



QUETICO-SUPERIOR COUNTRY



FROM THE QUETICO-SUPERIOR FOUNDATION • SPRING 1991

SHAN WALSH

by Ted Hall

This planet and we passengers face our first summer in twenty years without Quetico Provincial Park's gifted naturalist Shan Walshe to explain that million-acre wilderness' importance to the planet and to encourage the unending tug of war to keep it wilderness. Shan's death of a malignant brain tumor March 6 at the age of fifty-five also marks the birth of a new thrust against that wilderness, a request by two Ojibwe groups that the government live up to promises to help improve economic opportunities for them by opening some more of the Quetico lakes to Ojibwe-guide motorboats and float planes.

It's a challenge Shan Walshe would have met gracefully and firmly, providing his Ministry of Natural Resources a clear picture of the situation as a puppet show in which the white man's recreation industry speaks through a few Ojibwe hired hands. And he would have alerted the Ojibwe to the dismal prospect for Ojibwe prosperity in a place stripped of its attraction for the campers and fishermen now their customers.

A promotional blurb from the businessmen of Atikokan sheds some light on the seriousness of those pulling the strings in the new Quetico puppet show:

Atikokan, a progressive community of over 4,000 is located just north of the heart of Quetico Park, midway between Fort Frances and Thunder Bay on Highway 11. It is surrounded by pristine wilderness and literally hundreds of lakes—in Quetico to the south and the White Otter wilderness to the north.

For the visitor, Atikokan offers a wide range of opportunities, a list that grows each year. A variety of initiatives—establishing a series of snowmobile trails that link Atikokan with the rest of the northwest and the U.S. Border, the restoration of White Otter Castle (Jimmy McQuad), the creation of a district-wide boat route, and more—have put Atikokan and the northwest at the forefront of the tourist industry. All of that was completed last year with the completion of Highway 622, a route that links Atikokan directly with Ignace and Dryden.

The handout goes on to tout a possible mining theme-park at Steep Rock, and an 18-hole golf course with dining room and



Shan Walshe

sauna at Little Falls, Atikokan water-sports days (with water sleds), five hotel-motels and eleven dining places.

Fortunately, with considerable thanks to Shan, Atikokan is not completely captive of the hucksters. Read what Cliff McIntosh, president of Quetico Centre, Atikokan, said in his farewell to the mortal Shan:

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SIGNIFICANT MOTOR THREAT LOOMS OVER THE QUETICO

A development which could turn back the hands of time and bring down the curtain on the Quetico as a one million-acre wilderness park has emerged. In an effort from two fronts, one being the Lac La Croix Indian Band and the other being outfitters in Atikokan, proposals have been launched to motorize large areas of Quetico Provincial Park.

The Indian Band currently enjoys motor privileges on significant lakes in the Quetico including Beaverhouse Lake, Quetico Lake, Lac La Croix, Wolseley Lake, Minn Lake, McAree Lake, Tanner Lake and the Maligne River. The Indian Band wants motorboat and airplane access for fishing purposes to other jewels in the Quetico: Sturgeon, Jean, and Kawnipi Lakes.

The push for motorization in Atikokan comes from the Quetico Guides Outfitters Association which wants to motorize French Lake, Pickerel Lake and Batchewaung Lake along the northern edge of the park. There has been a request as well to fly tourists from Atikokan over the park to Prairie

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SPARKS FROM THE CAMPFIRE

Every time we open a canoe magazine we read glowing reports about the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. We agree that this wilderness has all the makings of a fine canoe destination. However, due to the police state enforcement tactics long utilized by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, we believe that paddlers must now stage a boycott of Minnesota.

Last summer, we were threatened with being jailed for not having a Minnesota canoe license while paddling in the BWCA. We pointed out that our BWCA permit made no mention of such a requirement and that Wisconsin, our home state, does not require a license. Ignorance is no excuse, we were told, and a large amount of money was taken from us on the water. Recently, we heard a story of the Minnesota DNR wanting to confiscate a Wisconsin couple's wedding rings, because they did not have a

Minnesota canoe license (they carried no cash into this wilderness area and could not post bail). A church group wrote about the "humiliating, embarrassing" experience they had at the hands of the DNR. We have even heard of seaplanes swooping down and issuing citations!

Since that time, we have checked into our constitutional rights which seem to be protected by the Minnesota Constitution: "Navigable water . . . shall be common highways and forever free to the citizens of the United States without any tax duty, impost, or toll therefore." The response of Minnesota officials is that this only applies to erecting barriers to commercial traffic, and if we do not like it, then file suit.

In Minnesota, the summer months are open season on canoeists. Failure to display a Minnesota canoe license is the number one violation in the BWCA (This is a separate

requirement from the Forest Service permit). Why the Minnesota DNR is even in this federal wilderness area is unclear.) On some days 50% of contacts by DNR wardens result in a citation for this reason. That adds up to a lot of upset vacationers who were not intentionally breaking the law. Meanwhile, little effort is made to inform visitors of these complex regulations. Even if one did attempt to purchase a canoe license, it would be very difficult, since there is only one outlet in all of Cook County, Minnesota, and they have limited hours.

We are not going back until such time as Minnesota admits there is a problem and adopts a friendly, helpful attitude towards visitors. We are asking other paddlers to join us in the Minnesota boycott.

Albert L. Fisher, M.D.
Oshkosh, Wisconsin

WALSHE, *continued*

For two decades he was scientist, interpreter, explorer and pesky conscience for the complex of wilderness set aside near Atikokan.

When timberlands are in short supply, Quetico Park looks like a huge reservoir of merchantable timber. Not to Walshe. To him it was nature's gift to which humans could turn to find their roots, to understand their origins.

To Shan, humans are trustees, given the job of watching over and protecting this last small island of wilderness on an over-developed globe. He fiercely believed that Quetico's timber values are much lower than its wilderness value. It is a little easier now in this age of environmental awareness, but Thank God Shan was around in the 1970s and 1980s.

Like many people whose legacy is great but hard to measure in dollars and cents, his contribution will go unsung except by those who knew him. But without him, the planet would not have one of its rare jewels, Quetico Park. For those of us who admired the man and respected his work, the greatest tribute we can pay to him is to ensure that his beloved Quetico Park is not despoiled by those who would "harvest" its wealth for short-term gain.

Shan gave voice to that silent wilderness—the right kind of voice—in contrast to the snarl of chainsaws and snowmobiles. His was a firm reminder that wilderness is at mankind's mercy, and mankind has not yet really accepted the delicate balance by which we animals and fish and serpents and birds

and trees and tulips exist on this planet Earth.

Perhaps the most immediately valuable lesson Shan has taught us is the need for those who oversee our wilderness to get to know that wilderness as something more than a green tint on a map. They need to know the silence and sounds of that wilderness, to know its housekeeping habits and other surprises. They need to feel the spiritual input of those trees and silent lakes and gossiping loons. They need to feel the rhythm of the revisions that imposes upon itself—to realize that the beaver dam is within the rules of the planet's balance, while the man-made dam may not be—in fact, is unlikely to be.

These overseers need to see a fallen forest tree not as clutter to be tidied up, but as a part of the flow that nourishes the forest. They need to recognize the long-term purpose of varying water levels—it's all a part of that delicate balancing act that Shan Walshe felt in his bones for being so much a part of it.

This is the Shane Walshe whose worn out body has returned to nourish the planet from which he sprang. This is the Shane Walshe who spent that body so wisely and joyfully, beginning with that boyhood that introduced him to his living partners at "Glenarriff," the twenty-five acres of rolling wooded hills and friendly meadowland near King City that was his regular retreat while growing up in Toronto.

In 1959, at the age of twenty-four, Shan was graduated by the University of Toronto with a Bachelor's Degree in languages, and a year later was granted a Type A high school teaching certificate by the Ontario College of Education. Then, for the next seven years he taught high school French and Latin in Orillia, Elmvale and Thunder Bay. Shan was at ease with languages and in

addition to French and Latin, was fluent in German and Spanish. But, happy as he was as a language teacher, the seed of Glenarriff began to sprout.

During his university days he had worked as a naturalist at Sleeping Giant Park, and there he met his wife, Margie, and married in 1960. Shan and Margie spent their honeymoon at the base of Sleeping Giant, then paddled a canoe to James Bay. Bridget, Kathleen, Shannon and Patrick were born to that companionable marriage, and in 1967 Margie and Shan moved their family to Glenarriff while Shan returned to the University of Toronto for a Masters degree in plant ecology. And then, in August 1970, Quetico called. In a sense, it was another marriage.

Years later Shan returned for a visit to that starting place, Glenarriff, and he found it much changed. Toronto's city-sprawl had been at work. "It was almost as though I had never lived there at all," Shan said. "In contrast, Quetico today is not all that different than in centuries past. It is humbling to realize that, though Quetico has been a park for only seventy-five years, man has lived here for more than nine thousand years. Change here is slow, proceeding at nature's pace, not man's."

At Shan Walshe's funeral service in St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church on March 9, a Saturday, the bagpipes sounded the hymns "Flowers of the Forest" and "Amazing Grace," and George Holborn sang "Danny Boy" and Father Ross Feeley, S.J. officiated. The mourners read this verse on the funeral card:

*Do not stand at my grave and weep
I am not there I do not sleep
I am a thousand winds that blow
I am a diamond glint on snow
I am the sunlight on ripened grain
I am the gentle autumn rain*

*When you awake in the morning hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circling flight
I am the soft starlight at night
Do not stand at my grave and weep
I am not there I do not sleep*

Indeed, it would be a mistake to think of Shan Walshe as dead and gone. He is still here, still at Quetico, still working to steer us to sensible cohabitation with our planet. He simply has been called to the head office for consultation at a time of environmental challenge.

A great teacher does not die.

MOTOR THREAT, *continued*



Antoon Plane at Prairie Portage,
Basswood Lake

Portage on Basswood Lake. Flying planes into this country would break open the whole south-central Quetico Park which borders the United States' BWCA. If successful, these developments would significantly degrade the wilderness character of Quetico Provincial Park.

Spokesmen for the Wildlands League, Toronto, Ontario have warned, "Motorized boats and fly-in outpost operations violate the definition of a wilderness zone in the current Quetico Park Master Plan and are also in direct violation of policies defined in the Ontario Provincial Park Planning and Management Policies Document." The document states, "Wilderness Parks are substantial areas where the forces of nature are permitted to function freely and where visitors travel by non-mechanized means and experience expansive solitude, challenge, and personal integration with nature."

The Executive Director of the Wildlands League stated in a letter to the Minister of Natural Resources, "It is the opinion of the Wildlands League that it is of the utmost urgency that the Ministry firmly and categorically articulate its commitment to maintaining or increasing the level of protection that Ontario's Parks are now afforded. Failure to do so encourages questions of the Ministry's resolve and invites demands that, if implemented, threaten the integrity and the survival of the wilderness areas."

Another organization supporting wilderness for Quetico Park, the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, has written to the Minister of Natural Resources concerning motor demands in the wilderness: "Such intrusions in a wilderness park destroy the basic attraction of the Park, its peace, isolation and its resources. These intrusions are in such violation of wilderness principles that they could undermine the whole wilderness park concept." The Federation of Ontario Naturalists recognizes the need for the government to deal fairly with the needs of native peoples. "We support the Lac La Croix Band's need to establish a long term means of livelihood which will be partially achieved through a stake in park management."

A third organization, Friends of Quetico Park, Atikokan, Ontario, has written: "As stake-holders in Quetico, the Friends of Quetico Park are strongly opposed to any expansion of the current motor ban exemption and the creation of an additional exemption. We, indeed, support the strategy of ultimate exclusion of motor-powered watercraft as stated in the Park's current Revised Park Policy of 1982 and for which the original motor ban of 1977 was implemented. Quetico's wilderness is one of the most unique and fragile resources in the Ontario Provincial Parks system. A canoe trip through it offers park users wilderness experience unparalleled in North America. To allow motorized travel to the heart of the Park degrades that experience significantly and, indeed, negates years of tremendous, conscientious effort on the part of many concerned citizens who, for over eighty years, have had the foresight and

conviction to fight for its preservation."

Members of the Lac La Croix Indian Band assert that they need to expand their operations in the one million-acre park to ensure economic livelihood. They argue that their livelihood is based on guiding and trapping. The 250 member Lac La Croix Indian Band live on Lac La Croix Lake at the southwestern edge of Quetico. In the case of the income earned, Jay Handberg at Cambells Cabins realizes commercial profits from the access to the present lakes by employing native guides for his fishing customers.

The superintendent of Quetico Park, Mr. Jay Leather, has emphasized that The Ministry of Natural Resources is required to try to improve the economic opportunities for the Lac La Croix Indian Band.

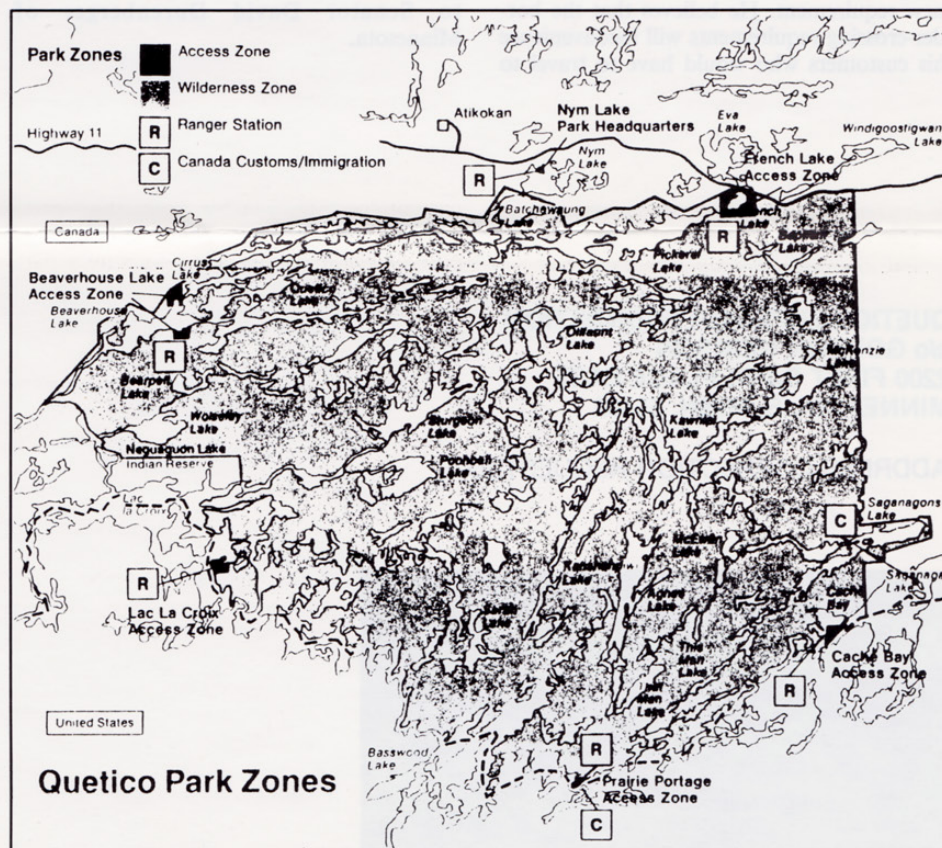
Public interest in the Quetico region has been high as shown by the public interest and participation in the 1988 Quetico Review. Canadians have shown concern for protection of the area. Organizations which support protection of the park include:

The Quetico Foundation
170 University Ave., Suite 1301
Toronto, Ontario M5H 3B5

The Wildlands League
517 College Street, Suite 406
Toronto, Ontario M6G 4A2

The Federation of Ontario Naturalists
355 Lesmill Road
Don Mills, Ontario M3B 2W8

Friends of Quetico Park
P.O. Box 1959
Atikokan, Ontario P0T 1C0



THOUSANDS OF MINNESOTA MOOSE DIE

A Department of Natural Resources survey has shown that Minnesota has lost nearly half of its 6,600 moose in 1989. A number of the moose lost have been attributed to "winter ticks." The ticks attach themselves to the moose in the fall and stay until spring when, filled with blood, they drop to the ground to lay eggs.

The ticks are infecting the moose in such numbers that they are causing irritation. The animals seek some sort of relief by rubbing themselves against trees.

As they rub, a wide section of hair which serves as the moose's winter insulation, is rubbed off and the moose perhaps die from exposure.



It is possible that the drought in the past several years has led to an increase in the number of moose ticks. Ticks are not dangerous to humans or other animals.

Residents of Rainy Lake in the 1930's

believed a tick infestation then was the possible cause of the decline of moose that era. It is possible when the moose population increases, a predator such as ticks enter to cut back on the population of moose. Of the 48 contiguous states only Maine has more moose than Minnesota. Many of Minnesota's moose call the BWCA their home.

In theory when the population of moose declines to a level that limits ticks' opportunities to sustain their numbers, the death rate of moose will decline.

Hunting season for moose is already in a state of question because of the sharp decline in the state's moose population.

ALL QUIET AT THE HOTEL

The Kettle Falls Hotel on Kabetogama Peninsula may not open in the summer of 1991 because of a new Canadian regulation requiring U.S. boat owners to register with Canadian customs and obtain remote-area border crossing permits before crossing into Canadian waters, even when they do not set foot on Canadian soil.

Chuck Williams, owner of Kettle Falls Hotel, said that he will not open the Canadian border outpost on the Minnesota side of Rainy Lake this summer because of the new requirement. He believes that the border-crossing requirements will inconvenience his customers who would have to travel to

Fort Frances to obtain the permits before embarking on a boat ride to the isolated hotel in Voyageurs National Park.

The Canadian Government had considered work permits for U.S. fishing guides who have brought tourists into Canadian waters. The requirement would have been among a series of new restrictions for fishing on lakes on the Minnesota-Ontario border. The requirement has been dropped. Ending the demand of work permits for fishing guides is a welcome development according to Senator David Durenberger of Minnesota.

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