



CREDIT

BY FARUK EKICH

GENERATION NO KILL

If the kids we find fishing today are any example, then salmon will be in good hands in the future.

PHOTOS BY KEITH DE COSTE



I want to tell you a tale that you are going to think is fiction. I agree it is fantastic enough to be fantasy, but this account is absolutely true. No matter, believe what you will, for even as fiction it makes a fine story. It's important for me to tell it now, because I am getting old, and soon I will begin to forget the little details, like the name of the fly, or worse, the name of the pool.

I could never forget the name of the river of course. It is the Petit Saguenay, where for 39 years I have cast over the salmon that lie in the tail end of my favourite pool, *La Poussière*. Even now, sitting in my Ottawa home, I can close my eyes and see this classic pool—the round boulders that make wading difficult, the forest that cuddles up to the bank on the far side. Birches, hemlock and alder form a solid wall of tone on tone green. A line of white foam adds emphasis to the foliage.





STEPHANE GOIC

Like grandfather, like son: Adam ties, casts, and catches, just like granddad. The only difference from 30 years ago, is this egg-laden female released to continue upstream and spawn.

It forms at the head of this junction pool, probably as a result of the water from two different rivers the Petit Saguenay and its tributary Riviere de Portage mixing together. In the jargon of local anglers, the foam (and the pool) is called “la poussière.”

Four decades of chasing *Salmo salar* through a full gamut of emotions. Certainly there's been joy, but also sadness and some regret. Today's released salmon were yesterday's killed fish; happily, there has been the growth and change that comes with acquired knowledge.

What of the future? Now, on the river, we enjoy fishing with old friends. But I ask myself, with all that we now know of keeping the rivers clean, of ensuring they remain free flowing all the way to the sea, and of the

important role of live release, who will carry this conservation ethic forward so that fish will always flash their silver scales in *La Poussière*?

You worry about that; do what you can. Contribute to the cause, pass on the passion to the next generation. I began to try to instill a love of nature in both my grandchildren, Adam and Sophie, from an early age. I carried them in an infant backpack seat down to the Credit River that flows into Lake Ontario where they could see and feel the life that such rivers nurture.

Push it on them and you risk youthful resistance to elderly advice, or worse, even resentment. I was lucky both of my only daughter's children caught me at my fly bench and their curiosity was piqued early. Adam, now nine, likes to try to imitate the classic flies; Sophie loves the colorful hair patterns that she finds in my fly tying books.



THERE'S ALWAYS A CHANCE WE'LL SEE IT NEXT YEAR. IF YOU LET IT GO, THERE'S ALWAYS A CHANCE.



FARIK ENICH



From the fly-tying table to the river, salmon angling infuses children with a love of nature, sport, and family.

It's late July, 2008. I am at my brother-in-law's home in the village of Petit Saguenay, located where that river enters the Saguenay fjord. The first morning I want to wake everyone up, get the grandchildren dressed, hike them out to La Poussiere. But another kind of anticipation gets to me. After all, I have been fishing this pool for so long and actually caught the record fish on it 30 years ago—a 40-inch female that now hangs in the ZEC office. Wish I'd let it go though, maybe there'd be more fish for Adam and Sophie. Stuff like that works on your mind. I sneak from the house just after four in the morning. It's a 40-minute hike and in the grey light of predawn I look forward to seeing the pool. I hope that the salmon will be visible in the tail end for the kids to see. Damn, should have let that giant fish go. So long ago.

The Petit Saguenay rounds a slow curve and there's the rapid formed by the two rivers meeting, then it widens just a bit into La Poussiere.



I can see the salmon, there are plenty of them and the fishing conditions are great—the magic velocity of the current that works the fly in perfect speed. Still, I can't raise a fish and by 11:30 I am ready to break for lunch when Adam appears, eager to try one of his creations. It's based on a Spey pattern he saw in a book and has black seal fur body with black hackle and dark brown turkey feather wings.

There are several fishermen around by this time and I am sharing the pool with Gaetan Lavois, an old friend, and one of the directors of the ZEC. I carry Adam to the rock in the middle of the rapids. It offers a good, strategic spot for casting.

On his fourth or fifth cast a salmon takes the fly and immediately tears downstream, leaping almost right beside where Gaetan is standing in the tail end. We can see that it is unusually large. The line goes slack and there is a groan from the onlookers. Disappointed and reeling in the slack line, Adam notices that the fish is still on. The fight is back on and this time I hold him by the shirt so he can get to shore. There are more jumps and at one point the line goes slack.

Suddenly the fish is at hand and I am able to hold its tail. There is applause from the riverbank, and Gaetan removes the barbless fly, quickly measuring the fish. At 100 cm in length and a 59 cm girth it is a healthy female, with a full belly of eggs. Adam and Sophie both give the salmon a farewell touch and it's gone.

This fish is registered at the ZEC as 12.5 kgs under the name of Adam Ekich Decoste. It is only one inch shorter than the river record caught thirty years earlier in the same pool, by his grandfather.

EPILOGUE

We're all back in Ottawa now. My grandkids still come over to tie flies, but now they talk more to each other about salmon. About one Atlantic salmon in particular. They ask me if it has spawned yet—is there a chance we'll see it again next year?

Of course, I tell them, certainly it must have spawned. And yes, there's always a chance we'll see it next year. If you let it go, there's always a chance.

Faruk Ekich is a regular on the Petit Saguenay River, where most summer mornings he can be found on La Poussière Pool. 🐟