

A Review by Mark Zalonis of **Perseverance** by Stephan Kesting

Perseverance may seem to be a strange title for a book about a wilderness canoe trip in northern Canada but the reader of Stephan Kesting's story of his trip from Missinipe on the Churchill River via Reindeer Lake, the Cochrane River, Upper Thlewiaza River, Nueltin Lake, and Lower Thlewiaza River to Arviat on Hudson Bay will soon come to understand the appropriateness of the title.

Kesting begins his tale by relating his first disaster as he starts his trip in Missinipe. His 17'9" canoe-kayak hybrid is overloaded with gear and provisions. A tailwind encourages him to set the small sail to take advantage of some free, non-paddling miles. All was going well so he tucked his paddle under a strap and studied the map. While distracted, a sudden wind gust from the side caught the sail and capsized the canoe before he could recover his paddle for a brace.

Not panicking, he took stock of his situation and mentally ran through his options: wait for rescue (not likely), deep water self rescue (didn't work), abandon canoe and gear and swim to shore (200 meters away and the wind was blowing the canoe in another direction, not good) re-rig the sail and try to use it to drag the canoe and him to shore - this worked). Upon reaching shore he analyzed what mistakes he had made that had caused the disaster: 1. Bad packing, 2. Out in the middle of the lake, 3. Misreading the weather, 4. Sailing in a strong wind, 5. Complacency. He then made plans to avoid those mistakes in the future and created his mantra for the trip, "No more mistakes". He re-packed the canoe to be more stable and made an effort to avoid repeating the other mistakes. Each chapter thereafter, relates some situation and the lesson to be learned from it. As one reviewer wrote "Kesting's rigor in drawing insights from adversity is as impressive as the miles he paddled."

His next chapter relates going through his gear and repacking the canoe to make it less overloaded. Wait! Why is his map tube so heavy? Opening the waterproof map tube water gushes out. The tiny eyelets used for cords to tie it down are not waterproof. Lesson learned? Test waterproofness ahead of time. It is time to peel and dry out the shreds of maps, although he has maps on his phone, they are not the same scale. It is good to have a backup and to be able to repair a problem.

In our modern age, it is not unusual for expedition canoeists to fly a drone to get an aerial view of what's ahead. So, Stephan flies his drone to check out what is ahead. Unfortunately, when he tells it to return, the drone goes crazy and flies into trees and crashes. He figures out that the last time he had flown it he was hundreds of miles away. He should have allowed it the time to acquire the satellites to reset its new takeoff GPS position. I know my GPS receiver requires time to link the satellites when first used in a new position far removed from its last use. I would not have realized a drone would need to reset its GPS position the same way. Another lesson learned.

Next stage of the trip was to traverse Reindeer Lake to the Cochrane River. Kesting recounts the key points to navigating such a large lake safely. Watch the weather. Watch the winds. Paddle close to shore, if possible. Etc. Etc. He does make it across Reindeer Lake to the Cochrane River, Upper Thlewiaza River, Nueltin Lake, and Lower

Thlewiaza River to Hudson Bay. Every step of the way is a lesson on solo canoeing in the North safely. Big Lakes, rapids, bugs, and bears, Oh My!

I found his book intensely interesting as he involves the reader deeply in his canoe trip. I first read this book on inter-library loan. I enjoyed it so much I bought my own copy. That is the best recommendation I can give. Get this book and read it. Maybe you will want to buy your own copy, too.