

## Sharing the Slave River with the World

By SAMANTHA STOKELL, SRJ Reporter

Soon the whole world will flock to Fort Smith to see the Slave River. That's the plan, anyways.

A film crew from the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) visited Nahanni National Park, Yellowknife and Fort Smith to create content in advance of the Olympics. The Olympic spotlight on Canada in 2010 creates an opportunity to increase tourism across the country. The CTC will promote Canada as a world-class destination and the North specifically as a must-see locale. Lesley Braby, CTC marketing specialist, said they're trying to promote scenic and unexplored places in Canada.

"We're trying to profile places that are less known. The (territorial) partner asked us to promote Paddlefest," Braby said. "It's an unknown gem. To entice travel in Canada, we say that locals know and there are some places that Canadians don't even know."

Local paddlers and visitors arriving early for PaddleFest, gathered at Mountain Rapids on July 27 to show off their skills. Videographers and photographers filmed from the rocky shore and from a raft riding through the rapids. Cameras were mounted on kayaks and helmets to get the full effect of the river.

The CTC will use the footage on social mediums, such as YouTube. Social marketing allows the CTC to reach niche markets and to advertise year round.

"We can't afford to do television ads year round," Braby said, "Social mediums can create buzz, especially if they show visual, unexpected and amazing experiences."

NWT Tourism will also use the footage to promote the territory at Arctic House, a location at the 2010 Olympics showcasing the North, as well as at trade shows. The Fort Smith Paddling Club president contacted NWT Tourism to help them promote the river and PaddleFest. The river and the festival represent the best the NWT has to offer, said Samantha Stuart, marketing assistant for NWT Tourism.

"I'm glad word's getting out about PaddleFest. People are staying up to two weeks and feeding the local economy," Stuart said. "This is such a target audience for paddlers and adventure audiences, which if they build a dam, would be devastating."

Creating these videos will help to combat the challenges of getting tourists north of 60. By tempting people with the beauty of the territory and showing the adventurous activities available, Stuart hopes people will take the time to address their concerns on traveling to the NWT.

"People think it's cold, with nothing to do. They ask 'are there roads or airlines,'" she said. "They don't know how to get here and don't realize how vast it is. The footage will show that people should come here to explore. It's great publicity."

The footage should be available on YouTube by the fall, as well as available on the Fort Smith Paddling Club website.