

BRANDON SCUBA CLUB

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First of all I would like to thank Michelle Painter for the photographs from Churchill on this page and Lynne Curtis for the great article on last summers dive with the Beluga whales. It was a great trip and it happened to be the only dive I made last summer.

I have also included a "Have You?, I Have" article in this newsletter. A Brandon Scuba Club version of that article might ask - Have you come so close to fish on a night dive in Clear Lake you could touch them, Followed crazy Ed R. over the Wall at West Hawk, Hunted for Moby Burbot, the elusive giant burbot on the bottom of Childs Lake, Circumnavigated Peanut Island at West Hawk, Dove the wall at Cats Ass at night, Crossed Deep Bay on the bottom arriving within 100 ft of your destination on the other side, Enjoyed the 30 to 50 ft visibility around the islands on Gordon Lake, Found the Sea Hag, Followed the marker tape from Peanut Island back to shore, Carved a giant pumpkin on the bottom of Clear Lake, Been within a few feet of Beluga Whales???? These are just a few of the great experiences I have had with members of the Brandon Scuba Club.

Why not come out to our January 10th meeting and support your club. If members don't support the club there will not be a Brandon Scuba club to plan great dives like the ones mentioned above. See you on the 10th.

Ed Burridge
burridge@mts.net



Brandon Scuba Club Meeting

7:30 PM January 10, 2006
UFCW Office



Beluga Whales at Churchill Manitoba

President Message

Slowly, it is getting colder outside, for most of us (warm water diver) the Manitoba diving season is finish. Some people are already booking their holiday in the warm southern water. Others are just dreaming about it.

Christmas is already upon us so don't forget on the 19th of November we are having our annual Christmas party, come and celebrate with your fellow divers. It should be a great evening.

This year, the A.G.M. is on the 6th of December come vote for a new executive and give us your ideas how to makes 2006 diving season a success.

Reflecting on the past year, it wasn't the best summer. We have been struggling to find new ideas to replace the pumpkin dive. Lets talk at the AGM about what we did wrong this year so we can makes 2006 a great year to dive in Manitoba. Only by finding our faults can we improve, like they say from here there is only one way to go but up.

Let have a great time at the Christmas party and a great discussion at the AGM.

Camille Brodeur

Diving Churchill

We (Les& Michelle Painter, Ed Burrige, Ed Riesmeyer, Brian Kooistra, Mark Fisk, Sandi Spence and myself, Lynne Curtis) left from Dauphin on July 21st @ 1:30 am, traveling via rail coach (no berth!). I found it interesting to see the change in terrain especially the trees as we headed north, they became shorter and shorter and then very sparse. The train moves very slowly, in some areas, good grief, even the dragon flies were passing us. But, we came prepared, besides having our food in coolers, we had cards, a cribbage board, scrabble game and of course a bar! So—we got some tables, swiveled some seats around and voila! A party on the train. Brian and Ed R were the one's to beat in cribbage and I kicked at least one butt in scrabble.

We arrived about 8:30am on July 23 in Churchill. After 2 nights on the train we were glad to see The Ice Berg Inn, our home for the next 5 days. I was surprised at the size of Churchill (I'm not sure what I expected) but it is about 4 blocks wide and 10-15 blocks long, with a population of around 800.

Once the gear was moved and we were settled in we contacted Wayne Bilenduke, our guide. Wayne is also a professional photographer; you can go to his site www.polarbearworld.com to see some of his work. Please take the time to go there his pictures are amazing. When he came to the hotel to meet with us the news wasn't good. Winds were high and that would prevent us from going diving for now, hopefully it would die down in a couple of days. Unfortunately the

flood gates (diversion) had been opened due to the flooding in the south and that would affect visibility. Also the Inuit had been hunting the beluga's, which would make them skittish of the boats. All things out of our control. Well, we'll hope the weather changes, but till then we'll look around and see what else there is to do. Les & Michelle rented a van (we all pitched in) and Lester toured us around, while Michelle became the official videographer. We beluga watched at Cape Merry NHS which is at the mouth of the Churchill River and on the Hudson Bay. Amazing! There really are thousands of belugas, you can't miss them because they are so white, the gray one's are the babies. I was a little nervous about diving after I dipped my toe into Hudson Bay. That water is some COLD. On day two we decided to go looking for polar bears. We had been told it would be unlikely to see any this time of year. We parked the van close to an Eskimo sled dog area. The guys (Les, Ed & Mark) decided to take a closer look. Michelle and I stayed in the van. All of a sudden these Eskimo dogs started to howl (a very eerie sound). The guys stopped, looked around, and headed back to the van. Then, there he was, this white head sticking up amongst the rocks, our first polar bear. We had three sightings in total, twice in the rocks close to the sled dogs and once out on the tundra.

On the third day we are finally going diving. Wahoo!! Our guide Wayne took us out to a spot called Button bay. It was so exciting to watch the whale's just meters from our boat. The first people in the water were the dry suits, (Ed, Ed, Brian & Mark) followed by Lester, Sandi & myself (crazy wetsuit divers). The first ones in the water said they could hear the belugas, but by the time I got in they were out of the area. We went down for 30 min. to a depth of 35 ft. The temperature was about 38 degrees and the visibility about 10-12 ft. We saw a lot of tarpon (fish belugas feed on), some starfish and interesting vegetation. Unfortunately my dream of making eye contact with a beluga underwater will have to wait for another day.

Some of the other sites were interesting as well—There was Miss Piggy, a C46 aircraft that crash-landed on Nov. 13, 1979, on the rocks close to the road along Hudson Bay. She was apparently named because she could hold a lot of freight and once did have pigs on board. No one was killed in the crash, which is amazing when you see it lying on top of the rocks.

We did the trek out to the wreck of the MV Ithaca. The Ithaca is 12 miles east of Churchill, a ship that ran aground in 1960. She is high and dry when the tide is low and completely surrounded by water when the tide is in. Wayne told us that area is called "Polar Bear Alley" so taking no chances he lent us a "walking stick" to take with us. That was Mark's department.

On day four we were back in the water, (Wahoo!!) snorkeling in the Churchill River this time. Because the current is so strong we were tethered by rope to the zodiac (dingy). The first one in was Lester, and then Michelle took the plunge. She was sooo excited to get into the water with the belugas, they were all around

us. Way to go Michelle isn't it great to say you went into the Churchill River with the belugas. Mark and I also tried the snorkeling. The visibility was about 3-4 ft. so there wasn't much chance of seeing them, but we could hear them. What an awesome sound, they are very high pitched and chirpy. Ed and Brian were in the zodiac anytime we were out on the water and they found if they rubbed their suits on the zodiac it created a sound that made the belugas come over to take a look, they are very curios. We in the boat could watch as Ed and Brian rubbed their neoprene butts against the zodiac and the belugas would come over and check them out.

Our last day there we toured the Prince of Wales Fort. It is a massive stone fortress built in 1731, with 40 ft. thick walls. Situated at the mouth of the Churchill River along the bare windswept coast of Hudson Bay, I could not imagine being there in the winter (brrrr). In the evening we were invited to the Bilenduke's for a wonderful steak dinner. Wayne, his wife Joyce and daughter Taylor made us all feel very welcome in their home.

As we left on the train the next day July 28th, we passed close by Wayne And Joyce's house. They gave us a sendoff, two shots with the "walking stick" (firecracker gun) and we are on our way. All is well, we had a great time in Churchill MB, and we are tired and ready to go home.

But wait!!! At 2:30 am we are stopped just outside of Gillam and find out there has been a derailment, sooo we have to back up all the way to Churchill. At 7:30 am we are met at the train station by Dick (owner of the Ice Berg Inn). Although Dick's Inn is full he is willing to take us to his home and put us up there for as long as it takes. What a great bunch of people we met. Wayne also heard we were back in town so he came over to take those of us who wanted to go out with him Joyce and Taylor for a cruise and a picnic on Hudson Bay. Most of us ended up flying out on Sat. July 30th, except Lester and Michelle, they flew home on Sun. night. When I got to the airport the first question I was asked is would I go back. You bet I will Elaine, but next time I'm taking Ron with me.

This trip to Churchill was a birthday gift from my husband Ron. Thank you it was a gift I will remember forever. We really do plan on going back so if anyone else is interested please let us know.

HAVE YOU EVER:

- WATCHED A BASS DEFEND IT'S NEST AGAINST ALL INTRUDERS, EVEN YOU?
- CAUGHT A FISH BAREHANDED?
- INTRODUCED A BRAND NEW DIVER TO "OUR WORLD" OF UNDERWATER EXCITEMENT?
- FED BLUEGILLS BY HAND ?
- PLAYED HIDE AND SEEK WITH A FISH IN THE WEEDS ?
- SEEN YOURSELF IN YOUR BUDDIES BUBBLES ?
- WATCHED A FRESHWATER LOBSTER (CRAYFISH) THREATEN YOU ?
- LOOKED INTO THE EYE OF A FISH AND SEEN YOUR OWN REFLECTION ?
- LOOKED UP THROUGH THE WATER AT THE SUNS RAYS AND WATCHED THEM FLASHING THROUGH THE RIPPLES ?
- FOUND A REALLY GREAT SOUVENIR ON A SHIPWRECK ?
- SEEN YOUR BUDDY SMILE RIGHT THROUGH THEIR MASK, AND FLOOD IT ?
- FOUND A NEW FRIEND THROUGH DIVING?
- LOOKED UP AND WATCHED THE RAINDROPS FALLING ON THE WATERS SURFACE ?
- FOUND THE VERY THING YOU WENT DOWN TO LOOK FOR ?
- SWAM GRACEFULLY INTO A FRESHWATER SPRING FROM A DARKENED CAVERN ?
- HELD A BABY MANATEE IN YOUR ARMS ?
- LOOKED UP AT THE ICE FROM UNDERNEATH AND SAW SOMEONE STANDING THERE ON TOP ?
- SEEN A NEWLY HATCHED BUNCH OF FISH ?
- WISHED YOU BROUGHT ALONG ANOTHER TANK ?
- SEEN THE MOONLIGHT AND STARS FROM 30 FEET?
- HELD A SHIPS WHEEL IN A WHEELHOUSE UNDERWATER ?
- WISHED YOUR AIR WOULD LAST JUST A LITTLE BIT LONGER ?

I HAVE

BRANDON SCUBA CLUB

UPCOMING EVENTS

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| January 10, 2006 | Brandon Scuba Club meeting
7:30 p.m.
UFCW office – 700 block on 1 st Street
Come out, support your club
Help vote in a new executive |
| March 4, 2006 | Meat Draw at Houston's Bar & Grill
Victoria Avenue
Call John at 725-3212 if you are able to help |

We are in the early stages of planning upcoming events. Some ideas have been a social evening in March to show photos from winter vacations, a July long weekend getaway to West Hawk, a dive on Parks Day (free admission to the Park).

Come out to the next meeting to give us your ideas, tell us what you want.

Our events chairperson would like to be a helper instead of organizer. Anyone out there that would like the job please let Elaine know (763-4943). Its time we have young, fresh ideas.

COME OUT SUPPORT YOUR CLUB