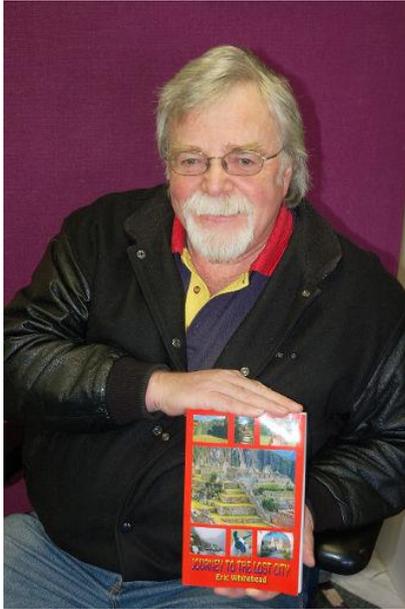


Author's Journey to the Lost City



By Miriam King, QMI Agency

Thursday, December 19, 2013 1:15:59 EST PM

Gilford resident and Author Eric Whitehead, with his new book, Journey to the Lost City - chronicalling an adventure on Peru's Inca Trail, in 2005. MIRIAM KING/BRADFORD TIMES/SUNMEDIA

"Wondering what was going on, it appeared the cook wanted us to accompany him into the kitchen; he had something there he wanted to show us. Maybe it was just my cynical nature, but to me this was not a good sign... The cook pointed up to the rafters and there, wrapped around a supporting post was a small boa constrictor snake eating a bat."

Eric Whitehead's first book, "Then There Was One: The Ultimate '70s Road Trip" - co-authored by Murray Jupe - detailed a coming-of-age, cross-continent road trip, complete with socio-political commentary and iconic cultural references.

His second book, South American Odyssey, chronicled a 2011 trip to South America with wife Karen.

In between, in 2005, the couple travelled to Peru and walked the Inca Trail from Cusco to the 15th century ruins of Machu Picchu - the subject of his newest book, Journey to the Lost City.

"I was 53, and Karen was 52," Whitehead says, and he admits that if they had realized just how demanding the hike was, they might have had second thoughts about making the trip.

They did spend months preparing for the hike, walking up to 10K per day. But there was no way to prepare for the impact of high elevation. The Inca Trail starts at about 10,000' above seas level, and climbs through a mountain pass to 14,000', before descending to Machu Picchu - elevation 8,000'.

Fortunately, they decided to stay in Cusco for 3 days before setting out. "We were totally acclimatized by the time we started the hike," Whitehead says. Even better, they were accompanied by a guide and seven porters, who carried everything but their daypacks.

"These porters are phenomenal - they're like the Sherpas in the Himalayas," he says - providing assistance as well as encouragement. "It's quite literally out of this world. We quite literally did not know if we'd be able to do it."

And as hard as the climb up was, the way down was harder. "It's just a stone pathway - thousands of steps!" he says. "It just kills your knees."

Despite the physical effort, Whitehead kept a journal of the trip - including their 3 days in the Amazon, and a trip to Colca Canyon in southern Peru. Twice as deep as the Grand Canyon, the Colca Canyon is home to Peru's remaining population of condors.

He also took numerous photos along the way - and the colour photographs are a welcome addition to Journey to the Lost City, bringing to life the comments, images and people of Peru. A great book for anyone thinking of travelling to Peru's landmarks, or just dreaming of hiking the Inca Trail.

To order, contact Eric Whitehead at ewhitehead@rogers.com or call 705-456-2215 - or visit www.thatroadtripbook.com

Whitehead is admittedly hooked on travel. The family used to take a road trip through the US every year, with their two sons. "By the time they graduated from High School, they had been to all 49 states - by car," he laughs.

Now, he and Karen plan their travels based on "continents", not countries. They've "done" North America, travelled extensively in South America, through Western Europe, and recently visited Viet Nam, in Asia. Their next adventure? Hopefully Australia and Antarctica - "but it's expensive and needs a lot of time, and my wife still works!"