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Registration opens Nov. 1 for 2010 Yukon River Quest

“Race to the Midnight Sun” enters 12th year as premier paddling event in Canada’s North; new First Nations prize boosts race purse to \$36,500

WHITEHORSE, YUKON – Registrations will be accepted starting November 1 for the 12th annual Yukon River Quest, the world’s longest annual canoe and kayak marathon, which will be held June 30 to July 4, 2010.

The 740-kilometer (460-mile) wilderness adventure paddling race is held on the Yukon River from Whitehorse to Dawson City in Canada's Yukon Territory. Held during the last week of June, the YRQ is known as the “Race to the Midnight Sun”. Paddlers race round-the-clock, as the sky never gets dark. It is a true marathon with just two mandatory rest stops of 10 hours over the course of the entire event.

Online entry forms will be available via a link on the race website www.yukonriverquest.com at 12:01 a.m. on November 1, 2009. Registrations are processed through eventsonline.ca.

Deadline for entries is April 15, 2010, but teams are encouraged to register early due to the growing worldwide popularity of the event. There remains a limit of 100 canoe and kayak teams, which includes a limit of 23 solo kayak and 7 solo canoe teams. These solo teams should register immediately to reserve a spot. All boats must meet the specifications defined in the 2010 YRQ rules which are now posted on the website.

Entry fees have been increased to address rising race costs. The fees are now \$850 (CAD) for tandem canoes and kayaks, \$475 for solo canoes and kayaks, and \$250 per person for voyageur canoe teams of six or more paddlers. Team biographies will be posted on the race website after the captain registers a team and all paddler information is received.

The 2010 race purse has been increased slightly to \$36,500 (CAD) with the addition of a new \$500 cash prize to honor the top First Nation team to finish.

“In an effort to recognize the fact that we are travelling down the river through the traditional territory of five First Nations, we have decided to partner with them in celebrating this great race,” said Jean-Francois Latour, race president. “We will release details about this partnership early in 2010. In addition, we want to offer a special prize to the first canoe or kayak entirely composed of First Nation teammates. This recognized this unique way of transportation that preceded the European appearance in this country.”

There are overall cash prizes for each class – tandem canoe, tandem kayak, solos, and voyageur canoes – as well as prizes for the top three in each division. There also are \$500 cash prizes for the top all-Yukon canoe and kayak teams, as well as the new First Nations prize. Several special awards are also donated by Yukon sponsors. A complete prize breakdown can be found in the race rules on the website.

The start location for the Yukon River Quest will be at Rotary Peace Park, where the race will begin at 12 noon in the grass by the gazebo with the historic SS Klondike looming in the

background. Paddlers will have about a 100-meter run to their boats. The start was moved off Main Street to this location last year and was a tremendous success.

The Yukon River Quest remains a popular paddling event, even in tough economic times. After registrations reached record levels in 2008, they dropped slightly in 2009 as 73 teams started the race. Weather was good for most of the event and 56 teams finished. The voyageur team Texans regained the top spot for the second time in three years with a time of 40 hours, 52 minutes. The course record still belongs to Canadian Team Kiskeynew's winning time of 39:32:43 in 2008. The 2009 race saw two records broken in the women's tandem divisions. In women's canoe, "Dawson Before Dusk" (Veronica Wisniewski of Washington state and Liz Bosely of Whitehorse) set a new record of 48:53, while "Oxford Hopefuls" (Lou Maurice and Hilary Greaves of the United Kingdom) set a new women's kayak record of 51:48.

Teams must finish the YRQ in 60 hours to receive prize money, but many do the race for the personal satisfaction of staking their claim to a coveted finisher pin in historic Dawson City. Aside from two mandatory layovers at Carmacks (7 hours) and Kirkman Creek (3 hours), teams paddle non-stop to reach the "City of Gold". Last year, paddlers from nine countries signed up for the event. It is supported by more than 125 volunteers.

The Yukon River Quest is the premier paddling event in Canada's North and is widely recognized throughout the paddling world. It has been featured on NBC-TV, the BBC and CBC, in numerous paddling and adventure magazines and websites around the world, and in the National Film Board of Canada's critically acclaimed "River of Life".

For more information, view the pre-registration instructions, rules, and numerous paddler preparation links on the race website.

The race is organized by the Yukon River Marathon Paddling Association, based in Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada. Major logo-level sponsors in 2009 were the Whitehorse Star, Yukon Emergency Measures Organization – Whitehorse, Faro and Carmacks SAR, Kanoe People – Clipper Canoes, Air North, yukoninfo.com, Northland Beverages – Aquafina Water, Norcan – Klondike Motors, Up North Adventures – Spirit of the North, and Gold Trail Jewelers in Dawson City. Several small businesses also support the race by sponsoring paddler bibs – see details on the website.

The YRMPA welcomes new members. The YRMPA Annual General Meeting will be held at Sport Yukon at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 12, 2009. If anyone is interested in joining or becoming a volunteer for the event, please contact the race organization at info@yukonriverquest.com or call 867-333-5628.

There also will be a Yukon River Quest fund-raiser at the Old Fire Hall in Whitehorse on Saturday, November 28. Watch for details soon on the website about live musical acts and silent auction items.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Jean-Francois Latour, president: info@yukonriverquest.com or 867-333-9988

Jeff Brady, media relations: wjbradyak@me.com or 907-973-2354