

# Cross-Canada canoeing family stops in The Pas

**M. Stuart Blanchet**

Times staff

The MacDonalds and their faithful dog Taq have been off and on the water for five years. They started in Victoria and made their way up the coast before cutting into Canada.

“Geoff grew up canoeing,” explains his wife Pam. “That’s the way, traditionally, [people] crossed Canada.”

So the Calgary couple determined that they would do the same and cross Canada by canoe and portage.

“We started planning it ten, fifteen years ago,” says Geoff. When they left Victoria in 2007, their goal was to see as much of Canada as possible, all while trying to get across. “We’ve been trying to see a lot of Canadian landscapes,” he adds.

For the MacDonalds and Taq, it seems to be an experiential journey. Every year, the three take their canoe to where they stopped the year before and continue their journey. Each day until they stop for the winter, they put in 8–10 hours of paddling. Minus breaks, of course.

“I think we’ve done over 5000km so far,” says Geoff. The longest portage

they’ve ever had to do was in the Rockies near Banff — for 100km.

Luck favours the prepared, and their expedition is no stranger to this. Wherever they go, they ask local canoers about the waterways ahead. With an open itinerary and an adaptive spirit, they’ve avoided some troublesome spots.

Since they began their cross-country canoe adventure, they’ve added a member to their crew.

“Once we had him, it’s been busy,” says Pam. “Jude’s two. [...] He has a spot in the canoe where he plays.”

He even has his own tethered paddle and helps out as best he can.

From The Pas, they’re headed to Cedar Lake and Lake Winnipeg.

“Next year is probably our last season,” notes Pam. “If all things go well, we’ll be in Atlantic Canada by then.”

They also expect a fifth crew member by the end of their journey. Their 20-foot canoe will no doubt be a little crowded!

“There’s a great adventure being outside,” exclaims Pam and Geoff adds that the best part about the trip has been the people they’ve met.

You can follow Geoff, Pam, Jude, and Taq on their canoeacrosscanada.ca website.



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*Expeditionaries Pam and Geoff MacDonald with their 2-year-old son Jude MacDonald and one of their best friends, Taq.*

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