



*Bruce*  
Cherney

## Fishing fun

### EDITOR'S COMMENT

"The early bird gets the worm," according to an age-old adage. For the media, the saying should read, "The early bird gets the fish."

Each year, Fish Winnipeg, an initiative of Fish Futures Inc., sponsors a media/corporate challenge to bring publicity to one of Winnipeg's treasures — its fishery.

I don't very often get up at 4:30 a.m., but I did last Tuesday in order to get to The Forks by 5:30. Before I left, I turned on the weather channel to get at least an inkling of what the sky gods would bestow upon the 18 media teams taking part in the challenge. It had rained during in the wee hours of the a.m., but I was undaunted — the weather channel seemed to imply that it would be overcast and the temperature would climb from 11°C to around 15°C that morning.

By now, I should have known that whatever weather for the day is announced on the TV or radio, it should be regarded with skepticism. The tools available to meteorologists have increased substantially over the years,

but that doesn't imply they are any better informed.

I also wonder about the prophetic powers of those who continually scare the public with dire warnings about global warming. If global warming is pushing up temperatures to all-time highs in recent decades due to the proliferation of fossil-fuel use, Manitoba has failed to see any real benefits. It seems to be more appropriate to think about the coming of another ice age than to believe we will be soon basking in tropical warmth. Don't rush to cash in your tickets for Acapulco — you'll need them to escape the polar blast of cold that will return in another couple of months to Manitoba.

It was cold when I arrived and it would get even colder when the heavens opened up and the rain began to fall. I thought I was dressed to survive the inclement weather, but I was sorely mistaken. Within minutes of being shuttled down the Assiniboine River from The Forks, I came to think that I was being transported down the Churchill River, hundreds of kilometres to the north.

Despite the shivers brought on by being thoroughly soaked and chilled by the wind, I was soon warmed by enthusiasm. Angling does that to you. I was actually transported back in time to my youth when my fishing equipment was a length of twine, a hook and a minnow. As a young lad, I had frequently gone to the Gimli dock to test my angling skills. Surprisingly, the low-budget equipment I possessed — minnows were caught at the nearby beach by straining the waters of Lake Winnipeg with a beach towel, though sometimes we were lucky and found an old window screen — invariably resulted in catching the odd perch, pickerel or sauger which I took to my grandmother to clean. Gudrun, or Umma as I affectionately called her, which is Icelandic for grandmother, had been a worker at the B.C. Packers fish processing plant so I knew that I was placing my catch of the day in more than capable hands. Of course, my mother had continually told me I wasn't allowed to wield a knife for fear that I would lop off a few of my fingers rather than convert a fish into fillets.

The point of the annual Fish Winnipeg Media/Corporate Challenge is to bring the experiences I had enjoyed so much in my early years to another generation of youth through its Fish Winnipeg's Urban Angling Partnership.

Last year, over \$15,000 was raised to purchase rods and reels so that youth-at-risk in the inner city can become anglers. Over the years, Fish Winnipeg has hooked and landed a stringer full of corporate sponsors

who have contributed the money needed to introduce budding anglers to urban fishing. I only had a length of twine and a hook when I was of a similar age, but I can imagine what I could have done with the equipment handed out for free every year to Winnipeg's less-privileged youngsters.

I would unequivocally say that on Tuesday I had recaptured my youth as did the other media teams. Thanks to our volunteer guide, George Bones, our three-member team — Tom Derksen, Peter Squire and myself — was transported to a prime fishing spot across from the Misericordia Hospital. Tom was the first to land a fish — a 28-inch channel catfish. Peter landed a slightly smaller fish and I landed my first channel catfish, which was identical in length to Tom's.

No, I didn't kiss the catfish as is supposedly required by tradition, though I may have in my excitement kissed it if I had been reminded.

Judging for the media event was best on the total length of fish caught by each team. Our WREN team finished a respectable sixth. The event was won by the three young ladies of A-Channel News who caught 14 fish. But, everyone who participated was a winner regardless of the number and size of the fish they caught.

Winnipeg is indeed blessed to have such remarkable fishery in an urban setting. The fact that 600 young people are introduced to angling in Winnipeg each year will guarantee that the fishery will continue to be enjoyed well into the future.