PRESS RELEASE

Four adventurers set off this summer to row the Northwest Passage

VANCOUVER, CANADA AND DUBLIN, IRELAND, June 18, 2013 — On July 1, 2013 four modern-day explorers from Vancouver will attempt a world first by rowing the 3,000 km Northwest Passage in a specially commissioned boat by human power alone in a single season—a feat only possible now due to the melting ice in the Arctic. Global wind and solar company Mainstream Renewable Power is sponsoring the expedition to bring awareness to the profound effects climate change is having on the environment.

The team of Kevin Vallely, Paul Gleeson, Frank Wolf and Denis Barnett are seasoned adventurers who, between them, have rowed the Atlantic Ocean, canoed across Canada and skied to the South Pole in world record time.

They will set off from Inuvik in the Northwest Territories on the first of July in their 25-foot long, specially built rowing boat *The Arctic Joule*. The four men will row in continuous shifts, 24 hours a day, seven days a week as the route will be in constant daylight for the majority of the journey. They hope to arrive at their destination in Pond Inlet, Nunavut on the east coast of Baffin Island in early fall, some 75 to 90 days after their start.

This area once represented a closed door for mariners who attempted to navigate the sea route, without success due to impassable sea ice. This passage has only become semi-navigable for about three months a year in the summer months when the ice of the Arctic Ocean breaks up and melts before refreezing for the winter. The four men will take advantage of that short window to row the ice-strewn passage.

“It wasn't long ago that the Northwest Passage was the sole domain of steel-hulled ice-breakers but things have changed,” said Kevin Vallely, lead rower.

“Climate change is transforming the Arctic and the world. By traversing the Northwest Passage completely under human power in a rowboat, without sail or motor, the Mainstream Last First team will be able to demonstrate first-hand the dramatic effects climate change is having on our planet. Something like this has never been done before. It is only now possible due to the increase in seasonal sea ice melt and deterioration due to climate changes.”

The rowers’ upcoming challenge is of global significance as both a pioneering maritime adventure and an environmental expedition. The team will be working with scientific research partners at Vancouver Aquarium, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Canadian Rangers on a unique and promising collaboration known as the Canadian Rangers Ocean Watch program (CROW) to collect and deliver environmental data about the Arctic Ocean.

In addition, the team will document their journey on their blog and through social media, as well as have an award-winning documentary videographer to film the trip. They will also engage with the broader public while away, using their adventure to publicize the melting Arctic and climate change's detrimental impact.

“With atmospheric CO2 concentrations hitting 400 ppm last month for the first time in 2-4 million years, Mainstream is sponsoring this expedition to highlight the immediate disasters of climate change,” said Sherra Zulerons, Country Manager for Canada at Mainstream Renewable Power. “This expedition will show people around the world a real-life example of what climate change is doing today. It’s real.”

The melting ice is only the start of the problem, she explained. As the ice melts, it causes massive amounts of harmful gases to be released into the atmosphere. Enormous amounts of methane hydrate has been trapped in the ice for many thousands of years and now that the ice is melting, the gas is being released, causing a huge knock-on effect. “That is why we are sponsoring this expedition,” said Zulerons.

“In the latest International Energy Agency report (IEA) it states that if we wait to act until 2020, we will be headed down a path to temperature rises of between 3.6 and 5.3 degrees C before 2100,” continued Zulerons. “Switching from fossil fuels to renewable energy will make a big difference in terms of keeping climate change below two degrees.”

Vallely added, “There seems to be a disconnect between what's actually happening with climate change and what's being done about it. We hope that our expedition will show the world through a real-life example of what climate change is doing today.

“We believe, as Barry Lopez echoed in his book Arctic Dreams, that mankind has *‘…the intelligence to grasp what is happening, the composure to not be intimidated by its complexity, and the courage to take steps that may bear no fruit in our lifetimes*’.”

The sea ice of the arctic has decreased by 50 per cent in the last three years alone and in about 15 years this region will be ice-free. According to scientists, this permafrost to perm-melt scenario will trigger numerous feedback loops that will put climate change beyond human control.

Note to Editors
Images, updates, videos and background materials are available at www.mainstreamlastfirst.com

About the Arctic Joule
The Arctic Joule has been designed specifically for this expedition. Built from marine plywood, the boat has multiple layers of foam, Kevlar and fiberglass to ensure strength and stability. Twenty-five feet in length and 1,000 pounds, she has two cabins where the team will sleep and rest when not rowing. All supplies required for the three-month expedition will be on board the Arctic Joule. With rowers and supplies the boat’s weight will double to 2,000 pounds.

About Mainstream
Mainstream Renewable Power is a world leading renewable energy developer. It has over 19GW in development and over 288MW of wind and solar farms in construction and operation. Mainstream offers an à-la-carte solution for customers to partner with us—from site identification through to long-term operation. Mainstream employs over 170 professionals on four continents.

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