

Black bear dives into Kuskokwim for 'Mac'

By Michael Fabion

Tundra Drums

A rumor floating around the Delta that two kayakers were chased by a bear on the Kuskokwim River was confirmed recently.

"That was us," said Tundra Drums editor James "Mac" McPherson who, along with his friend Barbara Kimberlin, has been traveling down the Kuskokwim by kayak from McGrath to Bethel for three weeks.

MacPherson said people they met along the

way told them to be on the lookout for bears, and they were. They saw plenty of tracks and even spotted a few bears at a distance. Then just upriver from Red Devil about a week ago, a black bear spotted them.

"I think he thought we were a moose," MacPherson said. "He started paralleling the bank and we started paddling like crazy. Then all of a sudden he jumps in the water heading straight for us."

In spite of the rough water and a headwind, MacPherson said they

doubled their paddling speed and made a successful escape to Red Devil.

It was about that time the pair began spending their nights with new-found friends in villages instead of camping in the woods.

Aside from the bear scare, MacPherson said the trip has been "incredible," giving him and Kimberlin a glimpse of "a whole other world" of trees, mountains, crystal clear rivers and "lots of really great people."