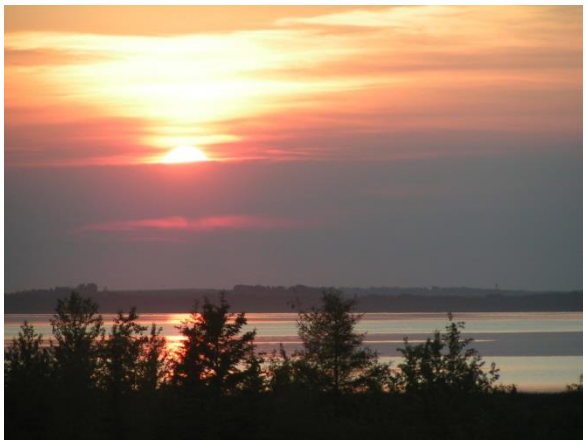
Gull Lake: What We Would Have Seen 20,000 Years Ago



This picture is a very common view of Gull Lake during the summer, but 20,000 years ago the landscape was very different.
Our area of Alberta was influenced by two gigantic ice fields, the Cordilleran from the Rocky Mountains and the Laurentide which was centred in the Hudson Bay area and extended south and west. Between these two ice fields was an ice free corridor, the borders of which shifted from west to east at different times. All of this contributed to the landscape of Central Alberta.

At the end of the last ice age, the ice was patchy and the borders irregular. The Laurentide ice field, the last to disappear in this region, often left detached melting ice blocks and mounds of glacial till.

Standing at the south end of Gull Lake, imagine what this landscape would have looked like as the glaciers retreated. To the north and east, at the edge of the ice field, you would have seen an area of rotting ice and to the south of this, a large lake formed from glacier melt (Glacial Lake Red Deer). In front of you, is a huge block of ice, running from the north west to the south east of where you are standing. The melting on its northern and eastern edges, forms a stream that flows around the block of ice, runs along the south edge and, then east and into Glacial Lake Red Deer. Thus was born the Blindman River. The ice block will become Gull Lake.

As the ice melted a depression was formed. Run off from the ice fields ran into the depression, building up hills of glacial remnants around its edges and leaving a shallow basin filled with run off from these mounds. The area around this basin begins to look like a patchwork of rounded hills (knobs) and shallow depressions sometimes filled with water (kettles).

Today, we can see the remnants of that ice block and the “lumpy” landscape around it. There are no more glaciers, but while precipitation and surface run-off still contribute water, our lake is now largely being fed by springs. It It is no stretch to say that our little village would not exist without this prairie puddle, a product of the last great plains glacier.