

Western Canada Wilderness Committee Educational Report

TATSHENSHINI

Ice Age Wilderness



Help Protect North America's Wildest River

Tatshenshini is North American wilderness on the grandest scale. Flanked by mountains that abruptly tower to heights over 15,000 feet, Tatshenshini is sheer grandeur. It drains part of the world's largest non-polar glacial systems. Meltwaters from this remnant of the last ice age make this 200

mile river mighty.

The Tatshenshini, which whitewater adventurers have nicknamed the "Tat", is a wild river surrounded by a wild landscape. There are no bridges, no settlements and no

signs of industrial society --except for recent mineral exploration activity at the proposed mega-project site called Windy-Craggy in the heart of this wild area.

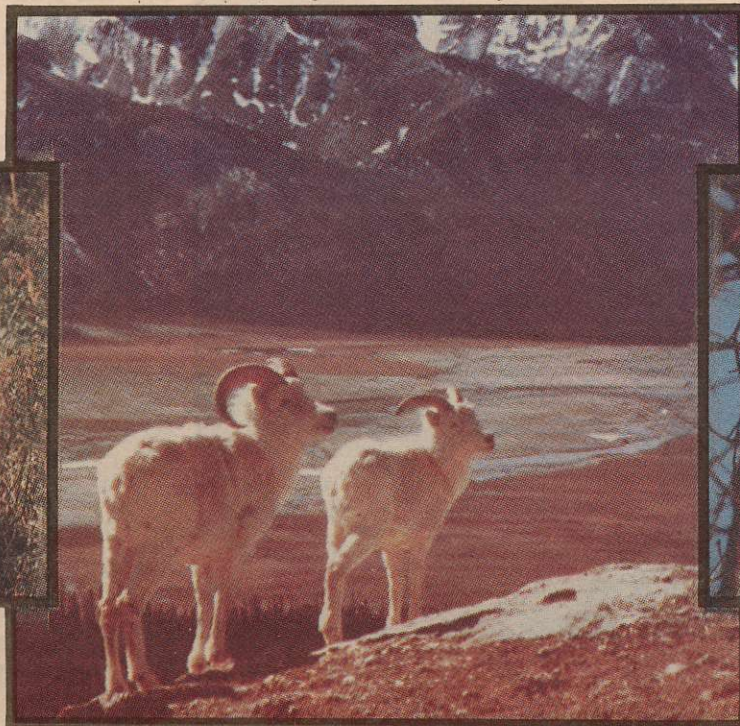
Grizzlies, wolves, Dall

sheep, and bald eagles in the "Tat" region are common. And while their habitat is protected in national parks in Alaska and the Yukon, British Columbia's section of the river remains unprotected.

A proposed Tatshen-

shini Provincial Wilderness Park would link up a giant contiguous wildlands preserve, creating the largest internationally-protected wilderness area in the world!

But today the "Tat" is gravely endangered. Only an international conservation effort will save it.



Rafting the "TAT"

No other commercial rafting or canoeing trip rivals the Tatshenshini experience. Once launched from Dalton Post in the Yukon, which is the river's only roaded access point, ahead lies 150 miles of completely wild and rugged river.

Each day it seems as if the scenery becomes more breathtaking. As the river descends into the dramatic Coast Mountains, the densely forested canyons of the Yukon gradually give way to increasingly more expansive vistas.

In the extreme northwestern corner of B.C. the "Tat" joins another mighty wild river, the Alsek. At their confluence (the site of the proposed Geddes mine is nearby at Windy-Craggy Mountain) is an area of sparse trees, alpine, talus slopes, and heavy glaciation. Here goats and bears are often spotted and wolf tracks are a common sight on the alluvial fans and beaches.

A few miles below the confluence the river is about a mile wide. The turbulent waters are a deep slate grey, loaded with silt which the glaciers, over eons, have pulverized out of rock. At one point 18 different glaciers are in view. One glacier terminus forms a ten mile long wall at the river's edge.

Each time a huge frozen pinnacle shears off and topples, a thunderous shock wave of sound and water surges outward. The river now is dotted with icebergs which have calved from the dying glaciers.

British Columbia's highest peak, the 15,300 foot Mount Fairweather, dominates the final scene. Ten days of river travel draw to a close only too quickly at the Pacific Ocean. Eagles give way to seagulls.

Flying home from the air strip



Tatshenshini's beauty and biological integrity is threatened by a planned open pit mine which would look, if developed fully, like the one on the right. Toronto-based Geddes Resources proposes to develop the Windy-Craggy deposit at a cost of half a billion dollars. Designed to produce 25,000 tons of ore per day, the mine in question would not be easy to build: an open pit 3/4 mile long and 1/3 mile deep would have to be excavated atop a 6200 foot mountain and under a glacier.

The natural acid run-off (below) of Red Creek, which drains a talus slope at Windy-Craggy, gives ample warning of the damage a mining operation would cause.

at Dry Bay, Alaska, the exhilarated adventurer takes in the wash of waves where mountains meet the coastline. Only memories are taken home... but what memories! No wonder river experts rate the Tatshenshini near the top of the list of the ten best wild rivers remaining in the world.

For thousands of years Tlingit and Athapaskan Indians on trading expeditions paddled this route in dugout canoes. Legendary Jack Dalton pioneered this river during the Gold Rush.

Tatshenshini remains to this day as timeless as then. It is truly a heritage river, as enduring as it is yet untrammelled.

If you are interested in rafting the "Tat", Tatshenshini Wild will send you, upon request, a list of river outfitters. (Write to address on back page.)

Tatshenshini's beauty and biological integrity threatened by proposed open pit mine

Conservationists are convinced that the Tatshenshini Wilderness would be irreparably damaged if Geddes' proposed mega-project gets government approval. Currently being evaluated by a multi-agency government task force as part of the Mine Development Review Process, the proposed mine has received the strongest criticism from the Ministries of Environment and of Parks. Hopefully the Ministry of Mines, which heads the review, will also question the wisdom of developing a road and mine with such severe, long-term environmental impacts.

SEVERE ROAD IMPACTS
Since the Geddes deposit is

located in the centre of the Tatshenshini wilderness, the ore would have to be trucked 160 miles to Haines, Alaska. 110 miles would be over a yet-to-be-built road. The negative impacts of such a road through the Tatshenshini wilderness include:

Wildlife: The road would cut through open alpine, prime grizzly habitat and the only Dall sheep winter range in B.C. With giant ore trucks making an estimated 74 trips daily (in addition to other mine traffic), animal deaths would be certain. Also, a road would facilitate motor-accessed poaching of animals.

Eagles and Salmon: Before reaching Haines, the ore trucks would have to travel

through the Alaska Chilkat Eagle Preserve, which is haven to the largest concentration of bald eagles in the world (3500 birds). Toxic ore dust is a potential hazard to the health of both the eagles and the spawning salmon on which they feed.

As well, the trucks to be used are so large as to require major widening of the present highway. This would encroach upon the critical habitat of the Chilkat River.

Water quality: Dust from, or spillage of, the Geddes concentrate could also contaminate the water of the Lutak drainage and the Lynn canal in the same way as dust, escaped from trucks bringing lead ore from the

Yukon, has polluted waters in the community of Skagway.

Wilderness Adventure Tourism: Due to its wild and spectacular scenery, the Tatshenshini is today renowned as one of the world's best commercial

wilderness rafting rivers. Trips on the "Tat" generate top revenues. If the road was built, visitor experience of a completely wild river would be gone. The river's present reputation would be lost, market appeal would dwindle and trip prices would drop. Because the proposed route runs for 16 miles along the banks of the river and crosses it with a major bridge, it would tragically and permanently scar what is now

North America's wildest river.

Geddes wants a road into Windy-Craggy as soon as possible. Slashing for road surveys was initiated by Geddes without permit in the summer of 1989, until Ministry of Environment officials chanced to spot the illegal activity. It is imperative that there be no fast-tracking of the review process, and that no road is built before a full mine review.

ACID DRAINAGE

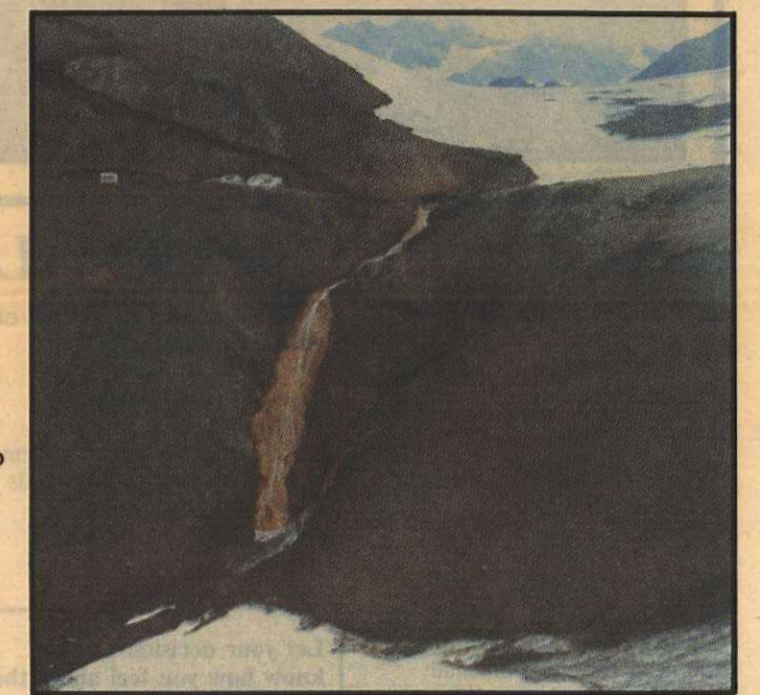
Among the negative environmental impacts commensurate with the size of this one-half billion dollar mega-project, acid drainage would be one of the most

severe. The Windy-Craggy deposit's rock is naturally acid-producing. Considering the type and size of the proposed development, it will generate incredible quantities of sulphuric acid during its lifetime and for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years afterwards.

A silver mine (called Equity), much smaller than this proposal but in a similar sulphite rock formation near Houston, B.C., is an ecological disaster of a magnitude unparalleled in the history of B.C. Its waste rock and tailings are pouring out sulphuric acid which must be continuously neutralized now and for many centuries to come at a current cost of over one million dollars a year.

Impossible to fully control or stop, such poisoning of the aquatic environment threatens to completely destroy the Bulkley River fishery.

Despite the fact that the Windy-Craggy mine would produce even more acid than the Equity mine, Toronto-based Geddes Resources is asking government to speed up approvals to allow them to develop the Windy-Craggy copper deposit without going through further environmental impact assessments. Besides jeopardizing a key Yukon sports and native fishery as well as an important commercial salmon fishery at Dry Bay, Alaska, the ecology of Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve could suffer.

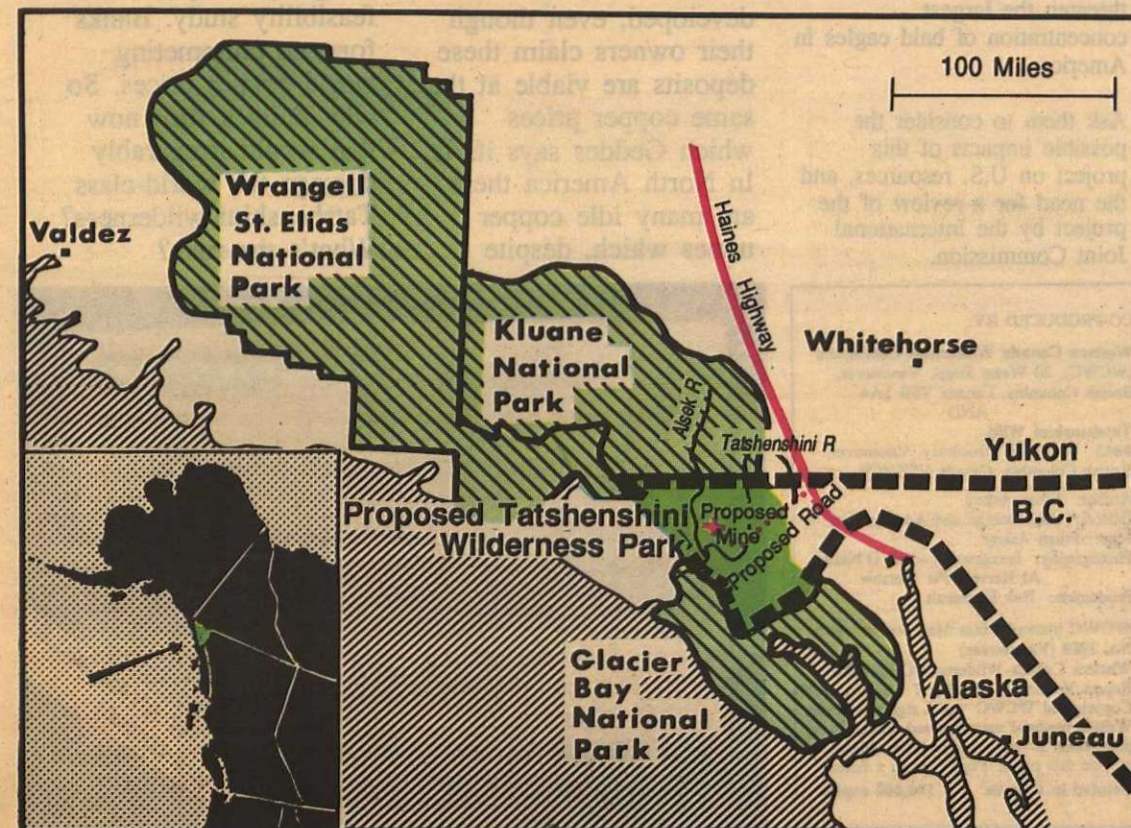


"Tat" preservation key to creating largest expanse of protected parklands in world

British Columbia's Tatshenshini is the unprotected heartland to what could be the largest international park on the planet. This area is surrounded by nearly 20 million acres of National Parks: Kluane National Park in its Yukon headwaters; Glacier Bay and Wrangell-Saint Elias National Parks on the American side.

Only in B.C. is the river unprotected. For long term survival, big game wildlife populations need the large contiguous wilderness that the preservation of the Tatshenshini area would provide.

Preserving the British Columbia portion of the Tatshenshini would internationally demonstrate North America's, especially Canada's, commitment to keeping a sustainable environment.

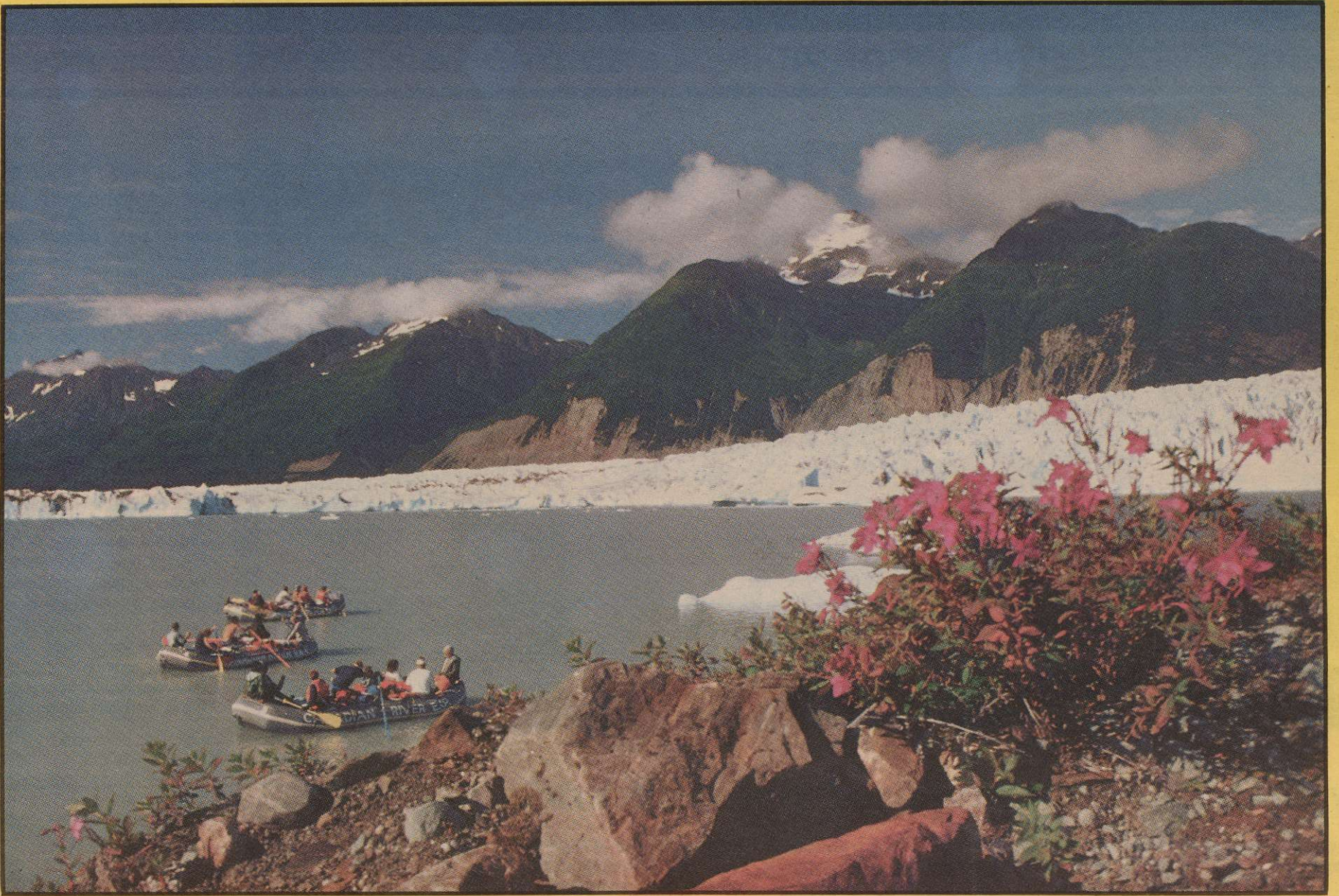


IF CONSERVATIONISTS IN CANADA AND THE U.S. ACT NOW, TOGETHER WE WILL KEEP TATSHENSHINI WILD

The Tatshenshini River unquestionably is a world wilderness treasure. It is imminently threatened by the construction of a road to the proposed Geddes mine. Your help is urgently needed to stop this wilderness-and-wildlife-destroying road from being built.

Individual actions have made a difference...cleaning up after oil spills, forcing reductions in pulp mill pollution and the protection of many wilderness areas. With your help, the preservation of the "Tat" will be added to the growing list of environmental successes.





YOUR LETTERS WILL COUNT!

In Canada, please write to:

Premier of British Columbia
Legislative Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Let them know how you feel about the preservation of the Tatshenshini Wilderness and the need for environmental impact studies before the government makes a decision. Remind them of the need for

a federal impact assessment of the Geddes proposal and a review by the International Joint Commission since the Tatshenshini is a transboundary river. Ask them to question why a road needs to be built now, while the mine remains economically uncertain.

Let your decision-makers know how you feel about the preservation of the Tatshenshini Wilderness!

In the U.S. please write to:

Governor of State of Alaska
P.O. Box "A"
Juneau, AK 99811

and to your State Congressperson.

Brief them on this remote place and its incredible wilderness values. Explain how you believe acid drainage from Windy-Craggy waste rock and tailings could damage the salmon fishery in Alaska and how the transport of ore concentrate would threaten the largest concentration of bald eagles in America.

Ask them to consider the possible impacts of this project on U.S. resources, and the need for a review of the project by the International Joint Commission.

ECONOMICS THREATEN TO KILL MINE

Copper is an abundant mineral. World prices of copper, crucial to the viability of the Geddes mine, have fluctuated wildly over the past few years. Consequently copper mines historically have been boom and bust.

There are large B.C. copper ore bodies which have never been developed, even though their owners claim these deposits are viable at the same copper prices which Geddes says its is. In North America there are many idle copper mines which, despite

lower ore grades, are infinitely more accessible than Windy-Craggy, have fewer environmental problems and have development infrastructure already in place.

At present, Geddes has not secured financing to develop the Windy-Craggy mine, nor has the company completed its feasibility study. Banks forecast plummeting world copper prices. So why build a road now that would irreparably damage the world-class Tatshenshini wilderness? What's the rush?

I am opposed to the construction of an access road into the heart of the wild Tatshenshini country. I want to contribute directly to ensure that a road like the one pictured at right is not built. I would like to help protect North America's wildest river.



Here is my _____ tax-deductible donation to help win the campaign to save the wild Tatshenshini.

Please send me a copy of your poster titled *ICE AGE WILDERNESS - TATSHENSHINI - Protect North America's Wildest River*. Enclosed is \$8. (B.C. residents add 6% tax)

I would like to become a Wilderness Committee member. Enclosed is \$25 to cover my annual dues.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Please make out your cheque or money order to: "WCWC - Save the 'Tat' Campaign", and send it to:

Western Canada Wilderness Committee, 20 Water Street, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V6B 1A4 Canada (We also accept VISA.) Even a small donation will help. Thank You!



CO-PRODUCED BY:

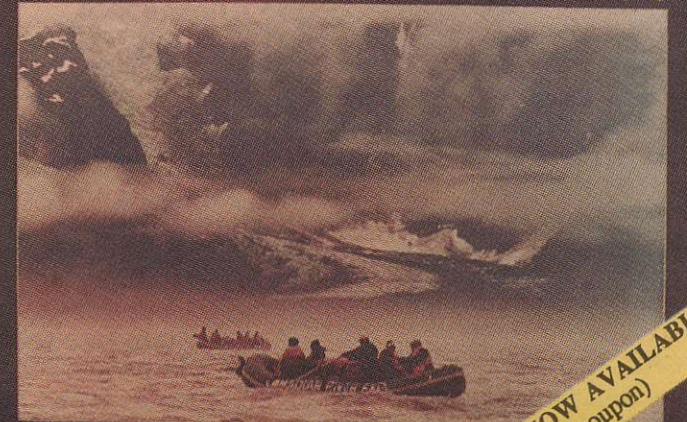
Western Canada Wilderness Committee (WCWC), 20 Water Street, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V6B 1A4 AND

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