NEW Bathurst Inlet Lodge Website!!!

Well, the new Bathurst Inlet Lodge website has gone “live” and seems to capture as much of the indefinable charm of Bathurst Inlet as is possible on a computer screen, tablet screen, or mobile device....... Check it out at: www.bathurstarctic.com

This is our first “newsletter” done with the intent of attaching to the website, and I (Page Burt, Editor) will promise to try to keep adding to the newsletter area on the site to better stay in touch with all of you who have visited Bathurst Inlet in the past and who love the land there so deeply.....

First, a word of thanks to all who have been so involved in the making of this new Bathurst Inlet Lodge website....... 

We’ve known for years that our old site was outdated, tired, and needed updating.....but lacked the resources to do it. Then, after the summer of 2015, we received a donation from members of a group that visited the Lodge that summer......intended, they said, “To be used to help ensure that the Lodge continues into the future.” So, many thanks to the “Toronto group” -- you know who you are! And you are so deeply appreciated....
Since marketing has always been a challenge, and so much marketing is now web-based, the Lodge matched their donation, and with the cooperation of the great folks at Outcrop, and in particular Ronne Heming, we created this new site!

So, here I am, April 4, reviewing the nitty gritty of the site and liking it more as I explore it, and being happy that we can add info as desired.....

As I sit here in my office in Rankin Inlet, looking out at a white landscape, minus 40°C with the wind chill, and blowing snow, the promise of the arctic summer seems quite distant. However, we have had some lovely spring weather so far, and the days are much longer now. Frosty and I found the tracks of a ground squirrel last week on the hillside, a sure sign of spring. The hikhiks will soon be out chasing each other and then the babies will surely follow. The ravens are courting, describing arabesques in the sky, tumbling over and over and swooping on each other.

Allen and Connie and their family are down at Bathurst for spring break, reporting weather at 0°C! They are catching char at Fishing Creek, and sent photos of a moose shot near the lodge (think Cassel got it!), with photos of all the “retail cuts” of meat on the snow.

Our sled dogs are out basking on their houses on sunny days, or sleeping stretched out on the snow. They welcome the warmth of the sun, as do we all. Today, however, they are all cozied up in their houses, taking shelter from the relentless wind.

**Looking Back at 2014.....**

As many of you know, Bathurst did not operate in 2014. Glenn Warner died suddenly in May 2014, and we simply did not have enough guest commitments to operate that summer. We did, however, organize a family gathering at Bathurst to do a memorial service for Trish and Glenn.

Two planes went from Yellowknife, dropping us at Bathurst. The Twin Otter continued on to Cambridge Bay, picked up the Inuit families, and brought them to Bathurst, including Elders Jessie Hagiolak and Lena Kamoyoak.

We were there two days – and what a wonderful two days of visiting, eating, and honouring memories of Trish and Glenn, Aunt Allie, both Trish’s and Glenn’s moms, Martha Akoluk, and Bishop Sperry. The weather was splendid, and it was so precious to all of us to be “home” and “together” at that time. Sad, but joyous at the same time....

Teri Warner and Lena Kamoyoak at BIL in 2014.
In 2015.....

We had an excellent summer at Bathurst in 2015, with three groups of guests, and ideal weather.

We had one group from the Quest Tours/Ontario Nature Federation, including many people highly enthusiastic about wildflowers and birds. Cathy Rand was with this group, her fifth trip to Bathurst over 20+ years. And in our third week, we had three people who had visited in the past, Kathy Evoy, Marie Price, and Jean Hershey, back to revisit the magic of the arctic summer. Our second week was enlivened by a group put together by the amazing Linda Intaschi of Toronto. She started it as a surprise birthday gift for her husband David Silcox, and told a couple friends.....and they told some, and they told some..... It mushroomed into a lively and enthusiastic group of 15 energetic friends who kept us on our toes.

Well-known architects Howard Sutcliffe and Brigitte Shim were in that group. Howard could always be seen up on a hillside creating beautiful watercolours of the land, sea, and sky..... And there was historian Ted Johnson, very interested in arctic history. It was such a real pleasure to do our Franklin program with Ted’s insightful assistance and the lively participation of the group!!

Arctic Kingdom becomes involved in marketing Bathurst Inlet Lodge.....

We have long been aware that we were not marketing Bathurst Inlet Lodge adequately, and thus losing opportunities for people to book with us for what we see as a well-rounded experience of “Everything Arctic”.

Boyd entered into conversations with the owners of Arctic Kingdom, which is a large tour company with many offerings in the eastern arctic. They offer a variety of tours from cruises, to trips to the floe edge, Somerset Island, arctic ice diving trips, and much more.

To make a long story short, Bathurst now has an agreement in which Arctic Kingdom will exclusively do much of our marketing and booking. The ownership and operational picture of the Lodge remains the same, 50-50 ownership between the Inuit of Bathurst Inlet and the Warner family, but Arctic Kingdom will market our trips, hopefully to their past guests as well as to new markets. They are exploring the birding market in the US, as well as other markets.

Both Boyd and I have met with the AK marketing team and briefed them on how we do things, what there is to do and see on our trips, and much more. They seem very dedicated, professional, and truly interested in helping us.

Arctic Kingdom is sending out a postcard mailing to our past guests, inviting you to update your contact information. Whether you do so or not is up to you, but it is important that you know this is being done with our knowledge and blessing. The Bathurst Inlet Lodge phone number is now forwarded to Arctic Kingdom but gives you a choice should you be trying to contact Boyd Warner directly.

Here’s the Arctic Kingdom web address: www.arctickingdom.com

Bathurst will still have its own website, and you can sign up for a specifically Bathurst newsletter through the BIL site. www.bathurstarctic.com

For those of you who want to get in touch with Page Burt, I can still be reached at page@outcrop.com or (867) 645-4600.
As has become the usual in recent years, grizzly sightings were frequent, including a mother bear and three cubs on Young Island, who then moved to Quadjuk where they were busily digging for ground squirrels, easily visible from the boat.

Then there was a beautiful big male who was grubbing out liquoriceroot along the terrace below the Amethyst Point, amidst gardens of avens and arctic oxytrope. We watched him from the boat for about 15 minutes before he discovered us, and, as the Franklin journal states, “Took the alarm and ascended a steep rocky hill with a rapidity that baffled all pursuit!” Once he disappeared over the top of the Tinney Hills, we landed, cautiously, and proceeded with our day’s program, visiting the Amethyst outcrop, looking for shorebirds and wildflowers, hiking to Iktogiak, etc. We don’t land if a bear is in sight, but proceed to an alternate plan. However, in this case, it looked safe, and was.

We had some great sightings of caribou, and one phenomenal sighting of a wolverine on Peregrine Point. Victoria Warner spotted him as others were all watching a peregrine. The wolverine was down in the rocks along the shore, and travelled parallel to the cliffs, so we watched him for about five minutes. A handsome sun-bleached wolverine with a very red tail....

And, we found a gyrfalcon, on Sally’s nesting cliff on Young Island. We had seen a bird we thought was a gyr the week before, at the south end of Young Island, but could not get a good look.... Then, at Sally’s cliff there was a bird that just did not look like a peregrine...... She flew around a bit, and seemed much calmer, silent flight, and paler than a peregrine..... We watched long enough to make notes, and tried to take photos. Once back at the Lodge, in better light for viewing screens, we confirmed it WAS a gyrfalcon!!!
Other special birds in 2015 included three male king eiders, seen on the sea on the way to Bird Island on June 30. We saw the birds on the water with common eiders from a distance, and they looked “different”. The difference became clearer as we approached, and we were able to get some in flight shots that definitively prove they are king eiders. The black line down the back contrasts well with the open white area across the wings and back of the male common eider, and is perhaps the most reliable field character. There were some females with the flock, but I’m not competent enough to distinguish the female king eiders from female common eiders at a distance. King eiders nest up on Victoria Island, and pass through the Bathurst Inlet area on migration. We see individuals about every other year. It’s a real treat as the males are so beautifully marked and colourful.

And then there was a great sighting of a pomarine jaeger on the water southeast of Young Island. We were paralleling the edge of the sea ice and saw a gull-like bird sitting on the ice. The bird remained on the ice until we were quite close and then flew at low level across the bow of the Blue Loo.

One week, on the way to Fishing Creek, we sighted what we thought were two muskoxen on the slopes above Fishing Creek Lake, but, while moving and at that distance, well, they could be musk rocks...... Once we landed and could really get them (by then, one) in the scope, we could see the light wool in his back and were sure. So, it was a muskox hike day -- portage around the shallow stream part, shuttle across the lake and a hike up a steep hill for the first 500 meters....then gradual hiking across wonderful short grass tundra with scattered lupines and woolly louseworts. We found the ox, a fairly large bull, dozing on a snowbank. He woke up, peered at us, got to his feet, peered some more, and galloped off through the willows, then up a steep slope and finally disappeared over the edge of the inlet. We climbed a bit higher, looking for more ox, but were unsuccessful. It was an amazing day, with incredible colours on the land and the sea, just enough wind to be comfortably cool.

On the way down, we spotted two distant caribou, and some of us laggards tripped (literally) over a ptarmigan family in the low willows. This is the first time I’ve hiked up above Fishing Creek when the lupines were in bloom. Between lupines, avens, rhododendron, arnica, and woolly louseworts, it was a stunning show of flowers. We even found a tiny flame-tipped lousewort, one of the truly rare flowers at Bathurst. Saw a distant golden eagle circling high over the lower part of Fishing Creek – they often nest in the gorge, but we lacked the time to go in search of the nest.
Our staff in 2015.....

All the “old guard” were back, Boyd and Monique Warner, Sam and Susie Kapolak, Allen and Connie Kapolak, and me (and Frosty, of course)..... Boyd is our General Manager. Monique looks after things in the lodge, and brings some amazing herbal concoctions she makes at home, including a very nice insect repellent smelling of lavender.... Sam and Allen are our boat captains and also look after the lodge and all camp and boat chores. Susie is our chef, and Connie looks after housekeeping. I look after the guests and the programming.

And, to my delight, Doris Kingnektak again joined us for the summer. Doris is Susie’s sister, and worked for the Lodge for 13 straight years, always helping me in so many ways, both around the lodge and on the boat. She has lived in Cambridge Bay for a number of years but was in 2015 able to arrange her schedule so that she could help at the lodge.... Doris grew up in a small camp at Brown Sound, 45 miles north of the Lodge. She is an expert hunter, and generously willing to share her stories with our guests.

But it was the younger generation that was so amazing.... I suddenly realized that this is the fourth generation of Kingaumiut with whom I have worked at the Lodge, and there is a fifth generation coming on! Connie’s girls, Cassel and Chania, along with a friend, Jenna Kailak, and Bernice Kapolak, were the foundation of housekeeping and kitchen chores. Sam and Susie’s daughter Sheena took all breakfast orders and helped maintain the lodge. Her daughter, Bernice, worked with the other girls on dishes and babysat for anyone needing child care. Shayne Kapolak helped his father with camp chores through the summer. Connie and Allen brought Ikey Nanagoak’s sons, John Henry Nanagoak and Lance Akoluk for the summer and both were very helpful around camp and on the boat, and Tony’s daughter Joanne Kamingoak, who helped with housekeeping and in the kitchen as well. Connie and Allen’s young son Amik brightens the day with his sparkling smile and mischievous ways.

Boyd and Monique’s daughters Victoria and Hope both worked in the kitchen and lodge, with Victoria, taking a leadership role amongst the youth. Hope always fills in where needed, and I am so grateful to her (and to Isaac) for looking after Frosty this summer. Hope filtered hundreds of gallons of drinking water, and also creates fascinating custom jewelry out of found pebbles and crystals, wrapped with silver wire. Both Hope and Isaac were very helpful on the boat. Any of the younger ones who go on the boat are expected to help in any way possible but especially with serving lunch and refreshments. The second week, Isaac asked me if he could give geology quizzes to the guests. He went around on the boat, asking people to identify the types of rocks and to explain the structures we were seeing! In the cultural program, Isaac gave a wonderful lecture on the construction and operation of the seal harpoon, and Hope modeled her grandfather’s caribou outfit.
But one vision stands out in my mind as so typical of Bathurst Inlet Lodge......Sheena’s little daughter, Jenna, all of 6 years old..... Scenario: Victoria, Hope, Cassel and Bernice were all cleaning in the lodge. Hope was scrubbing the floor, and Jenna was beside her, scrubbing cracks with a toothbrush. I commented to her, “Gosh, a new staff member! Jenna, thank you so much for helping!!!” Shortly thereafter, Marlowe enters and says, “Jenna, Mum says you’ve got to come home!” Jenna looked up, flipped her hair back, and responded, “No, I’m staff now, and I’m working!” Priceless!!! And, later, on the boat, Jenna served cookies to all the guests. Each child comes to us, asking to help, willingly and happily basking in the attention and thanks of the guests.

The (Ongoing) Story of the DRUMS!!!

Finally, all those pesky oil drums are gone, gone, GONE..... After the final group of guests left in 2015, Robert Eno, a contractor from Nunatta Environmental Services of Iqaluit, came in and along with a team from Bathurst Inlet, dealt with all those awful oil drums!!! They brought in a “drum crusher”, which is kind of like a giant nutcracker. The drums are individually cut open and any residual fuel is emptied into another drum. Then, the empty drum is rolled to the crusher where it is reduced to a pancake about 9 inches thick. These drum pancakes are then put on pallets and strapped down so they can be picked up and put on the fuel ship. STATISTICS: In 7 days, they crushed 1,637 drums, recovering 8500 litres of fuel which filled up 42 drums. This fuel, plus the 191 drums of auto gas (which were not ordered and just appeared one year) will be sent out and recycled in a refinery down south.

In a note from Robert Eno: “The job went exceedingly well and the entire crew worked their tails off. I was very impressed with the Bathurst Inlet folks who helped. I would hire them again in a heartbeat. Can’t sing their praises enough! Allen, Sam and Doris are the best! Ditto for Susie and Connie who did an outstanding job with the meals. Shayne supervised and learned and we let him crush the last group of drums. What a great bunch of folks! Glad I had the chance to see the place and would like to return!”

The contractor arranged for the drums to be picked up and shipped on the fall fuel ship. They were to be returned up the Mackenzie to Hay River, but we now hear this will not happen until fall of 2016. Since the drums have been accumulating since about 1990, we will be greatly relieved to see the end of them, and the end of all the potential hydrocarbon pollution that could occur.

Finally, we would like to share (p. 8) with you a poem written by Cathy Rand on her fifth visit to the Inlet this year...... Cathy is such a lyrical thinker, and so adeptly captures the beauty and rhythm of the land...... Quanakutin, Cathy...
**A Message from Bathurst Inlet**

I am Bathurst Inlet.
Come into my world.
Float on my waters
and gaze to my far horizons,
Stroll along my sandy and rocky coast
and roam on my hillsides,
Sit in a garden of lupins, lousewort and lichen
and slumber in the stillness of my nights.

I am Bathurst Inlet.
Get lost in my magic.
The light laughter of ripples
against the shore of rebound beaches,
The soft colours of arctic summers
and cushion of tundra underfoot,
The unscheduled performances of
wolverine, bear and caribou.

I am Bathurst Inlet.
Draw from my best.
The wisdom and courage of peoples
who call this land home,
The resiliency of flowers and willow
which flourish on stony shores and in rock crevices,
The stamina of shorebirds and falcons which migrate here
to raise young in my twenty-four hour daylight.

I am Bathurst Inlet.
Take back to your world
New eyes to see its beauty afresh,
New ears to be touched by its music,
New rhythms to blend with its flow,
New resolve to cherish and protect our beautiful world.

*Cathy Rand, Bathurst Inlet, 2015*