

Letter from Greenland

On the Hunt in Thule

John Pedersen takes after narwhal in a traditional qajaq

In this issue:

Letter from the President (P. 2)

Editor's Note: (P. 3)

Recommendations (P. 4)

Paddling through Grief, by Jeff Bjorgo (P. 4)

Qajaq vs. COVID: 2021 Events, by Dubside (P. 6)

Tuning Your Body and Kayak, by Christopher Crowhurst (P. 19)

Replicating a Greenland Qajaq, Part 3, by Fred Randall (P. 23)

Hunters, Bold & Otherwise, by Fridtjof Nansen, Tony Schmitz (P. 28)

*Remembering Richard Nonas, by Dan Segal, Jennifer Torres,
Harvey Golden (P. 32)*

On the Hunt In Thule, by John Pedersen (P. 38)

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

I feel like it wasn't that long ago that I was writing about what a challenging year 2020 was. Little did I know that 2021 would also be challenging for so many people on the planet. A few days ago I found myself sitting on a rock overlooking a calm lake. Trees were reflected in the water, and every now and then a fish would splash on the surface. The world has changed, but the solitude and enjoyment that the outdoors provides hasn't changed, and it has brought hope and enjoyment to so many of us during these challenging times.



Thank you for supporting Qajaq USA throughout the pandemic. While some Qajaq USA sanctioned events have been canceled, others have moved virtual platforms, and still others have taken place — with COVID precautions in place. This will likely be the same for 2022, as each event decides how best to navigate the waves that are in front of it.

The “forced” break that the pandemic has created has given each event an opportunity to rethink, redesign and come back with renewed energy and inspiration. Thank you to all of the Qajaq USA sanctioned event organizers, mentors and participants. I’m looking forward to connecting with you soon.

Another group of people that need to be thanked is the Qajaq USA Board of Directors. This group of volunteers meet about four times a year to share ideas and thoughts. They’re also tasked with the projects that keep Qajaq USA afloat, such as graphic design, merchandise design and distribution, managing finances, putting together publications (such as this one) and everything in between. Many of these Board Members have volunteered their time for years, and some of them have been involved for decades. While they’re doing a great job, there comes a time when the norsaq needs to be handed off, which is where you come in...

If you have the time and desire to become more involved with Qajaq USA, please get in touch with us at info@qajaqusa.com. Along those lines, if you have questions, comments, ideas, etc., then please reach out.

Thank you again, and cheers to 2022.

— *Helen Wilson*

EDITOR'S NOTE

It's not always easy to figure out what we're up to here.

Some of us are consumed by the impulse to make things. Today it's a kayak. Tomorrow it might be a knife forged from rebar or a long bow fashioned from a linden trunk. The object is less important than the act of creation.

For others it's an appreciation of the timeless grace and beauty of a skin-on-frame kayak — the cunning use of materials, the balance between the fragility of the parts and the strength of the whole, the lightness of the boat on the water.

There are some out there who feel that they're stepping back in time and coming to an understanding, no matter how dim, of what it might have been like to make a life with tools formed from whatever could be gathered on a beach.

Then there are those who see the kayak as part of athletic pursuit. How many different types of rolls can I master, even if they are no longer linked to the actual problems of hunting from a kayak that bristled with spear tips, line, knives and floats?

This issue of the Masik takes a run at these subjects in a variety of ways.

Master builder Fred Randall continues his excellent series on how to build a replica of historical kayaks, such as those found in Harvey Golden's *Kayaks of Greenland*.

Christopher Crowhurst explains how to fine tune your body and your kayak so you can paddle longer and more comfortably.

Dubside delivers a report on the traditional paddlers gatherings that happened during the COVID crisis, with thoughts about organizer half-life and hopes for the future.

Dan Segal, Jennifer Torres and Harvey Golden remember one of the early lights of Greenland kayaking in the US, the paddler, builder, artist, anthropologist and deep-thinker, Richard Nonas, who died last year.

Jeff Bjorgo explores another use of the kayak — paddling to soften the grief that overflows after your spouse dies.

Greenlander John Pedersen contributes another fascinating letter in which he compares the qajaq club rules for competition in southern Greenland with the rough and ready approach used by the far north hunters of Thule, who take to the water in qajaqs to hunt narwhal.

Finally, I'm weighing in on my ridiculous efforts to use a kayak for hunting in Minnesota. Let's say the prey was not fearsome, and the results not epic.

Take in the richness and complexity here and it's like opening a door onto a vast landscape. There are a lot of paths, plenty of places to end up. There are, as is so often the case, issues not far below the surface. What part of this is appreciation? What part appropriation? How can you tell the difference?

That I leave for your consideration. For now it's a pleasure to offer a version of these questions in another issue of the Masik.

— Tony Schmitz

RECOMMENDATIONS

ON THE DISAPPEARING ICE: Check out the New Yorker magazine's compilation of photos by the Icelandic photographer Ragnar Axelsson, who has spent the past 35 years documenting the native hunters of Greenland. In [The Fading Ways of the Indigenous Arctic Hunter](#), you get a glimpse at the effects of climate change on Greenland's ice floes, sled dogs, and traditional culture in photos that are, despite their depiction of environmental carnage, breathtaking.



Axelsson is more concerned with sled dogs than kayaks, and presents them as an essential aspect of survival in the far north. In his photo book, [Arctic Heroes](#), from which the New Yorker article is derived, he writes that dogs are "the only companion you want by your side in your moment of need."

TIMBER! Anyone building a traditional skin-on-frame kayak has spent time wrestling green oak or ash into ribs. For a deeper look at the possibilities of harvesting and working with green lumber, check out [The Forest Woodworker: A step-by-step guide to working with green wood](#).

There's some deep hippie-ism at work here, as a pair of Dutch makers cavort in the woods, felling trees, hewing them into useable lumber and fashioning spoons, chairs, tables, stools, chopping blocks, shaving horses and more. The well-illustrated book features rundowns on safely bringing down trees, strengths and weaknesses of various tree species, hand tools and how to use them, and various joinery techniques.

THE ROMANIAN KAYAK: Here's another entry in the how-to-build-a-kayak file, this time by the

Romanian builder Catalin Pogaci. His contribution to the category, [The Qajaq Book](#): Conceiving and building a skin on frame qajaq, originally published in Romanian, is translated into English and offered at the bargain-basement price of \$3.58 for the Kindle version.

While the English can be a little sketchy at times (though infinitely better than my Romanian) this text is best viewed as a frame-of-mind adjustment and high altitude overview. Pogaci is good at promoting the notion that as a builder you should relax and enjoy yourself, take time off when you need to, accept the idea of occasional failure. Don't expect a step-by-step tutorial a la Chris Cunningham's [Building the Greenland Kayak](#): A Manual for Its Construction and Use. But if you've already studied the other sacred texts, this is a light-hearted addition to the category. And the price is undoubtedly right.

YOUR ELECTRIC CAR, GREENLAND'S

RESOURCES: Most likely the location of the world's reserves of rare earth elements like neodymium and dysprosium — critical ingredients in electronic devices such as electric motors and wind turbines — hasn't weighed so heavily on your mind. Not so in Greenland, where the discovery of these and other resources such as nickel, cobalt, titanium and gold has set off a modern metals rush. In [The World Wants Greenland's Minerals, but Greenlanders Are Wary](#), the New York Times reports that while billionaire investors and the global superpowers are angling to get their hands on Greenland's metal riches, local activists are organizing to prevent the environmental destruction that would accompany mining. Find out what happened when mining interests ran into Greenlander Mariane Paviasen in the remote village of Narsaw (population, 1,700).

Paddling through Grief

Consolation that comes in a kayak

By Jeff Bjorgo

The kayak got me where I needed to be in 2021 to keep one promise. My wife's wishes were for her ashes to be scattered on Lake Superior. Thirty-nine years earlier her father put her mother's ashes there. It was her wish to rest in eternity with her.

I met my wife Laura at the open mic I hosted in South Minneapolis in 2007. I hosted there for 13 years and saw a million people come through. She was just a cute red-haired girl with a great resting bitch face, waiting for showtime.

I said to her, Where's your guitar? She said she didn't have one. She sang a cappella and damn, she sang good. It takes guts to sing a cappella at open mic because usually it's dreadful. But she nailed it. She could sing. She had pipes.

We got to be friends from the open mic. I remember the first time we collaborated. I played this Piedmont picking style that I like. Blues. It sounded pretty good to me. The audience loved it. And she said, your guitar sounded terrible. That was, I don't know, 2008 sometime. Laura was laying out the groundwork for the record that she produced and released in 2009.

We got married in 2010. She'd never been married. I'd been married before. She was 48. I can hear her calling, "Where's my husband?" It was lovely and funny.



She was an entrepreneur. She ran a cleaning business. She did a multitude of things. She was a certified western health medical technician and worked in the field for ten years. Then she went into eastern medicine and was a certified Shiatsu therapist and had her own studio. Music was her passion. She had worked hard at it. But then she stopped scheduling anything. She said she wasn't going to clean anymore. I thought she was depressed. She said she was just tired, that she wanted to take a break. She didn't want to do gigs. She

was very into eastern medicine then so I had to convince her to get a check up with a doctor and see what was going on.

I took her to see her primary care physician. She was in the exam room for about three minutes when they called me and said the doctor wants you to come in here. He said there's something wrong with her brain. She's got to go to a neurologist. Like, now. It was less than a year when we got the death sentence diagnosis. Alzheimer's. That was on the table, but along the way we were hoping for something nearly as horrid like a brain tumor or

autoimmune diseases where she might have a chance. The doctor said she's got five to seven years. She lived four from that time. But even when she went into the hospital, I didn't think she was going to die. I thought she would have to live in some facility.

She was 59. She loved me. It was the full moon.

Grief is weirder than you can imagine. You're trying to put that love someplace. You go around living in this surreal dreamland. I was burned to the ground for a while. Forever?

When I was strong enough to get to the water it was righteous. It's a cliché but it's true. Be outside. Be in nature. It's great for grief. With the kayak, with paddling, part of it is the rhythm. It's always been contemplative. If you're out there you're going to find some moment of enlightenment. Every time when I threw the boat in the water since Laura died, there's always been something.

One day I went to a lake near here that has nesting eagles. I don't know how many chicks they had this year, but I found an eagle feather on the edge of the ice. That day I saw four eagles at once. I was just laying back on the deck, watching an eagle circle over me. I watched that bird for five minutes and it stayed right over me. You're in a state of mind where you swear everything is divine. I could have stayed there and died. But my neck hurt too bad, so I had to sit up.

One evening I sat there in the kayak and watched the way the sun reflected in and through the

water. I just drifted to the shore. I sat there for ten minutes and looked at the sun's patterns on the water, on the sand on the bottom. Surreal times, frankly hallucinatory.

Swan migration was righteous. At least 300 swans swam on the lake one day. I watched seven take off the ice edge and circle back to me, I lay back on the deck and they flew six feet above me. I could see the shit on their feathers.

You really can't believe it, but I swore that Laura did that. I was positive. You can't think of it in any way except that it's divine.

Jesus, I did some sobbing out there.

I can still hear Laura's voice asking me, "Are you going on the water?" She said it a lot of times. She never called it paddling or going kayaking.

I remember the tone in her voice, which changed from

hour to hour and from day to day.

Sometimes, "Are you going on the water," would sound wistful. Sometimes she might sound a little annoyed, as in, "Go play by yourself then." And sometimes it captured much more than that; that she was waking up to a beautiful day, that life seemed perfect, that she knew I loved the water and that I loved her. It was a big pot of subtle emotion, impossible to truly describe. Best wishes to anyone who can come close.

In the end here's what I've got: "I will never hear that voice again from the lips I loved to kiss."

Laura, you are together again with Momma Ginny. Promise kept.

Sometimes, "Are you going on the water," would sound wistful. Sometimes she might sound a little annoyed, as in, "Go play by yourself then." And sometimes it captured much more than that; that she was waking up to a beautiful day, that life seemed perfect, that she knew I loved the water and that I loved her.

GATHERINGS



Photo Courtesy Traditional Paddlers Gathering

On the water at Minnesota's Traditional Paddlers Gathering

Qajaq Versus COVID

Organizers pull off successful Qajaq USA events in South Carolina, Minnesota and Florida

The COVID pandemic has been tough on everyone. For traditional paddlers, 2021 was a year filled with cancellations of signature events including the Delmarva Paddlers Retreat, the Michigan Training Camp, the Hudson River Greenland Festival, the Minnesota Qajaq Camp, and the South Sound Traditional Inuit Kayaking Symposium.

But COVID didn't win this round altogether. Events held by the Traditional Inuit Paddlers of the Southeast, the Traditional Paddlers of the South, and the Traditional Paddlers Gathering in Minnesota brought together kayakers for a respite from pandemic worries.

Dubside managed to hit all three. In addition to serving as a rolling, paddling and ropes mentor, he kept out a sharp eye to report on how organizers adapted to this new reality. See his detailed observations and photos on the following pages.

Is It Safe to Come Out Yet?

Qajaq USA events begin to test the waters

By Dubside (photos and text)

As with most everything else in the world involving people in groups, 2020 affected traditional Greenland paddling adversely – all Qajaq USA events were cancelled. A disaster? Well, that depends on how you look at it. Through Greenland eyes what may look like a disaster can be viewed as an opportunity. I myself have been annually attending multiple Qajaq USA events for the past two decades, enough to take them for granted. I've been to each consecutive Delmarva Paddlers Retreat since first attending in 2001. I couldn't imagine October without a weekend in Delaware at Camp Arrowhead until, that is, I had to imagine it because that is what occurred. Twice. Now that we have all had time to reflect on how much we miss the times and places we're able to congregate with our fellow traditional paddling friends, the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel seems to be finally in view.

In 2021 event organizers were faced with deciding whether to hold off for another year or go forward while figuring out appropriate protocols for masks and vaccinations. Delmarva, the longest running traditional get-together in the U.S., and SSTIKS, the longest running such event, both opted to cancel, though not without extended deliberation of the pros and cons, and going so far as to announce the scheduled dates and accept registrations before changing course. Other Qajaq USA events met similar fates with three notable exceptions:

TIPS - Traditional Inuit Paddlers of the Southeast,

usually held in May did a scaled-down version in August. TPG, the Traditional Paddlers Gathering in Minnesota, successfully held their event in its usual timeslot, early September. TRAQS, Traditional Qajaqers of the South, a Florida event usually held in March, rescheduled to late October. I had the good fortune to attend all three of these, which gave me a front row seat to watch U.S. traditional paddling assemblies begin to rebound, see what the organizers are facing, and take stock of the future.



Event impresario Dave Sides

Make no mistake about it, running a weekend paddling get-together is hard work. It's also work that tends to expand into a year-round activity. Between matching increasing costs to budgetary constraints, predicting turnout numbers, securing insurance, lining up a pool of instructors, coordinating transportation for featured guests,

arranging the logistics of obtaining the Qajaq USA fleet kayaks and gear, handling special food preferences and lodging considerations, anticipating the weather, and updating the website, there also T-shirts, nametags, pets, fragile egos and still more unexpected surprises to deal with. Robin Snow, who ran Delmarva by herself for eight years starting around 1997, once described to me her mantra for maintaining sanity as that first week in October approached each time: "It has to fall apart before it falls together."

Going through the ordeal eight years in a row is somewhat exceptional. Judging from past history the average life expectancy for holding the organizer's position is about five or six years

beyond which mortal human beings reach their limit. Working by committee can add additional years yet everyone on a committee eventually burns out, hopefully not simultaneously. Ideally volunteers, if they materialize when needed, take on the roles of those leaving and the event continues. In other instances someone may pick up the remains of an event no longer held and revive it. Dave Sides aka Unkel Dave brought HRGF, the Hudson River Greenland Festival back into existence in 2008 and, with a varying crew of assistants, set what may be a record. He ran it for ten years, and in the process moved it to a new location, lengthened it to a full weekend instead of one day, and grew it to the feature New York area Greenland paddler's rendezvous that it has become.

TIPS 2021 Talley Sims and her husband Chuck were involved in the inception of the Traditional Inuit Paddlers of the Southeast, first held in 2014 in South Carolina. They experimented with a few subpar locations before finding Camp Fellowship near the town of Greenwood in 2016, which checked all the boxes: a sizable lake, good food, a helpful and understanding staff, very comfortable accommodations, and a price that worked. TIPS was held there annually up to 2019. At that point Talley had enough but no one stepped up to take the reins, even after the pause of 2020.

TIPS 2021 was announced as a farewell version. The usual time in May didn't work because Chuck and Talley were in the midst of moving. They decided to wait for a month or two. This also provided more time to see how the pandemic situation looked. But postponing created another organizer's complication. Camp Fellowship had no open dates available during the middle of summer. Talley solved that problem by scaling the registration down to 15 people, and holding it at home – the new Sims residence, an impressive abode in a lake community near the town of Chapin, South

Carolina.

When they bought the place, they were looking for something not quite so large but none of the available houses in the neighborhood were any smaller. For the final TIPS the extra bedrooms and spacious finished basement were put to good use. It also made the most of a backyard that extended to the water's edge and had a dock too. The lake did however have a very mucky bottom and Chuck went to the trouble of constructing a framed mesh-and-fabric barrier that was maybe 10 feet wide and 15 feet long which the early-arriving participants helped him sink along the shoreline to make a friendlier kayak launch area.

As cars began arriving Chuck orchestrated the driveway parking arrangement so no one was boxed in. Later arrivals lined up along the empty lot across the street. Kayaks were hauled off cartops and spread out across the back lawn. One of the best attractions of the smaller traditional gatherings is the intimacy. The crowd at Delmarva or SSTIKS can be overwhelming to first-timers. TIPS always had a more close-knit feel and this time it couldn't have been closer in that



TIPS, Jenna Padilla, Talley Sims

we were eating in the Sims kitchen and lounging in their living room like a family. Having cars, water, kayak staging, sleeping, and eating locations all within a 100 foot radius was amazing. If you imagine Delmarva and HRGF as 3-day concert music festivals, this TIPS was like getting to hang out backstage for the whole weekend.

While it would seem to be a lot less work for an organizer to hold an event from home, Talley still had her hands full. She became the default kitchen staff and besides a few supplemental dishes brought by participants she did the food planning, preparation, and cooking. Those efforts were well appreciated, as the fare was a significant step up from the dining hall food of previous years.

Dave Sides attended, having made the long drive from his New York state home. For some time now he has been turning up at events all around the country. As a former event

organizer of HRGF and also the main announcer at Delmarva for many years it's taken him some time to get comfortable on the sidelines and refrain from reflexively adopting the organizer's mindset, which is to perpetually be on the lookout for potential trouble sources and become antsy when things aren't done the way he knows they should be. Sometimes one has to just let go and give people the leeway to sink or swim on their own as they chart new directions using the fresh perspectives they bring.

Lately there is a new situation organizers have to address – precautions. In fact one of the people originally signed up for TIPS, who was really looking forward to coming, tested positive and had to drop out, leaving just 14 participants. Everyone who came had been vaccinated and we used masks for a bit, or thought about wearing them, but by Sunday they'd been dispensed with for the most part. Nevertheless Jane Gulden wielded the infrared thermometer and made the rounds every morning to ensure no one had the signs of a fever.

Wearing masks while paddling in the breezy



At TIPS: luxury backyard accommodations.

outdoors seemed unnecessary, but there was a different obligatory item to wear. Following a trend of recent years, all participants including instructors had to perform a wet

exit before paddling, and were then awarded a little plastic charm to display on their PFD. The idea was to provide instructors a quick way to determine whether or not a student has met the prerequisite. Personally, I have accumulated enough seals, turtles, whales, flowers, and starfish to fill more than one bracelet. Which raises the question, Are they transferable? Does the seal I got at SSTIKS get me out of doing a wet exit at HRGF? Probably not.

I brought my set of ropes for the Greenland gymnastics. Talley thought there was nowhere suitable on the property to set them up but Dave and I looked around and found two trees in one

corner of the front yard that worked fine. With a group so small, and one that doesn't include any kids, the demo and try-it-yourself period went fairly quickly. We got three or four people giving it a try. Everyone else was content to watch.

The lake had an uninhabited island a bit less than a mile away with a narrow sandy beach on the far side suitable for rolling instruction. The usual

morning and afternoon sessions were held while



Learning the ropes with Dave Sides at TIPS.



At TAKS, 2008: John Peterson, Maligiaq, Cheri Perry.

another small group took a cruise around the lake for stroke instruction. South Carolina in August is quite hot and humid so the comfort of the Sims air-conditioned residence was well appreciated. That was also one of the nicer perks of Camp Fellowship, the site of TIPS from 2016 to 2019. It had a fully air-conditioned facility where a central meeting room sat in the middle of a satellite configuration of twelve sleeping rooms each with two or three beds and their own bathroom with shower. For those who frown on the tent camping of SSTIKS, or the rustic barracks-style cabins at Michigan Training Camp and Delmarva, TIPS was the best thing going.

Saturday the weather forecast indicated thunderstorm possibilities. We decided not to go to the island and instead stayed in the bay near the house. For rolling instruction the mucky bottom wasn't too bad although the unsecured sunglasses and noseclips that fell in were a lost cause. As cumulus clouds began to build vertically in the distance, our scheduled rolling demonstration was moved forward to beat the storm. With a microphone and amplification, Dave emceed the

show from the dock as the rolls progressed from elbow crook (pakasummillugu) to forward ending throwing stick (norsamik masikkut) and under-the-hull sculling roll (qaannap ataatigut ipilaarlugu).

The extra-small size of the group still had a good mix of Qajaq USA regulars and first timers. One such new face was a guy named Burak Bekan, originally from Turkey. When we found out he was a very knowledgeable physical therapist, we took note of his input on muscle groups used in rolling, shoulder injuries, and all things related to human anatomy. On the water he made rapid progress starting with the basic balance brace and sculling skills.

On Sunday Dave was on the dock again to officiate a rather loose notion of a group game for kayakers. We partnered up and paddled in a circle, then two circles, then changed direction, did 180 degree sweeps or tried to perform whatever else Dave thought of. It made for good maneuvering practice.

Another new face was a fellow who has run a conventional (non-traditionally focused) kayaking event in the South Carolina area for several years. As he learned more of the Greenland lore, saw the variety of rolls possible, and had a go on the ropes at the able hands of Dave, the idea of adding a Greenland element to his event took hold. I don't want to jinx things by raising expectations, but it is possible that some form of TIPS may live on past this "last" one.

If this was indeed the final TIPS, it may be technically the first Qajaq USA event to close up shop. Other gatherings that have stopped were not officially under the QajaqUSA umbrella. The early incarnations of HRGF that ended before Dave Sides' revival were held before Qajaq USA had a formal sanctioning process in place. Also TAKS — Traditional Arctic Kayaking Symposium — which never attained Qajaq USA status, was a gathering held at a rotating series of locations in California. It lasted from 2006 to 2010 and was billed as the only traditional event in the U.S. that took place on the open coast. Notable guests who attended one or more times included Helen Wilson, Maligiaq Padilla, Dan Segel, George Gronseth, Cheri Perry and Turner Wilson. The organizers, John Petersen and Wolfgang Brink, reached the five-year point and, for what I imagine was a combination of reasons, TAKS ended.

A typical reason for someone to start a Greenland-style weekend get-together is so that they don't have to make such a long trek to one of the established events. SSTIKS (Washington State), TAKS (California), TIPS (South Carolina), and TRAQS (Florida) all to a greater or lesser extent had this phenomenon at play in their inception. For long-term survival it is crucial to draw upon and cultivate paddlers from the local base rather than expect to attract all the distant regulars who make multiple appearances around the country. Then if the seeds sown locally grow over time it creates a self-sustaining core of participants.

Based on his decade of experience, Dave Sides is a

wealth of information on event organizing. He says the big issues are the venue and the food. From a baseline of camping in tents and having people bring their own food, every improvement can attract more participants but will increase costs. Getting a dry place in the event of rain such as the meeting hall at HRGF or the big canopy tent at SSTIKS is one such step up. Hiring a caterer or a real chef so those who are paddling most of the day can relax and eat well rather than worry about cooking is another option that's a lot more appealing than calling in pizza and fried chicken. For reducing the workload Dave favors having a designated registration person, a waterfront person, and a food person, if you can find reliable and trustworthy people.

The past decade's noted downturn in the paddlesports industry has affected the Greenland-style sector too, and organizers have had to worry about attendance particularly in regards to breaking even financially. Consider what in some sense could be thought of as the golden era for running a traditional paddling weekend. Back in the late 1990's and early 2000's Delmarva was the only game in town, i.e. the only place in the country like-minded kayakers could congregate. For Robin Snow the 100 or so registration slots would routinely fill up weeks ahead of time, necessitating a waiting list for those who procrastinated too long. Today the existence of multiple options and locations tends to spread the numbers a bit thin across the country, although I don't want to dismiss the possibility that the popularity of kayaking could stage a major resurgence and overwhelming demand to attend these events could reoccur.

TPG 2021 I'm happy to report that the Traditional Paddlers Gathering (which I'm still trying to get out of the habit of referring to by its old name: The Minnesota Gathering) pulled off a fine resurgence from the year of hibernation and has enviable prospects for a prosperous future. Originally started by the late Jo Hamilton as an outgrowth of the Michigan Training Camp, TPG's

organizational duties have changed hands a few times. In 2016 Renee DuFrene took on the job and just this year hit the aforementioned 5-to-6-year organizer's average life expectancy. Fortunately for Minnesota's traditional kayakers TPG had people willing to step in as trainees, allowing Renee to gracefully retire. Peter Strand leads the new administrative group and 2021 became their first test.



Contemplating at TPG: Peter Strand

ask Peter." This reminded me of Dave Braun's comment in 2005 or 2006. He was the original organizer of the Michigan Training Camp and just that year had turned it over to Diane Carr and Nancy Thornton. When anyone around the camp brought him their issues he was happily wielding a new phrase, "That's not my problem."

Renee in 2017 moved the event to its current location, a Boy Scout camp in the middle of Minnesota that boasts a castle on-site. Well, it's as much of a castle as one can find in these parts. It was built of cinder blocks specifically for the camp probably less than ten years prior. In something of an organizer's coup, Renee secured a discounted rate for using the camp by agreeing to accommodate a number of Boy Scouts who came on Saturday and worked on their kayaking merit badge with the assistance of Renee's lineup of instructors. The arrangement has been quite successful. Each year a different group of scouts from the surrounding area comes to see firsthand a side of kayaking rarely available to most boys.

Renee attended the latest TPG but with her large-and-in-charge presence couldn't shake being looked to as the person with all the answers. Yet at this point she had earned the right to shirk all responsibilities. She let it be known that the default directive for all questions, problems, and concerns was now, "go

The featured on-land workshop this year at TPG was not paddle-carving or tuilik-making but sewing your own changing robe. These garments began appearing at Delmarva auctions many years ago courtesy of the Walden Pond Scum. A roomy hooded pullover made of toasty fleece makes changing out of wet paddling gear easily accomplished anywhere. A TPG's regular Cindy Williams presided over four sewing machines and a large stock of fleece in a variety of colors. People were pretty good about wearing masks

whenever they came indoors except of course for eating.

This year the large lake next to the camp hadn't received its normal intake and the shoreline was noticeably lower. The area near the dock was too shallow to roll in, so the usual on-water

demonstration didn't occur and instruction took place further offshore where the deeper areas could be found. Ropes went as planned. A set of trees by the bonfire ring was brought into service



TPG's fortress location in northern Minnesota.

Photo courtesy Traditional Paddlers Gathering

as in past years, though this time a stack of firewood had to be moved out of the way.

TPG has for years taken harpoon interest somewhat further than the other Qajaq USA events. Sipke, Renee's partner, has nurtured his interest in all things relating to a seal hunter's chief weapon and presided over his annual harpoon contest during the weekend. He also set up his usual on-land target range where the Boy Scouts are introduced to this esoteric aspect of kayak lore.

Saturday afternoon, as the on-water activities wound down and people got dried off and changed, a ropes demo was scheduled for 4:30 at the fire ring next to the castle. The mid-west ropes guru Tim Galloway was on hand along with a few other rope aficionados. After a full display of rope moves from the easiest low ropes exercises to the advanced high ropes tricks, the unintimidated members of the audience as well as the younger more limber ones got on to try for themselves. Sipke hit on an innovation. Why not sit on the ropes in the qajaasaarneq position to throw a harpoon? We had no documentation that this was ever done in Greenland but that didn't matter. The rocking side to side and lack of firm stability maybe simulates the feel of sitting in a floating kayak. Or maybe not. But either way several people who would



Renee DeFresne: I'll tell you where to put that thing.

otherwise never get on the ropes wanted to try throwing a harpoon this way. A pizza box served as a target and an area was cleared of people before the throwing commenced. For the record the pizza box emerged unscathed.

An evening auction has become a staple of these traditional paddling affairs. What started years

ago at Delmarva as a way to generate money for bringing in special guests from far away places such as Greenland has proven successful enough to be copied elsewhere. In Dave Sides' view the money generated by the auction is critical for an event's survival. Larger events naturally tend to have more elaborate auctions including dozens of items, many with a kayak or arctic theme. To facilitate an unmanageably large supply of donated stuff it gets divided three ways: the live auction, the silent auction, and the raffle, or occasionally something different. TPG has

experimented with Qajaq Jeopardy, using an app, a projector, and a selection of questions, composed ahead of time, many of which required Greenlandic terms for the answers or should I say the questions, this being Jeopardy.

This year it was Qajaq bingo instead of a live auction. Plans to use the word "Qajaq" across the top of each card instead of "Bingo" had to be

scraped because "Qajaq" has two pairs of identical



Sewing up a storm: Changing robes at TPG.

letters. For \$10 per card we played for three grand prizes: a deluxe changing robe in vibrant orange with ornate trimming for the luxurious touch, an exquisitely laminated wood paddle sporting East Greenland style hardwood tips, and a distinctive cutting board

laser-etched with a kayak design that included the QajaqUSA logo. Sipke operated the rotating bingo number cage, keeping everyone intently focused on their cards.

I'm not sure how well bingo works from a fundraising perspective. Once the cards are purchased there's no way to generate additional money because no bidding goes on. The price of cards has to be set in anticipation of how many will be sold and this has to be weighed against what the prize items might otherwise fetch in a straightforward auction. However, in this instance some additional money did come in when the winner of the paddle offered to donate it back for another bingo round if three people would each donate ten dollars into the pot. Within seconds five people were waving tens.

The collective of assistants helping Peter run TPG includes kayaking couple



Sipke with a conceptual breakthrough: Harpoon on the ropes.

Tom & Danielle, and their three-month-old daughter Becky. (Well, Becky isn't providing any organizational assistance yet, but she comes with the package.) As so many of the traditional kayaking

demographic are already grandparents, it's encouraging to see younger people getting involved, particularly as organizers. I'd say that TPG's future looks very good for at least another five years.

TRAQS 2021 Ed Mann has been running Traditional Qajaqers of the South since 2016. Like TIPS, it's been one of the smaller gatherings, offering a cozier feel than the larger crowd found at Delmarva or SSTIKS.

To carve out a calendar spot that wouldn't interfere with other events, and would also take advantage of Florida's milder temperatures, Ed settled on the end of March, making his the earliest event of each year. After 2020 when everything was canceled, it fell to Ed to decide first if he would hold TRAQS in 2021, and it was a difficult



Big winner: First prize at the TPG auction.

decision to make. He opted for a long

postponement, allowing him to get an idea of what other organizers were doing.

The rescheduled TRAQS 2021 was held Halloween weekend at a place called Lake Placid Camp and Conference Center, a large Christian-oriented facility in central Florida about an hour south of Orlando that Ed found several years ago. The camp borders a big lake and has enough cabins, cottages, dorms, etc. to accommodate multiple groups at once. When one gets this far south the humidity as well as the insects make air-conditioned indoor sleeping quarters indispensable.

In the weeks beforehand, with concerns still a factor, Ed decided to adopt a mandatory vaccination standard. Both TIPS and TPG had done so without incident.

Thursday afternoon on October 28 the mentors began to arrive and by evening the majority of the participants were present, a group of 25 to 30 people. Cheri Perry and her associate Liz were featured instructors who came from Maine. Cheri was recovering from a fairly severe injury but appeared quite functional. Her rolling instructional method uses an extended series of exercises done on land, which Ed had scheduled for the Thursday evening. Burak Bekan came to TRAQS, making him, I believe, the only person besides me to attend more than one of the 2021 events. As mentioned above he is an adept physical therapist, an occupation that Cheri readily sang the praises of. We also found out Burak was once employed for some years in a boatyard doing fiberglass repair. With expertise like that we hope to see a lot more of him in the future.



TRAQS organizer Ed Mann.

Dorsey DeMaster, a local kayaker who has done the entire coastline of Florida, led the morning yoga Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Surprisingly she had a full crowd, numbering probably 60 to 75 percent of the whole group. It was inspiring to see so many people engaged in an activity that benefits one's rolling as well as general kayaking ability. Perhaps the fact that it was scheduled for 7 a.m. had something to do with the high turnout.

Morning yoga has become a staple at Qajaq USA events but 6:30 a.m. or earlier is a far more common starting time, which adds one more disincentive for late risers. Dorsey also gave an evening presentation about her coastline paddling feat.

Comparatively speaking, the food at TRAQS was okay. Just okay. Not a compelling reason to attend, but that wasn't the focus anyway. One need not gravitate to TRAQS for the exceptional meals (that would be Michigan Training Camp) just as one wouldn't lean towards Delmarva for the kids activities (that would be SSTIKS). TRAQS breakfasts and dinners were served at the dining hall where other groups using the camp ate as well. For Friday and Saturday lunch Ed had the kitchen staff send a platter of sub sandwiches to our meeting room so as to lower the number of times we were in proximity to the other larger groups and thereby decrease our potential exposure. Like at TIPS, face masks were widely deployed initially but less and less so as time went on.

A group of five women from the Naples area who call themselves The Rebel Rollers added a lively dose of new energy and enthusiasm. They even had shirts embroidered with their logo. This gang of skinny stick fanatics was precisely the type of



Which way to QajaqUSA 2022 events? Ed Mann and Cheri Perry know.

cultivated local participant base mentioned above that an event's longevity depends on. They had a rolling trick I hadn't seen before, which made use of a hula hoop. Paddling towards a floating hoop at cruising speed, the goal was to do a roll-on-the-move in such a way that the kayak's bow speared the hoop upon capsizing. By coming up and continuing to paddle forward while threading the paddle and torso through the hoop it would slide along the aft section where another roll allowed it to slip off the stern. The feat was not only a good rolling exercise but also a test of accurate timing and positioning.

At a small affair like TRAQS, with far fewer items donated, the auction isn't nearly as big a production, which in some ways allows for a less hectic evening with more time for casual socializing, often around a bonfire. However, a small pool of bidders can make for a disappointing auction, especially if no one has deep pockets. But a few big spenders did turn up for this TRAQS and things got lively. Ed's wife, a fine artist, donated three kayak-themed paintings, which generated some spirited bidding wars.

While the competitive aspect of kayaking appeals to some, it has never been the last word nor the first criteria for getting respect in Greenland-style paddling circles. One can always invent new ways to excel. Appreciating the unique qualities each of us brings is as much a part of the sport as doing the most rolls, paddling the fastest, or building dozens of skin-on-frames. Take for instance what can be referred to as The Sign. Several years ago a 15-foot signpost appeared both at Delmarva and HRGF bearing individual placards naming each of the Qajaq USA events, the distance in miles to their location, and oriented so as to point in the corresponding directions. It was the brainchild of Alan Mayors who made use of his skills as an electrician to include fancy lights for night illumination. This year he brought it to TRAQS and, for proper deployment, calculated a new set of distances and compass directions. He even included the QR codes. Brilliant. I don't know what inspired him but there's a similar signpost outside the airport in Kangerlussuaq displaying directions and distances to the North Pole, Copenhagen, New York, Tokyo, Paris, etc. that probably every tourist coming through Greenland has taken a picture of.

An annual T-shirt has become de rigueur at every event, forming yet another set of tasks for an organizer. First one needs a design. And the bar for cool-looking kayak motifs has been raised quite high. (Several of the TPG

shirts created by Peter Strand are exemplary.) Further steps: determining how many dozen shirts to have printed, figuring out sizes and quantities of each size, finding a printshop with reasonable rates. Plus deciding: long or short sleeves? Sweatshirts too? A different color for mentors? And all the preceding has to happen on a deadline. It is not unheard of to have the shirts arrive on-site Saturday afternoon, just under the wire. On the other hand, some organizers manage to stay on top of the T-shirt job and have them ready far in advance. Incidentally Talley didn't have any shirts made for her last go-round, so the only TIPS T-shirts in existence are those from 2014 to 2019.

Recall that the



Pete Homan describes traditional hunting equipment.

pandemic hit full force about late February/early March of 2020. Ed was in the midst of TRAQS preparation, getting ready for the March date and as part of his duties had a T-shirt fully designed and printed, ready to go. In prior years the shirts

bore the name of his event but he hadn't bothered to include the year. In an ironic twist he, for the first time, put the year on these. After he had to cancel the 2020 TRAQS he was stuck with several dozen shirts. The obvious solution was to recycle them for 2021 and tell people to ignore the inaccurate year. That is indeed what occurred.

Sunday at noon those who hadn't got an early start on driving home headed to the dining hall for a final lunch.

We sat at the outside tables, enjoying the pleasant weather. For someone like me who resides in northern latitudes this provided a way to pretend it was still mid-summer and



The Rebel Rollers: From Naples, Florida to TRAQS.

forget about the mittens, snow shovel, and long underwear I'll soon have to put into service. Sitting in the shade of palm trees allows winter to seem a long way off. As the goodbye's were made, Cheri Perry's father made an appearance, giving me and others a chance to extend our gratitude to him for having a daughter who has contributed so much for so long to our sport.

Like Talley at TIPS, Ed has now hit the five/six-year mark. The burden of kayak event organizing, especially in light of this year's hurdles, weighs heavily on him. But unlike Talley he isn't quite ready to declare the end of TRAQS. As for next year he has decided that since the 2021 event occurred in October, March of 2022 is too close. At first he thought that maybe he'd wait until March of 2023

but after further consideration he has decided to stick with the late October timeframe and hold TRAQS 2022 then.

And so in 2021 three Qajaq USA events took place, and as far as I know none of them became inadvertent super-spreader occurrences. Therefore at least in Florida, South Carolina, and Minnesota it was safe to come out. When we will be completely out of the woods as far as the pandemic goes is still unclear. I suspect it is not too overly optimistic to assume that throughout 2022 we will still be dealing with some of the effects of the virus but we'll be able to hold most if not all of the kayak gatherings we are used to having.

Keep your nametag handy.



Tuning Up Your Body and Your Kayak

Yes, it's possible to get comfortable in a skin-on-frame

By Christopher Crowhurst

I am sure it is not just me who has noticed that as each year passes, kayaks become a little less comfortable to paddle and roll. Our bodies are held together by a complex web of fascia, bones, and muscles. This remarkable structure maintains an equilibrium through a principle called tensegrity, where opposing forces of compression and extension balance each other out. Human tissue that does not receive regular exercise will slowly lose its elasticity. This can result in shortening of muscle or stiffening of fascia. When one element of our internal structure alters, the remaining structures must adjust to accommodate it.

This summer I was experiencing pain between my shoulder blades when paddling. I went to a sports medicine clinic where they examined me. After an x-ray and an MRI, they declared I just needed physical therapy. After a few weeks of PT and no progress I was fortunate to be able to visit a McTimoney Chiropractor. After observing me for a few minutes they pointed out that my clavicle on

one side of my body was 20mm higher than the other. They gently pushed down on the bone and pushed it into place, then told me my shoulder and back pain would now be resolved. It was. I relate this story to show that the root cause of pain and tension is not necessarily obvious to us at first and gets revealed by understanding how the structure of our bodies work.

Paddling a qajaq — a skin-on-frame kayak — is often initially an uncomfortable experience. The position that most paddlers adopt in these low-decked vessels is an unusual one for most western bodies. As such our bodies need time to adapt to the new tensions and stresses placed upon them. To understand the challenge, simply sit on the floor with your legs straight in front of you, heels together with your feet splaying outwards, with no support behind your back. Stay seated upright with a straight spine. How long can you last? It is not long before the small muscles and fascia within our hips scream at us, the muscles along the inside of our legs and knees complain, and our lower back bulges backwards as we slump forward to ease the



Instrument of torment? Relax into paddling through body work and outfitting.

tensions.

Sitting with flat legs is a challenge for most of us because we are attempting to lengthen some of our largest muscles, our hamstrings. To do so we are using some of our smallest muscles, our hip flexors. It's no wonder they start complaining when you compare their relative sizes. It's a real David vs. Goliath battle set up within our bodies.

Fortunately, there are many ways that we can help our bodies become comfortable in these postures. Over time we can paddle great distances in comfort. The necessary techniques fall into two categories: adjustments to the kayak and adjustments to the body. What will work best for your situation will be dependent upon your body and kayak. I hope the following suggestions will allow you to experiment and find a comfortable way to enjoy paddling your kayak.

Kayak customization

Support under the thighs

The practice of restorative yoga involves moving your body to its edge and then supporting it in the that position. Over time the muscles relax and extend, and the tension is removed from the posture, resulting in comfort. Support under the thighs changes the angle between the femur and the pelvis, removing some of the tension on the hip flexor muscles and allowing them to relax. The shape of the support is important. You do not want to create a pressure point pushing on your hamstrings, as this can create restrictions in the blood supply or pressure on the femoral nerves. Think about creating a gentle ramp, perhaps 100 to 150mm (4" to 6") long, starting where your seat ends. I like to make mine from closed cell foam as this offers support with a small amount of cushion.

Back Band

I think back bands are misnamed. The purpose of the back band is to adjust the angle of the pelvis. The back then follows the pelvis's lead. In order to do its job, the band must be low across your back.

Using your hands, you can feel the top of your pelvis. If the band is above that, then lower it so the pressure is applied to the pelvis region rather than the vulnerable spine. When seated in our paddling position our back is in a posture comparable to the traditional meditation position adopted by Buddhists and Yogis. Many meditators use a cushion under their sacrum to cause the pelvis to tilt forward. This helps to align the spine vertically and to release the muscles running along either side of the bones. The back band, when used correctly, supports the pelvis in this same forward tilt and allows the spine to assume the comfortable vertical position. Because most of us in the western world tend to sit in chairs, using the chair back for support, rather than sitting cross legged on the floor, our backs are weakened and are not used to supporting our pelvis. Therefore we slump with curved backs, which in turn causes back pain due to the lengthening of the back muscles.

Masik or knee padding

Skin on frame kayaks tend to have low decks and can include a deck beam, called the masik, which crosses the thighs and can exacerbate the straightness of the paddler's legs. When fitting out a kayak for rolling, many people will try to make them very snug, padding out these deck beams and further decreasing the room to move the knees. One great way to relieve tension on the hamstrings and hips is to allow the knees to splay open and rise. Try this in your own body. You will feel how it alters the pelvis position relative to the spine and femur and makes it easier to sit upright. Achieving this position in the kayak can be a challenge due to the conflicting desires to make the kayak easy to roll and to be comfortable while paddling. I recommend optimizing for paddling comfort and learning how to find the good contact you need for rolling as a secondary concern. After all, we generally spend more time upright than upside down. I suggest you use the minimum padding under the deck, and raise any deck beams you can to allow your knees room to rise. You can then support them in this position with foam under your thighs as described in the earlier paragraph.

Foot position

Look at your feet next time you lie down. Mine point forward slightly and splay out at about 15 degrees. Now take note of how your feet are when you sit in your kayak. It is likely that the position is very different — splayed out wider and either toes more aggressively pointed or cranked back. We need to be able to apply power through our feet to the kayak for efficiency, but we need to be as close to our relaxed position as possible for comfort. In many low volume kayaks there simply isn't enough room for our feet to relax. But we can make them more comfortable. Your foot angle is controlled by two touch points; your heels and the balls of your feet. Consider adjusting both positions. In some low volume kayaks I like to bring my heels together to allow room for my feet to splay out. In others I bring the balls of my feet closer to the centerline to allow my feet to be more vertical. The point or flex position of your feet is harder to adjust, as it is derived from the seat position and the footrest position, which are often not adjustable in skin-on-frame kayaks. However, with either additional padding or shaving some beam thickness it is possible to adjust the angle and bring greater comfort. Often pains along the inside of the knees are caused by sub-optimal foot positioning.

Seat padding

What's beneath your bottom when you paddle can impact your comfort. Running through the pelvic region are large nerve bundles, the femoral nerves. If these are impinged, pain can manifest along the length of the legs. Nerve impingement can be caused within the spinal column; hence the earlier focus on pelvic tilting and back bands.

Impingement can also occur if there is insufficient

padding under the seat. Appropriate seat padding needs to be factored in not just for comfort but also for where the pressure is applied to the body. Custom cutting a foam seat to support the entire seat, rather than using flat sheets that apply point pressure, will reduce the opportunity for nerve impingement.



For the hamstrings: the seated forward fold.

Body work

Modifying your kayak will on its own be unlikely to resolve all the potential challenges with finding comfort when paddling. It is also necessary to work on our bodies. As described at the beginning of the article, the body works through the interconnected

tissues supporting one another. Thus, it is challenging and often counterproductive to address just one or two areas, and is often better to focus holistically on improving strength and flexibility. My recommendation for a holistic approach to body work is to develop a regular yoga asana practice, as this will address all the areas of your physique that can help with paddling.

However, if you want to work on specific areas of the body, below are some suggestions along with the Sanskrit names of the poses to help you find more instruction online. As with all physical activities, please ask your healthcare provider for advice before starting any new fitness practice. If you are interested in more yoga practices for paddling, check out my website, where I have a series of posts specifically for this subject: qajaqrolls.com.

Hamstring lengthening

My favorite way to lengthen hamstrings is a seated forward fold, Paschimottasana. It has the added advantage of being a close facsimile of sitting in a kayak. The key to this method is to keep a straight

back, leaning forward from your hips until your hamstrings are in tension, then hanging out there for as long as is comfortable. It's not unusual in Yin or Restorative yoga to hang out for 5 minutes in this position. Over time you will feel your fascia and muscles give a little and allow you to deepen the posture. You may start only able to sit upright but with time and repeated practice you can get your chest closer to your thighs as your hamstrings lengthen. It took me six months to see progress, but it makes a profound difference to my comfort while paddling.

Hip-flexor strengthening and lengthening

Standing upright with straight legs, raise your leg in front of you, bringing your toes to hip height. If this is not accessible, then try it with bent knees. Hold the position for the count of five breaths, then lower back down under control and repeat. The bent knee version is called One Legged Mountain, or Eka Pada Tadasana. The straight legged version is called Standing Leg Raise, or Utthita Hasta Padangushthasana.

To work on lengthening hip flexors, lie back on the floor, bring the soles of your feet together and allow your knees to fall open. This posture is called Bound Angle, or Baddha Konasana, in yoga. Allow gravity to pull your knees down. I like to read a book in this position.

Knee and ankle rotation

If your kayak requires your feet to be splayed out, then spending time in this position will allow the muscles in the knee and leg to strengthen and lengthen. I recommend the Warrior Two posture, Virabhadrasana 2, which causes you to practice external rotation of the legs. You can find many

great online resources to learn about this classic posture.

Foot strengthening

It may come as a surprise, but having strong feet is a necessity for comfortable paddling. The position we

paddle in can cause or aggravate many foot or ankle injuries, such as Achilles' tendonitis or plantar fasciitis. Two simple exercises to strengthen the feet and surrounding muscles are first to practice standing on one's toes, and secondly, while standing upright on a towel and using your toes only, pull the towel under your foot so you move across it like a crab. This scrunch and

release motion will help keep the muscles and fascia across the bottom of the foot healthy and strong.

Lower back strengthening

My favorite answer to lower back issues is to stop sitting in a chair and instead sit cross legged, perhaps with a cushion under your seat to place your pelvis in a slight forward tilt (think meditation cushion). I built a cross legged chair for my office so even when working at my desk-bound job, I can physically benefit my kayaking.

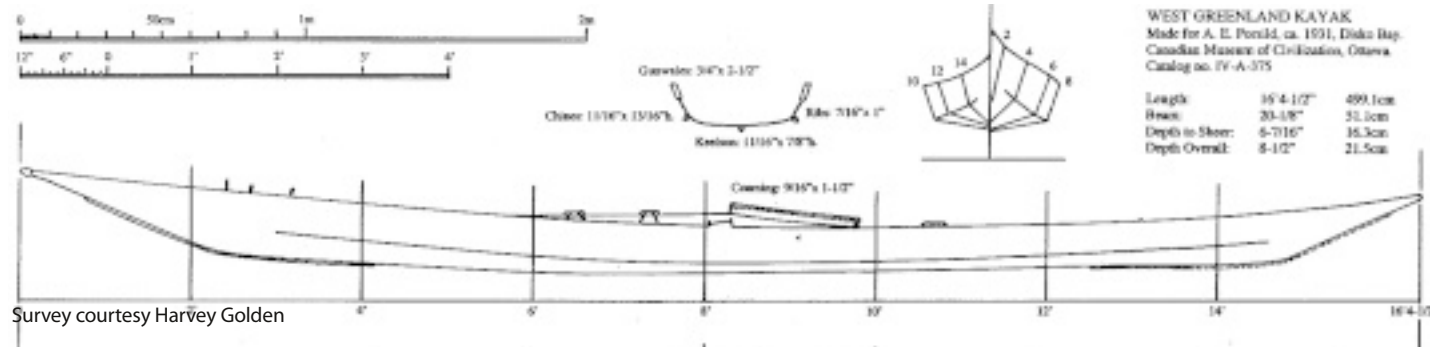
While I acknowledge that for many of us paddling a skin-on-frame can initially be an uncomfortable experience, I hope I have shown you that there are many ways to address this, none of which are profoundly difficult or inaccessible. Focus on those things you can control and give yourself the time and grace to gradually lengthen your periods of practice. Eventually you will be able to paddle in comfort all day. I look forward to seeing you comfortably paddling next season.



For knees and ankles: the Warrior 2 pose.

Part Three: Replicating A Greenland Qajaq

Fred Randall's expert guide continues with fitting the deck beams and ribs



By Fred Randall

In the [previous Masik article](#), I discussed considerations in the design and building of qajaq replicas. I went into some detail on how to determine the qajaq characteristics from the drawing, and developed both a list of offsets from the drawing and the apummâk (gunwales) flare or angle. Finally I went over how to determine the location of the stations for building the replica from the drawing. In this article, I will move on to the actual steps in building a qajaq replica. I have transcribed the list of offsets and apummak angles from the drawing of KOG 67 (p.308 in *Kayaks of Greenland*, Harvey Golden, 2006, see above) to the tables below.

Location of Ajât (Deck Beams) and Tikpik (Ribs)

For building a replica, I like to match the ajât (deck beams) and tikpik (ribs) with the original. That is not always possible when the information is not given or the original is not within reach. In those cases, I look for information that is available with similar qajaqs. In the case of KOG 65, it is categorized by Harvey Golden in *"Kayaks of Greenland"* as a Type VI kayak — kayaks from the northwest coast. Mr. Golden provides drawings of eighteen Type VI kayaks. For two of those qajaqs a frame drawing is given. The first of these is KOG 71 of unknown provenance. The other qajaq, KOG 72,

was built by Emanuel Kornielson of Illorsuit in 1959 for John Heath. It was built at the same time as another, built for Ken Taylor.

Based on those two frames, I will space the tikpik at 9" apart in the forward and aft ends, and closer to 6" apart midship. The first tikpik will be placed approximately 6" aft of where the cut water and the keel join. That will place the first tikpik at approximately 2' 10". That will place the tikpik close to the stem piece, which includes the transition from cutwater to keel. At the aft end the transition is approximately 2' forward of the stern, 15' 6". So the last tikpik will be at 15'.

The ajât will be spaced 10" apart in the forward section of the qajaq, and 12" apart in the aft 1/3 of the qajaq, with additional seqqortarfik (curved beams) for the cockpit, and one ajât behind the isserfik for entry support. I will start and end ajât where the apummak beam is close to 7". This will place the first ajât at 3' and the last ajât at 15'.

The aft end of the masik is located per the design at 8' 6". The isserfik will not be per the design, but moved aft to allow enough length in the cockpit for me to slide in. I find 21" works well for me. That is an increase of 5". I have found that usually eliminates any problems with weathercocking. This results in the forward edge of the isserfik now being located

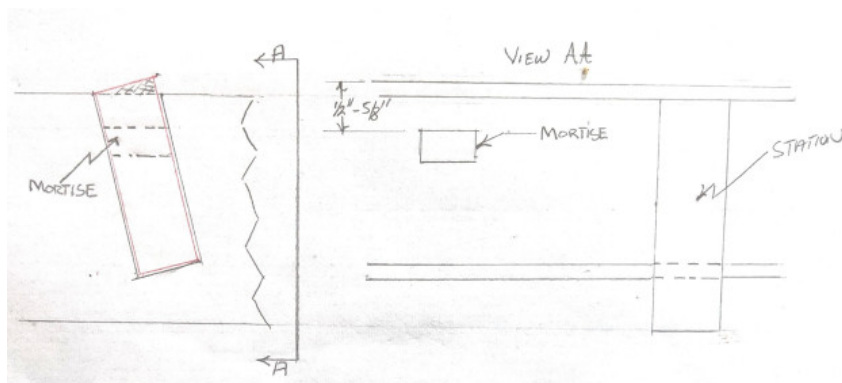
Location of Ajât and Tikpik				
Ajât			Tikpik	
	1st	3'	1st	34"
	2nd	3' 10"	2nd	43"
	3rd	4' 08"	3rd	52"
	4th	5' 06"	4th	61"
Foot Brace	5th	6' 02"	5th	70"
curved	6th	7'	6th	79-½"
curved	7th	7' 06"	7th	85"
Knee Brace	8th	8'	8th	91"
Masik		8' 06-½"	9th	95"
isserfik	9th	10' 03"	10th	99-1/4"
	10th	10' 10"	11th	103-½"
	11th	11' 08"	12th	109"
	12th	12' 06"	13th	114"
	13th	13' 04"	14th	123"
	14th	14' 02"	15th	127"
	15th	14' 10"	16th	136"
			17th	145"
			18th	154"
			19th	163"
			20th	173"
			21st	182"

at 10' 3". As an exercise, if I go to Chris Cunningham's book *Building the Greenland Kayak*, I can check on the location of the isserfik. He details a method using anthropometric measurements using your foot length and fist width. The sum of those two lengths locates the isserfik from the midpoint of the apummak. As hoped, that is 1" from my planned location. The locations of all the ajât and tikpik are given in the table at left.

The mortises for the ajât will be 7/8" long and 3/8" wide. The top of the mortise will be 9/16" below the top of the inboard side of the isserfik. The top aft kijuatjuk (deck stringers) should be at the same height as the top of the apummak, the sheer line. The kijuatjuk will be 3/8" thick. Also the top of the apummak will be planed so it lays flat as shown with hatch marks on the left drawing below. For the flare of this apummak, this is just over 1/8". The combination of 1/8" strong and 3/8" for the kijuatjuk, locates the top of the inboard side of the mortise at 9/16". As shown in the drawing on the left side below, the mortise is cut at an angle to the side/plane of the apummak. Obviously, this is done so the ajât is parallel to the deck and meets up with the matching mortise across the beam on the other appumak.

One way to cut the ajât mortise is with a plunger router with an angled base fitting that matches the flare angle of the apummak as shown in the drawing on the next page.

Note the two rails on the fixture keeping the top of the router bit fixed

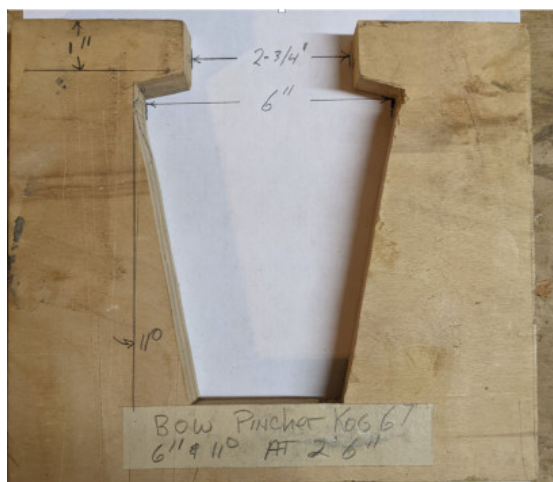


at the desired $11/16$ " from the top of the apummak. The rails fix that position but allows for the router to slide along the apummak's length. The rails are visible in the picture resting on the sides of the apummak. The triangular piece on the fixture is cut to match the apummak's flare angle (+ or - 2 degrees). A $3/8$ " router bit is used. An alternative to using a router is to use a drill with a level bubble. The mortise can be drilled with the apummak in place. Drill from the outboard side with a $3/8$ " drill bit, eyeing the level bubble and aiming the drill bit as if to hit the mortise on the opposing apummak. It is advisable to clamp a sacrificial scrap of wood on the inside of the mortise to keep wood on the apummak from breaking out when the drill bit cuts through.



The tikpik (ribs) will be $1-1/16$ " wide by $1/2$ " thick. $1/2$ " thick tikpiks is unusual for a Greenland qajaq. The thickness will make bending difficult. The stiffness of a beam (rib) is proportional to the cube of the thickness (h^3). That gives a difference in stiffness between a $1/2$ " tikpik and a $3/8$ " tikpik of 2.4 times. I will use the $1/2$ " thick tikpiks for the longer ones. I will reduce the thickness to $3/8$ " and $1/2$ " as the lengths get shorter.

Above: Mortise angle for deck beams, using a router to cut mortises. Right: pincher to hold gunwales.



The mortises will be cut $1/4$ " wide and $3/4$ " deep. Again, a plunger router set to a $3/4$ " depth with a $1/4$ " bit is used. The router is attached to a flat base with rails. Using the rails, the router bit is centered over a mortise. Once the routed bit is positioned, the rails are clamped to the router base locking the position. After cutting the mortises on one apummak, the router and fixture can be lifted, rotated 180 degrees and set back down to cut the mortises on the other



Above: router to cut mortises for ribs.

Right: the bow pincher holding the gunwales together.



apummak. Rubbing paste wax on the rails helps the rails slide without sticking. The mortises can also be cut with a drill and 1/4" bit and cleaned with a chisel or with chisels alone. Tape can be wrapped around the drill bit to mark the depth

Once the mortises are all cut, the apummâk are returned to the stations and the pinchers are slid on.

The bow pincher is shown in the picture to the left. The dimensions are given. The 11° angle matches the flare angle, and the 6" width matches the beam. It rests on top of the apummâk as shown in the picture below.

The apummâk ends need to sit flat against each other. This is accomplished by drawing a saw between them, shown in the photo on the page following.



I am using a finish cross cut saw to do this (see photo left). It takes many passes. Care is taken to ensure the same amount of material is removed from both apummâk. The pincher can be used to hold the apummâk together at a tension that facilitates the process.

When complete, the ends should sit snugly together. Sandpaper can be slid through the mating surfaces to improve the fit.

The next issue of the Masik will continue with checking for symmetry, and adding the beam along the length of the apummâk, and conclude with cutting the ajât (deck beam) tenons.



Hunters, Bold and Otherwise

Life and death in Greenland, pottering in Minnesota

Seals: "A miss may now cost him his life; but he calmly raises his lance..."

By Fridtjof Nansen

The following account of a seal hunt in Greenland appears in [Eskimo Life](#), a book that is among the achievements of the Norwegian explorer, diplomat, humanitarian and Nobel laureate Fridtjof Nansen.

The 1891 classic is

available free at gutenberg.org.

[Find more detail of Nansen's remarkable life here.](#)

Several hours before dawn Boas stands upon the outlook-rock over the village, and scans the sea to ascertain whether the weather is going to be favourable. Having assured himself on this point, he comes slowly down to his house and gets out his kaiak-jacket. His breakfast in the good old days consisted of a drink of water; now that European effeminacy has reached him too, it is generally one or two cups of strong coffee. He eats nothing in the morning; he declares that it makes him uneasy in the kaiak, and that he has more endurance without it. Nor does he take any food with him—only a quid of tobacco.

When the kaiak is carried down to the beach and the hunting-weapons are ranged in their places, he slips into the kaiak-hole, makes fast his jacket over the ring, and puts out to sea. From other houses in the village his neighbours are also putting forth at the same time. It is the bladder-nose that they are after to-day, and the hunting-ground is on some

Squirrel: "I suppose there's the chance of being charged by a berserk rodent..."

By Tony Schmitz

I am not planning to hunt walrus, seals or any other aquatic creature of the far north. I live in Minnesota. The fact that no such animals exist here is a definite case against hunting them.



Inuit hunter, poised for the kill.

Nonetheless, when my father died recently, he left behind the type of arsenal that small town Midwesterners often possess. A couple 20 gauge shotguns. A 12 gauge double barrel. A Japanese WWII military rifle (with bayonet!) that my father smuggled home after

floating around the Pacific on a landing craft. And, finally, a .22 caliber bolt action Winchester. This the patrimony of a man who didn't actually hunt. Go figure.

My brother took everything except the .22. I had some feeling for it. As kids we would go to the hardware store when we had coins jingling in our pockets and buy a couple boxes of .22 shells. Then, rifle slung over a shoulder, we'd walk through town, to the railroad tracks, and slay bottles and cans for an hour or two. This being early 60s small-town America, our neighbors did not take this as a cause for alarm. Boys being boys.

With the rifle now in my possession, it occurred to me that I could turn into a hunter again. As kids my

Seals

banks nine miles out to the open sea.

It is calm, the smooth sea heaves in a long swell towards the rocky islets that fringe the shore, a light haze still lies over the sounds between them, and the sea-birds floating on the surface seem double their natural size. The kaiaks cut their way forwards, side by side, making only a silent ripple; the paddles swing in an even rhythm, while the men keep up an unbroken stream of conversation, and now and then burst out into merry laughter. Bird-darts are thrown in sport, now by one, now by another, in order to keep eye and hand in practice. Presently an auk comes within range of one of them; the dart speeds through the air, and the bird, transfixed, attempts, with much flapping of wings, to dive, but is held up next moment upon the point of the dart. The point is pulled out, the hunter seizes the bird's beak between his teeth, and with a strong twitch breaks its neck, then fastens it to the back part of the kaiak. They soon leave the sounds and islets behind them and put straight out to the open sea.

After some hours paddling, they have at last reached the hunting-ground. Great seal-heads are seen peering over the water in many directions, and the hunters scatter in search of their prey. Boas, one of the best hunters of the village, has seen a large he-seal far off, and has paddled towards it; but it has dived, and he lies and waits for its reappearance. There! a little way before him its round black head pops up. He bends well forward, while with noiseless and wary strokes he urges the kaiak toward the seal, which lies peaceful and undisturbed, stretching its neck and rocking up and

Squirrels

brother and I shot at ducks and pheasants and squirrels now and then, not that the population suffered much because of it. Our harvest of tin cans was always much more significant. The .22 is mostly good for animals in the rodent category. Rabbits. Squirrels. Not the type of hunting that inspires epic tales.



Prey of the northern woods.

But the idea that I could use a kayak to get to some seldom used hunting grounds began to nag at me. My daughter lives close to the St. Croix, a clean and pretty river hemmed in by bluffs covered with deciduous trees. Oaks. Acorns. Perfect terrain for squirrels. Or so you would think. Much of the surrounding public land is open to hunting, but accessible only from the water. My daughter, being a vegetarian, is not particularly enthusiastic about the

execution of small game. So while I'll stop by to say hello, I don't dwell on my intent, which is to put together the ingredients for a squirrel stew.

Unlike the bold hunters of the far north, I am not dodging icebergs. I am not worrying about getting tangled in a harpoon line. As for wounded, angry seals or walruses, well, they're not much of a source for concern. I suppose there's the chance of being charged by a berserk rabbit (recall the infamous [attack on President Jimmy Carter, 1979](#)), but the prospect seems, admittedly, remote. For the most part I am paddling against the lazy current of the St. Croix for a few miles with a rifle stashed in a waterproof case under the deck.

There's a take out with a sand beach where I land the kayak and pull it up onto the grass. I change from paddling gear into hunting clothing, this being

Seals

down upon the swell. But suddenly it is on the alert; it has caught a glimpse of the flashing paddle-blade, and now looks straight at him with its great round eyes. He instantly stops paddling and sits motionless, while the way on the kaiak carries it noiselessly forward. The seal discovers nothing new to be alarmed at, and resumes its former quietude. It throws its head backwards, holds its snout straight up in the air, and bathes in the morning sun which gleams upon its black, wet skin. In the meantime the kaiak is rapidly nearing; every time the seal looks in that direction, Boas sits still and moves no muscle; but as soon as it turns its head away again, he shoots forward like a flash of lightning. He is coming within range; he gets his harpoon clear, sees that the line is properly coiled upon the stand; one stroke more and it is time to throw—when the seal quietly disappears under the water. It was not frightened, and will consequently come up again at no great distance. He lies still and waits. But the minutes drag on; a seal can remain under water an incredible time, and it seems even longer to one who is waiting for his prey. But the Eskimo is gifted with admirable patience; he lies absolutely motionless except for his head, with which he keeps watch on every side. At last the seal's head once more appears over the water a little way off and to one side. He cautiously turns the kaiak, unobserved by his prey, and once more he shoots towards it over the mirror-like sea. But suddenly it catches sight of him again, looks at him sharply for a moment, and dives. He knows its habits, however, and at full speed he dashes towards the spot where it disappeared. Before many moments have passed it pops up its head again to look around. Now he is within range: the harpoon is seized and carried back over his shoulder, then with a strong movement, as if hurled from a steel spring, it rushes

Next moment the seal comes up; infuriated at its inability to escape, it turns upon its pursuer, attacks first the bladder, which it tears to pieces, and then goes straight for the kaiak. Again Boas is within range; the animal arches its back and hurls itself forward with gaping maw.

Squirrels

a bright orange down coat, hat, gloves, insulated pants and heavy boots. The idea here is not to be shot by others, and also to stay warm while leaned up against an oak tree in a camping chair with a thermos of coffee at the ready.

There are schools of thought on squirrel hunting. There's the crash-through-the-forest-and-try-to-find-

them camp. And there is the wait-for-them-to-come-to-you camp. I open door number two, draw a cup of coffee, prop my .22 over my knees, and wait.

I would love to tell you about the delicious, nutty flavor of a squirrel stew. There are squirrel hunters on YouTube who assert that this is true. Had I assassinated a squirrel of two, I might also make a point of regretfully acknowledging my place in the food chain as a meat eater. Maybe I'd touch on the notion that hunting is more righteous than grabbing a plastic-wrapped parcel in the grocery store.

But no need. I have launched my kayak and gone hunting four times now. In the boat landing parking lot the squirrels bound from tree to tree. They scamper across the grass. They chatter merrily and chase each other up and down the oaks. If, however, you park your kayak where I do and blunder off into the woods, you will not see a squirrel. You will not hear a squirrel. You can sit quietly for hours, beneath oak trees that drop buckets of acorns, and you will watch the sun slowly settle, and the stray oak leaf flutter to the forest floor. Your thoughts will not be disturbed by the immediate possibility of murdering a squirrel.

I don't really have a beef with this situation. It's meditative. Peaceful. Upon my return I will not be confronted by a wife or children who wonder, in the

Seal

whistling from the throwing-stick, whirling the line behind it. The seal gives a violent plunge, but at the moment it arches its back to dive, the harpoon sinks into its side, and buries itself up to the shaft. A few convulsive strokes of its tail churn the water into foam, and away it goes, dragging the harpoon-line behind it towards the depths. In the meantime Boas has seized the throwing-stick between his teeth, and, quicker than thought, has thrown the bladder out of the kaiak behind him. It dances away over the surface of the sea, now and then seeming on the point of disappearing, as indeed it finally does. Before long, however, it again comes in sight, and he chases after it as quickly as his paddle can take him, snapping up on the way his harpoon-shaft which has floated to the surface. The lance is laid ready for use. Next moment the seal comes up; infuriated at its inability to escape, it turns upon its pursuer, attacks first the bladder, which it tears to pieces, and then goes straight for the kaiak. Again Boas is within range; the animal arches its back and hurls itself forward with gaping maw, so that the water foams around it. A miss may now cost him his life; but he calmly raises his lance and sends it speeding with terrible force through the seal's mouth and out at the back of its neck. A shudder runs through it, and its head sinks; but the next moment it raises itself perpendicularly in the water, the blood pours frothing from its mouth, it gapes wildly and utters a smothered roar, while the hood over its nose is inflated to an astounding size. It shakes its head so that the lance-shaft quivers and waves to and fro; but it does not succeed in breaking it or getting free from it. A moment more and Boas's second lance has pierced through one of its fore-flappers into its lungs; the seal collapses, and the fight is over. He paddles up to its side, and as it still moves a little, he gives it a finishing stab with his long-handled knife. Then he sets quietly about pulling out his lances and replacing them in the kaiak, takes out his towing-line and blows up his towing-bladder, which he fastens to the seal, cuts the harpoon-head out and once more makes it fast to the shaft, coils the line on the stand, and takes out a new bladder and places it behind him.

Squirrel

absence of squirrel, what we will eat tonight. Plus there's none of that messy business involved in cleaning a small rodent.

I've asked my kayak pals if they're interested in joining a squirrel hunting party with me. I'm not sure I'm altogether serious about this, since I understand the idea has close to no appeal among the aging, over-educated crew with which I run. I may just be taunting them, since I know from the git-go that the answer is no. I get skeptical looks. Some laughter. The observation that this week is really not so good. Nor is next week or the week after.

I tell them this is an opportunity to connect, in a feeble sort of way, with the actual roots of kayaking. First came the need to kill something to eat. Then came the need to build a kayak and a paddle, to devise clothing and other gear, to learn how to recover from a capsize.

I am not anticipating that this pitch will ring up a sale anytime soon. Or ever. But I know I'll be back, for reasons of my own, to match wits with a gang of rodents, who may or may not be there.



Walrus attack!

Seal Next, the seal's flappers are lashed close to its body, with the thong designed for that purpose, and the animal is attached by means of the towing-line to one side of the kaiak, so that it can easily be towed along,. Now Boas is ready to look about him for more game....

Richard Nonas, Remembered

Dan Segal, Jennifer Torres, Harvey Golden on early promoter of Greenland paddling



photo by Jennifer Torres

"Whenever we thought we actually knew something... he'd challenge our hubris."

By Dan Segal

We lost Richard Nonas last Spring in New York City. Always active, he had worked at his studio through the COVID lockdowns. In the evenings, he rode his bike up the High Line to the apartment in Chelsea that he shared with his partner, Jan Meissner. The night of May 11, he woke up, not feeling well, and passed before morning. He was 85, though he didn't look or act it.

Richard was the conscience of my cadre of Greenland paddlers, and, arguably, of Qajaq USA and the greater community. It was small comments, and looks on his face, sharp and alert as a hawk's, when he perceived that we were being self-interested, or obtuse, or ridiculously ignorant of whatever the important point of a discussion or

function might be. He was a mooring point that we all looked to for moral guidance, guidance that was as strong as it was subtle. Richard was always teaching.

I first met Richard Nonas at a gas station in Delaware. More accurately, I tailed him down the highway and accosted him when he innocently pulled in to refuel. My van was loaded with kayaks and paddlers — I can't remember exactly who, maybe Will and Craig Bigelow, Mike Scanlon, Tony Biscotti, Turner Wilson. We swarmed out and surrounded Richard's black Jeep. A gang of extremely, um, animated men. If I had been Richard I would have been terrified.

But Richard was calm. A little miffed at the interruption, and our lack of manners, perhaps. But calm. Because that's Richard. I had had a short, halting correspondence with him via email prior to this encounter. We all knew, slightly, that he had respect within the small Greenland paddling

community. But it was the kayak in the rack that had us crazy.

This was the first skin-on-frame kayak any of us had actually seen. Such a beauty: An accurate replica of a South Greenland kayak that had been collected in 1892, built by Harvey Golden — the same model that Golden used in the Greenland championships the year before. We saw it on Richard's car on the highway, chased it down, and here it was. Richard, quietly assessing us, assured us that if we could fit, we'd be welcome to give the kayak a try. He was going to the Delmarva Paddlers' Retreat, as we were. It was 2001. Delmarva had been an ACA event until then. It was all Greenland starting that year; the first of the Qajaq USA events. Like us, Richard was there to meet people face-to-face who had been correspondents. But he was also there to guide our education.

That was a heady time for the Greenland community. Despite its long history, Greenland gear and technique felt new and fresh, different and so much better than the stuff that could be bought in stores or what was taught in "normal" kayaking courses. It was centuries old, but so innovative, so intuitive, so powerful. The stuff other people paddled seemed fat, clumsy, disconnected; their technique overwrought. Fundamental Greenland technique and gear was only recently rediscovered less than 20 years earlier, in the 1980s, by a group of West Greenlanders who wanted to re-claim their history. True, it had shown up here and there in modern kayaking history. But modern kayakers always thought that they knew better. That Greenland stuff was there for them to adapt, not adopt; not to use and learn from as it exists.

Richard had a different take on that. Whenever we thought we actually knew something — about

kayaking, about kayak culture, even about the nature of knowledge itself — he'd challenge our hubris. How does an amateur (modern sport paddlers) improve on generations of professional (seal hunters) development? That was his read on modern paddlers appropriating aspects of Greenland kayaking.

He became our mentor. Our big brother, with all that implies. I wouldn't have expected or predicted it.

I was paddling with a specific troupe at the time. We were a small group of forty-somethings. Aging athletes and coaches simply looking to replace soccer with kayaking. Soccer, jarring on the joints and with sometimes even more jarring contact with other players, had been taking its toll. We thought that kayaking could have as much nuance and physicality, definitely more opportunity for

adventure. We edged our way into Greenland technique because there was so much to learn. We could keep ourselves happy, interested, and constantly challenged, even at little Walden Pond which was near our homes. Then we could apply that to more exciting venues.

We thought that our learning was to be about kayaking. A

more difficult roll, a more efficient stroke. That's what we thought. Richard, however, led us to more essential complexities. That what really attracted us to Greenland kayaking was both more intricate and more intimate. This intertwined mesh of technique and tools had a deep logic. It had centuries of refinement. It had meaning. It began with, in his words, "otherness". Greenland SOFs and paddles are "charged by their makers with more meaning than they can possibly carry...that they not only carry it, but also instantly communicate it over unimaginable gaps of time, space, and personal understanding." This was not mysticism. Sailors often

We thought that our learning was to be about kayaking. A more difficult roll, a more efficient stroke. That's what we thought. Richard, however, led us to more essential complexities.

feel this way about their boats and gear that have evolved over time and carry the history of the people who evolved them. That was what attracted us to Greenland kayaking. It's what makes it so good. Otherwise, we could just paddle a rec boat. We didn't know what made Richard so wise. But we listened and took it on board.

That attitude has become baked into the concept of what we tried to do at the Qajaq USA events. Yes, learn the technique. Play with the kayaks and tuiqs, paddles, throwing sticks, and harpoons. But also understand where this all comes from. How it all works together. Appreciate the generations who built it. When you slide a Greenland paddle through the water, touch the people who are guiding it for you. That's what Richard wanted.

Of course, we didn't know that such discussions would be part of our future education when we stalked Richard and his kayak to the gas station on the way to Delmarva. Or when Richard finally pulled me out of his South Greenland SOF after a few hours so that other people could also learn from it. Over time we learned that Richard had been an anthropologist. He had studied at Lafayette College, the University of Michigan, Columbia, and the University of North Carolina. He spent two continuous years in northern Mexico living with native peoples, and further periods of immersion in Arizona and with Inuit in northern Canada. After ten years, he gave anthropology up, feeling he was not capable of studying people as if they were a biological species. He was teaching anthropology at Queens College in New York when he discovered that he was actually a sculptor. It was art he was looking for all the time, of course. His was the art of space and of overlooked and well-used things.

When we met him, Richard's art was quite well known, though obviously not to us. We found out later.

His work has that same feeling of "otherness." Often made of stone, or timber, or steel, his work has been exhibited or can be found in permanent collections in some of the world's greatest museums: The

Whitney and P.S.1 in New York; the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles; The Walker Art Center in Minneapolis; MAMCO in Geneva; Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams; and private collections such as that of Count Giuseppe Panza in Biumo.



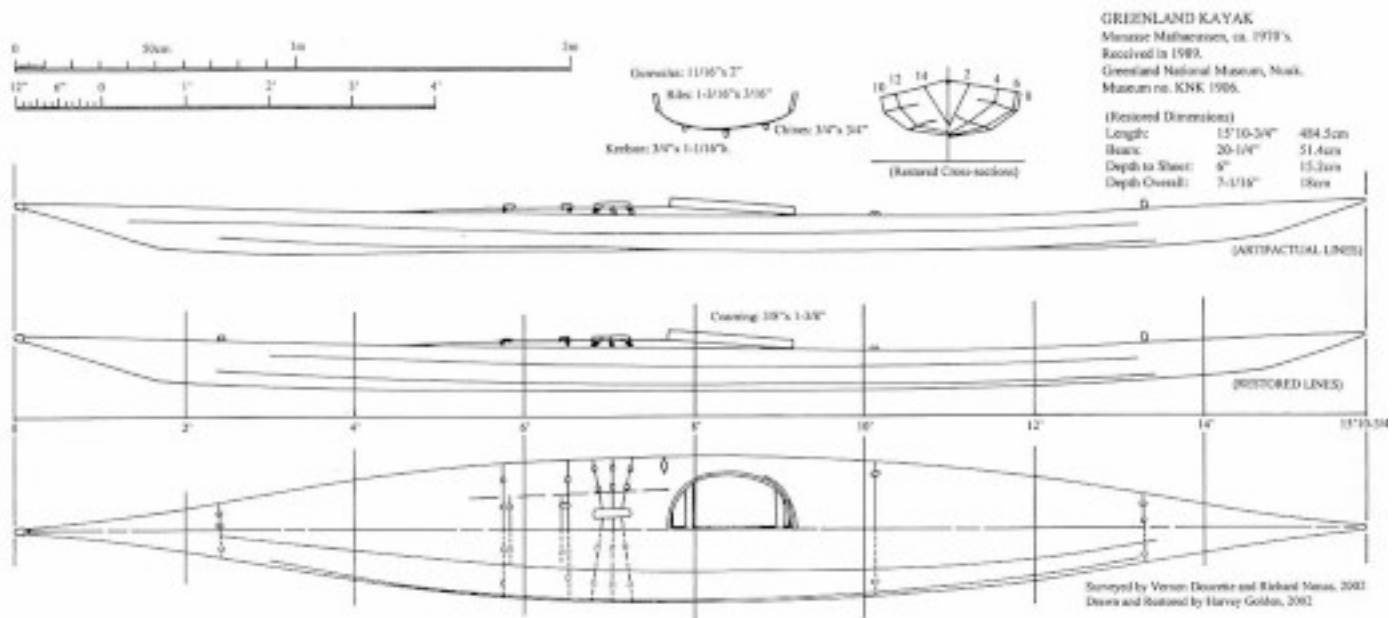
Nonas, Vernon Doucette, Turner Wilson.

Richard's art was often, literally, huge. Twenty-

and eighty-foot used railroad ties, in four sets of thirteen arranged in crosses over a barn-sized room at the Art Institute in Chicago. Two rows of identical stone slabs, like headstones, set every three feet that followed the paths of migration out of an abandoned village for over a mile in the French Pyrenees. Thirty-nine boulders in a winding configuration in a grassy meadow at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. Fifty-two timbers in a long, gentle arc three hundred feet long on the floor of the Mass MOCA's signature gallery. Fifteen Chairs made of used granite curbstones set in a subtle 100-foot-long arch looking at, well, I'm not really sure. But perhaps that's the point.

Given the above, you can understand that Richard loved kayaks for themselves and for the meaning he found in them as used objects. He built several replicas, including a [replica of my own replica](#). In his words:

"I built this replica of the Mid-Seventeenth Century



Harvey Golden's drawing of the De Rijp kayak built for Dan Segal, reimaged by Richard Nonas.

West Greenland De Rijp Kayak in the Rijper Museum in Holland — drawn by Harvey Golden, and photographed and described by Gert Nooter in *Old kayaks in the Netherlands* (E.J. Brill, Leiden 1971 pp. 35-39).

More accurately, this is my replica of the earlier replica built by Harvey for Dan Segal — a boat which, after hard use and re-skinning, had, I noticed, somewhat changed its shape, sliding from a 13 degree gunwale angle to one of about 8 degrees now, and from an original width of 16 ¾ inches to 16 ½ inches while losing some sheer in the process.

Dan's worn and aging beauty is the boat I in the end and almost in spite of myself decided to replicate. To my surprise, its recent organic changes came to interest me more than the clean shape on Harvey's page. Interested me because traditional skin-on-frame kayaks do age — starting, I think, very soon after they are built. And because such change under normal use and repeated re-skinning can sometimes create a significantly different boat. But how, I wondered, could that change best be thought of? Do boats slowly and constantly re-organize themselves under the strain of use? Do they gradually fall apart as weak parts fail? Dan's

living, slightly sagging beast, the kayak I had actually paddled, treasured, trusted and measured, came to represent for me the possibility of a natural entropic devolution toward greater and greater simplicity. And that idea of self-making amazed me. That was the kind of boat I thought I deserved.

It was a more difficult process for me than building to a drawing had ever been. A less straight-forward process too. And a more ambiguous one. A less integral one, I mean. A less structural one. Less the building of a whole and integrated boat and more the taking of a likeness. There were too many measurements of too many un-connected details, each demanding immediate and undivided attention. The boats became less and less whole objects and more and more compendiums of separate parts. Building became a kind of surgery. Not the immediate making which usually fills my day.

Each of us builds differently. Each of us needs to, I think. Some build for ease and efficiency, some for craft, beauty or accuracy. I build for a kind of 'thingness' — for the same wholeness, charged presence and emotional gravity that I find in a rock or a ritual. I build for a kind of deep, man-made

adequacy. Samuel Beckett says that "the role of objects is to restore silence." That is the adequacy I mean and the 'making' I try to do.

I built this boat to pry another living replica out of the first one; made it to acknowledge the entropic process all traditional work boats embody. Point-to-point comparisons only confuse me — accuracy is necessarily temporary, and it blinds me to the impermanence of the boat I am trying to find. There were two boats present from the very beginning of my process, three probably; three single-things slowly growing apart, though still somehow the same. I needed all three to be there — complete, and changing, yet part-less from the start.

Opaque from start to finish.

Crude from beginning to end."

Richard's kayaks hang in his studio, now a museum of its own, along with his other art. He didn't see any difference. Neither do I. Never did, really. But because of him, I know why.

Rest well, Big Brother. I'll miss not having future times together. But I carry you with me.

Breaking the Rules

By Jennifer Torres

I met Richard 20 years ago, right about the same time I fell hard for Greenland kayaking. For me, the discovery of skin-on-frame boats was all about the vessel and the freedom it provided. A form of escape, a way to leave, or perhaps a way to return. As a sculptor, the kayak was a three-dimensional form that could be manipulated and changed and the skin-on-frame building method became a new technique for making objects. But it also came with a lot of rules, in my view. Terms like rocker, sheer, chines, etc., were all things that had parameters for

building depending on what you were trying to make — a kayak good for playing in the surf or perhaps one for long journeys on flat water. They all had rules.

The history and culture all seemed so rarefied that I found it hard to justify making my first sculpture boats, especially since I was ignoring all the rules. (My mom will tell you this act of throwing out the rules was, in fact, something I developed very early on.) I had made my share of functional boats but was also building wild and out-of-control sculpture forms. I had so many and was needing to enter into a discourse on what it all meant.

How does one get the courage to break the rules? You meet someone like Richard. I met him at Delmarva. Same place I met so many other crazy/awesome/beautiful people. One day early on, when visiting him at his studio in NYC, I took a deep breath and showed him my work. Mind you this was close to 20 years ago, we were drinking lots of beer and listening to some fine jazzy tunes on the stereo. He was quiet as he scrolled through my iPad. I was shaking in my seat. I was worried that he would see my work and regard it as a travesty that was misrepresenting a time-honored tradition. He chuckled and then asked me if I had plans to make more because I needed to go further and push and dig even deeper. Rules are for breaking it turns out and since that had been a lifelong pursuit of mine, I needed to make sure I kept going, obliterating the norms. Seems I had found a partner and someone who would, for 20 years, be a mentor and confidant. Richard taught me so much and he always had time for me. He always, always, wanted to see my work. He cared less about what qajaq I was building, (unless it was one from Harvey's book, then we would go down a whole other rabbit hole) but when it came to art, those conversations were endless. Richard also taught me that you can be an appreciator of kayaks but don't have to be an avid roller or even a regular paddler. Although rules were for breaking he encouraged me to know them, as they were developed for a reason and having knowledge of

this made one better at breaking them. Ha! It all makes sense after the fact but back then I would find myself endlessly pondering the why behind it all.

He had amazing generosity and I was lucky to be on the receiving end, many times. His energy was notorious and he would often outwalk me as we'd head uptown to Jan's for dinner, or something. Later on, Jan (his partner), would show him stuff I had posted on Instagram and whenever I would see him he would mention specific things and always want to see more. He'd give me advice (Richard was never averse to giving advice, never) like some book or artist to look at and fully expect that I would report back on the new work that would be a result of this fresh knowledge.

Still, today when I am in my studio I think, what would

Richard say about this? I miss terribly that I can no longer see him, argue about life and art, but then I remember all that he gave me, and I realize I am one really lucky person who is still breaking rules, but this time intentionally and with copious amounts of artwork to back it up.

Rest in peace my good friend and wherever you are — please, keep breaking the rules!

He instilled a sense and duty of questioning everything — especially myself.

By Harvey Golden

I first met Richard at one of the Delmarva Paddlers' Retreats in the very early 2000s. I had just recently



photo by Jennifer Torres

returned from a trip to Greenland—my second research trip. I remember being drawn to Richard mainly on account of his sense of humor, but getting to know him better revealed a very serious and extremely thoughtful man whose true gift to others was to help them to see things differently. Every conversation I had with him left me feeling like my mind had expanded. He had the ability to elevate an ordinary discussion into deep, searching inquiry, to see (and articulate) the unspoken, to recognize power and meaning in everyday

(and unusual) objects.

Richard was many things: a cowboy, an anthropologist, a sculptor, and always a philosopher. I knew him as a sculptor, and I must admit that his art held little appeal to me, initially. It was heavy, hard, abstract, repetitive, inaccessible. The pieces struck me as roadblocks—both visually and intellectually. But who better to challenge these impressions? He made his art make sense to me, and I've since come to really appreciate it. It is

one thing to make an object, but to explain the object, and to speak its meaning so well that one can't help but understand was probably his most remarkable skill. That he suffered this fool is a testament to his generous spirit.

During several visits to New York City, Richard invited me to stay with him. I was doing kayak research at the American Museum of Natural History, and he joined me for a day surveying kayaks. Richard later joined me in research in Ottawa, with Vernon Doucette and Eugene Arima. During Richard's first trip to Greenland, he helped Vernon survey two very fascinating kayaks that together symbolized in real terms the end of an era and the beginning of an era in Greenland kayaking history. The "end" was Manasse Mathaeussen's kayak; Manasse was one of the last Greenlanders who had grown up using kayaks, was skilled in hunting from them and proficient in rolling them, and he had maintained his kayak and used it for cultural demonstrations well into his old age. The "beginning" was a rolling kayak built and used by a

teenager—Maligiaq Padilla—in the last years of the 20th Century when kayaking was having its renaissance in Greenland and new forms were being developed specific to their purpose—winning skills competitions; Padilla has won the championships numerous times.

Richard returned from Greenland most taken by Manasse's kayak, and as soon as a drawing was available from his and Doucette's survey, he built a replica of it, and shared it with many at the subsequent Delmarva Paddlers' retreats. In recent years, Richard drifted away from kayaking, focusing instead on his work and legacy as a sculptor.

His ten years or so mixing with this miscellaneous assembly of people interested in Greenland kayaks was significant, and all who met him are sure to remember him. For me, he instilled a sense and duty of questioning everything—especially myself. I hope this has made me a better observer and writer—his voice is often with me, considering, challenging, and encouraging. He is very, very missed.



On The Hunt in Thule

Taking after narwhal in a traditional qajaq

John Pedersen

Dear Kayak Fellows, and all who have interest in the traditional Greenland Qajaq: I have a question for you all. What is a traditional Greenland Qajaq?

- Is it a replica, built according to drawings of ancient kayaks?
- Is it a skin-on-frame, built for hunting in the Arctic waters?
- Is it a self-built rolling kayak made from surveys of old kayaks?
- Is it an ancient kayak like the ones seen in museums all over the world?
- Is it a Greenland qajaq, built according to the definitions from Qaannat Kattuffiat (The Greenland Qajaq Association (QK))?

I am quite sure that I would get 1000 different answers to my questions regarding "the long floating one-man Arctic hunting craft propelled through water with a paddle."

Everyone who has built their own qajaq has their own opinion of what their special ownership of a traditional Greenland qajaq represents.

The traditional Greenland qajaq is now available for everyone around the World – something unthinkable decades ago, when the qajaq was built for one purpose only, and only used by a few chosen individuals.

With globalization, many different interpretations, interests and approaches to the traditional qajaq followed. Our ancestors would not have believed



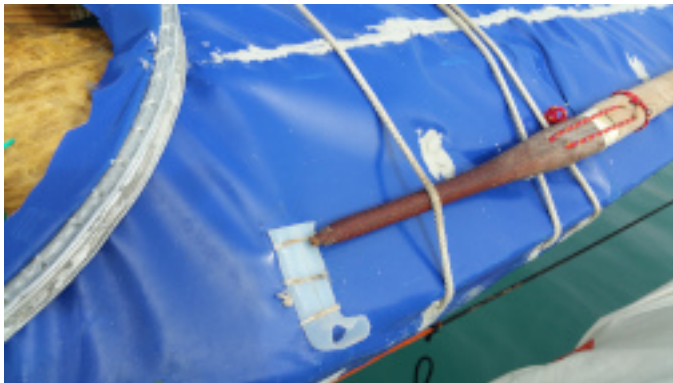
In Thule: Setting out after narwhal in a skiff transporting a brace of hunting kayaks.

Our ancestors would not have believed their eyes if they saw what has happened to their precious hunting-craft, which nowadays is passionately centered as an object for leisure and sports activities. But they would have been more than proud to give the qajaq as a gift to the world community,



their eyes if they saw what has happened to their precious hunting-craft, which nowadays is passionately centered as an object for leisure and sports activities. But they would have been more than proud to give the qajaq as a gift to the world community, if they knew that enthusiastic efforts for preserving their heritage was done domestically and worldwide, especially given that the traditional qajaq had almost disappeared from the face of the earth.

Many of you probably know the reason that the Greenland Qajaq Association (Qaannat Kattuffiat) was founded. This happened in 1983, as a step to preserve the ancient Greenland qajaq culture. At the time qajaqs were rapidly disappearing from Greenland waters, because they were so easily outmaneuvered by the more efficient boats made of fiberglass and powered by big outboard engines.



The qajaq, which had been an absolute necessity for survival and a means of getting food for our ancestors, almost vanished because of the need to land more and more prey. The introduction of a cash economy and the resulting mortgages and bills required more prey to sell and pay the bills for new houses, boats and other vital, imported necessities. The qajaq couldn't compete with the more convenient and updated hunting methods. And the Greenlander didn't look back as he abandoned a life of hard work and premature aging.



Top: Mentoring in a kayak that conforms to the competition rules of Qaannat Kattuffiat. Middle: Rough and ready qajaq in Thule, with bike rim cockpit frame, PVC skin and milk carton handle harpoon holder. Bottom: Plastic cockpit rim.

When QK stepped in, just a few qajaqs existed. There was an obvious decline in knowledge and skills related to qajaq culture with the diminishing number of old hunters. To save this national treasure that had been pushed aside by efficiency and innovation, a few people gathered, founded QK, and saved the remains of history, skills and knowledge for future

I want to share my observations related to experiences I have had the last few years with the last real hunters, a small group of Inuit in the Thule Distrikt of Northern Greenland who still use traditional qajaqs to hunt and kill large mammals.

generations.

But what is QK trying to preserve?

QK rules are not specific about which qajaqs are worthy of preservation. But the Greenland Competition Judges will accept participation if a determined series of definitions are met. These definitions are based upon the general characteristics of a Greenland hunting qajaq, which are as follows: The qajaq:

- Is built in the traditional skin-on-frame way, with lashings and wooden plugs,
- Has two chines, seven to ten crossbeams, one knee support, two deck stringers, a wooden cockpit coaming supported by the masik and back support,
- Has at least seven sealskin cross straps as well as two loose cross straps fore and aft, with bone tighteners on the cross straps,
- Has 13 to 22 ribs.
- In addition, the paddler's skin, mittens and tuilik are made of sealskin.
- The harpoon (unaaq) is made of wood, bone and sealskin.

The sum of all QK definitions basically results in a composite of traditional hunting qajaqs from Greenland's West Coast, widely built in the early 1900s. This blueprint of a qajaq worthy of preservation should represent our general idea of a traditional qajaq. The variations of hull shapes and cross straps from vicinity to vicinity is also an aim for preservation.

These new definitions of a QK qajaq meant that modern add-ons like nails, screws, cords, and other western imported goods were allowed in the

building process, since these materials were already extensively used at that time due to availability and durability of more authentic but often troublesome materials. So a compromise was made and implemented to the QK definitions, which led to the following exceptions:

- Cord-lashings on the frame - allowed,
- Fastening of bone or wood tenons on coaming – screws allowed,
- Canvas or nylon fabric – allowed,
- Bone or plastic reinforcements of keel and chines – screws allowed.
- Except for these exceptions, everything should be made the traditional way.

Specific definitions for the paddle were not made, as long as it looked like a Greenland paddle made of wood. The harpoon (unaaq) should be made 100 percent according to traditions, with no compromise. The shaft must be wood, with foreshafts and back pegs of bone and lashings of real sinew or sealskin.

This is how an officially approved qajaq is built in Greenland today — that is, if you want to participate in the Greenland National Championships. All the building criteria have been implemented at the local clubs under QK. One can not participate if the QK definitions are not met. The owner will be told to correct the qajaq.

In this brief note I will not deal with such interesting topics as the historical origins of the qajaq, QK rules, rolling, or the national championships. Instead I want to share my observations related to experiences I have had the last few years with the last real hunters, a small group of Inuit in the Thule



Whatever works: Roofing nails and twine keep this qajaq together.

Distrikt of Northern Greenland who still use traditional qajaqs to hunt and kill large mammals.

Some years ago I had the opportunity to visit the Thule-Distrikt for the first time. As most of you also probably know, the Danish Polar Explorer Knud Rasmussen founded and colonized Thule-Distrikt and made Northern Greenland a Danish sovereignty in the beginning of the 1900s.

I was visiting friends, living in the high North. Within their little, closed society of Qaanaaq, narwhal, belugas and walruses were still hunted the traditional way from qajaqs. These people are the last descendants of an Inuit migration from the Canadian Arctic to the farthest north of Greenland, which took place in the mid-1800s.

Before my departure for Qaanaaq Thule-Distrikt, I had many different thoughts and expectations about the qajaqs from the High North that I was going to see. As a long-time member of our local qajaq club —Qajaq Ilulissat, and later a member of QK — I was looking forward to see whether the qajaqs of Thule were still used the way they were intended — for hunting.

As I departed from the Western coast of Greenland in late July, the ice broke up. Well-informed hunters shared their observations about the arrival of the narwhals at the fiord we were going to. At last I was certain of seeing the hunting grounds of the Inuits, and looked forward to participating in the hunt.

A few hours later I finally set foot on the grounds of Qaanaaq. As an old defender and promotor of our national Greenland qajaq heritage, I went directly to the beach to have my first glance at the Thule harpoons and qajaqs. At a distance I immediately spotted the recognizable silhouettes of two qajaq hulls. I navigated through dogs sledges and boats to have my first sight. And what a sight!

These qajaqs were beyond my belief, and even more beautiful than I ever had imagined!

Finally, after more than 20 years, with club related kayaking, I saw my first Thule qajaqs. This was a qajaq culture with an entirely different approach, far away from our waters and QK influence. As I stood there all by myself and looked at these beauties, I could only admire the fantastic evolution they had gone through.

They didn't look like anything I had seen before. They were real bloodstained hunting harpoons and

*I will never forget my first encounter with the qajaqs of Thule!
These qajaqs were definitely no QK-qajaqs, frozen in time.
This was qajaq evolution at it's best!!*

qajaqs, with widths, heights and lengths exactly made to fit the preferences of the kayaker. These were hydrodynamically-optimized qajaqs, pure work horses with patched holes and scratches, their ultra-thin paddle tips lubricated with water-repellant oils. These were qajaqs and paddles built for stealth, made exactly for the purpose for which they were intended.

The first wonder was a qajaq with a bicycle rim coaming sewn into a reinforced PVC-fabric with a thick transparent nylon fishing line. White 6mm nylon cords fixed with stainless torx screws served as cross straps. A carefully cut handgrip from a plastic jug became a harpoon holder. An aft qajaq tip was reinforced with grey duct tape.

The other qajaq had a hull made of canvas, reinforced and stiffened with polyester resin and glass fiber, nylon pallet ribbons fixed with iron screws, PVC plastic ribs, acrylic transparent seat and a cork ball as a harpoon holder.

Similarly facinating were the harpoons. One featured a wooden harpoon shaft, with a customized screwdriver serving as a foreshaft. The harpoon head was bone with a stainless metal blade. The other harpoon had a PVC foreshaft and a massive aluminum harpoon head. All the harpoons were equipped with a 6mm braided soft nylon cord. Attached to that was an inflated float made of a whole seal pup. A T-shaped screwdriver had been mounted as anchor at the rear end of the seal and wrapped with a lot of thin nylon cord to make it watertight. At the other end — the head area — a thick cylindrical PVC-tube, with a small hole for inflation and a wooden plug, was mounted. The other sealskin hunting bladder was covered with a white dish towel as a sun block, protecting the skin

from UV and heat radiation.

I will never forget, my first encounter with the qajaqs of Thule! These qajaqs were definitely no QK-qajaqs, frozen in time, This was qajaq evolution at its best!!

A little while later my host arrived. He was born and grew up in Qaanaaq, and is one of the best hunters in that village. Last year he won a prize as best hunter in Thule-Distrikt. As we walked to his residence, one unique qajaq after the other popped up. And my astonishment kept growing when presented with new and unexpected updates in shapes, colors and mix of non-corrosive materials, which made every qajaq unique, even if you looked at them from a distance. Noticing my interest, my host told me that we would see many other qajaqs later. He kept on walking, despite my unwillingness to walk as fast as he did. For him, qajaqs were just qajaqs.

Enticed by that brief experience, the next day I went down to the beach where the qajaqs were stored. For two or three hours there my eyes were really big!!

Qajaqs and harpoons had undergone a constant evolution. Not because the design and fittings evolved. They were already engineered to perfection. The evolution was in the updates of materials and fabrics.

One of the first things I noticed was that the robust nylon- and polyester fabrics were not used as a skin for the frame. Not because they are not available, but because some of the hunters have had bad experiences with the fabrics. The fabric wouldn't tighten up as they wanted. This loose and wrinkled

material made noise, messing up the advantage of surprise. They stuck to the materials that they knew worked for them. They looked skeptically at me with a little smile when I tried to tell them what they were doing wrong.

The qajaqs I saw were mesmerizing!

To get to the hunting areas, boats are used as transport for the hunting trips today. Usually one or two qajaqs are brought with them. A trip normally takes four to five days, depending on the outcome. Most boats used in Qaanaq are 17-19 feet long, and equipped with two elevated mounting brackets on the gunwale for easier transportation of the qajaqs. Some boats have brackets on each side.

The boats are primarily used as a main accommodation center, and are inhabited by three to five people during the entire trip. In the eyes of other people, this is a very limited amount of space

for each participant. But this is the way it's done, and the lack of privacy is what they're used to. Tents and huts are also used, but mainly for longer trips and big families, and where there is also the advantage of observation posts from higher grounds. The preferred sites are often places with existing meat-storage facilities and good butchering beaches.

When arriving at destination, an anchor drop is preferred close to a drifting ice floe, where chances of spotting a narwhal are much greater, since they often swim nearby. Then the final preparations for a swift launch are taken. Qajaqs are inspected for holes after our rough ride. Floats are inflated, mounted to the drag anchor, and placed on the back deck. The harpoon line is carefully rolled up and placed on the foredeck. Racks to hold the line are not a tradition here. The harpoon is also placed on the fore deck, on top of the harpoon line. A microfibre towel is placed under the harpoon's



Harpoon featuring repurposed screwdriver components, nylon line piled on deck.

rear end to eliminate noise when it is lifted for a throw.

The harpoon, harpoon-line and anchor are not secured to cross straps. They are just placed on the bare deck, since hunting is only done on calm waters. As the last thing, a customized canvas skirt and another skirt made from a used rain jacket were placed in the cockpits, ready for put in.

The waters of Qannaaq Thule-Distrikt are teeming with wildlife. After an hour a group of narwhals are spotted.

But qajaqs are only launched when optimal conditions are present — i.e. no wind, no waves. Other considerations are the speed of the narwhals and the position of the sun in relation to the hunter. It is critical to be as quiet as possible, as the prey pays attention to the slightest changes in the surroundings.

On this day the criteria for the first launch were not met, because small pieces of ice had surrounded the ice floe. Therefore, no launch.

When the tides changed just after midnight, several other groups came towards us. Two hunters wearing sealskin boots grabbed their baseball caps and flew into their qajaqs, wearing just ordinary sweatshirts and blue jeans under the skirts.

The hunters waited to make their first paddle strokes until the last group had passed our ice floe. The rest of us followed the pursuit from the two boats, using binoculars. The qajaqs were right behind the last group of narwhals. paying close attention to learn the timing and diving intervals of the swimming mammals. The hunters paddled silently during the dives, then sped up when the whales boisterously surfaced. Getting close enough to successfully hunt depends on the speed of the whales. Our group was lucky just to be able to follow, as these narwhals didn't have any whale pups.

After half an hour, the first hunter found the right spot. When the whales surfaced, he accelerated and launched his harpoon towards the last narwhal of the hunted group. As soon as we spotted the seal bladder in the water — a sure sign of a successful catch — we started the outboard engine and motored toward the kayaker. With the rifles ready for the kill, we reached the hunter. No catch this time. He had missed. He told us that he lost his float on the water because he almost capsized when throwing the harpoon sideways.

The other hunter couldn't keep up speed with the other group of whales and returned.

Next day, after two unsuccessful launches, we had luck, this time with me as one of the hunters. After a successful hunt and launch, the boat came for assistance. A rifle shot secured the whale, although an old-fashioned lance would have done the same if the intention was to keep it purely traditional.

I was quite lucky on this hunt. A good guess regarding the hunting success rate is 10-15% for the average hunter and 20-25% for the best hunters. One or two hours of kayaking for each launch is common. During our four-day trip, we had 20-25 launches from boats and ice floes, and got narwhals.

This was my first encounter with real traditional hunting of big mammals as a grown up. Exactly the same methods were used in my childhood, when my uncle brought me up. One thing that has never changed since the qajaq took its first journey is the adrenaline kick gained by the passion of making a living.

Hunting narwhals or belugas on the West Coast is only done by boat. First you shoot the whale, and then you secure it with a harpoon. In Thule-Distrikt, you do it in reverse order. A rule that the famous Polarexplorer Knud Rasmussen introduced in the early 1900s was a result of the introduction of big calibered rifles. He noticed that prey often sank and were lost before they could be secured with the

harpoon. This rule is still in effect today.

After all these years I finally met a people without the prejudice and fixed mindset that is found everywhere among today's traditional qajaq builders. These were people with their own definitions of a good hunting qajaq, welcoming any improvement regardless of the origins of materials. They were building hunting qajaqs out of pure necessity, the way their predecessors taught them.

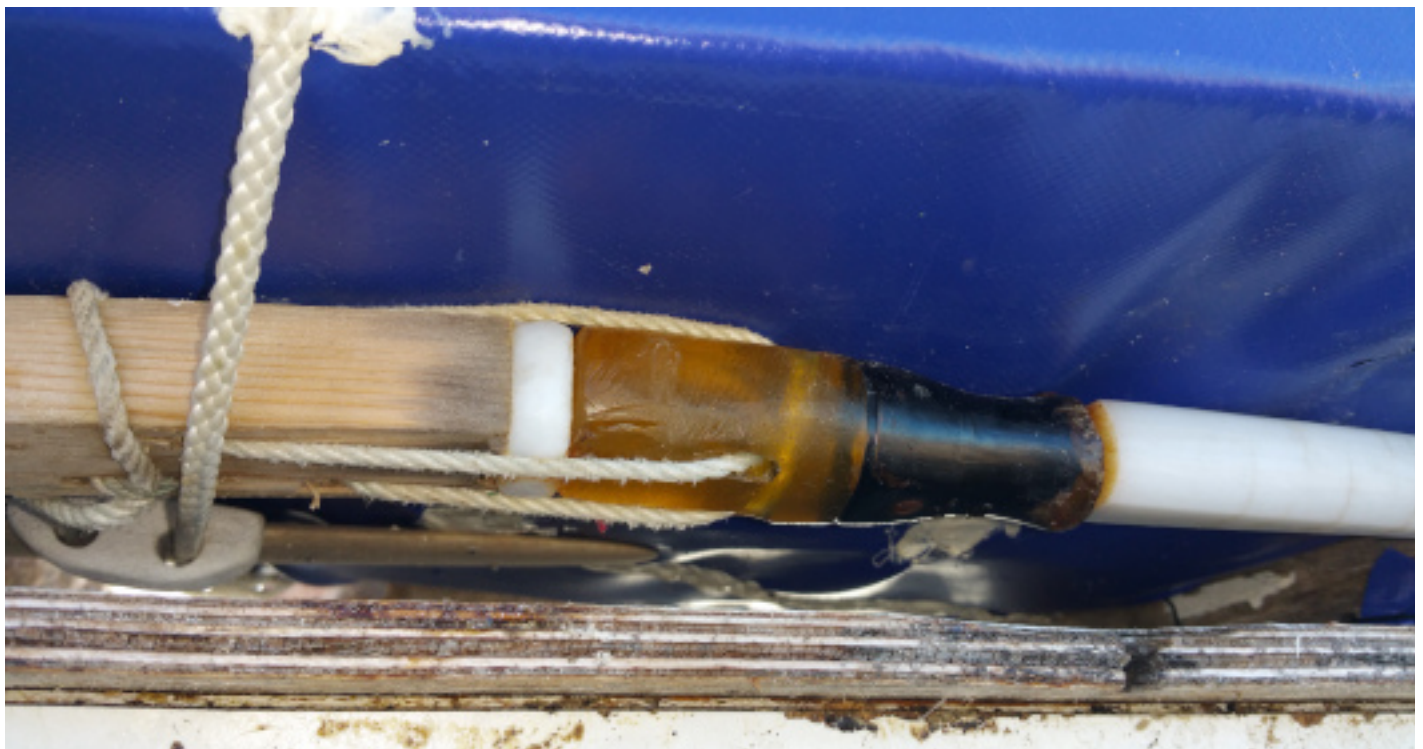
Since the dawn of time, hunters have always welcomed any improvement that made life easier, no matter where in the world he lived. This is a natural and the most rational approach for making a tough life easier.

It is no wonder that non-corrosive materials replaced everything but the wooden frame. If the variety of materials present today had been available in the 1500s — when frames were split from driftwood, and needles of bone constantly broke when sewing seal skin — the new materials would have been regarded as a gift from above and

immediately adapted. It is understandable that the hunters of Thule have a constant desire to allow their hunting craft to evolve.

My hunting experiences now and 50 years ago are quite the same. I'm afraid that the introduction of even more powerful outboards will outdate the hunting qajaq itself, as happened in Western Greenland. I hope I'm wrong, but unfortunately there are strong indications for the opposite outcome. My heart tells me that this livelihood will end in a generation or two, and with that, the last real hunting qajaqs on earth.

These hybrid-qajaqs, as many probably would like to call them, are the last remnants of an Inuit migration from Arctic Canada to the farthest north of Greenland, which revived a forgotten qajaq culture in the 1800s. These immigrants brought with them the well known Thule-qajaq, a qajaq with distinctive characteristics only known and used in that specific territory. That unique qajaq design was not known in other areas of Greenland.



It used to be a screwdriver handle; now it's part of a harpoon.

Some of the Thule qajaqs can be seen in different museums, especially in the United States, as polar explorer Robert Peary had an intensive trade going on with the local Inuits, trading qajaqs and weapons in exchange for western goods. This trade occurred mostly in the late 1800s and early 1900s in conjunction with Peary's search for the North Pole.

But where was this famous Thule-qajaq I'd heard so much about?

The famous Thule qajaq, with a cockpit coaming made of several pieces of wood, a two-piece masik, and ribs made of three pieces — a type I'd really looked forward to see — was unfortunately only a thing of the past, I was told that this type was updated long ago and replaced with the western type. The western type inspired them to use simpler ribs and cockpit coamings. The Thule qajaqs disappeared with the ongoing evolution of qajaqs, and are now just museum pieces.

My experiences, observations and interactions with the people of Thule-Distrikt opened up forgotten memories from my childhood. The sense of déjà vu — a recollection of old hunting methods and

craftmanship — has given me more energy for our efforts in preserving our beloved traditional qajaqs.

My trip to Qaanaaq showed me how our western culture lost its qajaqs, and how they became an object for preservation. I am thrilled that this way of life still exists, and that we are still able to place the hunter in a state of mind that our ancestors felt thousands of years ago.

So what is a traditional Greenland qajaq?

- Is it a replica, built according to drawings of ancient qajaqs?
- Is it a skin-on-frame, built for hunting in the Arctic waters?
- Is it a self-built rolling kayak made from surveys of old kayaks?
- Is it an ancient kayak like the ones seen in museums all over the world?
- Is it a Greenland qajaq, built according to the definitions from Qaannat Kattuffiat (The Greenland Qajaq Association (QK))?

Maybe you can tell me...

