

Adventures in Muskoka

By Marcia Downham

Paddling through a swell of history and imagination, his voice flows elegantly from the rivers of ink that skim the surface of every page. The reader is quickly captivated by the author's willingness to share his innermost thoughts, feelings and emotions as he describes some of his life's most intimate summer travels and adventures.

Beyond Mainland is written and published by Nathan Tidridge, a history teacher in Waterdown and a long-time



COTTAGE MEMORIES: At right is the preserved journal of author Nathan Tidridge's many canoe trips, used as inspiration for his latest book, *Beyond Mainland*. The book at left, *When Summer Suns Were Glowing*, is Tidridge's first self-published book from 2003, a collection of family stories from the cottage.

cottage on Muskoka's Buck Lake. His book is a personal tale of summer adventure, family and childhood memories. It brilliantly preserves and meshes together Tidridge's own history and stories of vast canoe trips around the lakes of Muskoka with real local history and stories of First Nations, settlers, land surveyors and pioneers, who took to the lakes centuries before him.

"It really aims at harmonizing two worlds, as in how you preserve your own history while not completely obliterating the real history, and how the two can coexist together," says Tidridge.

Taking 10 years to create, *Beyond Mainland* was inspired by a collection of journals Tidridge, as a boy, used to keep track of his summer canoe trips. In it, he guides the reader through a collection of captivating maps (real and hand drawn by Tidridge as a child), flags and historical photos.

Tidridge's childhood imagination is resurrected, as he and his young friend Aaron Walsh set out on the rivers to find and discover distant lands — the two christened their first canoe the "MPS (Man-Powered Ship) Natron (Nathan and Aaron)."

Every summer, the pair spent countless hours surveying and marking islands, rocks, rivers and lakes, christening and naming almost everything they came



IN STORES NOW: Nathan Tidridge's self-published book, *Beyond Mainland*, explores history and identity in cottage country. It is now available in book stores across Muskoka, including the shelves of Readers' World in Bracebridge. (Photos by Marcia Downham)

across as though they were the first to find it.

"No canoe trip was official, no island's name recognized, unless it was recorded," writes Tidridge.

The book includes more than 100 names and flags he and his friends created for various landmarks encountered on their travels, such as Alien Autopsy Hill (a hill that looks like an alien laying on its side on Lake Vernon), Apple Marsh (after a friend that threw an apple into a marsh on a trip into Fawn Lake) and Scottsland (named after Tidridge's late step-father

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