

Paddling (canoe) Newfoundland's Inland Ocean; Grand Lake, Sandy Lake and Birchy Lake

In mid June 2015, Kevin and Sophia Redmond, Harry Butt and Hazen Scarth paddled Newfoundland's inland ocean, 160 km paddle, with most of the trip covered in three days, in perfect conditions. On February 3, 2016 Kevin and Hazen entertained a group of 60 people with a description of the trip. It was evident this trip is in the bucket list of many of our paddlers.

The presentation included an introduction of early explorers and their interaction with natives. These explorers were amazed of the beauty of the watershed and visions of huge potential based on industry and recreation had them thinking that one day the watershed would rival the Adirondacks .

Rivers from the lakes were dammed in the early 1920s to provide power for a new pulp mill in Corner Brook. This resulted in a watershed of over 5000 square kilometres.

The presentation included a description of Glover Island, with cliffs rising over 1000 feet; the 11th largest island on fresh water in the world. Other than fishing near Howley, the paddlers saw only two boats during their trip. The water was very high and on the second day of paddling, the group was confined to their canoes for over 6 hours.

Grand Lake is about 80 kilometres long with a maximum width of five kilometres. The water temperature was in low single digits. This paddle must be approached the same way as a paddle on Open Ocean.

Kevin emphasized not to view the beauty and placid images in the presentation as the quintessential conditions found on Grand Lake, Sandy Lake and Birchy Lake. The risks and hazards associated with this waterway can be extreme and unpredictable. Grand Lake alone is approximately 80 kilometres in length with a maximum width of five kilometres. Because of the low water temperature (June range 6 - 12 degrees C), wind funneling/channeling and anabatic/katabatic wind force and unpredictability this paddle must be approached the same way as a paddle on Open Ocean. Paddling these waters require the utmost of skill, preparation, and experience informed decision making.