LAND OF LITTLE STICKS ROUTES

Thanadelthur
(chipewyan diplomat)

Thanadelthur was described as being of great beauty with unusual intelligence and forceful character. Off the "Land of Little Sticks" at an early age she was taken captive by adversaries, escaped, and painfully made her way southeast to York Factory.

Shortly after her arrival, she left on the 1715-1716 peace negotiation mission between the Chipewyans and Crees. It was a very difficult voyage for the stateswoman and her companions, a great distance through rugged country of harsh climate. Once again she was to confront starvation but she was not to be defeated in her project, for when she returned to the mouth of the Hayes in the spring of 1716, good relations had been established between the peoples and with the trading company.

Thanadelthur took sick and on February 5th, 1717 she departed on her final journey.

Ending his journal entry for this day, H.B.C. governor James Knight at York Factory wrote: "She was one of a very high Spirit and of the Firmest Resolution that ever I see any Body in my Days and of great Courage & forecast..."

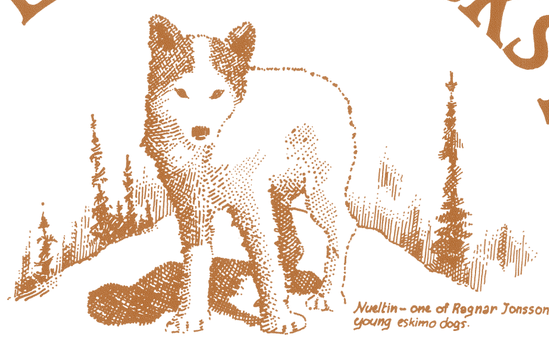
In "Traditions Indiennes du Canada Nord-Ouest" by Fr. Émile Petitot published in Paris in 1886, can be read the legend of Sha-nareltheer as told in 1879 by Alexis-Enna-azé of Lake Athabaska; its about "La Pierre qui branle" or The'-Nainlthoeur.

Petit Casimir

Was Chief of the Barren Land Band from 1906 to 1922. On August 19th 1907 Casimir signed the concluding articles for Treaty no. 10; others who signed with him for the band were Jean-Baptiste and André Anstanen.

Having wandered much, he knew well the barren lands. Approaching his lifes last chapter the old patriarch stayed mostly at Thai-tua (Sandy Lake) now Kasmere Lake.

Of his desires, one was to have his final resting place so set that he could watch his people pass on their way to the "Little Sticks". During the winter of 39-40 he passed on and Casimirs will was fulfilled for his body was set to rest on a high hill facing Fort Hall Lake.



Nueltin - one of Regnar Jonsson's young eskimo dogs.

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The routes make up a network of some 3500 odd Kilometres nestled above the 54th parallel, fanning north and northeast to the territorial boundary, thence east up to and including the treacherous Hudson Bay shoreline.

The upper shelf of these tracks drains through what is known to outsiders as the "Sub Arctic Region" but to the locals as the "Land of Little Sticks," a very peculiar country where life is still at a stage of coming into being.

Here, brief is the summer but very active during its nightless period allowing grounds to transform their vegetation into an Eden of bloom and colour; furthermore the country comes alive with a more aggressive lifeform known as mosquitoes and black flies.

Then there are the high sand eskers, some without a stick, others with arctic Spruce growing along the top & sides, but most have one thing in common: game trails along their spines leading to only the sky knows where.

Highways are fast shallow streams of nice cold water, becoming rowdy in the more shallow places and loafing quietly at the many lakes, but for sure, with time, going down to the bottom at the Bay.

The Land of Little Sticks is a vast place of extreme solitude where there isn't much mercy for anyone; wanderers are on their own, all alone by themselves.

Still, this is no more reason for garbaging around or being careless with fire. One should go through as a breeze leaving only a ruffle on the water to mark its passing.

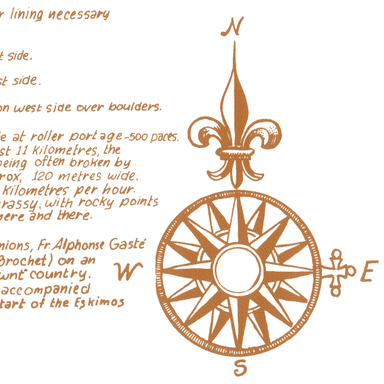
On April 21 st. 1868, with Chipewyan companions, Fr. Alphonse Gasté left Mission de Saint-Pierre du lac Caribou (Brochet) on an expedition to the upper Kazan and Doobaunt country. Returning the following year they were accompanied by five Eskimo families; this marked the start of the Eskimos coming to Brochet for trading.

DAVID THOMPSON
Famous Canadian geographer

Born April 30, 1770 at Westminster, England, he attended the Grey Coat School and at the age of 14 was an apprentice with the Hudson's Bay Company in Rupert's Land, working as a clerk and survey helper. While at Bedford House on Reindeer Lake in 1797 Thompson left the H.B.Co. and joined the Northwest Company which had a post at the South end of the Lake. In 1804 he became a partner in the Company and continued working in the northwest until 1812.

From 1816 to 1826 he surveyed the boundary line between Canada and the U.S.A.

On Feb. 10, 1857 David Thompson died in poverty at Longeuil near Montréal. Not only did he establish a chain of fur trading posts up north for both rival companies but became the most important early cartographer of the northwest. Worth reading: "David Thompson's Narratives of His Explorations in Western America 1784-1812." Toronto: Champlain Society, 1916. Also "Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor Between the years 1774 and 1792" Toronto: Champlain Society, 1934. Edited by J.B. Tyrell.

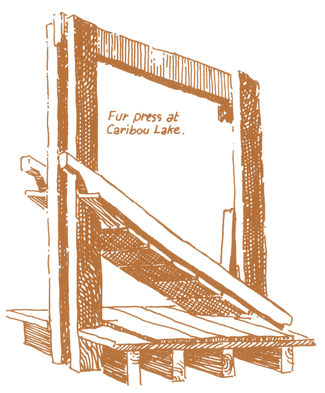


Ptarmigan - from an Eskimo soap stone. This jewel of the little sticks feeds on buds, berries and tiny twigs and switches colours with the seasons. In winter it wears feathered mukluks and sleeps in fluffy snow. To the meat of this grouse, many a local and northern roamer has owed his survival.

Little rugged church at "Caribou Lake" on the Caribou River. Inhabitants of this settlement left in the early '40's for Caribou Post at Little Duck Lake, now also deserted. A little cool wind wandering through a grassy meadow and whistling *Arctic spruce were the only signs of something going on when we passed by. *Arctic spruce for black spruce = Ragnar Jonsson.

BARREN LAND CARIBOU
The no-mans land pilgrims. Well worn trails on the spines of high eskers are the signs of their passing by the thousands on their way to greener pastures.

Shack at Caribou Post on Caribou Lake.



Fur press at Caribou Lake.

RAGNAR JONSSON

Born on Feb. 26th, 1900 at Örnsköldsvik, Sweden, Ragnar JONSSON came to Canada as a young man. For some years he roamed around Prince Albert, Churchill and Reindeer L. and in 1938 headed north for the "Little Sticks," more precisely Nueltin Lake; his grounds included the Seal, Wolverine and Caribou Rivers. For company Ragnar has a half dozen well cared for and well behaved eskimo dogs; he is occassionally visited by some tundra wolves who come to play with his buddies.

As most successfull trappers, he spent much time observing animal comportment and relations with other things in nature. By now he has them pretty well figured out as far as trapping them is concerned enabling him to harvest a yearly quota, which provides his livelihood and furthermore perpetuates one of this country's oldest traditions and ways of life. His catch includes a variety of animals but principally Arctic fox, Arctic wolf and wolverine.

So rooted has he become in this "Land of Little Sticks," that he sees no reason for ever leaving what he refers to as "Oh! this beautiful Country." One of his favourite spots is Twin Falls. Here, he says, you have independence all sorts of place to move around, peace and quiet; you come and go when you feel like.

In summertime, Ragnar uses his big wooden yawl for going places; on board are some red 45 gallon drums used as grub containers and clothes closets. He and his dogs all move down towards the southwest end of Nueltin L. where, in a tepee on an island, the short summer is enjoyed.

Individuals such as him have chosen a different trail to cross life, a simpler way with very little more than a packsack on the back, an axe in hand plus anything the eyes, ears and nose can gather (which can amount to quite a collection). There may be something suggestive in the simple ways of this wanderer in answer to some present day questions.

CAUTION:
This Canoe Route is to be used for general information; it is not a navigational chart. It was prepared in the summer of 1962,1976, 1977 & 1978 and the information recorded, including information with respect to the volume and velocity of water, reflects only the conditions which existed at that time. Because of the constantly changing nature of the waterway, this Canoe Route should be referred to with extreme caution, and only in conjunction with topographical maps and other available data.

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