaho. She loved to be outside, whether it was canoeing, biking, hiking the Oregon Cascades and National Parks, reeling in a 40-pound Chinook, or in the greenhouse propagating Giant Redwoods from cuttings . . . she enjoyed it all!

Per Jan's request, no Celebration of Life is planned. The family would like to thank Jan's medical team, and Visiting Angels for their loving care. Remember Jan for her honesty and good humor. Family and friends were everything to her, and we will miss her forever.



COURTING CANOES

STYLE & ROMANCE ON THE WATER



WOODEN CANOE HERITAGE ASSOCIATION 45TH ANNIVERSARY ASSEMBLY JULY 16-21, 2024 - PAUL SMITH'S COLLEGE, NY

Public Welcome! Bring the Family!

OVER 300 NEW, VINTAGE AND HISTORIC CANOES ON DISPLAY
WORKSHOPS • KIDS' PROGRAMS • ON-WATER EVENTS • AUCTION & RAFFLE
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MARKETPLACE: CANOES • PADDLES • GEAR • ACCESSORIES • BUILDING SUPPLIES

Information: www.woodencanoe.org 603-323-8992

Third Annual Willits Gathering!

August 24, 2024

Tacoma Narrows Airport

Gig Harbor Vintage Aero Museum

1108 26 Ave NW

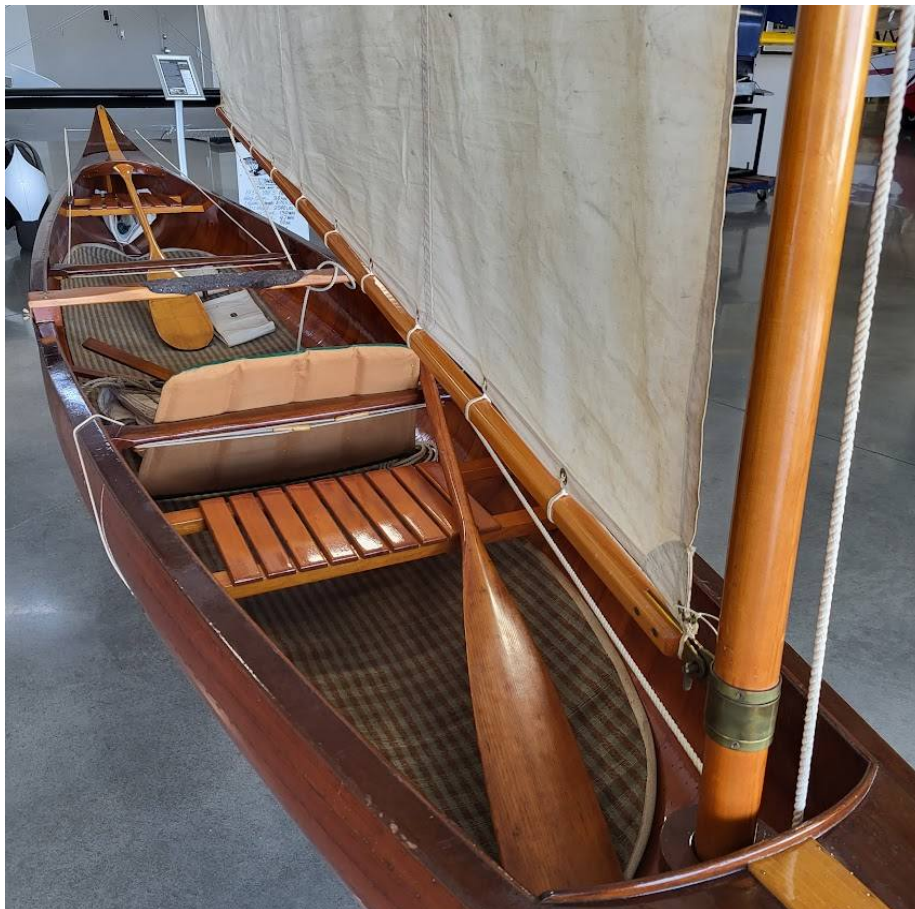
Friday August 23, participants can arrive in the afternoon. Secure your canoe at the Aero Museum (1:00-5:00 PM) & you are free to enjoy the evening in Gig Harbor.

Saturday August 24, participants arrive 8:00-9:00 AM & the public is welcome even if you don't own a Willits. "Meet and Greet" until 11:30. Paddlers and canoes transit from Aero Museum to boat launch at the end of 10 St. off Pt Fosdick.

Group paddle in Wollochet Bay that will go to the area where the Willits Brothers built their first shop. This is also the annual airport day at the Tacoma Narrows Airport. Public is welcome to come and enjoy all the activities

For more info or questions contact:

Phil Miller seeeds@comcast.net Cell 253: 651-4703



Willits sailing canoe with many Willits accessories, seen at 2nd Willits gathering in 2023. Ellsworth photo

Mark Your Calendars and Bring Your Friends!

WCHA Assembly: Paul Smiths College, New York: July 16–21, 2024

Third Annual Willits Gathering: Gig Harbor, WA: August 23, 24, 2024

NW Chapter Fall Meet: Manning Park, BC: September 17–22, 2024



Charlie Farmer enjoys Lost Lake while boating at the Spring Meet. Livdahl photo

“...there is nothing – absolutely nothing – half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats.” So says Ratty to Mole in Kenneth Grahame's classic novel 'The Wind in the Willows'.

WCHA NW Chapter!



Front row: Rebecka Ferwerda and Briggs, Mary Norton with Sean and Duff, Lin McElroy with Maggie, Stephen Farmer, Teddy Farmer, Charlie Farmer, Beth Arcand and Ted, Scott Christianson. Middle: Martin Ferwerda, Steve Ellsworth, Joan Ellsworth, Jan Heikkila, Jim Cullins, Mike Elliott, Courtney Codrington, Dylan Johnson, Annie McElroy with Kazoo. Back: Copper Elliott, Sylvan Skelly (seated), Mike Livdahl, Joe McElroy, Bill Paine, (seated) John Hockersmith, Josh Fliegel. Missing: Pat Chapman, Donnie and Carter Kassick, Susannah and Allie Ebling.

**See you at Manning,
September 17–22, 2024!**



The Heikkila Old Town Guide 18' is a fast boat with 4 paddlers: Manning 2022. Livdahl photo

Northwest.wcha.org

Joan Ellsworth	<i>Treasurer</i>
Colleen Hovey	<i>WCHA board rep</i>
Claude Delisle	
Joe McElroy	<i>Newsletter</i>
Geoff Harvey	
Martin Ferwerda	<i>Webmaster</i>
Mary Norton	<i>Sect'y/Newsletter</i>
Michael Davidson	
Ginger Fortier	
Kurt Schmidt	
Laura Schmidt	
Craig Dupler	<i>Past President</i>
Patra Moore	

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President's Message!

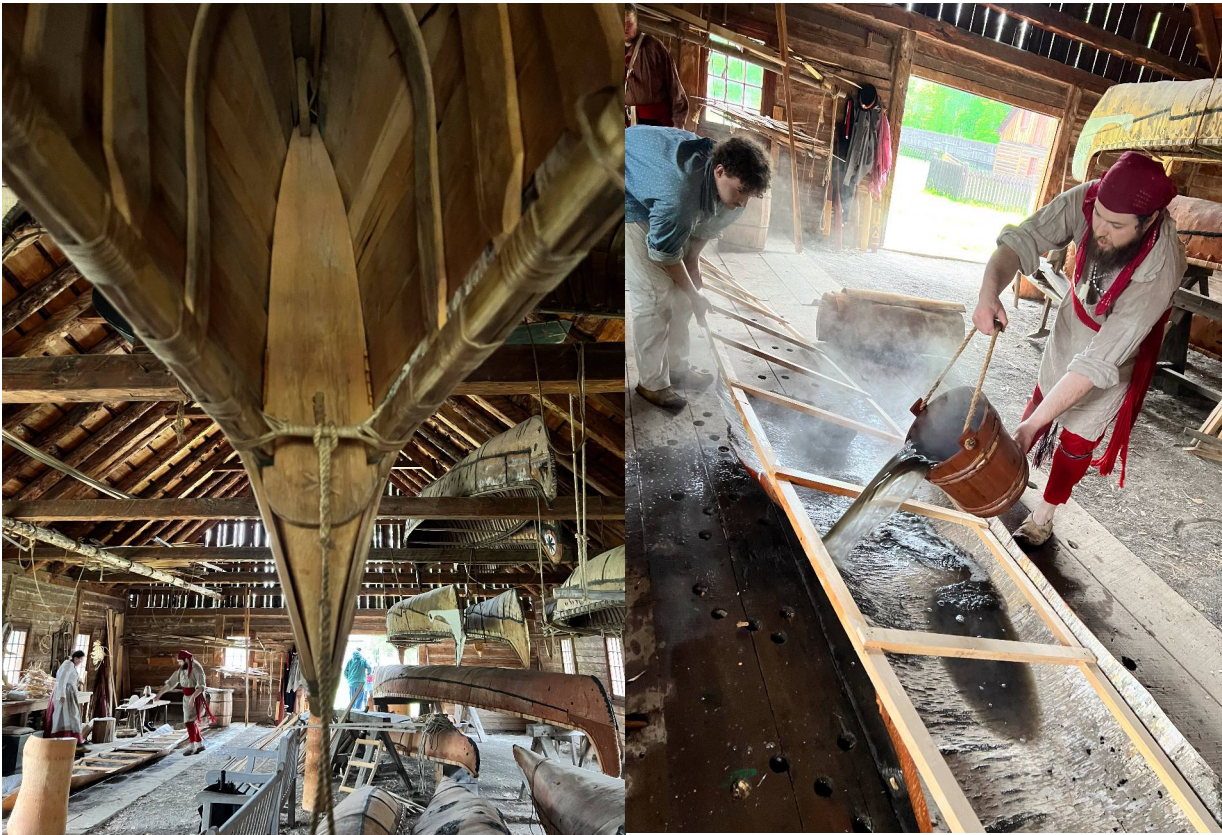
Hello fellow paddlers.

Greetings from Tettagouche State Park on the North Shore of Lake Superior. We just finished the the Circle tour around Lake Superior. If you remember Mike Elliott's story about restoring the canoe with the connection to the "Group of Seven", this route takes you through the country that inspired them.



The tour could very well have been the Birch Bark Canoe tour. Everywhere along the lake a museum or restaurant or lodge would have Bark Canoes on display. And not just one canoe at a time, Many! If you get to Old Fort William in Thunder Bay, you can wander a barn full of them while watching the re-enactors build another one. The 36 foot Montreal Canoe hanging in the rafters is huge.

On the business side, in June, a call went out for ideas for our budget surplus. The Call is still open, send your ideas to michael.livdahl@gmail.com There have been a couple good ideas for speakers, there are also some charitable opportunities donating to the National Chapter or helping local camps with their programs. Keep the ideas coming in! Beginning of August, we'll circulate these around the board.



Fort William Historical Park was the inland fur trading headquarters of the Northwest Company in 1815.

We have an **urgent need** for someone who plans to attend the Fall 2025 meet at Manning Park to make the Reservation. The sticky part is that the person whose name is on the reservation has to be the person who picks up the key to open up the site in Fall 2025. Since the Lone Duck 2 campsite is in High Demand the reservation needs to be made in Sept 2024 before the fall meet begins. Contact me at michael.livdahl@gmail.com or 2063550835 for details.

The job entails

- 1) Being logged in and ready when reservations open for the dates on the BC reservations website. Pretty much hit enter as soon as open dates . (pretend you are trying to score Seahawks playoff tickets)
- 2) Sending a copy of the Receipt to the treasurer for reimbursement (we are very prompt pay :-))
- 3) Picking up the Key at the Manning Park Resort fall 2025 and opening the Gate.

Contact me for details at 206 355 0835 or visit <https://bcparks.ca/reservations/group-camping>

It was great fun seeing everyone last spring. Looking forward to seeing all of you up at Manning Park this Fall. Happy Paddling!



Mike Livdahl