# Canadian Alpine Journal

2021


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est. 1928

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*Canadian Alpine Journal, Vol 1, 1907*

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# The Canadian Alpine Journal

Volume 104, 2021

## Features



Cover: Christina Lustenberger below the ice pitches on the first descent of Gold Card Couloir between Mount Burnham and Mount Grady, Monashee Mountains. Photo: Steve Shannon

Previous Page: Ski tracks by Christina Lustenberger and Ian MacIntosh from their first descent of the east face of Mount Nelson, Purcell Mountains. Photo: Bruno Long

Table of Contents: Jon Walsh on pitch four of Gravy Train on Fingerberry Tower in the Bugaboos, Purcell Mountains. Photo: Tim Banfield

Back Cover: Brette Harrington on the summit of Neptuak Mountain after completing the first ascent of The Hammer and the Dance. Photo: Tony McLane

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# The Canadian Alpine Journal, Volume 104, 2021

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# Editorial

## Reconciling the Past

PEOPLE CHANGE, hopefully for the better. In my twenties I made some poor choices for route names that I have recently corrected. I recognize now the impact of a name and the responsibility that we, as climbers, have in getting it right. A route name is not for the first ascentionists alone but rather for a community of users that reaches far and wide, and with no room for causing offence.

In the Canadian Rockies, the small mixed crag to the left of Hidden Dragon in the Ghost contains the names that needed changing. The irony is that at that time of my life, when those names first came about, I had considered myself a promoter of diversity, equity and inclusion by having featured women climbers on both front covers of my mixed-climbing guidebooks. This, of course, only illustrates how deeply entrenched a person's biases can be—back then I didn't think twice about potentially causing harm with a name choice. My climbing partners and I have retroactively corrected this mistake. The crag's name was changed to Justice Wall and the routes to MLK, RBG and AOC—the initials of proponents of social justice movements, past and present (Martin Luther King, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez). These route names are also a retort to naysayers who have argued that climbing culture will be watered down if we simply assign numbers or letters to routes. In this case, it's hard to deny the meaning of those initials.

This year's *Canadian Alpine Journal* has a significant number of stories that address questionable names, mainly with regards to colonial titles given to peaks that had an Indigenous name. In light of this and in the name of change, the *CAJ* will now refer to Mount Robson (the highest mountain in the Canadian Rockies) by its Texqakallt Nation name of Yexyexescen, and to Mount Rundle, the prominent massif that stretches from Banff to Canmore, by its original Cree name of Waskahigan Watchi (House Mountain).

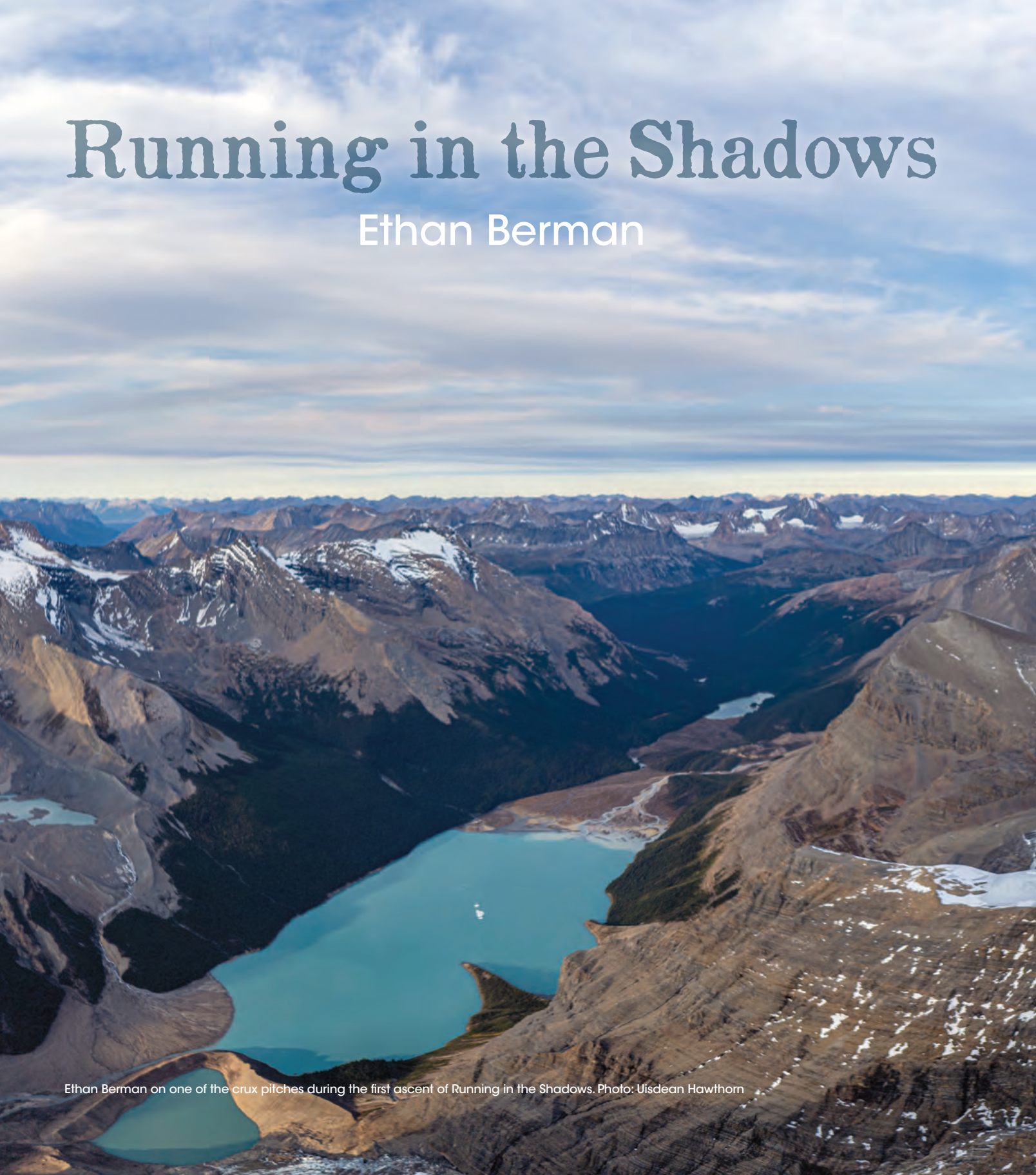
Reconciliation is a first step in the long path to healing past injustices. To paraphrase Muhammad Ali: a person who views the world at 50 the same as they did at 20 has wasted 30 years of their life. I hope that my present-day self is a more considerate person than my past self, and that I will never again make anyone feel marginalized or degraded by a name.

—Sean Isaac

The Alpine Club of Canada's National Office is located on Treaty 7 territory and on the traditional lands of the Stoney Nakoda Nations of Wesley, Chiniki and Bearspaw; the three nations of the Blackfoot Confederacy—the Pikani, Kainai and Siksika; and the Tsuu T'ina of the Dene people. Treaty 7 territory is also shared with the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III. Before the signing of Treaty 7 and prior to the establishment of provincial boundaries, this region was also used by the Ktunaxa and the Maskwacis peoples. *The Canadian Alpine Journal* acknowledges the past, present and future generations of these Nations who help us steward this land, as well as honour and celebrate this place. The *CAJ* further acknowledges and recognizes that the activities of the ACC reaches across all of Canada's First Nations, Métis Homelands and Inuit Nunangat, and for this we are grateful.

# Running in the Shadows

## Ethan Berman



Ethan Berman on one of the crux pitches during the first ascent of Running in the Shadows. Photo: Uisdean Hawthorn

Above: Summit selfie just before dark. Photo: Uisdean Hawthorn

Right: Ethan Berman tries to place an ice screw in unprotectable sn'ice during the first ascent of Running in the Shadows. Photo: Uisdean Hawthorn

Not five years ago I discovered mountain climbing through a stack of old magazines in the corner of our local bouldering gym. As a budding sport climber working and living in Chiang Mai, Thailand, the photos of icy faces and knife-edge snow ridges were an alluring escape far from the sweltering heat and humidity of Southeast Asia. The stories of triumphs and failures seemed packed with adventure and exploration, both inwards and out. I had already spent a number of years futilely searching for answers to existential questions, but discovering the freedom and depth of expression in the mountains taught me to embrace the process of asking the questions themselves. Little did I know that the art, sport and lifestyle of trying to reach lofty summits would completely alter the trajectory of my life.

When I returned to North America I moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, to develop my skills in the diverse mountain landscapes of Western Canada and pursue a master's degree in my spare time. I first laid eyes on the Emperor Face on Yexyexéscen (Mount Robson) in October 2018 on a day hike to Berg Lake. Winter had already arrived in the Berg River valley, and lines of snow and ice shimmered in the afternoon light, snaking their way up massive gullies to the ridge more than 2,000 metres above, only interrupted by steep rock bands running horizontally across the upper half of the face. The wind was whipping snow over the ridgeline, and clouds spun around the summit, refusing to reveal its secrets. A prominent gully system left of Infinite Patience

Ethan Berman climbs towards the Emperor Ridge on day two.
Photo: Uisdean Hawthorn

Second bivy on the summit of Yexyexéscen, under a clear sky and full moon.
Photo: Uisdean Hawthorn

immediately captured my attention. First, because it was a logical weakness that looked like it would suit a fast and light style, and second, because I knew nothing about it. Later research revealed that this part of the Emperor was the focus of the first serious attempt at the face by Pat Callis and Jim Kanzler in 1974. The pair climbed high onto the face through "The Jaws," a two-pitch choke point where three major gully systems converge, yet had to escape horizontally to the North Face having misjudged the ice conditions. This section of the face received little attention until 2010 when, on their third attempt of the year, Jon Walsh and Jason Kruk climbed through The Jaws and followed the middle gully to the Emperor Ridge before bailing from their summit bid due to incoming thunderstorms. The line I envisioned trying would also climb through The Jaws but take the right-hand gully above.

I left Yexyexéscen that day feeling equal parts inspired and intimidated. The face's size, history and significance in North American alpinism all weighed heavily against my relatively small amount of experience in the Canadian Rockies and alpine climbing in general. But I was determined and knew I would be back. After a couple of winter seasons in Canmore and expeditions to Bolivia and Alaska, I felt ready to revisit the Emperor. In June 2020, Peter Hoang and I made an attempt but quickly deemed the face out of condition. The mountain was still loaded with a heavy winter's snowfall—much too hazardous combined with the mid-summer's sun at 52 degrees north. After spending a warm night watching the face cleanse itself of its winter weight, the decision to bail was easy, minus the 20-kilometre walk back to the car in mountain boots. The reconnaissance provided valuable information, though, and I figured the copious amount of snow would solidify into good ice conditions for the coming fall season.

The short Canadian summer quickly passed, and soon enough I was back to checking the Yexyexéscen daily forecast, taking notes of freezing levels and snowfall amounts, and scouring social media for tourists' photos of the face, which sits conveniently in the backdrop of one of the most popular hiking trails in the Rockies. Just when I thought the season was slipping away due to

family obligations in the United States, a weather window appeared just a week before I was to head south. A few days later, Uisdean Hawthorn and I were on the trail to Berg Lake, bags packed for four days in the Canadian wilderness. Four days of clear weather is a lot to ask from the king of the Canadian Rockies, towering 3,000 metres above the Yellowhead Highway. So when we started the approach with the mountain completely shrouded in fog and a drizzle accompanying our footsteps, we weren't totally surprised. It wasn't quite the entrance we had imagined, but we tried to stay positive as the forecast called for improving weather that evening and three to four days of high pressure to come. Halfway to Berg Lake we stopped for some shelter under the dense rainforest canopy, and I pointed out the features of the mountain that we would be seeing on a clear day. It was Uisdean's first trip to Yexyexéscen, so he had yet to lay eyes on the mountain. I appreciated the trust he had in me—to venture out to one of the biggest faces in the Rockies on a whim based off my enthusiasm and excitement. We had become good friends over the last year or so, but this would by far be our biggest undertaking together. His calm and cool demeanor instilled confidence in me, highlighting the wealth of experience he had already amassed in climbing in the mountains.

The alarm went off at 1 a.m. the next morning. We still hadn't gotten a clear view of the face, but the sky had cleared overnight, wrapping us in a blanket of stars. The fog now manifested itself in the tent as we sat under a veil of silence and indecision, each of us tiptoeing through the game of not wanting to sound neither too eager nor too flaky. We were concerned about the quality and level of the freeze on the face, and thus the hazard of rock, snow and ice falling from above. After discussing all the reasons to not go climbing, we still laced up our boots and packed our bags. The rope stayed in the pack as we scrambled up through broken rock bands, avoiding

Ethan Berman begins the 3,000-metre descent from the summit on the third morning.
Photo: Uisdean Hawthorn

the drainages still running with water low on the face. We crossed the freezing threshold and roped up just before The Jaws, which turned out to be a pitch of unprotectable, near-vertical snow. The conditions improved as we climbed higher into the right-hand gully. We fell into a familiar rhythm, stopping to belay tenuous pitches of thin ice blobs that gave passage over steep and compact limestone slabs, and moving together over large sections of lower-angled alpine ice.

In the early afternoon, we reached the first of several crux rock bands. Twice I tried to work my way up a thin ice strip, but it didn't feel supportive, so I backed off. The flow we had found earlier dissipated and the daunting reality of retreat began to penetrate our mental armour. These are the moments that define our climbs, that dictate our successes and failures. I encouraged Uisdean onward and he sniffed out an overhanging, snow-choked corner. With a slow and deliberate craft, he worked his body upwards. Underneath the snow he found a perfect crack for protection and hung off a few pieces of gear as he slowly progressed. He howled as he reached the belay above, and I joined him shortly thereafter. "You can take the boy out of Scotland, but you can't take Scotland out of the boy!" he said, the fire back in his eyes. I knew it was my turn to step up.

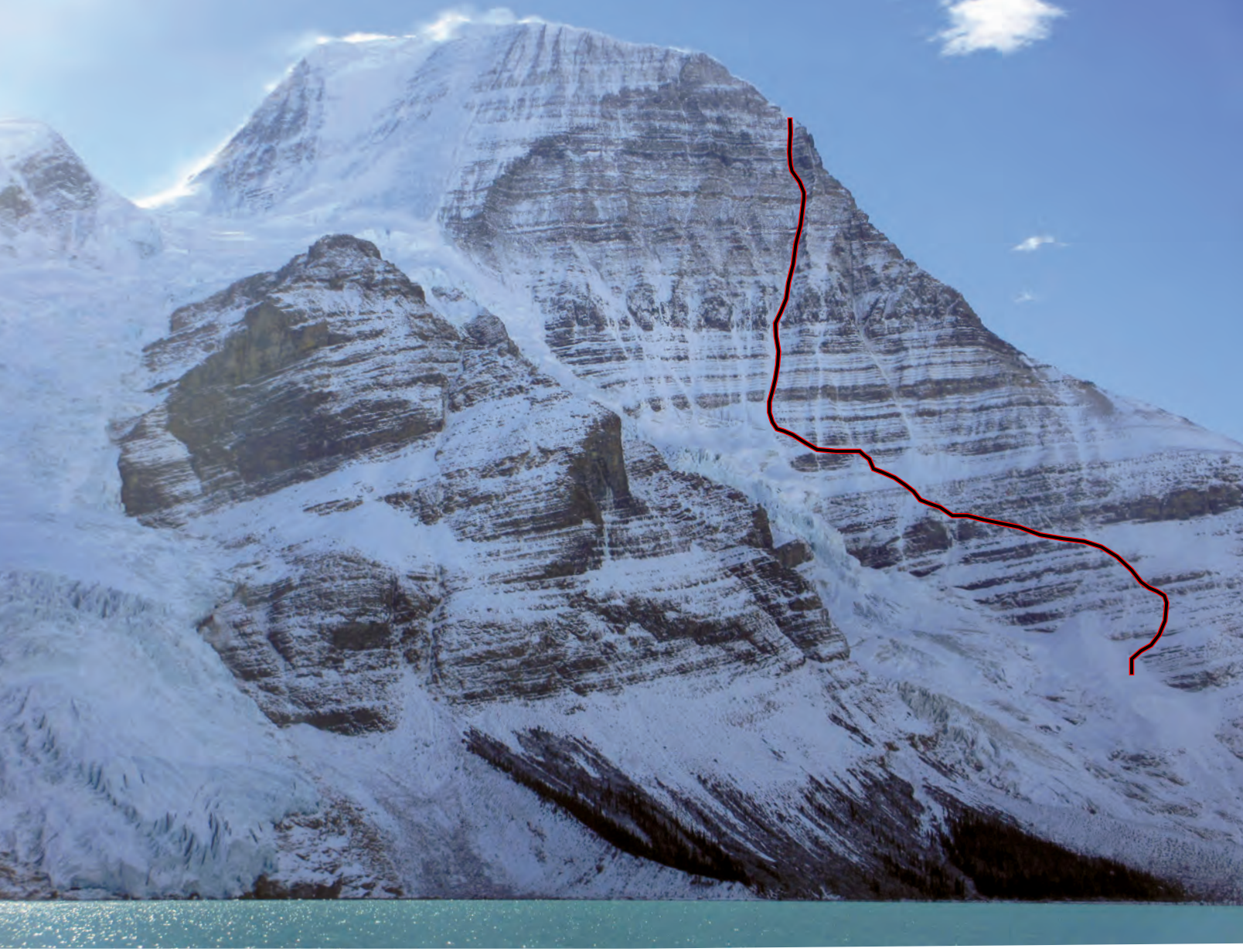
Above, I led a 60-metre pitch of run-out mixed climbing up a thin, vertical ice runnel interspersed with several overhanging rock steps. After taking a short fall onto the leash of my ice tool, thankfully with the best protection of the pitch at my waist, I had to tie off my final ice screw, hammer in two marginal pitons and make delicate moves to the ice band above. After one more long mixed pitch, the difficulties eased and we followed several pitches of ice to the Emperor Ridge, topping out the face after 19 hours of climbing. We hacked out a decent tent platform on the edge of the abyss and began rehydrating and refueling. We had gained nearly 2,000 metres of elevation, opening a new route that includes around 14 long and sustained pitches of the highest-quality ice and mixed climbing. But the summit was still far away, only 500 metres higher but more than a kilometre horizontally over convoluted, calf-burning terrain.

In the morning, we found ourselves immersed in a sea of clouds with only 30 metres of visibility. We decided to make our summit bid via the Patience Traverse across the upper west face in order to avoid the infamous rime gargoyles that guard the Emperor Ridge. The route finding was difficult, but when we were nearing the end of the traverse, the clouds broke just enough to help us locate the final ice and rime pitches leading to the summit. We topped out on the summit slopes to an auspicious full moon rising just above the cloud ceiling that had tested our mental fortitude all day. We pitched the tent in the middle of the summit bowl and enjoyed a cold and windy night at the highest point of the Canadian Rockies.

The morning sun thawed our numb fingers and toes, and we made the long 3,000-metre descent down the Kain Route and the Patterson Spur back to the car, completing our circumnavigation of the mountain. The experience was one of the most impactful that we have ever had, and all the more special because it took place in our backyard.

In some ways, it is hard for a climber of my generation to envision the experience of the first ascent of the Emperor Face by Jamie Logan and Mugs Stump in July 1978. My climbing experience has been fully shaped by modern ice-climbing equipment, ultralight gear and access to weather forecasts. Harsh bivies and aid climbing should be avoided when possible, and climbing on the Rockies' big faces in summer is foolish and dangerous. There is a reason that the most difficult and committing routes on the Emperor were actually the first few routes climbed, none of which have been repeated.

Yet our experience on the Emperor Face also bears a familiar resemblance to the first ascent. In the 1979 *American Alpine Journal*, Jamie Logan wrote, "The real key to climbing the Emperor Face was making the firm decision to try, regardless of the obstacles that nature and our imagination might place in our path." This much is still true. The significance of our ascent, if any, lies solely in the reaffirmation that our generation still honours the path of alpinism as



Running in the Shadows on the Emperor Face of Yexyexéscen.
Photo: Ethan Berman

an important element of our culture, that there is value in the pursuit of meaning and significance in the high mountains. In a time when it is so easy to not go, to stay at home, to be comfortable, to achieve ego-boasting confirmation of our value through the false mirror of social media, it is more important than ever to remind ourselves of the value of stripping away the layers, exploring our limits, engaging in self-examination, putting utmost trust and love in our partnerships and seeking a sense of adventure. These traits define our sentience and existence, and alpinism is such an incredible, albeit extreme, way to explore them.


**Summary**

Running in the Shadows (VI AI5 M6 A0, 2,300m), Emperor Face, Yexyexéscen, Canadian Rockies. FA: Ethan Berman, Uisdean Hawthorn, September 30–October 2, 2020.


**About the Author**

Ethan Berman was born in India in 1990 and has lived between Asia and North America ever since. He now resides in Canada, chasing seasons between Squamish, British Columbia, and Canmore, Alberta, and works as an environmental and data science consultant.

Greg Horne on rappel 14 at the end of day two. Photo: Katie Graham

# Looking For Waffl

## Greg Horne

The quest for exploring and descending big alpine canyons of the Canadian Rockies began with multi-year efforts on Hydro Circus [*CAJ*, 2003] and then Mount Wilson [*CAJ*, 2017]. My focus shifted to the next project, the drainage of the west bowl of Yexyexéscen, "mountain of the spiral road," as named by the Shuswap Indians. Having travelled up and down the Valley of a Thousand Falls to Berg Lake and beyond many times, I had spied the cleft and obvious waterfall from the Kinney Lake outlet bridge one or two decades ago. The relief is significant, and steep, but the access logistics are much more straightforward than the Cleavage Canyon of Wilson—no bushwhack or glacier travel; instead a hut and flat, safe bivy sites. ¶

AT THANKSGIVING OF 2016, Dave Critchley and I mountain biked to Kinney Lake to make the first scouting from the bottom upwards. We should have got the message on the drive from Jasper that we were "out of season" as my truck fishtailed on a black-iced highway bridge. Right above the lake, rain turned to wet snow, and our footing, even walking in steep forest with water shoes on, proved to be precarious. We checked and rigged the bottom four drops, and the rock quality looked good. Hopes of continuing higher for more recon were dashed when it was difficult to stand up on snow-covered moss and grass. Even with dry suits on, we did not overheat on the hike and bike out to the road.

For the 2017 Labour Day long weekend, I rallied a crew of the usual suspects familiar with my alpine-canyon obsessions: Katie Graham, Gavin Elsley and Colin Massey. Joe Storms offered support with a first-day portering contribution. The game plan was simple. Go up the Ralph Forester Hut trail to just below the hut, then traverse the Yellow Bands across the Great Couloir and Wishbone Arête and bivy the first night in the west bowl above the start of the canyon. Next, two days down the canyon, and on the fourth day, hike out from Kinney Lake.

I had not been on the hut trail in a couple of decades, and it was heavily overgrown with willows, alders and conifer branches. It felt like trail wading/swimming in the vegetation. At the crux slab below treeline, the chain I had installed to replace a cable in the 1990s was missing. I lead a sporty solo with a mega pack then belayed for some of the others. As Joe didn't have a rope of his own to get down, he left his load for us to distribute and headed home.

Above treeline, we encountered the missing chain cut up into three or four sections in the zone where an old iron hook had previously provided a single rappel/belay point. It was terrain where one could not afford a slip but was easier than the crux slab below. By late afternoon, our pace dictated by the heavy packs, brushy trail and belays made it obvious that reaching the west bowl on day one was unrealistic. The hut beckoned. A hole in the floor of the hut chewed open by packrats, and their subsequent shit and piss everywhere inside, dampened our arrival.

Day two had us to the Great Couloir crossing point where I scouted without my pack a way in and out of the nearly dry, snow-free gully. We then opted for continuing our Yellow Bands traverse by moving up to a much narrower band. This led us to a mini saddle on the Wishbone Arête, visible from the highway when one knows what to look for.

Picking our way into the west bowl and figuring out our starting point of the first rappel ate into time. It was near 3 p.m. before the technical descent began. A short 10- to 12-metre rappel positioned us to drop the headwall. Katie led, and we could hear the rope bag of our 60-metre rope hit the ground. That was a good thing as the pitch proved to be 55 metres, with much of it free hanging. We were committed after pulling the ropes down. While finishing the rope pull, Katie's pack started to roll down a steep scree slope. Gavin began a lunge for it, but I grabbed him, as the risk of him stumbling then falling was not worth the pack save. Instead, we watched in horror as the tumbling pack opened and began ejecting its contents just as it went airborne over a small cliff and out of sight. A yard sale of scattered gear was found in the stream bed. Most of Katie's gear was found, except a headlamp and a couple of minor items.

The next drop, a 50-metre pitch, had a telephone-booth-sized stack of a shaley junk balanced over our canyon. Rationalizing it had sat there for hundreds of years, we had nothing to worry about—in theory. Rain began and anything dislodged by the precipitation would funnel directly where we were rappelling. Colin's new canyon rope grew a core shot from the Rope Eater pitch; the 60-metre rope now became 55 metres.

A few more drops and night closed in. We had planned to bivy on the very major forested bench at around 1,750 metres but that would not happen. Instead, we set our bivy in a small patch of trees with amazing flat, soft ground only a 100 metres from the stream.

Guillaume Coupier on the 60-metre Rope Eater of rappel three. Photo: Greg Horne

Colin Massey contemplates the fate of his brand-new rope during the 2017 attempt.
Photo: Katie Graham

Colin Magee and Katie Graham finish the first rappel during the first descent of Waffl Canyon. Photo: Greg Horne

Day three dawned overcast with mid-level cloud banks below us. Stream-flow level had gone down overnight after the rain stopped. We progressed down eight more pitches of 10 to 50 metres in height. At 4 p.m., we reached the major bench we had hoped for the day before. Time calculations of how much canyon was left to descend, return to work obligations and unknown terrain ahead swayed us to pull the pin. The retreat exit plan was to traverse right on the bench and negotiate several forest cliff bands to reach the Berg Lake trail near Whitehorn campground. Three rappels and much bush thrashing found us in the dark on a steep forest slope with waist-high vegetation that blocked our view of the ground below and what we might step off of. Each of us found a saddle upslope of a tree to lay down on and sip our limited rationed water (certainly not enough for a freeze-dried meal) and chew on a chocolate bar.

The last day, after one more rappel, brought us to the outhouse of the campground. Our missed supper was cooked for brunch, and with perfect cloudless skies, we hiked out wondering where we would be had the canyon descent continued.

August 25, 2018, found the same crew as 2017, plus Tamara Kostya and Joe Storms, gathered at the Kinney Lake campground for a two-team bottom-up exploration of the lower or apron section of the canyon. Katie, Joe and I would scramble and climb as high as we could then descend down the canyon, and once reaching the rappel anchors of the other crew who had traversed in midway, use their built stations to repeat those pitches while taking notes and sketching details for future reference. It was a crazy hazy and smoky summer from forest fires, and the upper half of the mountain was never seen. Fog mixed with haze made mid-morning seem like dusk. Joe led a few impressive belayed pitches above the limit of scrambling in a dry suit and canyon shoes. By

noon, we were back in the canyon much higher than expected. Water levels were perfect.

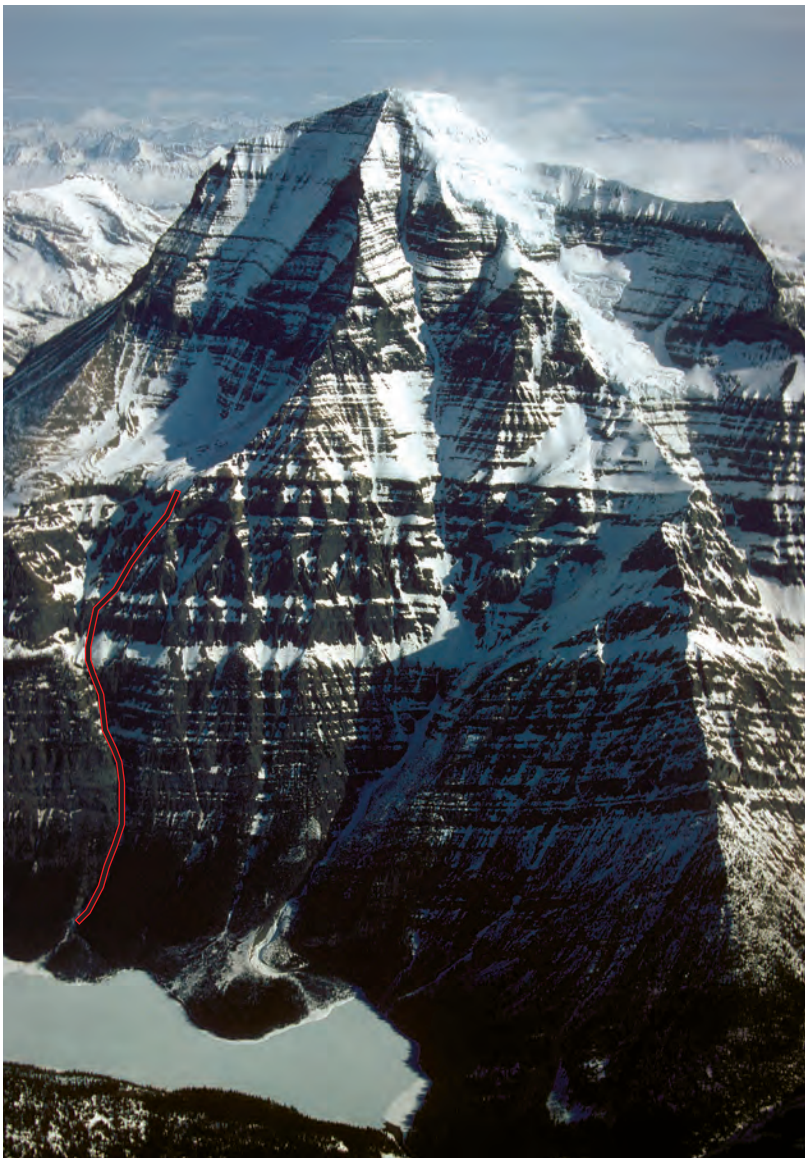
After seven raps, we joined where the other team of Colin, Gavin and Tamara had begun using a traverse ledge to access the canyon. Eight more repeated rappels brought us down to where Dave and I had stopped in 2016. Along the way, we found anchor evidence in two spots where previous parties had rappelled.

Now both the top and bottom of Waffl Canyon were completed—32 pitches in total. The last major unknown was the middle section, including the tall waterfall visible from the Kinney Lake bridge.

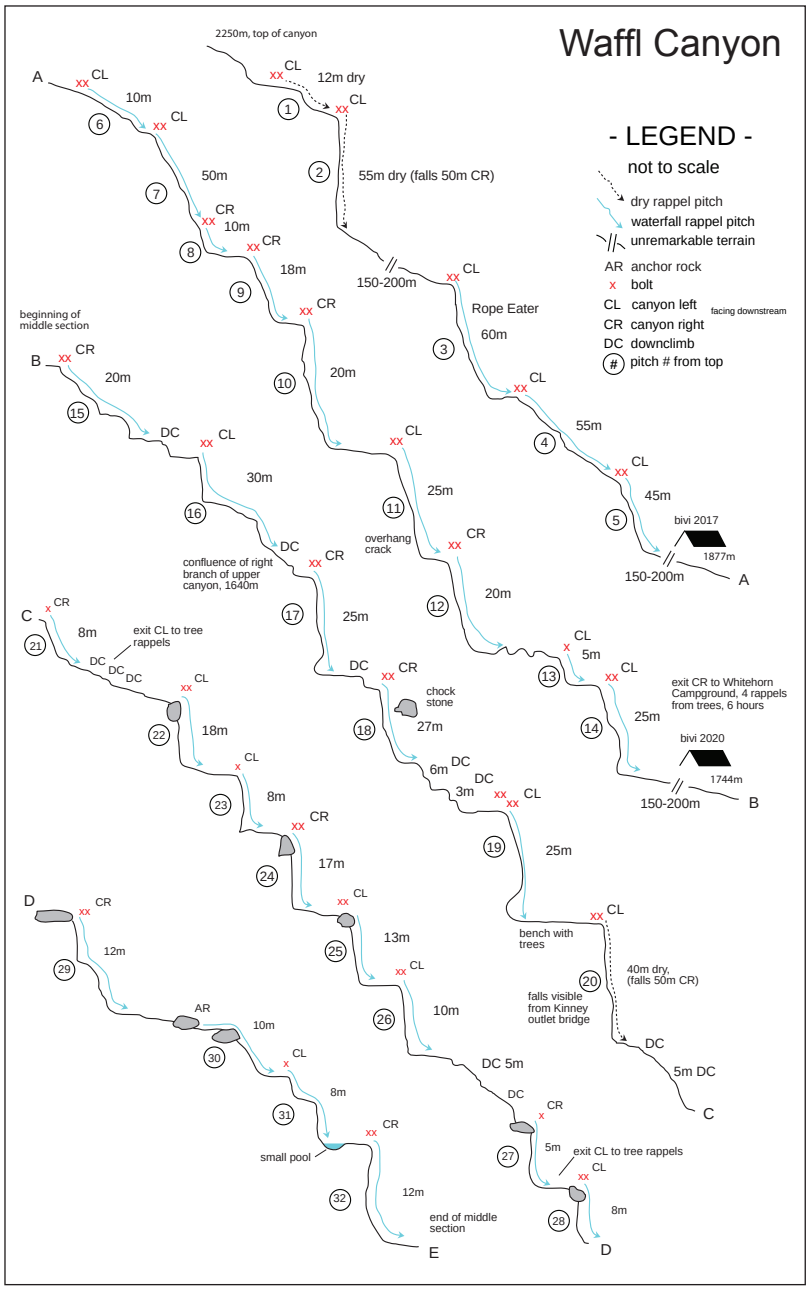
In 2019, a team of only three could be mustered, but with all the personal and group gear needed for the canyon, a minimum of four is realistic. 2020 brought its own set of new logistical hiccups—bubbles, cohorts and on and on. Group size expanded and contracted from three up to seven. Now a COVID-19 traffic jam could be a concern. Katie and I committed to keep a 10-day window of showtime open from work. Rain on the wrong day or two could turn the canyon into a shooting gallery. No repeats of ricocheting boulders off canyon walls like Mount Wilson were desired. Others did not have the luxury of 10 days free, so a complex calendar of who could go when developed. Katie and I studied SpotWX multiple times a day, crystal-ball gazing our best option. Early on we had a great weather window, but only three people were available. As the days ticked by, trip options reduced.

As with most things, a compromise in weather forecasts was selected. Rain the night before we started, ending by noon of the hut approach, cloudy day two, clear day three (our most important day into the new section of canyon) and mixed day four. On September 2, our team of Guillaume Coupier, Katie Graham, Matt Kennedy, Colin Magee and I shouldered heavy packs as light rain fell.

The ugly condition of the hut trail found in 2017 had spurred me to start a volunteer trail maintenance project supported by Mount Robson Provincial Park. Numerous friends bent to my pressure for help. Loppers, hammer drills and chainsaws were put into action. The park bought and flew a new section of chain to the crux slab. Brazilian friend Luiz Drummond got to experience what a 16-hour Greg Horne day trip felt like—inchworm-pulling 50 metres of 5/16-inch chain uphill from where the helicopter had missed the correct drop-off spot for the chain. Joe Storms helped on three of five maintenance trips I made, including to help hump a 12-kilogram gear cache to treeline.



Waffle Canyon on the west face of Yexyexéscen. Photo: Greg Horne




The hike up the trail now verged on a highway, and we barely got damp from the wet vegetation. The re-equipped chain on the slab was easy in its greasy, wet state. We shaved off at least an hour, if not more, to reach treeline and the gear cache. The sun broke out, and life was good. The option of skipping the hut to push on to a grassy shelf I called the Goat Promontory (fertilized by generations of pooping goats) beside the Great Couloir was considered but voted down in favour of a hut mattress.

A peek outside with the 5-a.m. alarm revealed rain, snow and fog—glad the team crushed my Goat Promontory camp idea. After another hour on the pillow, snow gave way to misty fog. By the time we left the hut at 7:45 a.m., snow flakes swirled in the wind. Familiar terrain improved our pace and little route finding was needed. The gully crossing of the Great Couloir had a completely different character. Powerful step kicking by Colin, who had the stiffest boots for firm snow, upped our safety as we all only had trekking poles or wood sticks from the forest for self-arrest if needed.

By 1 p.m., we dry-suited up for our 2020 descent. Stories and jokes about Katie's roll-away pack had us all extra careful with how anything not clipped in was placed. To avoid another issue at the Rope Eater pitch, I built a new rappel station thinking the rub point was eliminated. At the bottom, I discovered the next station had been sheared off by rockfall. Colin arrived next and informed me he found a core shot in my new first-time-used rope and had to tie off the spot with a butterfly knot, making it 15 metres shorter. Repeating our 2017 descent, several more stations had missing anchors blown away by falling rock. After six hours, we reached the intended forested band and made a comfortable bivy camp on soft moss.

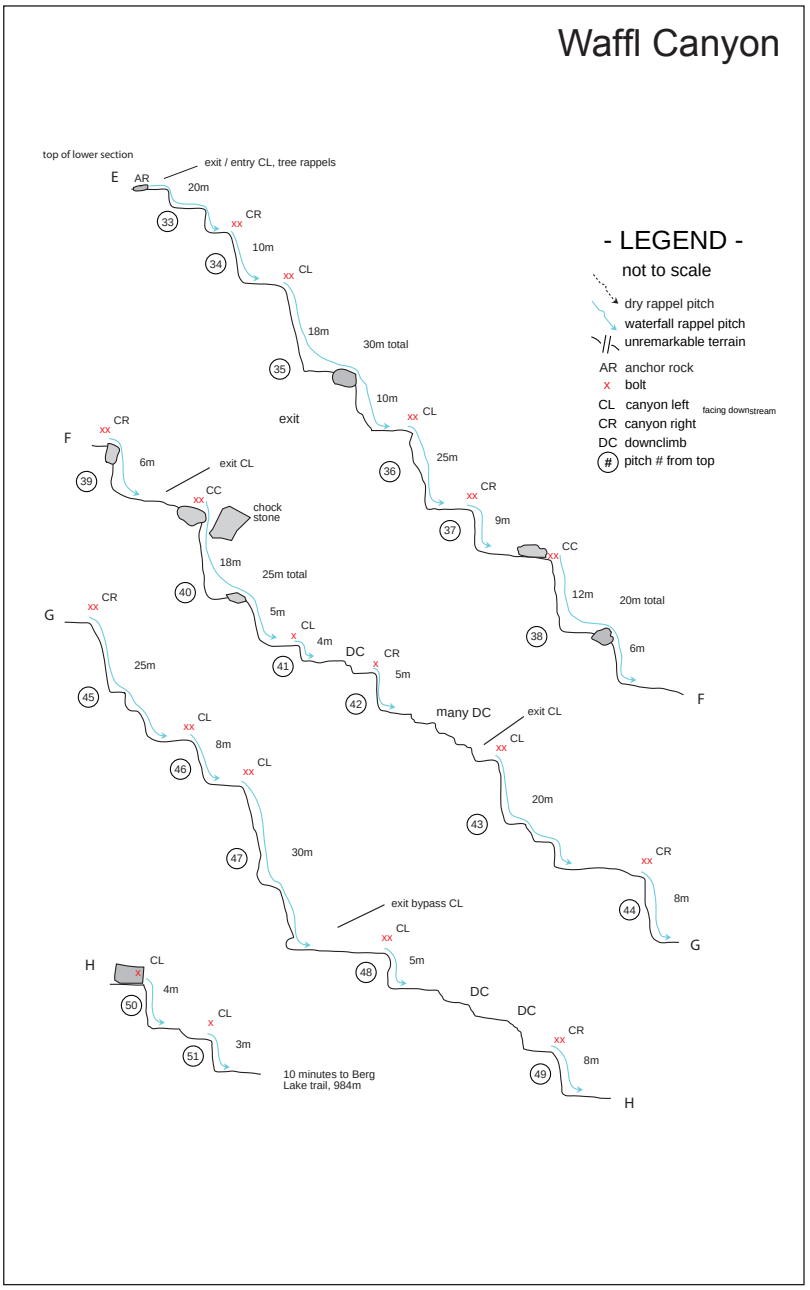
Day three needed to be our best weather, and the forecast came through with clear skies. Ahead was the unknown section. The water flow of the upper section had been a little more than 2017, but soon we would join with the west branch and stream flow would double below the confluence. Guillaume led with route scouting and anchor building. Below the confluence, the water volume upped the program—a jammed rappel device now would have serious consequences. The warm day would add snowmelt as well. The narrow canyon opened to a sunny bench with a few trees right above the falls visible from Kinney

Lake. Not as high as expected (about 50 metres), many descent options presented themselves. We chose a 40-metre dry line beside the falls to avoid being pummelled. Trying but unable to keep up with the sun, we moved into shade and just before 6 p.m. reached the high point of our 2018 bottom-up exploration.

A wave of relief and satisfaction came over us. The pieces of the multi-year puzzle had come together. Nineteen drops remained and full attention to detail had to be maintained. No anchor damage, like we had found the day before, sped our progress and some two-year-old slings were reused. Our third rope, an old 9-millimetre dynamic chosen because of its light weight, was not happy in the canyon. The sheath kept blowing apart, and we started cutting it up to use as anchor material. Full darkness enveloped us. Our waterproof radios had died and communication between top and bottom or between rigging and pulling teams became difficult in the dark and very noisy canyon.

The final larger pitch of 30 metres was like driving in a snowstorm with the high-beam headlights on, a complete swirling maelstrom of flying water bouncing off us and the canyon walls. The rope below was tight from the current tugging on it. Knowing the pitch details were critical here as part way down a step might fool someone to detach from the rope in the blinding night shower and step off the lower vertical drop. Watching each person descend in the dark with stars above, the sound of their movements covered by the pounding water and only their jerky staggering headlamp motions partly visible behind curtains of water, was truly special.

A repeat of the drops Dave and I had done in 2016 and a final walk down the streambed to the bridge on the Berg Lake trail ended our descent of Waffl Canyon at midnight. In 1930, while attempting a solo ascent of Yexyexéscen, Newman Waffl perished, the first person to die on the mountain. Only his pack and a few other small personal items were found on a snow cone of the west bowl; his body was never recovered. Some of his molecules likely still flow in the waters of this canyon.





**Summary**

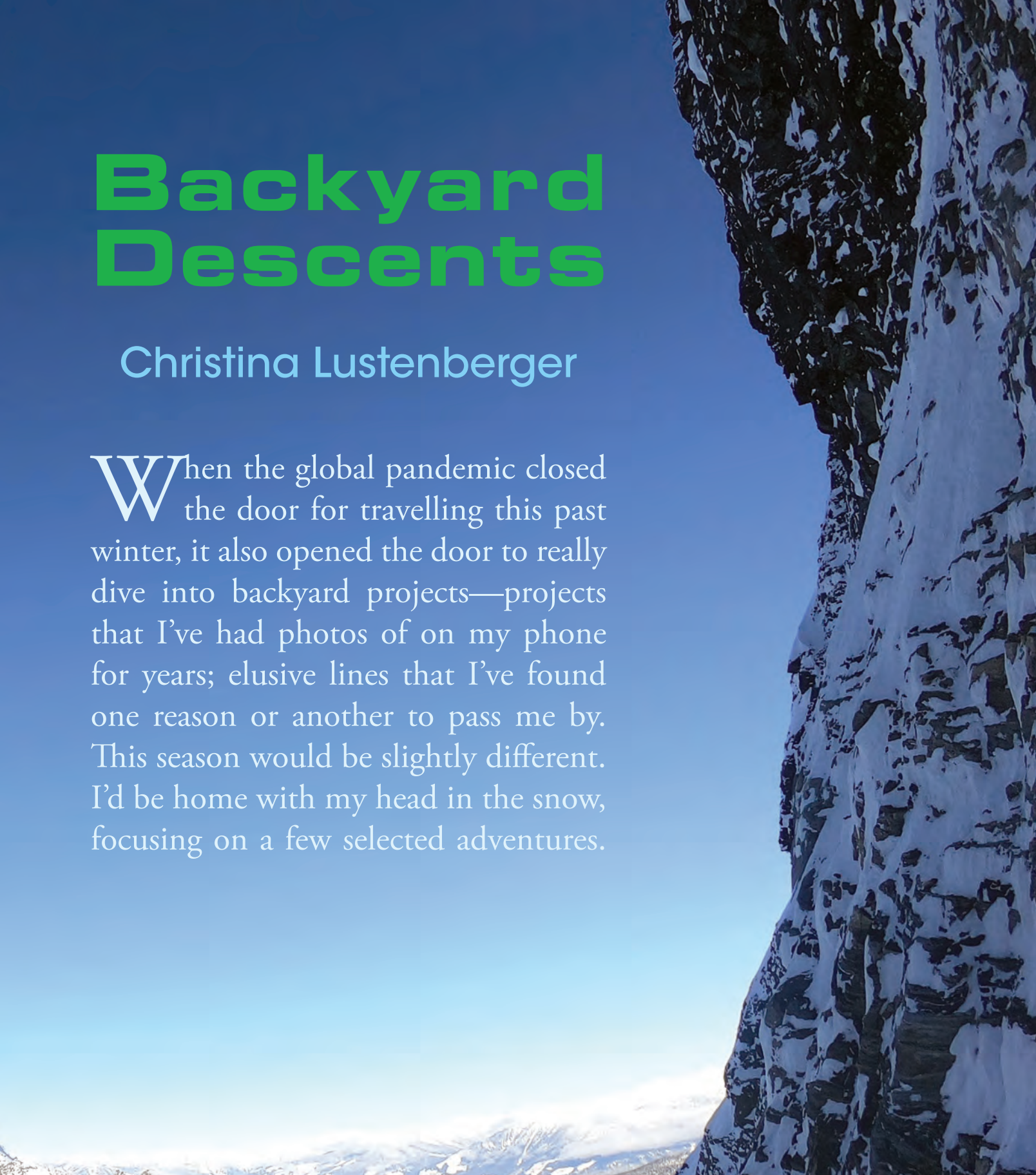
Waffl Canyon (ACA rating: 4-C1 X VI, 51 rappels), west face, Yexyexéscen, Canadian Rockies. FD: Guillaume Coupier, Katie Graham, Greg Horne, Matt Kennedy, Colin Magee, September 2–5, 2020.

Brette Harrington climbs the middle ice bulge on Gold Card Couloir. Photo: Christina Lustenberger

# Backyard Descents

Christina Lustenberger

When the global pandemic closed the door for travelling this past winter, it also opened the door to really dive into backyard projects—projects that I've had photos of on my phone for years; elusive lines that I've found one reason or another to pass me by. This season would be slightly different. I'd be home with my head in the snow, focusing on a few selected adventures.



Christina Lunstenberger descends the south face of Mount Thor.
Photo: Andrew McNab

The couloir between Mount Burnham and Mount Grady in the Monashees is a stunning ski line. I had first tried it with Andrew McNab years back. I think we've skied in on two occasions to take a look, but the intimidating exposure and 200-metre hanging face made our stomach drop at first glance. Although the line was intense-looking, there was a lure of putting tracks in such a wild place.

On January 23, 2020, Andrew and I, joined by Brette Harrington, set out on sleds for the 30-kilometre snowmobile ride plus two hours of skinning to the base. The line consisted of three ice pitches—two of WI3 and one of M4 A0—to get us above the glacial bulge and onto the upper snow. We reached the top just before 3 p.m., soaking up the only sun we felt all day. The urgency of fleeting light helped for a quick transition. The snow on the upper face skied well with minimal sluff and was just soft enough to enjoy the exposed turns. We skied to 20 metres above the steep ice and descended via a short rappel to our pre-established anchor. Another 60- and 40-metre rappel delivered us through the serac and into the lower portion of the couloir.

The snow was firm and chalky as we linked turns to a traverse and one more 15-metre rappel through the rambling ice. At 5 p.m., near dark, we skied off the fan and onto the lake. By the time we crossed the lake, complete darkness had set in. We skied with headlamps back to our sleds for the reverse of our long, cold ride back to the vehicles.

While boot-packing the upper section, Andrew pulled out his phone to snap a photo. At that very moment, we all noticed a thin, shiny object go sailing down the gully. It was his Visa card, hence the name of Gold Card Couloir.

Christina Lustenberger rappels a steep ice pitch on Gold Card Couloir. Photo: Andrew McNab

WITH THE ARCTIC AIR mass embedded over British Columbia in early February, it was crucial to take advantage of a big south-facing ski line. Andrew and I bundled up with over-boots, heated socks and full-down outfits for a terribly cold 24-kilometre snowmobile ride to Mount Thor. Starting our long and chilly ascent at 1,200 metres, we skinned up the east-facing basin for the first 1,300 metres of climbing. From the east shoulder of Thor, we descended 200 metres to the north side to gain the north couloir that led to the top of our line. Dropping north with such cold temperatures made me nervous, but we moved quickly to the base of the couloir and found generally friendly boot-packing conditions. At the top, we welcomed the calm and sunny ridge. Looking down the south face, the snow looked absolutely perfect—cold, dry powder on a huge face.

Basking in the sun, we transitioned and got ready to descend. Testing the snow in the first few turns, we were ecstatic with the boot-top blower snow with minimal sluffing. Leapfrogging pitches, we took turns watching each other disappear behind the powder clouds of sun-lit snow crystals from each turn.

Arriving at a small step of rock and waterfall ice, we glanced around at options for anchors to rappel but instead opted for some downclimbing with skis on and a short mandatory air. Below this was another 900 metres of sun-lit, cold-smoke turns. We descended into the cold valley bottom and transitioned to skins for the long, flat walk back to the snowmobiles. As with Gold Card Couloir, we endured another cold ride back to the trucks in the dark before getting the satisfaction of taking off the ski boots.

BOTH IAN MCINTOSH AND I grew up in Invermere, British Columbia, a small town at the headwaters of the Columbia Valley, nestled between the Rockies and Purcell mountain ranges. Ian and I both took part in the local ski-racing program. Even though we loved ski racing, we probably didn't have a choice. Our parents loved to ski and were huge characters in the local ski community.

The iconic peak of Mount Nelson and its east face can be seen from most places in town. I grew up looking at this peak—daydreaming from a window in my living room and classroom, and from the old double chair at the ski hill. It's easy to say that skiing Mount Nelson was a childhood dream, and around the age of 11 or 12, I started to look at that mountain differently. As I glanced up and wondered if it could be skied, I knew nothing about ski touring, the backcountry or first descents. It was just the pure imagination of a childhood fantasy.

Skiing has taken me to some far-off places, but I always felt a pull towards the home mountain. It's an intimidating line, in a location with a tricky snowpack—just a few reasons why I have procrastinated on an attempt.

I was retired from ski racing, had become a full ski guide and was a professional steep-ski mountaineer. With travel restrictions, Ian and I would return to the roots of where it all began.

At the end of February, Ian and I arrived in Invermere. Driving into the valley and seeing Mount Nelson usually brings joy and a nostalgic feeling, but this time I was all nervous butterflies. We wanted to get eyes on the east face, so we headed up Panorama Mountain Resort with my dad and Joshua Lavigne, who would film. I had my long-lens camera and Ian had binoculars, and we swapped back and forth, scouting the line. We descended the resort piste, stopping to glance from different angles. The line looked good from a distance—by good I mean incredibly intimidating, but at least it had snow on the face. Later that afternoon, we met at the Invermere airport to take a fixed-wing flight over our objective. From the air, we scouted the approach up the south face and the hoped-for descent of the grand east face. Ian snapped photos while I hurled into the barf bag.

We spent the next week skiing around the area, familiarizing ourselves with a very different snowpack. A weather window presented itself, and we mobilized the film crew. Josh Lavigne and Andrew Gallant would join us to the summit then descend back down the south face. Three other camera guys would fly out with local guide Brodie Smith and set up angles from an opposing ridge. Two days before, I had set a skin track from the Toby Creek FSR to the alpine basin below the south face. This would

Gold Card Couloir between Mount Burnham and Mount Grady. Photo: Steve Shannon

make our travel much easier by not having to navigate the thick forest at 2 a.m. in the dark.

We left Invermere at 1 a.m. and headed up the Toby Creek FSR to about eight kilometres past Panorama and the junction to Delphine Creek, where we started skinning at 1:45 a.m. From the trucks, it was just over 2,000 metres to the summit. We followed my previously set ski track via headlamp, and when we reached the alpine basin, the moon casted dark shadows to reveal the nighttime terrain.

It was still dark when we arrived at the base of the south face. We skinned up to the constriction of the rocks and transitioned to climbing. The dark night sky was lightning up with orange to the east. We continued up the scoured and rocky south face while the sun started to light up the tips of the highest peaks.

The top quarter of the south face had little to no snow on it, so we continued scrambling rock steps, ever mindful of rockfall. Finally breaking onto the ridge, we felt the warmth of the sun with a gentle breeze of wind. Our film crew had just been dropped off on the ridge of Mount Trafalgar.

We reached the beautiful summit cross at 8:45 a.m. Time was crucial as the face had first light and would only be getting warmer. With anxious parents and our community watching from the ski resort, and ski patrollers listening to our radio communications, we dropped in with a short 15-metre rappel at 9 a.m. The snow on the face was very shallow and faceted, making clipping a rock with a ski a very hazardous possibility. We found the best snow in the main trough and started skiing one at a time, leapfrogging pitches. The snow was just barely staying dry and cold. We traversed skier's right over the exposed cliff band and regrouped. Due to the combination of sugary snow, protruding rocks and

The east face of Mount Nelson. Photo: Christina Lustenberger

exposed terrain, we built a rappel anchor using a piton, a wire and an ice screw in questionable ice. The three pieces allowed us to rappel 30 metres over the rocks to the final fan. As I coiled the ropes, Ian began to descend.

There was a weight lifted and a sense of lightness as we linked big turns exiting the face—a childhood dream realized with my good friend and teammate. Immediately after, the buzz of our descent hit the community. Sharing this line with my hometown made it all the more special. We now get to look up with so much pride—a day that we'll forever remember.

IN APRIL, Mark Hartley, talented splitboarder and local Revelstoke legend, picked me up at 3:30 a.m. Unable to drink coffee due to masked-up carpooling, we made light conversation. We picked up Andrew McNab at the Bostock parking lot, leaving his vehicle as a shuttle for the end of the tour. The three of us continued to the Rogers Pass visitor centre parking lot to gear up for the north face of Bagheera Mountain.

We knew that the ascent up the south face would be locked up with a melt-freeze crust and that an early start would help get a lead on the solar aspect. We hustled up Connaught and transitioned at Balu Pass. The sun was just starting to hit the highest peaks as we skied down towards Cougar Creek. Another transition had us skinning up the valley until we were directly below the south face of Bagheera. With the firm crust and almost 1,000 metres of elevation gain, we transitioned to boot-packing with crampons. Rolling clouds kept the solar aspect cool as we marched our way to the top of our line.

At the top, Andrew and I belayed Mark out to cut away some of the cornice and build a rappel anchor.

Slinging a block to skier's right of the entrance gave way to a 15-metre rappel. The line consisted of a steep, skinny 300-metre couloir. Where the couloir widened, we would have to traverse skier's right over a big exposed cliff and look for the exit gully. From above, it was hard to tell if it went, and our photos of the line were incomplete, but we had all the gear we needed to navigate the unknown.

Once all in, we pulled and coiled the rope, clicked into our skis/snowboard and started to descend one at a time. At 55 degrees and narrowing to barely a ski width, we made our way down and into the wider part of the couloir. The snow was soft and dry, making the skiing more comforting in such a wild and steep place. The traverse out right had a little west-facing tilt to it, firming up the snow and requiring us to use our ice axes on descent as we made our way down to a snow ledge. A short five-metre downclimb and some tight turns through the exit couloir and we were out of the business.

We skied down to Ursus Creek, snacking and filling up our water bottles as we transitioned to climb our way up to McGill Pass. From the pass, we skied over to the Bostock summer trail and descended it right to Andrew's truck. After 16 kilometres of distance and 2,500 metres of elevation, ski boots came off with pleasure.

Despite not being able to travel internationally, I was very satisfied to discover challenging and rewarding first descents in my own backyard ranges. This only reconfirms that we live in a truly wild place with some of the most beautiful mountains in the world.

The north face of Bagheera Mountain. Photo: Douglas Sproul

## Summary

Gold Card Couloir (WI3 M4 A0 50–55°, 800m), Mount Burnham/Mount Grady, Monashee Mountains. FD: Brette Harrington, Christina Lustenberger, Andrew McNab, January 23, 2021.

South face (45–50°, 1500m), Mount Thor (2941m), Monashee Mountains. FD: Christina Lustenberger, Andrew McNab, February 10, 2021.

East face (50–55°, 750m), Mount Nelson (3313m), Purcell Mountains. FD: Christina Lustenberger, Ian McIntosh, March 4, 2021.

North Face (55°, 500m), Bagheera Mountain (2720m), Rogers Pass, Selkirk Mountains. FD: Mark Hartley, Christina Lustenberger, Andrew McNab, April 24, 2020.

## About the Author

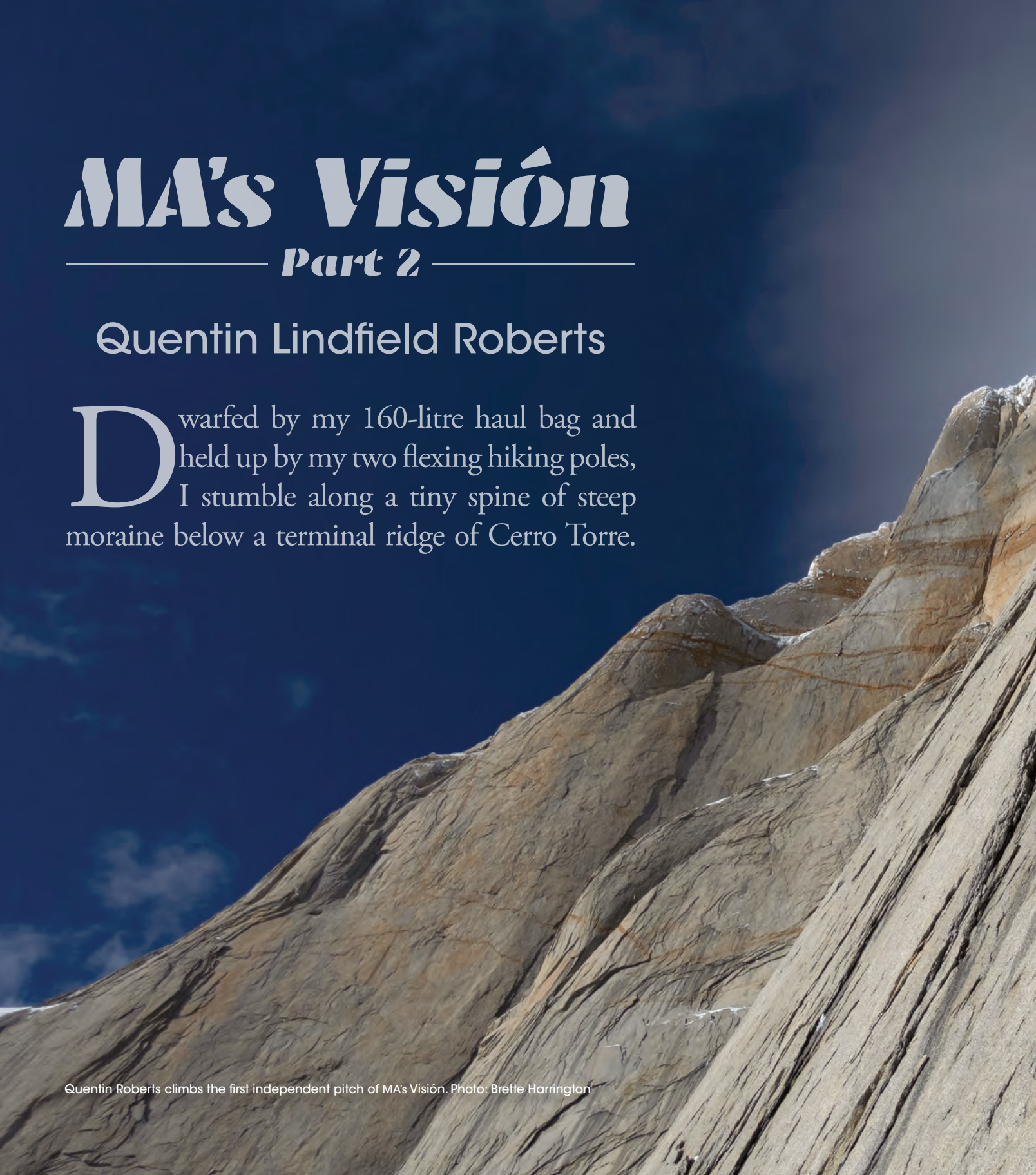
Born and raised in Invermere, British Columbia, Christina Lustenberger began skiing before she can remember. As a pro racer, she competed on the Canadian alpine ski team for six years, achieving top-10 World Cup results and competing in the 2006 Winter Olympic Games. She now works as an ACMG ski guide and professional ski athlete sponsored by The North Face, Black Crows, Smartwool and Pomoca.

# MA's Visión

## Part 2

Quentin Lindfield Roberts

Dwarfed by my 160-litre haul bag and held up by my two flexing hiking poles, I stumble along a tiny spine of steep moraine below a terminal ridge of Cerro Torre.



Quentin Roberts climbs the first independent pitch of MA's Visión. Photo: Brette Harrington

Sunrise from the first bivouac on Torre Egger. Photo: Quentin Roberts

The spine provides the easiest footing but also leaves me unprotected from the gale-force gusts that regularly take me down like the unlucky target of an amusement park shooting gallery. The haul bag straps are like streamers in a tornado, and I try to ignore them ripping against my face as I push my foot into the pulverized granite once more. I've already hiked for 20 kilometres with this damn pig of a bag, and I've just added our Niponino cache to it as well.

Niponino is the most popular base camp in the Torre Valley. The name refers to the camp being neither Polacos nor Noruegos (Ni-Polacos-Ni-Noruegos). Polacos is the base camp commonly used for routes on the west side of the Fitz Roy massif, and Noruegos—where I am heading—is a base camp often used for routes on the east side of the Cerro Torre massif. The two massifs run parallel to each other, and Niponino sits in the valley between them. I inch my way up towards Noruegos with our cache of gear, hunched over my poles, braced for the next wind slam. At Noruegos, I shove the haul bag into a cave and watch as the sky blackens. Soon enough, driving rain blows me the 25 kilometres back to the town of El Chaltén where I stumble soaked into Brette's cabaña, ready to crash her supper of hot Argentinian stew.

Brette Harrington and I are back in Patagonia together. It has almost been three years since Brette reached out to me, asking about the potential of attempting a new route on the east pillar of Torre Egger. A route that our late and great friend, Marc-André Leclerc, had seen during his solo ascent of Titanic on Torre Egger. We tried in 2019 but were stopped short when Brette's mountain boots detached from our haul bag and fell some 500 metres to the glacier below. This time we want to go to the summit. The route is important to us. It has reoriented our lives and deepened our friendship tremendously. Brette's eyes are distant, and I know that her mind is in the mountains. What is the best strategy for us this time around?

HORACIO GRATTON, a local Argentinean strongman, caught wind of our attempt and reached out to Brette, asking if he could join us. I feel that it could be a good idea to climb as a team of three, because the extra muscle would help if an accident were to happen on the wall, although I am also skeptical about climbing with someone I don't know. I first meet Horacio at the climber's pub in El Chaltén. The passion Horacio has for mountains is instantly clear, backed up by his beaten body of bone and muscle. I study him as he speaks of the routes he's done and recognize an idiot-resolve I know so well—the resolve required to hold rational thinking together amid the fear, cold and pain so common in alpinism. It's the same idiot-resolve that holds the rolled cigarette between his gnarled fingers.

Having Horacio join us will certainly be a blind date, but I like him and feel that Brette and my partnership is strong enough to handle any disagreements that might arise, so we start

planning as a team of three. We'll take a lead rope and tag line, and a burly static rope. Horacio is adamant that he wants to jug and haul the lower half of the mountain, so we plan on him jumaring on the static and hauling the bag while Brette and I rotate through lead blocks. With our cache of gear in Noruegos, all we have to do is sit and wait for good weather to materialize.

In early February, it finally does. I hike in a day ahead of my partners to spend some time with the mountain and watch the sun strip the ice-plastered walls. The sky is clear, but it is obvious that the mountains have been ravaged by weeks of relentless storms. The only clouds are streaming from the mountain summits, forced into existence by the rapidly cooling air mass driven upwards by wind against the vertical granite. These super-cooled air droplets are responsible for the rime-clad summits unique to these mountains. Torre Egger, and its glowing dollop of rime ice, is still more than a kilometre above. Across the valley the west face of Fitz Roy has shed its icy coat and is shining gold in the last light of the day.

I wake late the next morning to other climbers arriving. Italians Matto della Bordella and Matteo Pasquetto are back to finish the famous British attempt on Cerro Torre, and Jorge Ackermann, Korra Pesce and Tommy Aguilo intend to climb a new route that wraps around from Cerro Torre's east to north face. Brette and Horacio arrive in the late afternoon, and it feels good to have my companions join me. We quickly start organizing our gear and preparing for our climb the next morning.

In the pre-dawn, Brette takes off in the dark and climbs flawlessly through frozen rivulets and run-out terrain while Horacio and I shiver and smoke ourselves into pre-dawn consciousness at the belays. As day breaks, I take the lead where our line branches left from the original Titanic start. A run-out 5.11+ flake pitch brings us into the defining corner system of the route. This is the pitch that Marc-André spotted on his solo ascent of Titanic, it was the key to the unclimbed prow of the lower east pillar, and it is the fourth time I

Quentin Roberts starts the M6 pitch that guards Torre Egger's summit, with Cerro Torre's summit brightly illuminated in the background. Photo: Brette Harrington

have climbed it. We keep climbing into the day, and before long I'm looking up at the 5.12+ crux.

Conditions on the crux are icy, but we haven't fallen yet, so I go for it with everything I've got. The granite screams when my nail splits from its bed, but I force my fingertips deeper into the seam. Pushing my feet into the exfoliating rock, I reach for the next pod, but it's full of ice. I reach higher—it's not better. Locked-off, I fiddle a micro-wire in just as I explode off the wall. I stare up in dismay, 600 more metres of climbing to go and the ice doesn't seem to stop.

The ice-plastered rock is sabotaging our goal of free climbing to the summit. Brette and I free climbed these pitches in 2019, but we had dry conditions. It's disappointing, but this route is what we've travelled here to climb, what we've trained for and what we've waited out the storms for. So we decide to keep going without the glory of a continuous free ascent. Instead, we make the summit our goal.

Still hanging on the rope, I look down to see an unperturbed Horacio bringing up the firepower, racking his jumars up the rope like shotgun charges. The bag he is hauling has our bivy gear and three alpine packs in it. I'm baffled that this Chaltenean animal wants to use his 5.14 biceps to haul our massive bag up the entire lower half of Egger, but he is adamant that he wants to. Brette encourages me from the belay, and Horacio is still focused on his jumars and the giant cobweb of static rope tangling itself in the updrafts. I clip a sling to the wire I'm hanging on and stand high for an aid piece—no dice. Oh crap, I'm going to have to climb past the damn ice anyway.

We're getting close to the corner system that gave us access to the bivy ledge on our previous attempt, but a very runout 5.11+ pitch on discontinuous flakes guards access to the corner, and this year it is plastered with ice. Rather than relive a more intense version of what I'd already experienced in 2019, I veer right and stretch the rope up flakes and cracks into new terrain on the headwall of the lower pillar.

Brette Harrington climbs Torre Egger's defining snowfield before fixing the first pitch for the next day.
Photo: Quentin Roberts

It's also very run out, but at least it is dry, and it feels so good to be free climbing again.

I stop below a steep corner-flake, and Brette takes the lead. Horacio is still set on bringing up the rear, and I don't argue for long. He gets to the belay and shoves another hand-rolled dart in my mouth. We smoke away while Brette finishes off the steeps of the lower pillar, deftly navigating the unknown climbing. At this point, I force Horacio to take over the lead on the lower-angled slabs that will take us to our bivy platform. His hauling job was hard work. I soon become a swearing animal raging the giant bag up the velcro-like slab and arrive to the others a sweaty mess of hyperventilated curses. It turns out they dropped our bivy sack while chopping out the ledge; if you've got to drop something, at least it's the sack and not the boots.

The next morning we wake to a blanket of fresh snow on our sleeping bags and zero visibility. Horacio wants to go down, and Brette wants the opposite—to continue on our envisioned line despite the conditions. We wait it out. Once the weather clears, we decide to strike a balance. We will continue but will compromise and join into the upper portion of Titanic instead. Titanic is the trade route on the east side of the mountain, which gives us a much higher chance of success. We spend the rest of the day climbing a few pitches higher to a better bivy spot, and Horacio cuts a more comfortable ledge while Brette fixes the first pitch for the next day.

We're back in alpine-climbing mode on Titanic, and quickly make our way to the summit rime. I climb an unusual and fun mixed pitch of ice, rime and rock to the base of the summit tunnel of overhanging ice, which Brette confidently tackles. Before long we are standing on the summit of Egger. Huge ice gargoyles shelter us from the wind, and we bask in the sun. The summit is a frozen ice dollop of bliss. It is hard to believe that three years have come to this moment, standing on our little island in the sky. We stay on the summit for an entire hour before rappelling into the all-to-familiar windy shade. The descent takes an eternity, but the summit smiles never leave our faces. I feel Marc's grin through my own cheeks and see it in my partners' smiles too. Marc would be so stoked on this one.

We get down in the morning of the following day, and the weather is still supposed to be good for another 24 hours. All of the climbers in the Torre Valley start leaving, content with their experiences in this beautiful window of warm weather, but I just can't bring myself to leave with them. This is one of the most magical places on Earth when the weather is good, and there is still one night of good weather left. I stay and rest for the remainder of the day and start back up the glacier at 7 p.m. to climb Cerro Standhardt via Exocet overnight. I climb the whole thing in my little headlamp orb and watch as the storm clouds roll in the following morning. I howl at the wind, so thankful for this mad experience. I'm the first to arrive and the last to leave this valley. Once again, I let the driving rain blow me the 25 kilometres back to El Chalten.

MA's Visión climbs 500 metres (400 metres new) of terrain to the hanging snowfield on the east face of Torre Egger, where the route rejoins Titanic to the summit. The name MA's Visión (Marc-André's Vision) plays on words, also meaning "more vision" in Spanish. My solo of Exocet was the second free solo of the route. Marc-André Leclerc was the first to free solo it in 2016.

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**Summary**

MA's Visión (5.12b/c A0 M6 WI5, 950m), east pillar, Torre Egger, Patagonia, Argentina. FA: Horacio Gratton, Brette Harrington, Quentin Roberts, February 6–9, 2020.

Exocet (5.9 WI5, 500m), Cerro Standhardt, Patagonia, Argentina. 2nd free solo: Quentin Roberts, February 9–10, 2020.



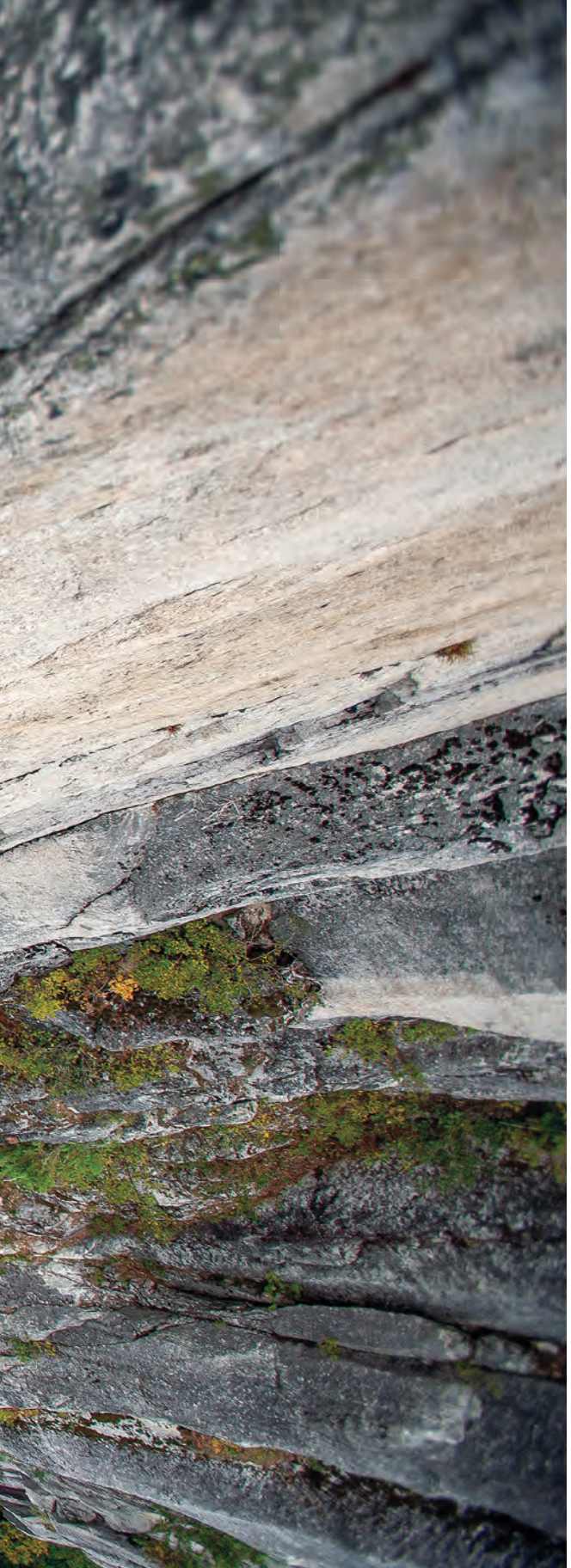
**About the Author**

Born in the United Kingdom and raised in Germany and South Africa, Quentin Roberts moved to Vancouver Island with his family when he was 17. An under-spoken alpinist who has been making his mark in the mountain world, he now resides in Canmore, Alberta. He is sponsored by Arc'teryx, Petzl and La Sportiva.


MA's Visión on Torre Egger. Photo: Rolando Garibotti

# An Unusual Skill Set

Paul Bride



I've never been able to properly explain in words why I spend so much time photographing climbing, or why I put so much effort into trying to show exactly what I saw. I just loved doing it.

If I specified when I started photographing climbing, I would sound old, so let's just say it was before digital cameras and that I learned how to belay using a Munter hitch during a weekend climbing clinic in Milton, Ontario. When I made the move out west and really started to grasp climbing, the community was actually quite small, and the idea of making money off climbing photography was about as real as Bigfoot. There were a handful of established photographers at the time who inspired me as I flipped through the pages of *Rock & Ice, Climbing Magazine* and the *Canadian Alpine Journal*, but they all seemed fictitious.

The Internet wasn't mainstream either, and no one had cell phones or personal computers, so learning about climbing photography was done by trial and error. If you wanted to sell images, you had to shoot on slide film, which was expensive. It could only be developed by a special printer in the city, and then you had to mail your submission into the magazine along with a written or typed explanation of who, what and where. It was a real commitment.

I loved climbing, but when I picked up a camera and started photographing climbing, it was all-consuming. Developing the skills to capture someone in a location that seemed completely absurd and then to have the image be good enough to come to life in a magazine was really special. As the industry moved on from film to digital, I eventually made the switch. I love digital, but the memory of sitting in front of a light box with 10 to 15 rolls of slides that you just got back from the printer could only be compared to waking up on Christmas morning as a little kid.

Today I do all types of photography, and my camera has taken me many places, but I still look at rock walls, ice lines and mountains where ever I am in the world and visualize someone in that wild location moving through the crux in a storm or ideal light. Imagination and passion have been the foundation of my career, and the best climbing images I have ever taken occurred in the most unbelievable positions. It is a good thing to believe in the unbelievable.

To do something for no reason other than you want to—and many years later to still be doing it—is the ultimate enjoyment of an amazing, fun-loving, scary, exciting, dangerous and amusing career, and I owe that all to climbing photography and the people I have had the pleasure to work with.

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**About the Photographer/Author**

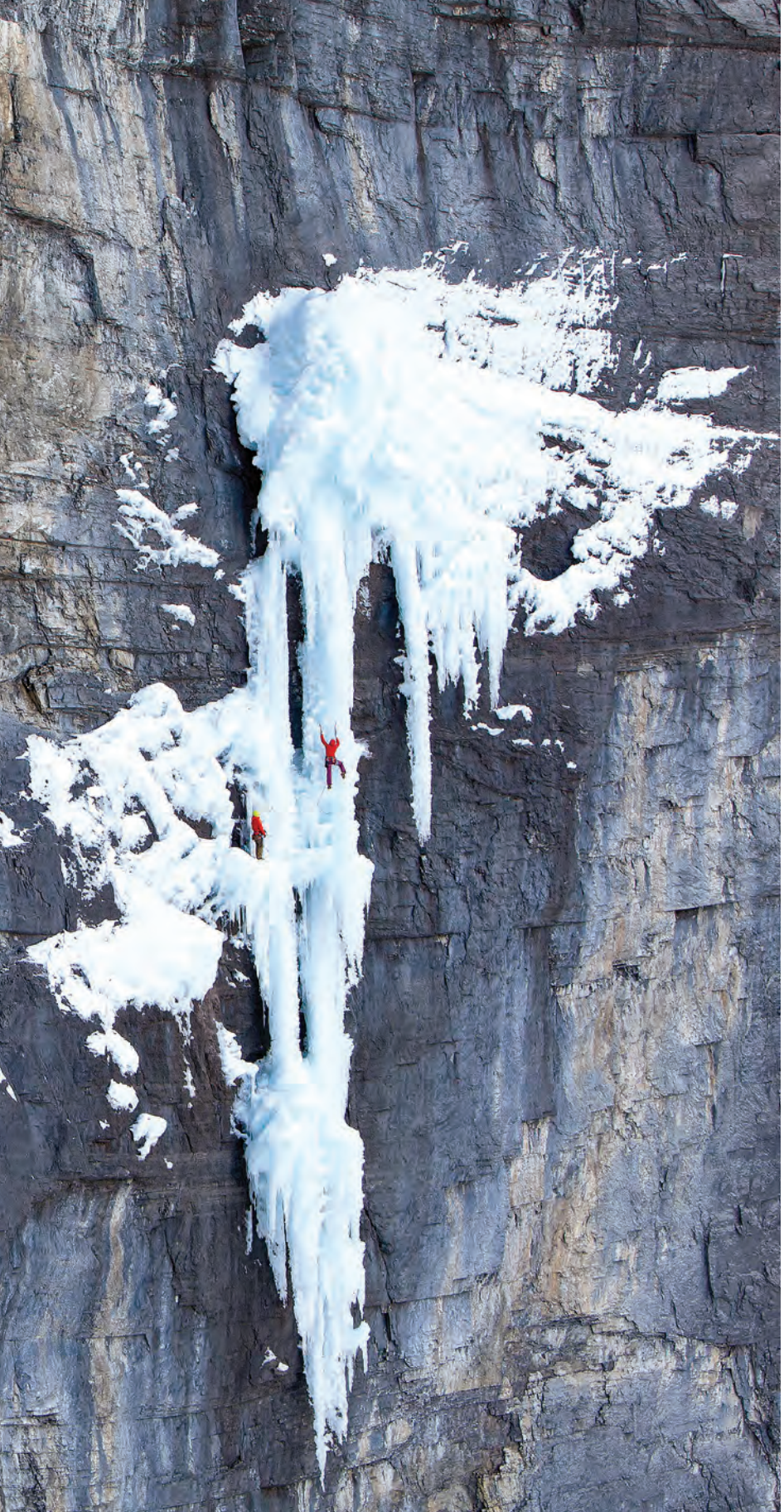
Based in Britannia Beach, British Columbia, Paul Bride is a professional commercial and editorial photographer whose images have spanned six continents. With more than 60 front covers to his credit, he continues to shoot for the world's top outdoor companies and publications.

Towering out of an Ewok forest, the North Walls of the Chief in Squamish offer some of the finer exposed positions. High on the wall, Astro Ledge is the starting point of the rarely climbed Public Image. This perspective offers a great vantage of John Furneaux getting down to business on the second pitch. He and Craig McGee had plenty of opportunity to test their off-width and chimney skills on this 120-metre four-pitch hidden gem. Photo: Paul Bride

My watch reads 3 a.m. as I step out from the car into the pitch-black parking lot below Ben Nevis in Scotland. It's raining sideways so ferociously that it is hard to hear what anyone is saying. Loaded down with a multi-day pack, Marc-André Leclerc turns on his headland and yells, "I love bad weather!" Rain turns to sleet then full blizzard as we gain elevation. My entire camera and lens are instantly cemented in wet snow every time I pull it from my parka. Belayed by Paul McSorely, Marc leads out on Sioux Wall, and I am able to clean my lens and viewfinder during a pause in the storm to snap off four frames before the lens is completely plastered in white again. Photo: Paul Bride

The rain is almost upon us, blue heavens turn black, ear-splitting thunder blares through the valley and the first fork of lightning rips a hole in the sky. Jon Walsh retreats down the wall back to the belay with Michelle Kadatz; it will be well over an hour before I have contact with them again. A heart-pounding electrical lightshow whips up, followed by a solid drenching. Over the next three days, Jon and Michelle completed the first ascent of the appropriately named Electric Funeral on the southeast face of Wide Awake Tower in the Bugaboos. Photo: Paul Bride

North of the Arctic Circle on the Norwegian island of Senja stands Mount Breitinden, the island's highest peak at just over 1,000 metres. There is no climbing guidebook, so information can be hard to come by, but the coastal region and bad weather make for perfect mixed-climbing conditions with notoriously poor protection and no bolts. Following Paul McSorely and Jesse Huey, we approached the mountain on skis. I wouldn't be climbing with them that day, but I still wanted to capture what I could before they set off up the north face on the first ascent of a new 450-metre mixed line they called The Ice Princess. Photo: Paul Bride



Images of ice or mixed climbing always give me that hard-to-swallow feeling. If I was to try and compare it to another sport, big-wave surfing comes to mind. Some ice lines, like infamous waves, beg to be photographed. They are seasonal and never the same. Jen Olson belayed by Kyle Vassilopoulous works up the third pitch of The Real Big Drip in the Ghost River Valley in the front ranges of the Canadian Rockies. The series of hanging daggers is a mixed classic and a photographer's dream from any angle. I can only imagine what Dave Thompson, Eric Dumerac, Kefira Allen and Sean Isaac were thinking when they established this monstrosity. Photo: Paul Bride

# Cultural Ranges

## Pre-Contact Indigenous Mountaineering

Drew Brayshaw

I AM A CANADIAN MOUNTAIN CLIMBER, and when I became interested in climbing and mountaineering in my teens, I educated myself in part by reading climbing and mountaineering guidebooks, histories and similar literature. In these works, I learned that whether in the Alps or North America, the so-called "primitive peoples" who were the indigenous inhabitants of mountainous regions, be they Swiss peasants or First Nations in Western Canada, had historically regarded the mountains with superstitious awe, as frightening areas to be avoided. It was only when middle-class and upper-class Europeans developed mountaineering as a sport, beginning in the mid-19th century, that peaks were regularly and consistently climbed by these bold explorers, who had both the technical ability and the mindset to venture into the mountains and reach their summits. Swiss locals might guide wealthy French or Britons to European summits, and likewise the explorers of the Rocky Mountains and Coast Mountains might have relied on Native guides, but the goal of climbing to the summits was the idea of the clients, and the locals they hired to assist them were merely brought along for their strong backs and legs, as help and porters.

As I have grown older, and kept abreast of history writing, scientific research and archaeological discoveries and rediscoveries, I have come to learn that much of this received history is not only wrong but was deliberately wrong, part of the narrative of *terra nullius* designed to disenfranchise the native peoples of the Americas and to deprecate their claims to their territories. In this article, I want to present evidence, some of it very recent, that First Nations people in northwestern North America did indeed use and live in the alpine environment and potentially climb many of the summits in the region. I also want to discuss how we, as Canadian mountaineers, can recognize this and incorporate it into our mountain literature and history as part of the general processes of decolonization, reconciliation and indigenization, which Canadian society has begun. I am a climber and not an academic, and so I want to distill some of the technical journal papers that I have read into the sort of writing that other climbers will read and understand, rather than simply repeat jargon.

Taylor Starr of Seabird Island First Nation re-enacting a story about a goat hunter who climbs Mount Breakenridge (2,395 metres) located in the Lillooet Ranges of B.C., inspired by archaeological evidence of ancient stone-tool technology found on the summit that dates back 7,000 years. Photo: Chris Kimmel

Firstly, what is mountaineering? For us, mountaineering is a leisure activity: climbing peaks and rocks and ice for fun. But for pre-industrial or prehistoric peoples, there were other reasons to go up the mountains and cliffs that, although carried out for different purposes, involved many of the same techniques. It is that overlap that I am interested in, and it is not unique to northwestern North America. For instance, in the British Isles, recreational rock climbing only began in the late 19th century, but people had been climbing sea cliffs for centuries before that to do things like harvest seabirds and their eggs. The early recreational climbers did not always acknowledge that their pursuit had older roots.

I want to break up the general idea of mountaineering into several smaller components and

then discuss each in turn. In general, mountaineering involves going to mountain summits, but it also involves spending time in the alpine environment by camping and living at high elevations. Travelling through the mountain environment by following ridges and crossing passes and glaciers is important, as are scrambling and technical climbing on rock and ice.

Finally, in the discussion that follows, I do not want to suggest that the First Nations and other Indigenous peoples of northwestern North America were a homogenous group. Different nations had different cultures and traditions, and interacted with the mountain environment in different ways. But from what archaeologists studying artifacts can tell us, there was a high degree of long-distance trade between communities, and technological innovations, such as the bow and arrow replacing the atlatl for hunting, took place region-wide at about the same time. So it is safe to assume that if we have evidence that if tools, such as snowshoes, were available to some groups within the region, that they were probably available in some form, either locally crafted or traded for, to all groups within the region, even if they have not yet been documented everywhere.

Living in the alpine environment, at or above treeline, is a basic part of mountaineering. The Americas are now known to have some of the earliest documented high-altitude archaeological sites on the planet, with human use above 4,000 metres dating back to 12,800 years B.P. (Rademaker et al, 2014), and with mummies of Inca child sacrifices found at elevations of up to 6,740 metres. But in northwestern North America, there were few archaeological studies in high-elevation environments until the last few decades. However, the mountain environments are rich in resources—animals, plants and minerals—that were and are still used by Indigenous peoples, and this use has been documented in oral histories as well as by archaeological investigation.

All of the alpine areas of northwestern North America were rich in animal life, and hunters used these resources. For instance, in the Bella Coola Valley, men from the various villages would hold contests in spring and summer to see who could hunt the most goats. Goat hunters would climb peaks like Stupendous ("Tabletop") Mountain (2,665 metres). Every village had a few hunters who specialized in goat hunting, and they might leave the village and stay in the mountains for several months at a time while hunting (Mack, 1994). Reimer (2000) summarizes similar descriptions of goat hunting timing and strategies for the Squamish Nation, and bighorn sheep and bear hunting on the Interior (Similkameen) side of the North Cascades and in the Rocky Mountains. Artifacts recovered from glaciers indicate that caribou and Dall sheep were hunted in the alpine in Yukon, and on Vancouver Island, where there were no goats or sheep, marmots were hunted in alpine areas.

In addition to animals, subalpine and alpine areas have many plant resources that Indigenous people used and still use. For instance, Turner (2014) provides extensive documentation of northwestern First Nations' traditional use of plants as food, medicine and raw materials for technology, and for cultural purposes. Many of the most extensive known archaeological sites in alpine areas in northwestern North America are at or just above treeline, where resources from both high-elevation forest and alpine meadow could be accessed. People would camp in these sites as part of the "seasonal round" for up to several months to pick berries and harvest root crops. Both berry patches and root-crop meadows were intensively managed using techniques such as controlled burns, weeding and splitting and replanting of roots to increase their yield of desirable plant products.

Mineral resources are an additional alpine resource, and mountain areas are important sources of mineral resources in part because the lack of vegetative cover, thinner soils and affects of glaciation make these resources easier to observe and discover. Indigenous people used stone for tools and cultural purposes and would obtain the most desirable or highest quality stone that they could, even if these stones were sourced from locations at high elevations that were difficult or challenging to access. Mineral resources such as obsidian, basalt, large quartz crystals, nephrite, chert and native copper were obtained from high-elevation mountain sites, including

active and glaciated volcanoes (Fladmark, 1985), alpine ravines (Reimer, 2003), cliff faces in passes (Meirendorf, 2004), cliff faces accessible only by rope work (Mack, 1994), and at the edge of glaciers and permanent snowfields (Ritchie, 2020). In some cases, these quarry sites were used over dateable periods of many thousands of years, and tens to hundreds of tons of material were excavated from them (Meirendorf, 2004).

In addition to resources, alpine environments provided travel corridors, whether through passes, along ridges or across glaciers. Kwaday Dan Ts'inchi, the "Long Ago Person Found," who lived between 1720 and 1850 and whose body was discovered by sheep hunters at the edge of a Yukon glacier in 1999, has provided an amazing documentation of such crossings. A research volume published by the Royal BC Museum in 2017 describes the young man and his tools and clothing in great detail, as well as embedding him in the oral traditions of the Champagne and Aishihik and other neighbouring First Nations. These oral histories describe numerous glacier crossings in the Coast and Kluane ranges, as well as a crevasse rescue or rescues, a man from the interior escaping from a coastal nation that had taken him prisoner by climbing a rock cliff, and a legendary figure known as the Copper Chief who climbed a glacier by cutting steps into the ice with two picks, one of iron and one of copper.

Finally, the last set of reasons for Indigenous people to use the alpine environment was for spiritual and cultural purposes. That is, to spend time in the mountains not simply to travel or obtain resources, but for a spirit or vision quest, or to maintain a territorial claim, or to see long distances, or simply for enjoyment. All of these purposes are also described in oral histories and have been discussed in archaeologic literature. For instance, Sonny McHalsie, in *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas* (Douglas & McIntyre, 2001), describes how the view from Lhilheqey (Cheam Peak, 2,104 metres), encompassing all of the lower Fraser River from its mouth to near Hope, provides the ideal vantage from where one can view and understand the landscape through which the legendary Transformer (X:als) journeyed. Nlaka'pamux people from the Fraser and Thompson canyons near Lytton still use the summit of Mount Roach (2,615 metres) for spirit or vision quests. Reimer (2003) describes young men of the Squamish Nation spending up to several years alone in the mountains as part of their warrior training, learning not only how to live on the alpine resources but how to become self-reliant and develop a power they could share in a dance with their people when they returned home, and maintaining the traditional rights of their house or clan to a particular part of their nation's territory.

While hunting and gathering are not necessarily mountaineering or climbing pursuits in and of themselves, they indicate familiarity with travelling through and living in the mountain environment for long periods of time. The diversity of alpine mineral resources used by Indigenous people speaks to their familiarity with the alpine environment, developed over thousands of years. Some archaeological sites are known from mountain locations where fewer than a dozen modern climbers have visited within the last hundred years. Wild areas that seem to us remote and rarely visited today were not always so, and Indigenous people have had a very long time to find and become familiar with the locations of scarce high-quality lithic resources.

When considering these oral histories and archaeological evidence from my perspective as a mountaineer, I notice most the aspects that relate to modern climbing and mountaineering. The oral histories of travel in the mountains are the ones that I, as a climber myself, find most engaging. In reviewing these sources for this article, I was struck by how many facets of the sport of mountaineering, such as glacier travel, use of ropes in crevasse rescue, use of picks and adzes to chip steps and climb glacier ice, use of ropes to descend cliffs, and climbing or scrambling up rock faces, were described in oral histories. These are some of the activities for which, aside from Kwaday Dan Ts'inchi, we have the least physical evidence, because they are activities that leave no permanent traces, and also possibly because archaeologists who are not climbers might interpret artifacts that they find as having other non-climbing purposes. This is an area in which historical re-enactments

with replica equipment might conceivably be used to settle questions about effectiveness. In this vein, Adam Palmer, mountaineer and director of the Sts'ailes Outdoor Education Program, has already had his students attempt and succeed at self-arrests and step cutting on snow slopes and glacial ice with traditional stone, wood and bone adzes during mountaineering classes.

Some past discussions of the mountains by non-Native writers have attempted to emphasize the idea that mountain summits were taboo or forbidden to Indigenous people, and thus imply by suggestion that it was only non-Native climbers who, unencumbered by traditional mores, could make the first ascents of these peaks. In my research for this article, I did not come across any peaks or summits that were described specifically as forbidden, but I did encounter the idea, expressed several times, that certain peaks, mountains, meadows, lakes, ridges or summits were owned by certain clans or families, and that only people who were both part of the appropriate group and who had undergone the appropriate training and conditioning (Reimer, 2012; Davis, 2004) were allowed to visit these areas and use the resources that were present there. In other words, there probably were specific mountain areas that were at the same time both prohibited or off limits to many while still permissible for access by those with suitable provenance, training and experience. I find that the idea that out of a large population, only a smaller subgroup might have the skills, training and experience to regularly and safely travel into and climb mountains to be remarkably similar to the situation of mountaineers within our present-day society.

We should also consider names. There are many cases where Indigenous people named mountains in Canada that were then given new names in the colonial period, like Nch'kay being renamed Mount Garibaldi, or Yexyexéscen being renamed Mount Robson. Other peaks, like Slesse/Slyosi, Hozomeen and Petlushkwohap, have retained their traditional names as official names but with some degree of transliteration or anglicizing in the process. Climbers have been in the forefront of rejecting the more egregious colonial names and referring to some of these peaks by their Indigenous names where they are popularly known, particularly for larger or more prominent peaks like Denali (Mount McKinley). But rather than make a blanket call to always use the Indigenous names, I think a more nuanced view may be necessary. Indigenous peoples, colonial geographers and climbers use names for peaks in different ways. The name T'amiyeho:y in Stó:lō could be used to refer to the present day Tamihi Creek, Tomyhoi Mountain, Mount McGuire, Canadian Border Peak or American Border Peak (Douglas & McIntrye, 2001). Here is a case where climbers may find that using the colonial names, or indeed using names invented or popularized by climbers, helps to more easily distinguish between summits that shared a single traditional name or which were not otherwise distinguished.

When reviewing the evidence, it seems clear that Indigenous people were both familiar with the alpine environment and spent considerable time in it. Many of the tools, techniques and subdisciplines that make up modern mountaineering, including scrambling and rock climbing, glacier travel, crossing peaks and passes, and living above treeline, were available to and historically practiced by at least some groups of Indigenous people. And some summits are definitively known to have been visited by pre-contact Indigenous people.

Reimer (2003), writing as an archaeologist and Squamish Nation member to other archaeologists, said:

"The pre-contact inhabitants of the region had both a deep understanding of the landscape and a high level of physical fitness in order to access these areas, no matter where their location. A common claim of many modern mountaineers is having a 'first summit' of a particular mountain, yet it is likely that individuals from First Nations communities of the area had reached that summit hundreds or even thousands of years earlier."

As a climber and mountaineer, writing to other climbers and mountaineers, I feel that this statement deserves our serious consideration. In particular, I think that it is undeniably true for non-technical summits that require only hiking or scrambling ability to reach—peaks like The Lions near Vancouver or Cascade Mountain near Banff. We should recognize

it, and we should update our guidebooks and the references in our literature to reflect it.

Where I feel the unknown boundaries of this statement lie are in the questions of remoteness and of technical difficulty. We know now that Indigenous people crossed glaciers, especially to go between the interior and the coast. But perhaps some summits in parts of some of the larger icefields may have been beyond their logistical limits. There may have been real limitations to travel distance that were only overcome by modern industrial-age technology. The advantages John Clarke had in using skis and airdropped supplies, for instance, may have permitted him to reach and climb peaks in the centre of icefields that people carrying or hunting their food and travelling with snowshoes could not.

Likewise, peaks like South Howser Tower, Mount Waddington or Mount Robson that have no easy way up and require the sustained application of modern mountaineering technology, such as forged crampons, long lightweight ropes and rock protection to successfully ascend and descend, could have been beyond what pre-contact Indigenous people were technically and technologically capable of climbing. I do not think that the line between what could and could not have been climbed is very well-defined yet, though any more than it is easy to define where scrambling becomes technical climbing. The ability of hunter-gatherer peoples around the world to climb difficult rock pitches at 5.9 or higher grades, as evidenced by documented archaeological sites in Australia, the Middle East, Utah and Africa, should not be underestimated by modern climbers. Many Indigenous peoples in Canada have oral histories of either people or mythological beings climbing certain cliffs, suggesting that the idea of climbing a cliff or rock was not foreign to them. Rock-climbing skills, either free or aid, certainly seem to have been necessary to construct some of the documented structures that early colonial explorers described in places like the Fraser Canyon and Hagwilget Canyon regions. I think that locally many archaeological discoveries, and re-enactments with historically accurate technology, have yet to be made and may yield surprising results.

To conclude, I will go back to where we began. Guidebooks, journals and mountaineering histories, all the documentation of our climbing culture, have treated the thousands of years of Indigenous habitation of Canada and North America's mountainous regions with either denial, deliberate omission, appeals to ignorance, silence or a lack of knowledge and awareness. Archaeologists, in turn, ignored alpine areas for years in favour of valley bottoms and plateaus. But the situation has changed. Indigenous peoples' traditions and oral histories consistently document dwelling in and use of alpine environments, and archaeologists have begun to document a myriad of locations where physical evidence of these uses persist. As climbers and mountaineers, we need to recognize this evidence, both oral and physical, and revise our history accordingly. Many, even if not all, of the peaks in Western Canada were climbed thousands of years ago by people that had the knowledge, experience, skills and desire to do so. Our guidebooks should state this, and we should recognize it when we go to the mountains. We should revise our concept of first ascents as well, to more narrowly encompass only those routes and summits made possible through modern technology, and if necessary, we should also seek ways of testing that assumption. Only then will we, as modern climbers, achieve reconciliation with the original climbers and inhabitants of the mountains.

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# Got Yer Goat

Caitlin DuBiel

IT WAS THAT TRICKY TIME of year when dry rock is hard to find and there is just barely enough snow to make skiing worthwhile, even on your jankiest pair of skis. Fall in northwest British Columbia often consists of consecutive days of heavy rain, poor visibility and geological movement of over-saturated terrain in the mountains.

My friend Gary McQuaid has a pretty tight reputation up here. We like to refer to him as the "hardest guy we know," or joke Chuck Norris-style, "Gary probably has muscles in his shit." He has been in the Northwest for many years and for a period of time worked as a hunting guide. Due to technical terrain and the tendency of mountain goats to stay high, these hunts are appreciated as some of the most difficult. Gary stopped guiding long ago but continues to spend much of his time in the mountains. He maintains a reputation in the guiding industry as a guy who can get to tricky places in technical environments. So when he texted me to say he had been hired to retrieve a dead mountain goat that was stuck in high-angle terrain, I was stoked when he invited me to assist.

As we began to make arrangements, all we knew was that the animal was located just outside of Bear Glacier Provincial Park in the Boundary Ranges near Stewart, B.C. Apparently, hunters notoriously underestimate the accessibility of terrain, so we packed for every possibility: skis, glacier gear, rock gear (including a bolt kit), axes and hip waders. We drove northeast from Prince Rupert through most of the night and met up with the client, a Kiwi trophy hunter, and his guide early the next morning.

Parked along the highway, they scoped the terrain and located the animal, which had been shot the day before. "No big deal, aye! Shouldn't take too long, aye!" the hunter enthusiastically exclaimed. We took stock of the situation and geared up. From our position we would have to cross the Bear River, which was swollen from a heavy week of rainfall. About half a kilometre beyond this, past a drawn-out talus field, we could

see a left-leaning gully above a small glacier that eventually crossected a vertical gully and waterfall. The goat lay approximately 20 metres above this point. We couldn't tell exactly what challenges the day would bring, but we knew we would be wet and travelling over variable rock and vegetation.

The river crossing, which they assured us had been shin-deep the day before, resulted in a near miss that just about did me in. Momentarily on all fours in knee-deep water, I got a little gripped and dialed in my footing as my jacket started to fill with water. I was able to stabilize before being swept away, but it was a subpar way to start the day. Eventually across, we wrang out our clothes, regrouped and began to scramble up the moraine. We picked our way around the remnants of a glacier whose moans echoed around us as ice chunks, thousands of years old, calved off and tumbled down towards the river. We roped up and started into the more technical climbing. Right away Gary drilled two bolts, and I hid under a ledge from rockfall as he picked his way up the wet rock. After a rope length of slippery 5.7 climbing, he used ice axes to navigate upwards through steep, shallow gullies interspersed with short rock bluffs covered in a thick mess of slide alder. We simul-climbed for 50 metres until we came to the entry point of the gully we believed the goat to be in. However, there was nothing there but a tuft of fur and a musty smell, so we carried on.

After another half pitch of chossy climbing, complete with a spicy (thankfully, bolted) alpine whipper as the ledge Gary was standing on gave way in the middle of some 5.10 moves, we stopped to re-evaluate. Where the hell was this goat? It was getting late in the day, and we weren't confident of our exit strategy. We decided to descend. Some downclimbing and a 55-metre rappel ending in an icy waterfall put us in good position to cross the river, now 20 centimetres higher, before we lost light.

"Aye! Did you lasso it?!" This was not what we expected to hear when we reached the parked trucks and the waiting hunters. It turns out that we were not able to find ol' Billy because he hadn't been shot dead. Instead, he had only been wounded. While we were up climbing in search for him, the hunters at the base had spotted him moving deftly away from us in spite of a wounded shoulder. I was in disbelief. We hadn't thought to take radios for communication.

After a fine evening of pizza, beer and feined interest in UFC, we racked up again and waited while the client aimed to finish what he had started two days earlier. Gary and I secretly hoped that the animal would take an opportune tumble towards us when shot. But alas, it must have been a low-gravity day. It fell in place a hundred metres above the previous day's high point. We started off for the second ascent of a climb that in regular circumstances we would have chosen to make a first ascent of. This time we avoided the second gully and continued by deeply sinking our axes amongst the steep slide alder and spongy moss. Finally, we caught a glimpse of the goat—this time immobile.

Gary led out on a lush traversing pitch through a moss and alder amphitheatre to reach the animal. We managed to descend with the animal to our final rappel of the previous day. I had the enormous creature on belay as Gary rappelled next to it for a full 55 metres. I was exhausted, soaked and wide-eyed as the animal's weight pulled at my belay when it rolled over the final overhanging section of the waterfall. Once I felt the ropes relieved of weight, I rigged my rappel, triple-checked my gear, lowered through the waterfall and gingerly set my feet down around the body of the huge and beautiful creature.

The client and two guides met us at the bottom for their quintessential photographs. With mixed emotion, we agreed to take a photo with him and his trophy. They butchered the animal in place and were happy to let us take the meat home to share with friends and family. Soaked through every layer of clothing, we hiked down and made our way back across the river with the very last light of the day and returned to find the camper wrapped up in police tape—but that's another story, fortunately not an important one. Once home, Gary showed me how to properly process and store the meat over the course of a couple of evenings as we reminisced with friends on our unusual and ethically complicated adventure.

# A Tale of Two Purcells

Alex Weller

THE PURCELL MOUNTAINS in south-eastern British Columbia, well-known in mountaineering circles for the Bugaboos, Jumbo Glacier and the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy, have a history of being misconstrued. When first named in 1858 they were a small, indeterminate range amid a sea of unmapped territory. Fast-forward to the present and many people are still unable to describe its borders, despite an official definition having existed for more than a century.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the eponym for the Purcell Mountains should also be misunderstood. Current consensus has the Purcells being named after Goodwin Purcell "The O'Leary," a professor at Queen's University College Cork in Ireland. Read through Irene Spry's retelling of the Palliser expedition, however, and a different Purcell appears—an Edward Purcell.

An investigation into both of these men, and into the history of the Purcell Range itself, sheds new light on its naming. I propose that the oft-cited eponym of Goodwin Purcell is wrong, that the range was originally named after Edward Purcell, and that, all things considered, the historical error is unsurprising.

## Where are the Purcells?

THE NAME PURCELL first appears on a map of the 1858 travels of the British North American Expedition (the Palliser expedition). Originally labelled as Purcell's Range, it appears alongside the route travelled by John Palliser and secretary/astronomer of the expedition, John Sullivan. It was a small front range located roughly south of what is today Findlay Creek by Canal Flats and north of St. Mary's Creek by Fort Steele.

The range prompted confusion from the start. How far north, south or east did it stretch? Where or how was it separated from the previously named Selkirk Range? For decades, cartographers solved these problems by either leaving the Purcell Range off the map entirely,[1] or by labelling the Purcell Range to the south, near Kimberley, and the Selkirk Range further north, closer to Spillimacheen.[2] The latter reflected common usage of the names without requiring definite boundaries.[3]

A new interpretation emerged in 1889 when George M. Dawson suggested that the mountains between the Arrow and Kootenay lakes be the Selkirk Range proper, and those east of Kootenay Lake be seen as, "the Purcell division of the Selkirk system."[4] The proposal was made "as a matter of convenience" in order to explain the confusing mass of mountains Dawson encountered during his survey of the West Kootenays.[5]

Dawson's suggestion was largely forgotten until 1906 when Reginald A. Daly revisited the idea in his attempt to clarify nomenclature of B.C. mountain ranges. Arguing that the Purcell Range name was "practically useless" if confined to the original Palliser usage, Daly agreed with Dawson that the Purcells should encompass the mountains west of the Rocky Mountain Trench and east of Kootenay Lake.[6] He further defined the southern and northern boundaries as the Kootenay River Valley in Montana and Idaho, and the Beaver-Duncan valley (what Daly called the Purcell Trench), respectively.[7]

This new definition was slow to be adopted. It took until 1918 for these boundaries of the Purcell Range to be formally adopted by the Geographic Board of Canada[8] (changed to the Purcell Mountains in 1954),[9] and until 1959 for the Purcell Mountains to be formally separated from the Selkirk Mountains.[10] Both are today defined as sub-ranges of the Columbia Mountains.[11] It had taken a century, but the Purcell Range had gone from being an insignificant sub-range to a vast area of around 24,000 square kilometres.

## Goodwin Purcell O'Leary

AS THE PURCELL RANGE GAINED NOTORIETY, questions emerged as to its eponym. In 1946, James

Monroe Thorington presented an answer in his book *The Purcell Range in British Columbia,* stating that the range was named in 1859 "in honor of Goodwin Purcell, 'The O'Leary', M.D."[12] This has since been simplified to Goodwin Purcell.[13]

This "Goodwin Purcell" was Goodwin Richard (or Ricardus) Purcell O'Leary, born 1817 in County Cork to barrister Cornelius O'Leary[14] and Mary Purcell.[15] His grandfather was Art Ó Laoghaire (1747–1773), who was allegedly killed for refusing to sell his horse to the local magistrate.[16] A poem commemorating his death, "Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoghaire," is described as "the most renowned lament in modern Irish."[17]

Goodwin was effusively proud of his grandfather and his O'Leary heritage, and would "relate with thrilling detail the traditionary achievements of his ancestors… none was he prouder [of] than the romantic yet tragic termination of his grandfather's life".[18]

Educated in his early years in Paris, Goodwin returned to Ireland c.1830 to attend Trinity College Dublin.[19] He later studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh, graduating in 1841.[20] In 1857, he was appointed to the chair of Materia Medica (pharmacology) at Queen's University College Cork,[21] a position he held until 1875.[22]

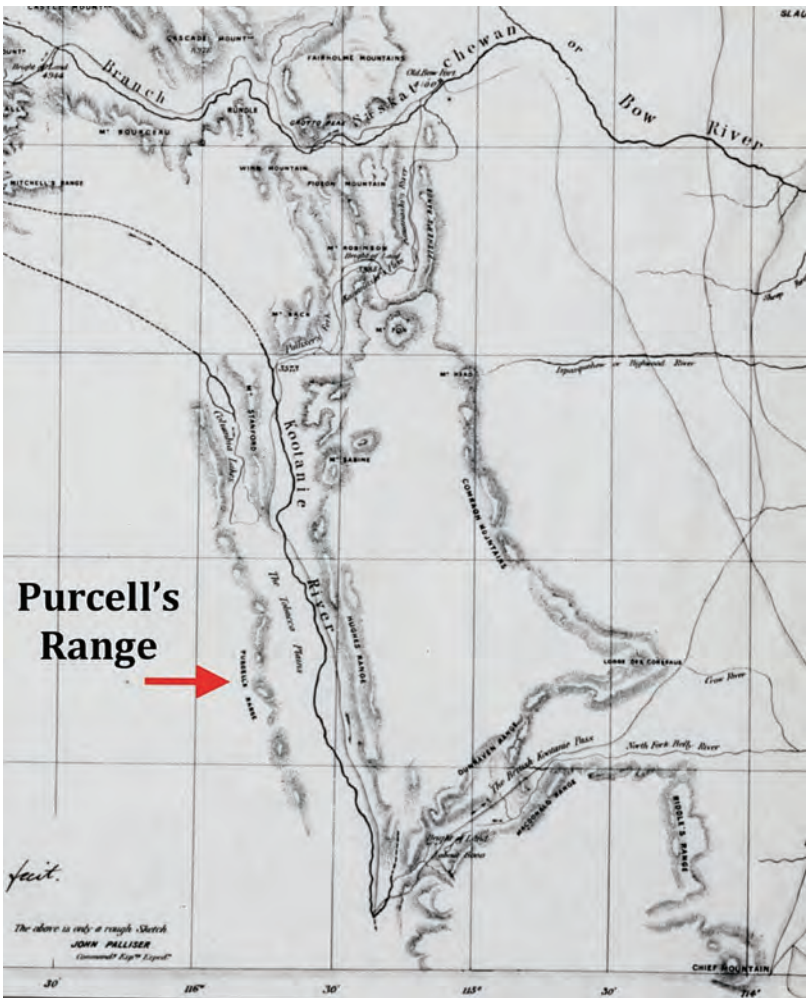
Goodwin passed away July 9, 1876, in Manchester.[23] He was widely remembered as "One of the last of the Irish chieftains," with "all the best qualities of his splendid line."[24] His body was interred next to his grandfather's at the Abbey of Kilcrea near Cork.

Goodwin is an awkward fit as the eponym for the Purcell Range. Notably, the professor's last name was not Purcell at all, and it is erroneous for Thorington and subsequent authors to refer to Goodwin Purcell O'Leary as Goodwin Purcell or Dr. Purcell. Primary sources refer to him as Doctor or Professor Purcell O'Leary,[25] shortened in some newspapers as just "Professor O'Leary" or "The O'Leary."[26] The name "O'Leary" is always included.

There is also no confirmed connection between Goodwin and the Palliser expedition. Thorington states that James Hector named the range in 1859 after Goodwin, who "served with Sir Roderick Murchison and others on the committee for the selection of officers for the expedition."[27] Subsequent authors, including Glen Boles, state that Goodwin taught James Hector at the University of Edinburgh.[28]

There is no evidence for either statement. Although a committee was organized under the Royal Society to direct the scientific goals of the Palliser expedition and recommend possible scientific assistants, no evidence has been found that Dr. Purcell O'Leary sat on that committee. Hector's official record of study also does not include Goodwin Purcell O'Leary as a teacher, even in O'Leary's specialized field of study (Materia Medica).[29]

Indeed, as already established, Thorington was incorrect in stating that the name Purcell was given in 1859 at all. It first appears in 1858, and




The first record of Purcell's Range from 1858 sketch map of the Palliser expedition. John Palliser and James Hector, *British North America Exploring Expedition under the command of Captain Palliser, W.A.: Enlarged sketch from the Map of the Expedition, showing the routes followed when exploring the Rocky Mountains during the Summer of 1858* (Ottawa: Topographical Department War Office, 1858).

was more likely given by Palliser himself.

Some sources acknowledge this likelihood that Palliser named the range, and suggest that he did so due to a friendship with Goodwin.[30] It is certainly possible that Palliser and Goodwin knew each other. They were born the same year to wealthy Irish families, attended Trinity College at the same time and were in a similar social circle.

It is less probable that Palliser named a mountain range after Goodwin. Even if the two were friends, Goodwin's pride in his O'Leary heritage makes naming a mountain range in tribute of his mother's maiden name illogical. If one wanted to commemorate Goodwin, "O'Leary's Range" would have been far more appropriate and appreciated.

## Edward Purcell

THE SECOND CANDIDATE as eponym for the Purcell Range is Edward Purcell. Born in Cork, Ireland, circa 1822,[31] Edward also studied at Trinity College, Dublin. At some point he gained a degree as a doctor of laws (LLD).

In January 1845, Edward became second master at the Royal Hospital School, Greenwich,[32] teaching a maritime-based education to the sons of British navy personnel. The school was physically separated into an upper school, teaching the sons of officers, and a lower school, for the sons of "ratings" (everyone else).[33] Edward taught in the lower school and was headmaster there from 1861 until 1870.[34]

Edward Purcell was a competent teacher. In August 1848, an inspector of the school noted that students in Dr. Purcell's class "attained an efficiency second… to that of no other in the institution," and that their writing skills had seen "great improvement."[35]

A former student later recalled, in 1934, that "Dr. Purcell, LL.D. (Oxon.), was the only one [of the masters] of whom I had a most holy dread. In appearance he was upright and rigid; the perfect gentleman and quite an aristocrat."[36] Edward's name does not appear in the official alumni record of Oxford (Oxon).

Edward Purcell passed away on July 26, 1882, at the age of 60.[37] With no wife or children, his death went largely unnoticed.

## Edward Purcell and the Purcell Range

THERE HAS BEEN ONLY ONE hesitant suggestion that the Purcell range was named after Edward Purcell. Irene Spry remarks in a footnote relating to Edward Purcell that "The expedition named the Purcell Mountains in southern B.C."[38]

There are fewer irregularities when one presumes Edward Purcell as the eponym instead of Goodwin Purcell O'Leary. For a start, if one wanted to commemorate Edward, then using the name "Purcell's Range" makes sense. He was known throughout his career as Dr. Purcell.

Edward Purcell can also be tied directly to the Palliser expedition. In spring 1857, Edward wrote a letter directly to Palliser recommending John William Sullivan as a candidate to go on the expedition, tasked with taking astronomical observations and doing secretarial work.[39] The exact relationship between Edward Purcell and Palliser remains unclear, but the direct letter suggestions a connection.

Shortly after this recommendation, the Royal Geographical Society of London, sponsors of the expedition, elected Edward Purcell as a fellow.[40] Edward's candidate for the expedition, John Sullivan, had attended the Royal Hospital School as a student beginning in 1847. The son of a "caulker's mate," Sullivan went on to become a pupil teacher in 1850 and an acting assistant master in 1856.[41] His recommendation to the expedition presumably came about as a result of his long acquaintance with Edward, first as his pupil and later as his colleague.

The direct connection between Edward Purcell and both Palliser and Sullivan coincides with Purcell's Range being named by Palliser and Sullivan's party in 1858. Even setting aside these personal connections, it is unsurprising for a geographical feature to be named after Edward. Every other man who recommended an officer to the expedition had a feature named after him. These include Sir Roderick Murchison (nominating geologist James Hector), John Ball (suggesting botanist Eugene Bourgeau), and John Henry Lefroy and Edward Sabine (recommending magnetic observer Lieutenant Blakiston). It would be unusual for Edward Purcell, who recommended

the last of the officers to accompany Palliser, to not be given the same distinction.

## Discussion

VIEWING THE TWO OPTIONS for the eponym of the Purcell Range side by side, it is difficult to understand how Goodwin Purcell "The O'Leary" became preferred over Edward Purcell. The connection between Goodwin and the Purcell Range is painfully forced, while Edward has strong connections to both the expedition and two of its members. How could such a dissatisfying conclusion have been made?

As it turns out, very easily. Recall that more than 60 years passed between the Purcell Range first appearing on a map as a small sub-range and its designation as a major mountain system. By the time anyone thought to look after its source, information was extraordinarily difficult to find.

Even the connection to the Palliser expedition was little known. A 1925 obituary in the Nelson Daily News identified long-time Rossland mining engineer Michael E Purcell (1857–1925) as the source of the name.[42] In the 1920s, journalist and amateur historian Basil G. Hamilton tried repeatedly to identify the origins of the name Purcell, at one point even attributing it to John Baptist Purcell, Archbishop of Cincinnati, based on an obscure connection with Father Pierre-Jean De Smet, who travelled through the Rockies in 1845.[43] Hamilton was eventually directed to John Palliser as having named the range, but was unable to discover who it was named after.[44]

Even after the connection to the Palliser expedition was recognized, information about the expedition was scarce. When James Thorington sat down to write his 1946 book on the Purcell Range, likely all he had to guide him was the 1863 expedition report presented to the British Houses of Parliament. In the introduction of this report, Palliser writes, "Her Majesty's Government attached to the Expedition Lieut. Blakiston, R.A., Dr. Hector, Mr. Sullivan, and M. Bourgeau, at the several recommendations of General Sabine, Sir Roderick Murchison, Doctor Purcell, and Sir William Hooker."[45] This is the only mention the report makes to Dr. Purcell.

Thorington correctly identifies this Dr. Purcell as important, but a single name isn't much to go on. It is reasonable that a desperate query for an Irish "Dr. Purcell" might turn up the flamboyant Dr. Purcell O'Leary rather than the understated Dr. Edward Purcell. Purcell O'Leary was the grandson of a man immortalized in Irish literature, and was even buried alongside him. Unlike Edward, he left an obvious historical record to follow.[46]

Closer examination only made Goodwin Purcell O'Leary seem more likely. His life paralleled Palliser's: they were both born to wealthy Irish families in the same year and attended college simultaneously. As a medical student at the University of Edinburgh,


The Purcell Mountains, as defined by the Geographic Board of Canada (October 7, 1954). "Purcell Mountains," Toponymic Feature ID: 0cfb588a849c20c3ef26b86a395e715c. National Resources Canada.

Goodwin's life also echoed James Hector's. With no further information and no better options, assuming some connection—any connection—made sense.

So, to better fit Palliser's "Dr. Purcell," Goodwin's legal last name "O'Leary" was dropped as a quaint title and Goodwin Purcell became the accepted eponym for Purcell's Range. Like a puzzle piece that has all the right colours and seems to fit, Goodwin was forced into the role.

Unfortunately, the association between Goodwin and the range went unchallenged even in the face of new evidence. In the late 1950s and early 60s, Irene M. Spry conducted a scholarly investigation of the Palliser expedition, spending years chasing down original papers associated with the expedition.

During her research, Spry uncovered a June 1858 letter from John Palliser to the Colonial Office in which he states that Sullivan had been brought onto the expedition on the recommendation of Doctor Purcell from the "Naval College Greenwich." This relevant portion of the letter had never before been published.[47] Further research led Spry to identify Dr. Edward Purcell, and to make a single suggestion that the Purcell range was named after him.[48]

Even with these new details, Thorington's conclusion went unquestioned. Those reading his work seem to have assumed either that he was privy to some other reliable information or that he had access to the same resources as post-Spry researchers and still regarded Goodwin as the correct candidate. Thorington was given the benefit of the doubt, and his verdict repeated so often that it has become an accepted fact.

The problem is that this "Goodwin Purcell" is an artificial creation, desperately brought into being based on the colourful legacy of Goodwin Purcell O'Leary and the belief that such a large geographical feature must be named after someone important.

The error is unsurprising, but it is time for it to be corrected. If we accept that the range was originally named for the Dr. Purcell mentioned in the writings of the Palliser expedition, then Dr. Edward Purcell (c.1822–1882) is the correct candidate.

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# What's in a Name

Kieran Brownie

MOUNTAINS HAVE EVOKED DRAMA since the beginning of time. We humans have always stored our valuables in high places, and throughout history, mountains were the homes of the gods—places where commandments could be found, or sacred wisdom divined.

Over time, however, the mountains became tangible locations that could be ascended by mere mortals. Difficulty became communicable and reward quantifiable. Eventually, these once-sacred spaces were caught up in the very human narrative of "whose is bigger." As a result, mountains became objects of possession, of ego. They became things that could be named. And humans clamoured to put themselves in these high places once reserved for the gods.

In Canada, the English names given to peaks come primarily from the middle and upper classes of Britain, those to whom mountaineering offered a grasp at immortality. One example of this occurred in 1889 when John Hamilton, British Columbia's Supreme Court judge at the time, gave a name to two prominent peaks jutting above the north shore of Burrard Inlet. He called them The Lions of Vancouver, named after The Lions of Trafalgar Square, four great bronze statues he had seen in London.

The battle of Trafalgar (1805), which Trafalgar Square is named after, was a tipping point in British history, by defeating the French and

The Sisters.
Photo: Casey Dubois

Spanish fleets, who at the time were their only adversaries on the path to global dominance. The Royal Navy gained a reputation as an omnipotent force that would sail the seven seas unchallenged for more than a hundred years—tendrils of the monarchy, seeking new and unexplored worlds.

But to the Squamish peoples of Howe Sound these twin peaks already had a history, a story and a name: *Ch'ich'iyúy Elxwíkn*, The Sisters.

Like Trafalgar, the Squamish story is also a story of war, but rather than glorified bloodshed or of power born from fear, theirs is a tale of humility and accountability. According to a Squamish Nation legend, as told by Chief Joe Capilano and transcribed by Pauline Johnson, the peaks are the legal marker of a peace treaty between the southern Sunset tribes of the Georgia Straight and the Northern tribes beyond Prince Rupert. During a time of intense battle, two daughters of the Tyee of Capilano asked of their father that he invite the enemies to a peaceful feast in honour of women (the English approximation of Tyee is "chief" or "leader"). For the Coast Salish, a woman's coming of age was a highly regarded event, something to celebrate; but the Tyee's obligation was to lead his people, to stand shoulder to shoulder and defend their livelihood. He would have to make a choice between his responsibilities as a leader and as a father. His decision led him away from the front-lines, returning home to his daughters.

On his arrival, the daughters approached him with a request: that he invite all of the communities along the coast to join the celebration. The Tyee considered his options—the coast was at war, so what would it look like if he asked for a ceasefire. Would he be considered weak? He cast aside these thoughts and refocused his energy on those he loved and his duty to grant their request. He bid his strongest warriors to send the message to the front lines—not a plea but a command that all tribes attend the festivities. And with this, the Tyee of Capilano began preparing for the celebration, uncertain of what was to come.

The potlatch lasted for days and days, and all communities were in attendance. Each brought gifts of food and brilliantly constructed works of wood and stone, and it was "such a potlach that nothing but tradition can vie with it." At the end of the festivities, when all in attendance lay around, content and lazy, and recovering from the frenzy—at peace with themselves and each other—the Great Sagalie Tyee, the creator of the world, who had been watching the events unfold, was very pleased by the way his children had found harmony between each other.

> Then the Sagalie Tyee smiled on His Indian children: 'I will make these young-eyed maidens immortal,' He said. In the cup of His hands He lifted the chief's two daughters and set them forever in a high place, for they had borne two offspring—Peace and Brotherhood—each of which is now a great Tyee ruling this Land.
>
> And on the mountain crest the chief's daughters can be seen wrapped in the suns, the snows, the stars of all seasons, for they have stood in this high place for thousands of years, and will stand for thousands of years to come, guarding the peace of the Pacific Coast and the quiet of the Capilano Canyon.

Those words, as spoken by Chief Joe Capilano and recorded by historian Pauline Johnson, were included in a book titled *Legends of Vancouver,* a compilation of place-name origin stories published in 1911 (it remains one of the oldest books still in circulation by a Canadian). A footnote at the bottom of the page, written by Johnson, is a sobering reminder: "This is the Indian legend of 'The Lions of Vancouver' as I had it from one who will tell me no more the traditions of his people."

For the Squamish peoples, high places are reserved for values, not individuals. And their cultural narratives are interwoven with the landscape because of this, leaving no separation between people and place. These stories have survived despite the careless gestures of newcomers and their pens, but others have been lost, lessons we cannot remember, mistakes that will have to be made again. And therefore, it is always good to ask: What's in a name?

# Standing Up Alone

Graeme Pole

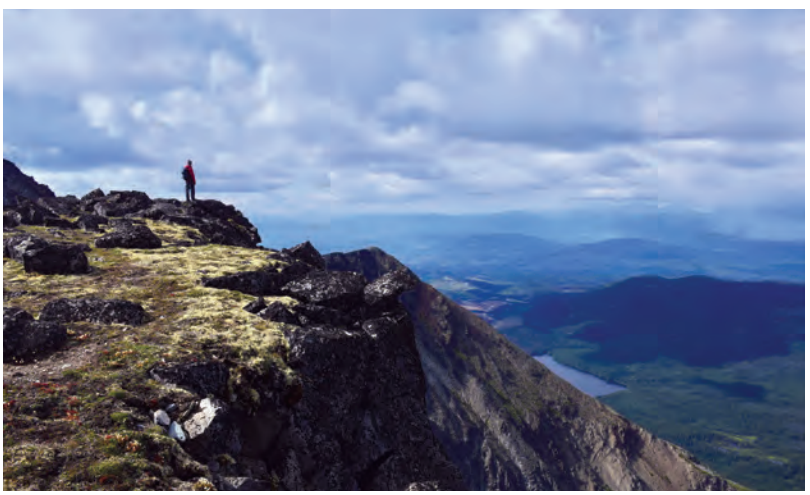
IT IS A MOUNTAIN WHOSE LOCATION defies belonging. Most geologists place it in the Skeena subset of the Hazelton Mountains and thus part of the Interior Ranges. Some consider it an outlier of the Coast Mountains. Others position it on the Nechako Plateau. Conundrum as it may be to those who catalogue Earth's tectonic past, Nadina Mountain suffers no inferiority. This is a mountain that, with its independence of geology and in its sheer bulk of mountain-ness, dominates its landscape.

We approached the mountain in August 2020, aware that massive changes were afoot on the land; changes that may not outstrip those of the geologic past but that will certainly outstrip any within human memory. Until recently, if you were to drive south from Houston on the Morice River Road, the trappings of industry would wane. Now they build, literally and figuratively, with the presence of the Coastal Gas Link pipeline. Intended to feed the LNG Canada plant at Kitimat, the pipeline right-of-way cleaves a swath through the lake country west of Burns Lake, angling just north of Nadina Mountain before plunging west into the mountain thicket of the coastal ranges.

In response, and to assert traditional title, the Unist'ot'en and Gitumdt'en clans of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation raised blockades to this industrial trespass late in 2018. After the courts weighed in, applying Canadian law to unceded land, the barricades were destroyed, the work presided over by a menacing military force. This action—brutality and intimidation countering the courage to defend legitimate claim—was the unified response of governments, federal and provincial. In so doing, our political leaders somehow managed to simultaneously speak the languages of reconciliation and colonialization, and largely escaped being called on it by their electorates. The politicians pitched the birthrights of all, indigenous and non, choosing instead to answer to the shareholders of two corporations that rank third and fourth in the world by revenue. They sacrificed resources, sovereignty, climate, cultures, trust and wilderness to guarantee that the short-term economic boost of yet another foreign-owned oil and gas mega-project will be mantled to the land.

Not surprisingly, the pipeline right-of-way also tears a swath through the cultural and social fabrics of northwestern British Columbia. Championed by many as an economic salvation, feared by others as the blunt edge of a wedge of destruction and as a stinging refrain of a colonial past, the Coastal Gas Link project has become a divide of dollars for the Wet'suwet'en First Nation—on whose traditional lands Nadina Mountain and the nearby pipeline right-of-way are found—just as it has divided those with no ancestral claim to the land.

We knew all this before we headed toward the mountain, but it was nonetheless a profound challenge to leave such noise at the trailhead. A summit is never guaranteed, but the skyward journey should at least offer a chance to escape. We took a collective deep breath and gave ourselves to the ascent, and were rewarded beyond measure. As if mirroring the pall of the valley bottom, the weather threatened for most of the day, and we were well into the fugue of descent when sunlight at last softened the view. We had ascended through fleeting bursts of snow, sleet and graupel, our steps enlivened by thunder as we crossed



Marnie Pole on Nadina Mountain. Photo: Graeme Pole

the summit plateau. The cumulative experience—the singular character of the mountain, the wildlife, the unusual arrangement of the geologic pieces, the raggedly wild summit and, yes, the knowledge that what was in view below might never again be the same—created a lens unlike any other through which I have viewed a mountain landscape.

I plucked a piece of Nadina Mountain from the eastern cliffs on the way down—a sphere of white granite, flecked with black. The story that this rock would tell—it is water-worn—defies its near mountain-top place of origin, almost a mile above Wet-zuhn-kwa, the Morice River. The rock embodies a lonely testament to the unknown past of the world. It is a roadblock to knowing; a foil to the collective arrogance of our time. On the upper slopes of Nadina Mountain, whose Wet'suwet'en name means standing up alone, this rock was but one of look-alike thousands, probably of millions.

I think of the checkpoints on the Morice River Road, some tentatively held by defenders, some taxpayer-funded by their aggressors. I think of the RCMP patrols now harassing anyone who would dare drive there and not be in the service of industry; impounding vehicles for the supposed offences of chipped windshields and burned-out tail lights. I think of the world locked down, its businesses withering while the Coastal Gas Link pipeline soldiers on, its 800-person, COVID-wracked "man camps" militarily protected from view. I think of the news that broke in late 2019 that the RCMP had blanketed the Unist'ot'en and Gitumdt'en resistance camps with "lethal over-watch," with officers instructed to "use as much violence toward the gate as you want." I think of freedom and the delusion that we have absently agreed to embrace in fear of freedom's true definition. I think of rounded granitic ledges alternating endlessly with banks of heather on Nadina Mountain's eastern slope, making a staircase into the gunmetal sky, each step too big to surmount in one motion. My fingers curl around the rock. It fits snugly into the palm of my hand.

# Reflections of Monica Meadows

Tricia Daum

WILDERNESS, ITS SEVERITY AND BEAUTY, comes in small and large parcels. Small, at my feet, anemone pods stand proud on high, sturdy stalks. Their seed wings furled. The pods nod from long necks in wind breaths.

Soft larch needles stem from gnarled, woody limb nodules. Ancient trees, hundreds of years old. Each germinated by a cone seed, then wind, water and mountain soil. Tiny white and red heather flowers. These minute clarions sway and arc in light breeze.

Towering above, a quartzite triangular summit is protected by steep talus slopes. Last season's snow is cradled in couloirs, bound by sharp ridges. Difficult to climb. Underfoot, metamorphosed conglomerates in corrugated washboard and countertop smooth patterns. Rock colours brown, blue, gold, green, grey.

Flower colours—pink mountain laurel, goldenrod, arnica, yarrow. Beauty. The landscaper reads no book. Wilderness has no trails. It has neither guardrails nor signposts. Wilderness experienced is to be humbled.

Whistles, chirps and peeps in stereo. Ground squirrels sound the alert at the present danger as I trod the soil. I am the danger. Oval mouths, tiny arms draped over round bellies. They stand tall, tails roped to rock outcrops. Peeps, chirps and whistles.

The symphony of sound expands as the wind murmurs through larch branches, spruce shrubs and heather blossoms. A cascade of water churning over rocks completes the orchestral composition.

Above my head and chased by a small black bird, a hawk catches the uplift and rises, wing feathers spread. A falcon circles intent on snatching a squirrel in its talons. I would not want to witness that: the imperative of survival.

Ahead, an emerald gem bound with a bedrock cliff on the right and sunny green rocky meadows on the left. The mirrored lake reflects, from across a vast valley, an ochre mountain group in the distance. Mountaintops are lathered with glacial ice.


Monica Meadows Lake. Watercolour on paper, by Tricia Daum.

Glacial ice, the accumulation of winter snow, generations compressed. Sometimes smooth between mountain arms. In other steep spaces, glaciers expose seracs and crevasses. They descend in spikey turquoise-painted ice falls. At the glacier toes, ice melts into silty tarns or frothy streams that cascade on bedrock, reach the forest and disappear into conifer forests.

Ever-evolving, this landscape. Upstream from the mirror lake, ribs of glacier-smoothed bedrock slope down valley. Nestled between the ribs and built over the eons, talus rocks have been placed in stream patterns by the unstoppable forces of gravity, ice and water.

Spaces between other down-valley sloping rock ribs are where gigantic and long-term forces like avalanches and water with dissolved rock have made flat the clefts, filled the cavities with soils. Soils that contain rich organic and inorganic materials. Then pussyfoot, short grasses and heather coverlets form. New meadows nibble at the talus edges. A perfect, flat place to pitch a tent.

The designers of this landscape, this unspoiled natural landscape: the millennia.

I am small in this wilderness, this landscape comprised of valuables large and small. Forces larger than humankind are in control. Wilderness prompts, demands respect and humility—only heard if one pays attention.

The summer's zenith produces a bright sunshine with elongated evening shadows. But a chill hints in the air. Autumn slushy snows will soon arrest plant growth. Winter snowfalls will accumulate. Seasons will progress. Only larch and spruce giants will tower over frozen lakes and meadows, all buried by the snow blanket. The landscape will sleep the long winter.

I want Monica Meadows to speak through the words written in my journal. I want it to be illustrated by my watercolour painting. I want others to see what is before my eyes. I want people to understand that only the passage of eons in time and the confluence of natural forces, land untouched by humankind, can produce unspoiled nature.

# The North

## Anijaaq

Sarah McNair-Landry

I stood on the shore, watching dark clouds move quickly across the sky. Our little bay was deceptively sheltered, and my friends' two boats anchored just offshore gently bobbed up and down. But once out of our sheltered bay, the winds swept across the Arctic Ocean, pushing up a big swell—too dangerous for our small hunting vessels—keeping us stormbound.

The next day, Jeremy woke us at 6 a.m. with news that the weather was looking good. We packed up the boats and made the final push towards Anijaak (the traditional Inuktitut name for Lincoln Bay), which lay 200 kilometres from my hometown of Iqaluit on the tip of Hall Peninsula on southern Baffin Island.

Several polar bears curiously swam past us as we navigated the strong tidal currents and cautiously kept a look out for shallow reefs. The light-grey cliffs came into view, towering 460 metres over us, jutting straight out of the ocean. Erik Boomer and I had spent months poring over satellite images of this area, but this was the first time we had seen the walls in person. While researching this area, we couldn't find a single photograph of the cliffs.

Due to travel restrictions, we had to cancel our expedition to Greenland, and with the news of Auyuittuq National Park being closed—where most of the climbers go to climb classics like Mount Asgard and Mount Thor—we turned our attention to adventures accessible from home.

No previous climbing expeditions had explored the climbing potential at the mouth of Frobisher Bay, so with few resources, Erik and I relied completely on satellite images to scout for granite walls accessible from Iqaluit. Erik spotted this hidden fjord, so we decided to take a chance and spend a month of our summer investigating the area. Relatively new to climbing and having never put up new routes, we trained as much as possible on the short 20-metre crags around Iqaluit, beefed up our climbing rack and taught ourselves how to drill bolts.

Left: Sarah McNair-Landry on pitch two of Ijiraq.
Photo: Erik Boomer

Right: Erik Boomer scouting lines on unclimbed walls.
Photo: Sarah McNair-Landry

Our base camp for the next month was pitched on the shore of the fjord, complete with an electric fence to keep unwanted polar bears away (we saw 12 on the trip). Once the boats were unloaded, we sat outside and passed our cheap monocular back and forth, studying the walls visible from camp. "Look at that crack," Erik pointed out on the wall just opposite camp. A single crack ran up the entire face. Erik was eager to climb, and since I had a month to explore the area, we convinced our friend Torsten (who brought us down by boat) to join him. They named their route The Line—a fun six-pitch 5.7 route on flawless rock that follows a wide crack on featured granite with occasional hand jams.

Our friends headed home, leaving us 25 days to climb and explore the area. We established five moderate routes (5.7 to 5.10), each offering 300 to 450 metres of climbing. Two climbs stand out as ultra-classics (self-proclaimed) with sustained slab and crack climbing on solid granite.

On rainy days, we paddled out the fjord to scout new cliffs or hiked up the valley in search for walls and boulders to climb. We set our second objective on the tallest cliff, which we named Sedna Wall. The two routes we established there start right at the ocean. To access the base, we kayaked two kilometres from camp and hauled our boats up onto the wall to secure them safely above the tidal zone. We were able to descend off the back side of the cliff back to camp, and then retrieved the kayaks the following day with our inflatable pack raft.

Our first route on Sedna Wall followed a less obvious line up a fun crack that weaved up the wall. Pitch four was a full 70 metres of 5.10 climbing, starting with a hard crack roof into a corner with tight hands then into a finger crack with a scary slab finish—luckily with a belay stance right at the end of the rope. Our second route up the Sedna Wall was the most obvious crack, which ended up being hard to protect but had several fun sections, including a 5.8 roof.

While scouting the fjord by kayak, we explored a cirque of cliffs around an alpine lake and spotted a shorter climb that we hadn't noticed before, as it was almost always in the shadow. The first couple of pitches on what we called Shadow Wall were


Raven Rock Wall:
(1) Ijiraq
(2) The Line
Photo: Erik Boomer


Sedna Wall:
(1) Beluga
(2) Sedna
Photo: Erik Boomer

technical slab with small cracks for protection. The top turned into wet slab followed by a long scramble, some loose rock and stunning views.

Our final and favourite route we named Ijiraq (a.k.a. Shape Shifter). It took us three full days to piece this one together as the route was not obvious from the ground. We followed perfect cracks for two pitches, which faded into a section of unprotected 5.10 slab. We bailed on our first day as it started to rain—and we had forgotten the battery for our drill. On our second attempt, we placed three bolts to safely climb the slab up to a thin finger crack that eventually grew into a hand crack.

After a few more pitches of nice 5.9 climbing, we found ourselves on a big ledge with two options. The first was the easy scramble escape off the top, which we took as we were running out of daylight. Several days later we returned with more time and continued directly up the steeper face. The headwall was very different with climbing a fun chimney and an airy 5.7 traverse on huge jugs with no feet. Erik called it fun; I called it terrifying. The rock quality was outstanding for nine pitches with two 5.10 cruxes and numerous 5.8 and 5.9 crack pitches.

After 25 days, our friends journeyed back down Frobisher Bay to retrieve us by boat. But before we made the long push home, we spent several days sharing some of the climbs and bouldering with our friends.

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**Summary**

The Line (5.7, 370m, 6 pitches, 62°50'46.08"N 65°13'11.85"W), west face, Raven Rock Wall, Anijaaq, Baffin Island. FA: Erik Boomer, Torsten Diesel, July 22, 2020.

Taqriaqsuit (5.9, 200m, 4 pitches, 62°49'23.67"N 65°13'17.90"W), north face, Shadow Wall, Anijaaq, Baffin Island. FA: Erik Boomer, Sarah McNair-Landry, July 26, 2020.

Sedna (5.10, 460m, 10 pitches, 62°50'42.86"N 65°15'27.64"W), south face, Sedna Wall, Anijaaq, Baffin Island. FA: Erik Boomer, Sarah McNair-Landry, July 28, 2020.

Beluga (5.8, 460m, 10 pitches, 62°50'42.86"N 65°15'27.64"W), south face, Sedna Wall, Anijaaq, Lincoln Bay, Baffin Island. FA: Erik Boomer, Sarah McNair-Landry, August 2, 2020.

Ijiraq (5.10, 340m, 8 pitches, 62°51'0.09"N 65°13'11.37"W), northwest face, Raven Rock Wall, Anijaaq, Baffin Island. FA: Erik Boomer, Sarah McNair-Landry, August 10, 2020.

# The West Coast

## Temple Full of Talismans

Max Fisher

ON A BEAUTIFUL COOL MID-JULY MORNING, Ryan Van Horne and I ventured up the Elk River Trail to enchain all the summits that drain into Foster and Landslide lakes. We scrambled through the forest on Mount Slocum's north shoulder to the col where we climbed a 5.7 step and gained a sub-summit of Slocumb; then we dropped down and crossed Suspension Ridge and continued up to the main summit of Slocum before dropping down again, this time to the south col of Colonel Foster. From there, we started the summit traverse of Colonel Foster, summiting the south peak around 1 p.m. After the south summit, we engaged with the bulk of the technical climbing on this enchainment. We moved unroped for the majority of the climbing until we got to the northwest summit where we rapped into Evacuation Gulley to climb the north tower. We topped out on the north tower around 9:30 p.m. At 10:30 p.m., we had finished the rappels of the tower and started walking toward our last little summit to the northeast. At 11:30 p.m., we stopped and lay in the heather until we had more light and continued to our little unnamed high point before dropping down the steep bush and back to the Elk River Trail.

In late summer, Marie-Lou Piché, Ryan and I had intentions of heading into the east face of Elkhorn to climb another cool feature on the face. As we were walking up the Elk River Trail, we opted to head up to Mount Colonel Foster instead and climb a new variation to the northwest summit. For the first 400 metres, we scrambled over 3rd- and 4th-class terrain to a huge treed ledge. We scrambled to the far left edge and climbed the crux pitch of Ryan's route, Head Games. From the top of this pitch we headed up and right through two gullies to a prominent steep buttress. We climbed the splitter on steep holds with good gear all the way to the top, staying on the buttress crest as much as possible. After some high-fives and sharing how rad the climbing was, we headed down Evacuation Gulley and wrapped down and around the north tower to Foster Lake and walked out the Elk River Trail to the car. It was a stellar day in the hills and a cool new route in a 21-hour car-to-car push.

Late November brought ideal freeze-thaw temperatures to the Vancouver Island Alps. Sutton Peak, often overshadowed by Victoria Peak, has a beautiful 350-metre east face that is littered with steep gullies and couloirs just waiting for ascents. With Piché and Liam Gilchrist, we collectively climbed four new routes—each ascent offering its own flair. My personal favourite and probably one of the best multi-pitch winter routes I have climbed is The Talisman. It had everything: steep runouts, excellent belays, snow slogging, well-protected climbing and a committing feel with easy access.

Max Fisher on pitch three of The Talisman.
Photo: Liam Gilchrist

**Summary**

The Temple Traverse (5.7, 4000m), encirclement of Landside and Foster lakes, Mt. Slocum to Mt. Colonel Foster, Elk River Mountains. FA: Max Fisher, Ryan Van Horne, July 14, 2020.


The east face of Sutton Peak:
(1) Sutton's Season Ale
(2) Blackbird Ragging
(3) 'Twas the Night Before Christmas
Photo: Philip Stone

Joy Ride (5.10-, 900m), east face, northwest summit, Mt. Colonel Foster, Elk River Mountains. FA: Max Fisher, Marie-Lou Piché Ryan Van Horne, September 3, 2020.

Blackbird Ragging (AI3, 350m), east face, Sutton Peak, Sutton Range. Max Fisher, Ryan Van Horne, November 28, 2020.

Sutton's Seasonal Ale (AI4+, 350m), east face, Sutton Peak, Sutton Range. FA: Max Fisher, Liam Gilchrist, Ryan Van Horne, December 12, 2020.

The Talisman (AI5, 350m), east face, Sutton Peak, Sutton Range. FA: Max Fisher, Liam Gilchrist, Ryan Van Horne, December 22, 2020.

'Twas the Night Before Christmas (AI3/4, 350m), east face, Sutton Peak, Sutton Range. FA: Marie-Lou Piché, Ryan Van Horne, December 24, 2020.

# Two Visits with Randy

Paul McSorley

IF YOU HAVE EVER FELT A deep reverence while bathing in a stand of coastal old growth, you are a friend of Randy Stoltmann. An avid mountaineer and conservationist, Randy was the first person to document British Columbia's dwindling ancient forests with the B.C. Big Tree Registry. At age 32, he was killed in a crevasse fall in the Kitlope Range near Kitimat. In 1999, Drew Brayshaw and Mike Buda climbed and christened a beautiful granite tower on the flanks of Mount Athelstan in honour of this inspirational human.

I have always wanted to visit this zone, and with the whole pandemic keep-it-local thing going on, I figured this area was close enough to home to keep the germ-spreading in check. With the smacking irony of logging-road access, Paul Cordy, Tony Richardson and I left my truck, Jimi, at a clear-cut and surfed up a steep stand of old-growth fir and cedar to reach a scenic bivy beneath the tower. Our itinerary was a compelling golden pillar on the south side of the formation. After end-running a couple of slabby pitches, we reached the pillar proper and climbed 200 metres of very featured but sometimes unprotectable stone. We placed three bolts on the route: two for protection and one at a belay. The line culminated in a long, cruxy dihedral that led to easier scrambling to reach a sub-summit called the Gnomon Tower. We rappelled to the north, beefing up the exiting stations with a few bolts and hit the toe of the rockfall-strewn glacier that descends from the Athelstan plateau. Good vibes with an amped crew made the route naming easy—Stokeman Pillar.

After spying several appealing options on the still-unclimbed south face, I returned with Joshua Lavigne at the end of October to enjoy some more pleasure climbing. Opting for a day trip from a ditch bivy in the clear-cut, we blasted up to the base of the south face, just right of the Stokeman Pillar. We cruised several pitches of straightforward terrain to a large terrace two thirds of the way up the mountain. A bit of scrambling had me regretting leaving my approach footwear at the base. With rock shoes off, I jumped like Huck Finn between solid bits of stone amongst the choss to avoid lacerating my bare feet.

Once we gained the upper headwall, several primo lines presented themselves. Spectacular face and crack climbing up golden stone rewarded our efforts. Climbing high in the mountains under sunny fall skies with a good friend was all it took to make me smile. As on the previous trip, we added just a few bolts to protect some crackless sections and several more to rappel the wall, which we descended without a hitch.

Overall, the Stoltmann Tower and the walls surrounding it offer fun, featured climbing with a mixed bag of rock quality that ranges from loose but manageable to bulletproof and top quality.

**Summary**

Stokeman Pillar (5.11a, 250m), Randy Stoltmann Tower, Pacific Ranges, Coast Mountains. FA: Paul Cordy, Paul McSorley, Tony Richardson, August 9, 2020.

South Face (5.11a, 350m), Randy Stoltmann Tower, Pacific Ranges, Coast Mountains. FA: Josh Lavigne, Paul McSorley, October 3, 2020.


Randy Stoltmann Tower:
(1) Stokeman Pillar
(2) South Face
Photo: Paul McSorley

# Running Blondie

Gary McQuaid

EARLY IN THE MORNING on July 13, 2020, I woke up in my car (with a few adjustments, like removing the back seats and fitting a cedar platform in their place, a Toyota Corolla can make a great camper), drank some coffee and started the hike towards the north side of the Seven Sisters. The Cedarvale trail is a pleasant walk through an open hemlock and pine forest. The trail's elevation is not necessarily high, but the trees are still far apart and there is little underbrush. The forest floor is carpeted with a bright green moss that, with the right lighting, looks as if it almost glows. I've hiked this trail many times, and its low angle and peculiar beauty always have a way of settling the mind. The trail only lasts about an hour and a half until it leads to the foot of an open moraine. Here, the south side of Orion Peak comes into view while the dominant north walls of the Seven Sisters face it from a half a kilometre away across a glacier moraine.

Orion Peak is not as high as its neighbouring Seven Sisters, but it has its own nuances that make it stand out and attractive. Perhaps its most beneficial feature is that its south side—mostly a 1,000-metre face divvied up by couloirs and large fins leading into spires—gets a significant amount of sun, opening it up to early season climbing. I've tried to probe this wall numerous times but was continually met with pitch after pitch of deep and endless choss. On this particular trip, I was hoping that the line I previously scoped out a couple of weeks back might work out.

After a pleasant hike on the Cedarvale trail, another half hour on glacier moraine led me to the base of my chosen line, where I sat to study it. The climb started with a 4th-class gully, which lasts for 130 metres until another prominent gully drains into it. This gully is open on one side and overhung by a large wall. Within it was a beautiful-looking ramp of rock that climbed for another 120 metres. From the bottom, I could not tell what I was getting into after the gully. From afar, it looked like if I could negotiate the terrain above the gully then I could gain a high plateau and traverse the upper parts of the east shoulder of the mountain to gain the west face. Here I wanted to attempt another new line on a 120-metre slab of rock. In 2014, I climbed a fun route on this slab, which I dubbed Fear the Bull (the title is based on actual experiences) and found that the rock quality was relatively good.

The first 130 metres of 4th-class gully went relatively quick. I reached the gully, started to climb it and found it to be even easier than it looked, consisting of mostly 4th-class terrain. After 120 metres of fun and cruisy climbing, I reached the top of the gully. I then climbed a steep traverse to gain a ridge. Upon reaching the ridge, I looked up to see more 4th-class climbing, and after 200 metres of it, I came to the base of a short but steep tower of rock that formed the top of the ridge. To gain my objective, I needed to top out on this or start a long downclimb. The climbing wasn't hard by any means—5.7 at the most—but it was chossy. None of the holds I used could be fully trusted. It was a delicate process, and I was happy it was over when I pulled onto the top of the ridge. The rest of the terrain looked manageable, but I left a little rock cairn to mark where I topped out on the ridge in case I had to retreat. After some more scrambling, I finally reached the top of the plateau.

It was now 11 a.m., and after a brief look around I started side-hilling on scree to reach the northwest side of Orion Peak. It was close to noon when I reached the base of the slab, which was to be the setting for the second objective of the day. The line I had in mind went directly up the slab for 50 metres, through a deep roof and up 15 more metres of slab to another roof system, which continued for 60 metres from the lower right side of the upper wall to the upper left of the wall, leading to the top of the slab. The plan was to make it to the second roof and traverse its base until I reached the top.

The climbing below the first roof was interesting and fun. The roof turned out to be easier than I thought when an opening presented itself that required a few easy stemming moves. The slab above the first roof required a little more thought, which

included a few friction moves, but the climbing was still enjoyable. It was very soon that I reached the base of the main roof that I was hoping had a crack system, which I could use to traverse the roof's base to the top of the wall. The crack turned out to be wet, so I contemplated simply traversing the slab below the roof. It looked like fun slab climbing and maybe a little more technical than the 5.8 terrain I was currently on. However, as I was scoping my line, I felt a few raindrops, which became more frequent. The thought of being more than 50 metres up a slab un-roped in a rain shower was enough for me to make a hasty retreat. Still, I took my time on the downclimb because the rock wasn't super solid. In fact, I broke off holds on the way down, which I used with a bit too much faith on the way up.

It wasn't long, however, that I was at the base of the wall feeling a bit of relief but also a bit of confusion as the rain stopped. It was hard to judge by the clouds if the rain would start again. I waited around for a while. No rain, but the clouds still looked ominous. I really wanted to get back on the wall, but I couldn't reconcile myself to make another solo attempt with such a high risk of rain. Personally, I can't think of a worst nightmare than to be soloing a friction climb in the rain, even if it is a moderate grade.

I made my decision and started on my way down. I didn't totally complete all my objectives, but I finished the climb on the south side of Orion, and I had a bunch of fun anyways. I took a long and wide gully from the plateau to reach the glacier moraine. About a third of the way down, I saw what looked like a mountain goat traverse my path about a hundred metres below me. I thought little of it and continued my way down. When I reached about halfway down the gully, I saw the mountain goat bedded down at the base of the right side of the gully wall. This goat looked funny, however. I walked a bit closer to it to see that it was not a mountain goat but a blond-phase black bear, what locals call a Kermode bear. Living in northwestern British Columbia has afforded me numerous sightings of white bears, and usually I have not felt threatened by them or any other bears. However, by strange coincidence, or whatever you want to call it, a few nights prior, I had a strange dream that a white bear was chasing me. This gave me a nervous and uncanny feeling, and I wasn't carrying bear spray because that shit is heavy. I decided to simply walk the other way and give the bear some room. While traversing the steep scree, I accidently knocked a couple of pieces of rock down the slope, alerting the bear to my presence. From about a 100 metres away, I watched that bear get up and run away faster than I have ever seen an animal run. The poor bear was in so much distress that it even tried to climb a short cliff, which resulted in it falling several metres just to get up and bolt again. I was worried the scared thing was going to hurt itself. I have inadvertently spooked plenty of bears in my time, but never have I seen one run away in such a panic. I almost felt insulted. Still, I wondered if there was something meaner out there harassing it. Soon enough, however, I was back at my car by 4:30 p.m. and settling in for the long drive home.

Running Blondie on the south face of Orion Peak. Photo: Gary McQuaid

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**Summary**

Running Blondie (5.7, 535m), south face, Orion Peak, Seven Sisters Range, Bulkley Range, Kitimat Range, Coast Mountains. FA: Gary McQuaid, July 13, 2020.

# Mount Land

Drew Brayshaw

TRAPPED INSIDE by stay-home orders and work shutdowns in spring 2020, I found myself going through old journals and slides and hard drives full of scanned photos, thinking about all the things I hadn't done. Peaks not climbed, ranges not visited, routes not ticked, promises to myself not kept. I don't find much solace in the few things that I have accomplished when there are so many others that I never will. Just because I understand it and I accept it doesn't mean I have to enjoy it.

At any rate, around June, COVID cases died down and it seemed like it was actually OK to hang out outside with other people again. But then a typical thing happened that we here on the West Coast know about all to well. It rained, not always heavily but at least consistently, for much of the next six weeks—fine weather for dog walking and mushroom hunting but not much else.

When things dried out in mid-July, my body was screaming at me to go into the mountains and do something, anything. I felt like I should skip work and spend a couple of weeks up high with the bugs and the goats, but I had too many work projects on the go to just leave. A second complication was provided by a cardboard box of bolts and hangers waiting for me in the gear room. In 2019, I had volunteered to take on the task of replacing the rusty hardware on the classic 1992 Cox-Wolkoff route, Yak Check, on Yak Peak, after waiting and waiting for anyone else to do it. I chatted with Rick Cox, I chatted with Gary Wolkoff, Mt. Waddington's Outdoors chipped in the hardware, I bought a new, lighter drill, and nine months later, I still hadn't done the deed. So when the rain stopped in July, I recruited young, keen Tim Nielsen, and we hiked to the top, rappelled in and replaced all of the rusty hardware and cord stations like for like with brand new stainless steel bolts and rappel rings. The old bolts were actually surprisingly solid, though disconcertingly rusted, and so most of them are still there, waiting for a return visit with a chisel, prybar and hacksaw. Afterwards, I had a new appreciation for what climbing must have been like with the weight of the gear to put this route up on lead.

The northeast face of Mount Land.
Photo: Drew Brayshaw

Later on, in early August, Adam Palmer invited me out to climb an obscure summit in the unpopular mountain country of the southern Lillooet Ranges, between Big Silver Creek and Fraser River. He had done some scrambling there a week earlier and saw a nice buttress on a peak west of Mount Nesbitt. We started near the Big Silver-Kookipi pass and bushwhacked for an hour or so to a beautiful meadowed valley, then climbed talus to the cirque below the peak. A snow traverse took us to the northeast ridge crest, which provided delightful, easy scrambling to just below the summit ridge where it steepened and we roped up. Two 30-metre pitches of low-5th climbing got us to the summit ridge and a nice granite ridge walk. We descended the west side of the mountain back to the logging road. The unofficial name "Mount Snyder" has been applied to this summit in the past but could easily be confused with the officially named Mount Snider about 60 kilometres away.

The northeast ridge of Mount Snyder. Photo: Adam Palmer

A few days later, Fern Webb and I paid a visit to Mount Land in Bridge River country. I had climbed Land with Jordan Peters and Steven Harng in 2003 [see *CAJ*, 2004, vol.97, p.98]. The road to the Mount Sloan area had become overgrown in recent years but was cleaned up and reopened for logging in early 2020. We took advantage of this fix up. On the first day, we drove separately to Gold Bridge then hiked to Ault Lakes and camped. The next day we traversed south to Land. I had kept a photo of the steep northeast side on my desktop for a number of years, and it felt good to finally check it out. We examined the toe of the north ridge, pronounced it to be too steep and difficult-looking, so ended up climbing a diagonal route on its left flank, the northeast face. Most of this climb was solid granite, sometimes too solid, where what seemed like a good crack from a distance became a disappointing seam up close. We made several full-pitch leads with only a single point of protection, though the climbing was mostly quite easy. High on the face, we reached what had been a snow patch until recently and crossed some loose, dangerous dirt and scree to reach the more solid crest of the upper north ridge. One more pitch got us to the summit. We descended by the west ridge. The small glacier northeast of Land has diminished precipitously since 2003 and will probably be entirely gone in another decade. It seemed to be more water than ice as we hiked down it, with waterfalls pouring from its toe into the new tarn at its base.

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**Summary**

Northeast ridge (II 5.3, two pitches plus scrambling), "Mount Snyder" (2109m, 49° 48' 56" N, 121° 44' 23" W), Lillooet Ranges, Coast Mountains. FA: Drew Brayshaw, Adam Palmer, August 4, 2020.

Northeast face (III 5.8, 9 pitches), Mount Land (2546m, 50° 45' 42" N, 122° 57' 52" W), Pacific Ranges, Coast Mountains. FA: Drew Brayshaw, Fern Webb, August 9, 2020.

# Three Coastal Beauties

Paul McSorley

Jia Condon on pitch five of The Frothing Feline. Photo: Paul McSorley

EVER SINCE I MIGRATED from the Rockies to British Columbia's coast, my ice devotion has gone from fanatical to monastic. It's not that there's no psyche, but rather the prevailing local conditions only offer a brief, decidedly coastal (read: chilled out) window to attack the danglers. The 2020–21 season was not exceptional, but the brief moments between the torpor proved to be truly memorable.

In early February 2020, along with the highly excitable and unjaded Scotsman Anthony Wood, coastal ice veteran Jia Condon and I made the normally unsuccessful pilgrimage to the sacred Stawamus Creek headwaters. Approaching as for the Fluffy Kitten Wall, we contoured around to the north and found ourselves under the rather large 400-metre bastion of the northeast face of Mount Habrich. We quested up the right edge to a line I've been sussing for years but never felt like it was in safe condition. The key to success was a well set up snowpack that simultaneously allowed for speedy travel and good stability. Névé pitches flowed beneath our tools for a couple of hundred metres then finally gave way to legit blue water ice. A hanging snowfield led to another lovely WI5 flow that deposited us at the top of the wall in a basin underneath the final pyramid of Habrich. Instead of climbing upward into the night like alpinists, we retired to the valley like good Squamites and went for beer. Fine camaraderie and quality hard-to-nail conditions make the laidback coastal style my preferred mode of attack.

More than a calendar year later, a weak but adequate outflow in February saw Sam Eastman, Tim Emmett and I heading up the Squamish Valley to find some unclimbed ice around the 15-kilometre mark. This almost-roadside wall had seen previous attempts from Guy Edwards, Don Serl, Andrew Boyd and Damien Kelly. Several options presented themselves, but the driest, plumb-line dihedral at the left side of the wall beckoned the strongest. We all got a lead, each pitch feeling harder and spookier than the previous one. Once again, the company and the leisurely style made this

climb a real winner. Though fragile and difficult to protect, the soft one-stick magic of the temperate coastal ice allowed us to sneak this climb in before it came tumbling down not long after our ascent.

A couple of weeks later, a low elevation melt-freeze cycle offered up one last climb of the all-too-brief season. Jia Condon, Tony Richardson and I found ourselves once again underneath the alluring Fluffy Kitten Wall. Just the day before, along with Jean-Marc Savoie, Squamish's most-stoked ice climber, Jia and I had tried a line up this wall but ran into a dead end a few pitches up. Bailing was standard fare on this cliff that hosts only one winter route. With some good route-finding knowledge, we made flowy progress up several pitches of incredible one-stick névé. The line turned to ice in a corner that led to a devious face traverse onto a hanging curtain. Tony slayed the sting in the tail crux, and we hightailed it down the line as the daytime warming caused plenty of debris to come unstuck from the wall.

I don't regret my move to the West Coast. There is less winter climbing and a lot of failures, but when it comes together, the magic is real and the vibrations are decidedly beautiful.

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**Summary**

Blue Gold (WI5, 400m), northeast face, Mt. Habrich, Britannia Range, Coast Mountains. FA: Jia Condon, Paul McSorley, Anthony Wood, February 12, 2020.

Wild West (WI6 R/X, 200m), Squamish, Coast Mountains. FA: Sam Eastman, Tim Emmett, Paul McSorley, February 14, 2021.

The Frothing Feline (WI5+, 270m) Fluffy Kitten Wall, Britannia Range, Coast Mountains. FA: Jia Condon, Tony Richardson, Paul McSorley, March 12, 2021.

Tim Emmett on pitch two of Wild West.
Photo: Paul McSorley

# The Slabs of Nim

Paul McSorley

In 2018, Will Stanhope and I took a trip into the Eldred Valley in search of solace and unclimbed stone. We balked at several options but finally quested up the difficult-to-access Amon Rudh. After a multi-hour hike through one of the last stands of old-growth forest in this once-pristine valley, we settled in for a sleepless, insect-molested bivy below the wall. The morning found us scrambling up to the left of the 2017 route, The Mormegil (5.10 C1, 11 pitches), and getting on the wall with a mix of trickery and bolts. We made it a few more pitches before running out of bolts and motivation on the baking south-facing wall.

The Slabs of Nim on Amon Rudh.
Photo: Paul McSorley

In late July 2020, I returned with Kieran Brownie, Max Fisher, Emilie Pellerin and a crew of friendly locals who helped us porter gear to the wall. We cruised through the now-threatened stand of ancient fir and cedar trees back to a more comfortable bivy carved out of the steep forest. With mosquito netting, the sleep was far more comfortable than my previous experience. The next morning, our foursome scrambled up ever-steepening blueberry bushes to the base of the wall. The first-pitch crux was dispatched with all the pleasures of clipping pre-drilled bolts. Once at the 2018 highpoint, we continued on swapping leads and sharing the pleasures of adventure climbing. We chose a line best suited for flow. The route weaves up the granite along a delightful path of smears and dishes and even a few intrusions of pink aplite. We climbed a total of eight long pitches plus some scrambling to the summit of the formation, where we skinny-dipped in a natural infinity pool carved into the granite. To descend, we rapped the route with double ropes.

As far as coastal granite goes, the Eldred is a wonderful valley well worth visiting. Bushy sections interspersed with primo rock make climbing here a memorable adventure. Sadly, the approach to this wall may be altered forever if the cedars at the base are heli-logged. The local Powell River community is working to stop this cutblock, but with so few people, the clock is ticking. I would highly suggest getting out there soon to see the ancients for yourself and to enjoy the massive granite. Even if the cedars remain, the valley bottom will be coming up for harvest in the next few years, and things will look a lot different than they do today.

**Summary**

The Slabs of Nim (5.11a, 385m), Amon Rudh, Eldred Valley, Coast Mountains. FA: Kieran Brownie, Max Fisher, Paul McSorley, Emilie Pellerin, July 24, 2020.

# Vancouver Island Report

Lindsay Elms

ALL CLIMBERS HAVE ASPIRATIONS and often a list of what they want to climb. The more time spent in the hills gaining experience and knowledge, the longer that bucket list gets. With many summer goals getting ticked off, some start looking for winter goals, which we all know are more challenging. There are factors that don't need to be considered during the summer: avalanches, deep snow, tree wells, ice, cold, buried trails, shorter daylight hours, heavier packs, emergency clothing and longer slogs up logging roads. These are all reasons why there are fewer winter climbers. Like anywhere, there are mountains waiting to have winter ascents. Look at the excitement generated with the first winter ascent of Pakistan's K2 in January 2021. Vancouver Island also has mountains waiting for first winter ascents. Obviously, as the biggest peaks get ticked off, climbers start looking further down the list. But just because they are smaller doesn't mean they are easier. It's all about choosing the right moment and being ready when weather permits. I am not alluding that everyone who heads into the mountains in winter is looking for fame by having their name associated with a first winter ascent. For many, it is the challenge of pushing their boundaries but not going too far beyond their comfort zone. Turning around and going home is always an option. That's how a young climber becomes an old climber.

On January 9, at 1:15 a.m., Stefan Gessinger and Evan DeVault left the Bedwell Lake trailhead and headed towards Cream Lake. A clear, bright moonlit night made the sleepless slog a lot more bearable, and after reaching the west shoulder of Mount Septimus, they took a "quick gander" across to Mount Rosseau. It looked good, so they traversed across what is usually boulder talus slopes in summer to the base of the southwest face to attempt the route. After five pitches, which involved some wallowing in deep snow, they arrived to the summit at 3:30 p.m. achieving their personal goal but also the first recorded winter ascent. However, with a forecast that was calling for 60 centimetres of fresh snow in the late afternoon, they didn't linger and arrived back at the trailhead at midnight. A month later (February 8), Ryan Van Horne and Marie-Lou Piché skied Trio Mountain and the connecting ridge on the east side of Strathcona Park near Gold River. On March 1, Gessinger, DeVault and Andrew Welsh headed into Strathcona Park via Tennant Lake and climbed Mount Thelwood. Two weeks later, Van Horne, Piché, Clinton Leung and Michael Loch took advantage of an extended period of clear weather and skied to Mount Thelwood, summiting via the south ridge on March 15. The next day, the four summited Moyeha Mountain via the west ridge and skied off the west face, making possibly the second winter ascent. Finally, on the day before winter officially melted into spring, Matt Lettington and Ryan Bartlett summited Mount Thelwood, making it the busiest winter for the mountain.

However, just as the official winter season finished, the unexpected occurred. The global pandemic with COVID-19 meant no travel, and a new word entered our vocabulary—staycation. A portmanteau of stay and vacation, it became the rallying call of local governments and provincial health authorities. However, by late May, as the restrictions gradually eased, we slowly started returning to the mountains again. In our small groups, or bubbles, we began with short day trips into some of the lesser mountains. People were also leery about posting their trips reports on Facebook in case of backlash. But, by the end of June, boots were on. People were flocking to the mountains. There were traffic jams at trailheads and line ups at the outhouses reminiscent of the conga line at the top of Everest.

On June 28, Josh Overdijk and Peter Hartmann made the first recorded ascent of the complicated south ridge of Elkhorn South Mountain. John and Mike Waters and Rene Monjo had previously

Liam Gilchrist descending Ya'ai Peak.
Photo: Kris Mutafov

descended the route during an attempt to complete the Elk River Traverse. Three days later, on Canada Day, Van Horne and Piché completed a four-pitch route on the east face of Wolf Mountain, which Ryan first attempted almost 10 years earlier. There were several ascents while the X-Gully on Mount Septimus was in condition, and throughout the summer, Thunderbird on Rugged Mountain continued to receive attention and praise. On July 13, Liam Gilchrist and Kurt Schluessel climbed Indian Summer on Mount Tom Taylor, and on July 14, Max Fisher and Van Horne completed the Landslide Lake encirclement, which they dubbed the Temple Traverse. Starting at the Elk River trailhead, they hiked up to Landslide Lake then climbed Slocomb Peak's Suspension Ridge. This was followed by the south to north traverse of Mount Colonel Foster with possibly a new route up the northwest face of the North Tower. Once down on the north shoulder, they spent a few hours waiting for the sun to return before continuing along the Butterwort-Landslide divide and back to the trailhead in a lightning 28 hours. On the same day, another party climbed Indian Summer on Mount Tom Taylor. On Colonel Foster, Overdijk and Phil Stone teamed up on July 15 and climbed a new route on the west face.

In the last week of July, Gilchrist and Deon Towle climbed Cataract Arête on Colonel Foster (not to the main summit) while further to the south, Garner Bergeron and Joe Koropechi climbed Mount Rosseau and Big Interior Mountain in 20 hours and 45 minutes, car to car. Gilchrist made a quick turn-around and on July 30, with Kris Mutafov, made the first ascent of the north ridge of Ya'ai Peak in the Haihte Range with 10 pitches

up to 5.10+. Also, in the last week of July, Van Horne soloed a route up the unclimbed east face of The Behinde. This was the first new route on the peak other than the standard climbing route.

In August, two parties completed the south to north traverse of Colonel Foster in perfect weather. Continuing his busy schedule, Gilchrist, along with Towle and Schluessel, climbed Into the Mystic on Colonel Foster. On August 29, Nick Elson ran the Golden Hinde (to the summit and back to the trailhead) in 10:01:53, shaving over five hours off the previous fastest-known time. Every year, one or two runners/climbers take on the challenge to complete the round-trip to the Golden Hinde in under 24 hours. Nick is no newcomer to sky running and has won races around the world and many in North America. He holds a number of speed records, including the fastest-known time for the Grand Teton Traverse in Wyoming.

On September 2, Fisher, Van Horne and Piché climbed a new variation on the east face of Mount Colonel Foster's northwest summit that they named Joy Ride (5.10-, 900m). Beginning on the Waters-Monjo route, they then climbed two pitches of Head Games before heading right where they found some perfect rock with amazing friction and beautiful cracks. On September 6, Lucas Smythe and Peter LaValley climbed Sawtooth Peak (third ascent) and what is believed to be the first ascent of the sharp pinnacle known as The Fang, by way of a large crack up its south face (5.7). With the ACC-VI hut closed on nearby 5040 Mountain, there was still a lot of foot traffic to the peak, and in early October the hut was restocked in preparation for its opening again later in the month. Early October also saw Mutafov and Keely Sifton access Peters Lake via the heinous Perry Creek canyon and climb Mount Alava via the northeast ridge.

With the threat of COVID-19 keeping everyone local instead of travelling abroad during the summer, many of the Island's well-known peaks saw a record number of ascents: The Golden Hinde, Kings Peak, Mount Albert Edward and

Marie-Lou Piché on the first ascent of Joy Ride on Mount Colonel Foster. Photo: Ryan Van Horne

the surrounding peaks on Forbidden Plateau, the Comox Glacier, Rugged Mountain, Victoria and Warden Peaks, Mount Arrowsmith and the Sooke Hills west of Victoria. It wasn't just in the mountains, but at all the rock-climbing venues as well: the Nomash Slabs, Comox Lake, Crest Creek Crags, Samsun Narrows, Nanaimo River area and the new developments on Mount Tzouhalem and in the Cowichan Valley. Unfortunately, this activity has, in turn, come with a price as all the Island's search and rescue teams have been extremely busy and, on some days, they've assisted with multiple rescues.

On November 28, Fisher and Van Horne enjoyed near-perfect conditions on the east face of Sutton Peak, climbing a new 250-metre route that topped out on the north ridge [see page 79]. Two weeks later (December 12), Fisher, Van Horne and Gilchrist returned to Sutton Peak and completed another new route on the east face: Sutton's Seasonal Ale (AI4+R, 400m). The same trio were back again on December 22 and climbed another new route on the south edge of the east face: Talisman (AI5, 400m). This route involved four long pitches up a deep gash to the summit ridge, and Van Horne described it as one of the most aesthetic routes on the face. He returned with Piché on Christmas Eve and climbed another new line at the north end of the east face next to the north ridge: 'Twas the Night Before Christmas (AI 3+/4, 350m).

While conditions up high stayed good, Jason Peters and Randy Brochu made the first recorded winter ascent of Peak 1720, located four kilometres north of Matchlee Mountain, on December 27. To the south, Danny O'Farrell and Steve Janes put up two mixed lines on the Cokely Wall on Mount Arrowsmith. The first route, Pass the Dutchie (M4, 15m), was led ground up on natural gear, while the second route, Bone Thugs and Harmony M5,15m), they rap-bolted then led.

For the past two years, the ACC-VI, in partnership with the Inter-Cultural Association (ICA), has initiated a "nature outing" program for youths from immigrant families in Victoria. The

Steve Janes on Bone Thugs and Harmony.
Photo: Danny O'Farrell

The north ridge of Ya'ai Peak follows the left-hand skyline. Photo: Kris Mutafov

goal of this program is to introduce them to local short hikes and nature activities. Intended as a meet and greet, the first hike of the year was up Pkols (Mount Douglas) in Saanich on February 22, which included 10 youths and two ICA staff along with two ACC-VI volunteers. Most of the youths were in senior high school, and many of them had recently arrived from Syria. Based on the success of this outing, a second trip (March 15) was organized to Strathcona Park. On a beautifully sunny day, a large group of 30 youths, 10 ICA staff and a number of volunteers from the ACC-VI hiked out to Lake Helen Mackenzie in Paradise Meadows. Travelling in soft snow on snowshoes was a new experience for almost all of the youths. At the end of the hike, all of them were excited and in great spirits as they debriefed over a late lunch at Raven Lodge. The partnership between the ICA and ACC-VI was a positive experience for everyone, though further trips were cancelled due to COVID-19.

Also affected by the pandemic was the ACC-VI youth program; however, the week before restrictions were imposed in March, two families, with kids ranging in age from two to 11, hiked out to Lake Helen Mackenzie for an overnight camp. After sunset, temperatures dropped to –18 C, but the kids braved the long, cold night in their tents. The only other youth trip was in September when two groups of six youths spent the day climbing on the Lantzville foothills. With four top-ropes set up and lots of hand sanitizing in between climbs, the kids learned valuable rope and leadership skills. Overall, the ACC-VI looks forward to continuing both of these programs in 2021, and climbers have their eyes on personal goals for the future. However, I don't think the corona coaster ride is over quite yet.

# The Interior

## Gravy Train

Jon Walsh

THE FIRST NOTABLE FEATURE you pass by after descending from Pigeon-Howser Col towards Howser Towers is Gar Wall, a 5.10 A2 route by Kirk Sellers and Roger Debeyer from 2001 on the west face of Fingerberry Tower. I've always found the natural architecture of this face to be both impressive and inspiring, as compelling corners lead from the broken glacier through a monstrous roof to a spectacular tiger-striped headwall laden with finger-sized splitters.

East Creek eventually became one of my favourite destinations, and exploration of Gar Wall was inevitable. About five years ago, Michelle Kadatz and I climbed a meandering line up to the roof on Gar Wall, finding some interesting variations as we desperately tried to avoid the big chimney. While rappelling down, a new and exciting path became clear. We returned the next day and cleaned three pitches with wire brushes, including a 10-metre sideways face traverse across a slab.

While we were working it, we noticed some other climbers watching us from the glacial snow arête beside the route. Unbeknownst to us, it was Hayden Kennedy, Mason Earle, Andrew Burr and Eric Leidecker on their way to a do a photo shoot in the Howsers. Hayden and I were friends at the time, but we were just a little too far away to communicate or see who it was. A few days later we were gone, but Mason and Hayden, two of the strongest crack climbers of the day, were obviously inspired and followed our tick marks across the runout 5.11 slab on the second pitch.

Jon Walsh on pitch five of Gravy Train.
Photo: Tim Banfield

Hayden told me on the phone later, in his typically stoked voice, that he had onsighted the third pitch at 5.12c-ish, which it may very well be if you use the wrong beta and follow someone else's (mine) incomplete set of tick marks. They continued up the normal Gar Wall with Hayden rope-gunning for Andrew, who was shooting Mason and Eric for the first free ascent of the route and a video for Eddie Bauer (easily found with a Google search). Mason sent and rated the upper crux at 5.13 R slab after returning to it a day later via fixed lines.

I was back in East Creek a year or so later with Raphael Slawinski. After a humbling couple of days trying to free climb Doubting the Millennium on Minaret Tower, we turned our attentions to Gar Wall and began exploring what we dubbed "the everyday hard-man's variations." Raph rigged a cool two-bolt direct variation on the fourth pitch to turn the big roof and join the cracks that lead to Gar Ledge. The original route goes straight up from where you first reach the ledge, but a sidewalk feature crosses the face and leads to some beautiful splitters out to the right that were really the reason we were there in first place. These turned out to be as good as they looked from afar. I cleaned and rigged the fifth pitch, which took a lot of scrubbing to clean the exfoliations. We ran out of time and the project was filed away for another year. A year or two later, Michelle and I were back in there, and I finished cleaning pitch five and six. Tim Banfield also joined us to shoot some photos, but it was a short trip and time ran out again before we finished the route. It was super clean and ready for the send.

Finally, on the morning of July 26, 2020, Peter Hoang and I flew into East Creek. Pete said he was just there for the gravy. It was early afternoon by the time we were climbing, but we both managed to send the whole route without falling and pushed a seventh pitch to the top of Gar Wall. Despite a couple of short weaknesses through the summit block that appeared to be relatively easy, we were still 10 metres of dirty choss below the summit, and it looked horrible. So, we descended, stoked with what we had accomplished. It seemed like it was done, except the ending was somewhat unsatisfying to our alpinist instincts. A few days later, after some other climbs, we decided to climb Fingerberry Jam, a world-class route on the southeast face of the tower. The plan was to pack the bolt kit, climb to the summit and try to establish a better finish to the project from the top down. I hate coming top-down to establish new climbing and generally think it's terrible style, especially in the mountains, but it was nice to climb a different route of exceptionally high quality, especially for Pete who was on his first climbing trip to East Creek. It was my third time up Fingerberry Jam, which was just as fun as the first two times.

Just to the right of our original seventh pitch was an obvious flake crack that worked out as the perfect alternative to keep the climbing level and aesthetics consistent with the six pitches below. The flake was thin and flexed just enough that we didn't want to stuff cams behind it, so a few protection bolts were added. From the top of our sixth station, Pete fired it on lead, and the route was complete.

All said and done, I think this is one of the highest quality routes I've put up. The rock and positions are fantastic, the movement is varied and fun, and the grade is amazingly consistent the whole way, gradually building to a technical crux at the sixth pitch. The size of the tower makes it comfortable to do in a medium-sized day from either Applebee or East Creek camps, and the morning shade on the lower half of the route is nice on a hot day. And in the words of Pink Floyd, "And if we tell you the name of the game, boy, we call it 'riding the Gravy Train.'"

Jon Walsh on pitch four of Gravy Train. Photo: Tim Banfield

**Summary**

Gravy Train (5.12-, 250m, 8 pitches), Fingerberry Tower, Pigeon Feathers, Bugaboos, Purcell Mountains. FA: Peter Hoang, Jon Walsh, July 26, 2020.

P1: 5.11-, 30m. Start at the base of Gar Wall. Follow thin cracks with crisp edges left of the off-width to a bolted anchor at the base of the big chimney.

P2: 5.11-, 35m. Climb easily up the chimney for about six metres. Traverse left on crimps past two bolts to gain a beautiful right-facing corner, which is followed to a bolted anchor on a small foot ledge.

P3: 5.11+/5.12-, 25m. Continue up the right-facing corner above for about five metres, until you can step right into another right-facing corner. Continue up this sustained 5.11 thin corner, past a definitive crux and some crispy face climbing to the anchor on a ledge below the big roof.

P4: 5.11+, 45m. Face climb past two bolts to the roof, then traverse left. Pass one more bolt to a ledge, then follow 5.9 cracks, including a short section of off-width. This brings you to the Gar Ledge and a bolted anchor. For the sake of efficiency, clip a long sling to this anchor and walk 15 metres along the ledge to another bolted anchor below a finger crack that splits the face.

P5: 5.12-, 35m. Climb the 5.11 finger crack to the roof. Pull steeply past two bolts to a stance. Two more bolts protect face and slab moves to gain a crack that trends up and left to a bolted anchor.

P6: 5.12-, 25m. A tricky boulder problem right off the belay leads to two bolts and a finger crack that splits the headwall. Follow this to a two-bolt anchor.

P7: 5.11-, 35m. Climb up for five metres to a big ledge. Traverse right until below a steep flake. Layback and jam the flake past five bolts to an anchor on the slab above.

P8: 5.4, 30m. Step right from the anchor and climb a short section of easy 5th class past some loose blocks that gives way to 3rd-class scrambling and the summit.

Gravy Train on Fingerberry Tower. Photo: Tim Banfield

# Water of Life

Niall Hamill

DENSE, VERDANT TANGLE of slide alder and evergreen split by boulder-worn gullies made for arduous hiking. High above us on the wall, there is still a patch of snow that has survived the August heat. That is where Tony and I will bivy tonight, and though we are grateful for the snow, dark water streaks down the hulking steep wall for hundreds of metres, causing us to question our odds of free climbing it. We follow tunnels made by bears through this steep jungle, and I hope we don't encounter them. We are at one of Canada's greatest roadside attractions for climbers, the north face of Mount Macdonald at Rogers Pass. It is an inhospitable place and the only signs of other human life come from the grumbling engines of tractor trailers far below.

By early afternoon the next day, we have dead-ended at a slab we can't free climb. "Free or nothing" is the mantra, so Tony links a traverse sideways and down into a steep corner system that looks promising. We find it soaking wet, so we plug in an anchor and bail. On the hike out, we spy a line breaking out left from where we had been and into the vicinity of the original Waterman route, which is steeped in lore for lack of human contact. We know that a couple of strong parties had been up there and were turned around due to the conditions. I'm skeptical whether it would go well for us, yet I'm drawn to the unknown and the fact that the route is unrepeated.

Forty-five years prior, the cousins John and Alan Waterman arrived from the eastern United States to Western Canada. Spending four days and three bivouacs on the face, they made the 600-metre first ascent at V 5.8 A3. Their humble description of the ascent was a mere paragraph without photographs for the *American Alpine Journal.* They made reference to using many pitons and climbing a waterfall pitch. The line drawn in the current guidebook and in subsequent route topos may not be totally exact, but it shows that the Waterman team started more or less in the centre of the face and connected various corner features, skirting around the huge roofs and looking for the line of weakness.

A year and some change later, it was a beautiful late summer's day. I knew Tony had been out in Canmore doing his guides exam, and had used some free days to climb a new line on Mount Neptuak with Brette Harrington [see page 111], who I was currently cragging with at Lake Louise. We had just been discussing their wild adventure when my phone went off. Who could it be? Tony, of course. "Hey, heading back to Squamish soon, but I'm free for a few days, want to try the Waterman?" Of course, I was in.

We met on Monday at the Rogers Pass visitor centre and sorted our kit for the next couple of days. We brought a double rack, a double set of nuts, a hammer, pins, 14 slings, a 60-metre rope and a tag line. We planned for two nights out. We each brought an ultralight sleeping bag and a double siltarp to share. We would climb with separate packs or haul when it was too difficult to free climb with packs. We also packed a power drill and eight bolts, reasoning that if we needed it to link some crack systems, or bail, that it would be a good idea.

We approached the wall late afternoon on an autumn Monday with a good weather forecast for two days ahead. We slept just below treeline under the siltarp. That night, rain consistently sprinkled the tarp and we wondered if the forecast was off. When we awoke at 5 a.m. the sky was clear, and with relief we brewed strong coffees before setting off. Tony set off at a good pace, winning the first block over a rock-paper-scissors game that we always do. After climbing four pitches, we were on the broad ledge below the upper wall and it was my turn to lead. I led the three corner and chimney pitches that we had climbed the year prior, and then ventured out left on the next pitch into new terrain, finding a nice handrail that offered a rising traverse to a small ledge.

Next up was the big arching undercling feature that Tony led. Tiptoeing around wedged plates, I would trundle as I seconded.

Mantling onto a thin rail, his last gear well below in the overlap, Tony yelled, "Drill!" I watched as he expertly placed a bolt from a free stance. He then climbed a face crux a couple of body lengths above the new bolt, eventually finding a good crack and then a ledge to anchor from. It might have been the most impressive onsight lead I have ever seen, especially given the nature of our surroundings.

The next pitch began with another bolt and a tricky slab downclimb/traverse, and finished in a chimney to a nice ledge just below the left edge of the big roof. I had to lower out on the bolt to avoid a potentially terrible fall if I blew the downclimb, so our "leader-free, seconder A0" mantra was adopted to speed things up, as it often goes on such routes. I then led up a steep and mostly solid left-facing corner. After a tricky start and burly finish, I mantled onto a small but relatively flat ledge. Whether it was the backpack or the climbing, it was the one time I felt truly pumped on the route. When Tony arrived at the belay, I cheerfully suggested that we spend the night there, first having to excavate some blocks and smooth out the dirt so that we could both stretch out with the tarp strung over us. With 11 lengthy pitches and the steepest parts below us, we happily refuelled ourselves and nodded off to sleep, figuring we had it in the bag.

That night, rain steadily pattered on our tarp, which only had us mildly concerned. We figured the rain would be minor and that we would be in the clear for another 24 hours, if we could count on the forecast. Unfortunately, when we woke up at dawn, the rain had intensified and a thick fog moved in with it, obscuring the rest of the mountain above us. We sat and brewed up coffee under the tarp, munching on a few hundred calories each. We discussed options. We were 400 or so metres up with the hardest climbing likely behind us, and we still had a good margin

Tony McLane on the first ascent of Water for Life.
Photo: Niall Hamill

Water of Life on Mount Macdonald. Photo: Jon Walsh

of safety. So, without further talk, Tony started up the next pitch.

It seemed as though every pitch was wandering in nature, nothing plumb seemed to go. We were still free climbing, so we followed zig-zagging weaknesses and in a few cases were dead-ended and had to downclimb. The day was quickly going by, and we still weren't sure how close to the top we were but knew it had to be near. We were soaking wet from steady rain. The slick, frictionless quartzite felt dicey, even on moderate slab moves.

Finally, in a total of 10 shorter pitches from the bivy, we reached the west ridge. We were high on the ridge and didn't feel the summit scramble was of any value to the line, so with some down-scrambling on the ridge, we located the first anchor of Tony and Jason Ammerlaan's 2016 route and began to rappel the headwall around sunset. Everything was going smoothly, but on the third rappel, our rope became badly stuck. The tag line also received a core shot, so we taped it. Then, on the following rappel, Tony ended up over a huge roof in space and had to jug back up the line, finding the lead rope horribly damaged where it had rubbed over an edge. Our rope was chopped to 50 metres. The next couple of raps went well until another core shot on a traversing, overhanging rappel spooked us again. The rope was shortened again, and we had to then build anchors between fixed stations to shorten the raps for lack of visibility and length of rope. At one point, we had to belay a short traverse into the corner where we had dead-ended the summer prior. Finally, we felt like we were totally in control again, knowing we were not far from the big ledge above the lower wall. The final rappels of the lower wall went well enough, although on the last two we had to fix and leave our pathetically shot ropes to reach the ground. Finally, we took harnesses off, and slashing rain pounded our tarp as we sat underneath, rehydrating with hot soup and coffee so that we could then complete the steep hike down.

Just below a waterfall in the descent gully, I noticed small rocks whizzing overhead. Delayed by the dense fog and rushing water, the sound reached our ears only a couple of seconds before it all crashed over us.

I yelled, "Rock!" and Tony, who was off to the side, dove for cover in the bushes. I was in the guts of the gully and had to duck under a tiny bulge in a turtle position. As massive blocks exploded over us, I prayed for us both. I felt like we were in the jaws of this thing, dodging the gnashing teeth of the mountain. Needless to say, we bushwhacked the rest of the way down to avoid the gully. When Tony's headlamp began to fade out, we moved faster as the highway was close.

Crossing back over Connaught Creek, swollen with the heavy rain, proved to be full on. Tony slipped on a jagged tree snag and tore his pants nearly clean off from crotch to ankle. I couldn't stop laughing. Totally spent and soaked, we bushwhacked up to the harsh glare of the highway lights and into our cars for warmth, snacks and a shared moment of reflection on this outing. It was the water of life, and our cups were overflowing.

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**Summary**

Water of Life (V 5.10d R, 600m), free variation of Waterman Route, Little Face, north face, Mt. Macdonald, Rogers Pass, Selkirk Mountains. FFA: Niall Hamill, Tony McLane, September 22–23, 2020.

# Hela Monster

## Vince Hempsall

THERE IS A GIANT south-facing slab that is hard to miss from Highway 6 in British Columbia's Slocan Valley. As you drive north of the village of Slocan, just before you reach the S-bend that takes you over Enterprise Creek, you will see a large swath of rock to the west that resembles a white and grey ramp ascending to Valhalla, which is appropriate given it is located in the provincial park bearing that name. From the highway, it is impossible to judge just how large the slab is, but after our adventure on it, photographer Steve Ogle and I can now confidently attest to the fact that it is really, really big. And in 30-degree heat, it is really, really hot.

In August 2020, we loaded a canoe in the Slocan and paddled six kilometres to the mouth of Evans Creek, a popular camping spot on Slocan Lake. Both the lake and the creek were important fishing grounds for multiple First Nations throughout the centuries, as evidenced by the pictographs on the lake's west shoreline. Then, in the 20th century, the area became a hotbed for mining and logging. In fact, the Beatrice Lake Trail, which we hiked to reach our objective, follows a tiered lake system that used to be flooded then released to move timber down the drainage. The trail itself is an old logging road, and there is still evidence of the old camps, from rusted cans to rotting machinery.

The hike took about three hours, and we passed the aptly named Emerald Lake to Cahill Lake where there is a large dome of gneiss on the north shore that is backed by the sub-peaks of Hela Peak. It is a stunning piece of off-white rock that is easy to access from the campground at the west end of Cahill Lake. The same day we hiked in, we did a recon mission to the base of the wall, scoped a line, stashed some gear and went back to camp to rest.

The next day proved to be a bit longer and hotter than expected. In hindsight, Steve dumping a half litre of water at the start of the route because it was too heavy wasn't the best idea. Neither was leaving one headlamp at camp. By the time we reached pitch five, bolting the occasional blank section on lead, the temperature had climbed above 30C. Luckily, there were

Vince Hempsall on pitch two of Hela Monster. Photo: Steve Ogle

Hela Monster on the southeast shoulder of Hela Peak.
Photo: Steve Ogle

intermittent clouds, but it wasn't long before I was sucking on the lid of my ChapStick trying to trick my brain into believing there was moisture in my mouth. Another five pitches took us near the summit just as the sun began to set. We ate wild blueberries on the fly, savouring the minuscule amounts of moisture they provided, and then stumbled down talus for one and a half hours with the light of one headlamp and a cellphone before reaching an unnamed creek where I consumed about three litres of water in 10 minutes. We walked back into camp 15 hours after setting out, toasted the new 10-pitch route with Scotch, and then collapsed.

Later, we decided to call the route Hela Monster after the nearby peak, which is named for the Norse goddess Hela (a.k.a. Hel), the daughter of Loki and giantess Angrboda who presides over the realm of the dead. Her appearance is described as half blue and half flesh-coloured, which is appropriate given the views from the climb, including the stunning

blue lake and the pasty-white skin colour of the rock. We also took into consideration the Gia Monster (pronounced Hila Monster), which is one of only two poisonous lizard species in North America. We figured it was also appropriate given the route has bite when you climb it in 30-degree heat.

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**Summary**

Hela Monster (AD 5.10a, 350m, 10 pitches), south face, southeast shoulder of Hela Peak, Valhalla Provincial Park, Selkirk Mountains. FA: Vince Hempsall, Steve Ogle, August 18, 2020.

P1: 5.7, 58m. Start at the tree and pass two bolts. Trend left using sporadic gear then past three more bolts to finish at a small ledge just below a larger grassy ledge (bolted anchor). There is one 5.7 move off the deck, but otherwise this pitch is in the 5.6 range.

P2: 5.10a, 58m. Climb past two bolts then follow the flake, laybacking and jamming through 5.8 terrain until you can step over to easier ground. Continue up, aiming for the V-shaped notch past a big left-facing dihedral. Pull a mantle move over the roof, which is protected by a bolt that can only be seen once you are at the roof. This is the only 5.10a move on the route. Continue another 10 metres past an additional bolt to a bolted station.

P3: 5.6, 45m. Move up a wide corner then either step left to the arête or continue up the corner. Past this feature is an easy section of slab climbing where protection can be found by the large block to the right if needed. Gain the large ledge and find a two-bolt anchor to the left of a bushy gully.

P4: 5.6, 58m. Go directly up a seam and two overlaps, continuing slightly left above to gain more cracks with sparse but adequate protection. Finish on the twin cracks to the right and belay by slinging the lone ottoman-sized white boulder.

P5: 5.2, 30m. Scramble up low 5th-class terrain to gain a huge ledge that slopes downward slightly to the left. The bolt anchors are about 20 metres left from where you first gain the ledge.

P6: 5.8, 60m. From the anchor, angle up and left over 4th-class terrain (no protection) to gain a broad V-shaped crack system that trends up and left into a right-facing dihedral. Belay from the ledge at a two-bolt anchor at the top of the dihedral.

P7: 5.5, 60m. Continue straight up, skirting below and to the right of bushes and trees, then angle slightly right and up through easy terrain. Aim for an area approximately 10 metres to the left side of a large, sloping roof. Belay at a very small tree with a good-sized root ball with a fixed sling.

P8: 5.8, 58m. Climb easy terrain then veer left onto mellow slabs. There is a bolt in a more blank section of rock at around the 40-metre mark. Continue left past the bolt and follow a small seam with one small gear placement. Finish up on a ledge with darker rock where there is a bolted anchor.

P9: 5.2, 60m. Move up and left over easy ground then walk on the moss-scattered ramp, skirting below the treed cliffs as far as you can reach to a fir tree.

P10: 4th class, 60m. Continue walking uphill and to the right across pine needles, over blocks and around trees until you reach easier ground at the 60-metre mark. Belay from whatever you can sling. From here, it is an easy walk to the height of land, but be careful not to veer too far right towards the cliffs.

Descent: From the top of pitch 10, continue hiking east up mellow terrain where the ground levels out. Once there, walk in a north-east direction. Although you will be trending slightly downhill, it is important to stay relatively high as most of the south-east slope cliffs out. Eventually, you will reach a scree slope that you can follow down, first east then it swings around south and a creek is on your left. Keep walking towards the lake, and when the scree ends, trend southwest through the trees (this is the only heavy bushwhacking you will have to endure) to gain the scree slope below the south face of the slope you just climbed. Stay approximately 80 metres above the lake edge for easier walking back to the campsite. Rappelling the route is not recommended.

# Furry Friends

Ethan Berman

Ethan Berman on pitch four of Furry Friends. Photo: Usidean Hawthorn

WHEN OUR GROUP of six arrived in East Creek in mid-July, we knew something wasn't quite right. The parking lot was empty. The bivy was still full of snow. The sky was spitting rain and whipping wind. No one was around. Not even our furry friends.

We worried that the massive snow season, late start to summer and lack of foreigners with stinky cheese may have driven the little creatures away once and for all, driven them way down to the muggy bogs and alder thickets below. We were wrong.

After a few days with more bacon than belays, the small ones started to emerge. They would dance around our cook site, scrambling for scraps and keeping us on our toes. But soon the bigger ones arrived. At first they loomed nervously at a distance, like old acquaintances afraid to come close for fear of not being recognized. But that fear dissipated rapidly as they moved in and made it be known that we were the visitors—and they were home.

We tried to keep the atmosphere as cordial as possible, only hurling the occasional rock while yelling a brief obscenity. "Hey you! You're not my friend! That's my third-to-last bag of Doritos you stole!" Tensions reached an all-time high when Paul, having left the top-left corner of his tent door slightly unzipped, and upon returning back from a late lunch for a mid-afternoon siesta, found a slightly obese and unwelcome visitor gnawing at the well-worn waistband of his harness, as if enjoying the salty rim of a margarita.

As time went on, things settled down and we learned to live with one another. The weather changed, we went climbing and eventually made our way home. Our furry friends remained.

Uisdean Hawthorn and I established Furry Friends on the south face of Lost Feather Pinnacle. We more or less followed the first couple of pitches of the Martino-Wright route before veering right and heading up an impressive golden splitter crack (5.11-), which opened from fingers to wide hands and was both the highlight and crux of the route. Above, the route finding became tricky. After retreating from two dead ends, I found an unlikely arching crack

Furry Friends on Lost Feather Pinnacle. Photo: Usidean Hawthorn

(5.11- mungy hands) that led us up and further right to a large ledge full of broken blocks. Happy that we were heading up and not down, I slung the biggest block I could find and belayed Uisdean up. The last few pitches climbed through broken terrain but were actually much more solid and fun than they looked.

The route was climbed all free, onsight and with no bolts placed. I unfortunately didn't link the entire golden splitter in a single pitch, thinking I didn't have enough gear left. It would be better to finish it in a single pitch as there is a good ledge not far above with good nuts for the belay. Bring a rack of cams from #0.1–4 with doubles #0.3–3 (triple #0.5–1 could be useful) and a set of nuts. We used two 60-metre ropes to rappel down from bolted stations on the west face of the spire. This was our first time climbing the Pigeon Feathers, and the quality of the routes established—along with the possibilities to establish many more—did not disappoint.

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**Summary**

Furry Friends (5.11-, 8 pitches, 300 m), south face, Lost Feather Pinnacle, Pigeon Feathers, Bugaboos, Purcell Mountains. FA: Ethan Berman, Uisdean Hawthorn, July 22, 2020.

# Voodoo Chile

Uisdean Hawthorn

On August 4, Alik Berg and I climbed All Along the Watchtower on North Howser Tower. The day before, we spent some time scoping the west face but to get to the start of all the routes requires several rappels. We stood 400 metres above the base of the routes where the rappels start from a ridge that sticks out westward from the hulk of granite above. Alik pointed out a line he had spotted a few years back and we considered the possibilities of the route. Unlike all the other routes on the west side of North Howser, the potential new line didn't require the committing rappels to the very bottom of the face and would be shorter as a result. Despite this, the splitters on the golden granite high on the buttress made us agree it would be worth a look.

Uisdean Hawthorn on pitch eight during the first ascent of Voodoo Chile. Photo: Alik Berg

After a superb day on All Along the Watchtower, we rested in glorious sunshine only to spend the next four days of our trip in the tent avoiding the weather. Fortunately, we had some whiskey, and when it was finished, we hiked out. On Monday, August 17, at 5 p.m., I phoned Alik from Hope, British Columbia. My girlfriend had been called away last minute to a wildfire on Vancouver Island for a few days, meaning I had some spare time, but the weather looked like it was only going to be good until Thursday morning. We decided it was going to be tight, but if I packed and left in an hour, I could do most of the eight-hour drive that night, meet Alik and walk in the next day, and climb on Wednesday—the last day of the good weather.

Tired from the previous night's drive, we were unable to leave early in the morning and had to take a lot of breaks from the blistering heat during our six-hour walk to East Creek. Not feeling as fresh as we would have liked, we packed our bags and set alarms for 5 a.m. while wishing we could take a rest day. The cracks we were aiming for turned out to be mega. The buttress we climbed doesn't have any other lines on it and is the right-most line on the North Howser. We climbed 11 pitches in total, with the 5.11+ crux on the top headwall being the highlight.

The first half of the route had a hard switch from one crack to another and a pumpy layback pitch, where, at 30 metres Alik impressively hung around and scraped the holds clean. After the sustained first 30 metres, the second half of the pitch rewarded us with double hand cracks on the golden headwall. In total, it took 19 hours (East Creek to East Creek) but that included a few bits of timely route finding. The most significant one involved me climbing a wide crack until it got steep and became off-width, and with no number six cam, the decision was made

to find an alternative way around. We named the route Voodoo Chile as a nod to the Jimi Hendrix theme.

The next day, as the weather began to turn, I packed up camp, and since Alik lost at rock paper scissors, he went and got the axes and crampons we had left at the base of the route. With a few points of aid, it would only be 5.10, making it a great option for climbers who want to climb North Howser Tower but don't feel quite feel up to the longer routes. Thanks to Alik for the good company, vision and hard leads.

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**Summary**

Voodoo Chile (5.11+, 600m), west face, North Howser Tower, Bugaboos, Purcell Mountains. FA: Alik Berg, Uisdean Hawthorn, August 19, 2020.

P1: 5.10, 60m. Approach across the gangway ledge until below left-facing flakes just left of a prominent left-slanting white dyke. Start up the hollow left-facing flakes for five metres, then step left into a more prominent crack system. Continue up this feature until it peters out, then trend up and left to a belay under a large block or on the ledge just above.

P2: 5.8, 50m. Climb the left-facing corner above to a good belay on the right.

P3: 5.9, 50m. Continue up the corner until the angle eases and a step right can be made to a clean right-facing corner with a shallow flared crack. Climb this until about five metres below a small headwall and traverse 10 metres to the right across slabs, stepping down to a small belay stance.

P4: 5.11, 60m. Climb the steep finger/hand crack directly above the belay. Continue up until a step right can be made into a more prominent finger crack and follow this through a small overhang. Climb the long splitter above as it widens to five inches and curves left to an awkward semi-hanging belay (small to medium cams for belay).

P5: 5.10, 30m. Continue up the hand crack for 20 metres and make a tricky step left to easier ground.

P6: 5.10+, 50m. Climb a short wall above the belay and move right to climb the right hand of two parallel cracks. Follow this past a wet section to a good ledge.

Voodoo Chile on the west face of North Howser Tower.
Photo: Uisdean Hawthorn

P7: 5.8, 30m. Step down from the left end of the ledge and move left into a good right-facing corner. Follow this to the pedestal at its top.

P8: 5.11+, 60m. Climb the finger crack above for 10 metres and make a difficult step left to gain a slim corner just left of the arête. Climb this corner until a tricky move can be made back across the arête to gain double cracks. Continue for 20 metres to a semi-hanging belay.

P9: 5.10-, 40m. Climb the remainder of the headwall and continue up easier ground.

P10: 5.10, 50m. Climb the step above in awkward flared cracks and exit right into an easier gully. Belay below the next step.

P11: 5.9, 60m. The short step above leads to easier terrain.

P12–13: Low 5th class, 100m. Climb easier broken terrain above, staying right of the buttress and gaining the south ridge 30 metres below the summit.

# Skiing Macdonald's West Face

Christina Lustenberger

THE TRANS-CANADA HIGHWAY passes directly beneath Mount Macdonald, and my neck is always cranked from looking up as I drive past it, often hitting the rumble strips as my truck and mind swerve off the beaten path. I can't recall a time when I haven't been in total awe of this area. My first-ever ski mountaineering experience was in Rogers Pass with Andrew McNab. We toured up NRC Gully to Avalanche Glacier then climbed to the summit of Avalanche Peak. I was in absolute amazement. We skied down the east face of the peak and toured back around to the north side of Avalanche where we then climbed up the south shoulder of Macdonald. We finished the day by skiing into Banana Couloir as a direct shot to the Trans-Canada, skiing right underneath Macdonald's west face. Tired and oblivious, I kept my head down and linked turns to the valley.

I doubt I would have even noticed it as a potential ski line at that point in my career. It had been about a year since I left the Canadian alpine ski team. I was 26 and had skied my entire life, although something about that day opened my eyes to a new style of skiing. It was my first year in the TRU Adventure Guide program. I was hungry to become a ski guide and highly motivated to ski all the lines that were newly catching my eye.

Over the next five or so years, I became an ACMG ski guide. My mountain skills were evolving from skiing around red and blue gates to learning about snow crystals, rope handling and all that comes with ski mountaineering. As these skills evolved, so did my vision for new lines. Much of my time was spent skiing around Rogers Pass in Glacier National Park, where it's hard to ignore the placement of Mount Macdonald. It's a prominent peak seen from all over the park.

I had climbed it in the summer many years ago and remember looking down a rocky gully, trying to imagine it with snow. Winters rolled around. Intrigued and curious, I started flirting with the idea. Could it be skied? What conditions are favourable? What style? Partners? Gear? All questions that go into imagining the unknown line.

Year after year, I would glance at the line and take photos of it from different positions in Rogers Pass, and each season that line always seemed to escape from reality.

On February 20, 2020, at about 5:30 p.m., I texted Andrew McNab about our ski plans for the following day. Of course, he was still out skinning and on his way back to his truck. Andrew is one of the most motivated skiers in the area. Retired from ski-mountaineer racing, he has since become an established ACMG ski guide, good friend and ski partner.

The first photo I sent was a picture of the south face of Macdonald with a line drawn up it. The second was of the west face, also with a yellow line drawn down a potential ski descent. The second yellow line was something we had both been looking at for just shy of a decade with the intention to ski it. I had just finished three days of guiding in the Pass, and I finally felt like conditions were lined up. He quickly responded: "Sure! That could be fun. Bring some ropes."

We texted for another 20 minutes or so, deciding on what gear to bring. A large cliff band midway down the line split the skiing into two pitches. It was hard to judge the exact relief, but we knew it would most likely be multiple rappels. We decided on two 70-metre 7.7-millimetre half ropes, a set of nuts, pins and one axe each. I would pick Andrew up at 6:30 a.m. the next morning.

We drove to Rogers Pass, heading to the Hermit parking area to take one last look at the line. We then drove to the NRC parking lot and checked the daily permit system to make sure it was open that day. It was!

It was the fourth day of high pressure, so there were tracks of all sorts everywhere. We drafted up one that took us to the col above NRC. We transitioned to skiing, took a few good turns and traversed over to the bottom of Macdonald's south

face. We managed to skin up the lower portion of the south face before it bottlenecked and forced us to boot-pack. We arrived on the summit with an easy bootpack and mini sections of rock scrambles.

This was a new winter summit for me. It was glorious and a beautiful perspective of Rogers Pass. We harnessed up and transitioned back to ski mode—skiing right off the summit and rolling into the unknown. A small section of rocky side steps with skis on led us into the snow-covered guts of the line. We linked nice turns on the upper portion. This section was probably the steepest at around 45 degrees.

Approaching the first rappel, we took calculated turns to a good stance and found a fridge-sized rock horn to sling, allowing us to confidently rappel into the unknown. The second anchor took a bit of cleaning in search of a solid crack. We eventually placed nuts and rappelled again to the shelf above the most vertical part of the cliff. We pondered if it would be one or two more rope lengths to get us to skiable terrain again. We quested a bit and found a solid nut and pin anchor. We directed the rope off fall line and linked our rappel onto the next snow slope. At this point, the skiers in us were psyched.

We coiled the ropes and dropped into even better skiing on a beautifully slanted ramp. Taking it to the valley bottom with few stops, we arrived at the creek-crossing for high-fives and a quick text to our friends, telling them we were safe(ish).

Skinning back along the Trans-Canada, we glowed from our euphoric day. Much like that first day with Andrew, I found myself skinning back along the snowbanks, fully satisfied and dreaming of what's next.

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**Summary**

First ski descent of the west face of Mt. Macdonald, Rogers Pass, Selkirk Mountains. FD: Christina Lustenberger, Andrew McNab, February 20, 2020.

Christina Lustenberger rappels during the first ski descent of the west face of Mount Macdonald at Rogers Pass. Photo: Andrew McNab

# The Rockies

## The Hammer and the Dance

Brette Harrington

AUGUST 3, 2020: THE WORLD is in shambles. The global pandemic is running rampant, borders are closed and countries are in lockdown. Amid a seemingly endless stream of doom-scrolling, I read an article by Tomas Pueyo—"The Hammer and the Dance"—which paints a grim picture of the world today, describing the fluctuations to which society would ebb and flow according to epidemiology.

I was an American expat temporarily residing in Canada when the shutdown began, and I am still here. Lying at a lakeshore outside of Regina, Saskatchewan, I checked the weather on my phone for the Canadian Rockies. The little yellow sun icon had finally replaced the sad cloud that had resided on the website for months. I dialled up my friend Tony McLane over in Squamish. "Tony, can you meet me in Golden tomorrow evening? Weather looks good." I was still an hour's flight away and a two-hour drive from my home in Golden, British Columbia, but I knew this would be our best shot at getting the right conditions to try Neptuak's east face. A day later, Tony and I were preparing for the most engaging alpine rock route either of us had ever climbed.

The usual quietude and stillness of the mountains at 5 a.m. was exactly what we did not find at the Moraine Lake car park on the morning of August 5. Quite the opposite, in fact. Tourists were bustling around with cameras in hand, hurrying to catch the iconic photo of Moraine Lake at sunrise. Through all the chaos, Tony and I snuck by unnoticed and started up the dark forest path towards Wenkchemna Pass.

Tony McLane on pitch 16 of The Hammer and the Dance. Photo: Brette Harrington

I had first scouted the east face of Neptuak during the summer of 2016 with Marc-André Leclerc. He had noticed the striking rock quality on the face while climbing in the Valley of the Ten Peaks earlier that spring with Luka Lindic. The face was large and imposing. We assumed it would be about 5.11 run-out rock climbing on quartzite bands. The east face had not been climbed. It had a reputation among local climbers, and it was waiting for the right team to try it. Now, four years later, I was finally heading back to see if it would be possible.

Tony and I decided to try the prominent pillar, just left of the central face. A large gully separated the pillar from the face. The rock on the pillar was steeper and appeared to be better quality than on the central face, and it was less threatened by overhead hazard. We broke the climbing up into lead blocks and hauled our bag up with the tag line. A steep face of bulletproof black quartzite was speckled with tiny edges. Without cracks in the rock for protection, it was more like free soloing than rope climbing, with the occasional Bird Beak placement.

Around 4 p.m. we arrived on our bivy ledge. We fixed our lead line 60 metres above to get a head start in the morning, then began unpacking the haulbag of our bivy kit essentials. With my ultralight hanging pod—half-hammock, half-Therm-a-rest—and Tony's Grinch Who Stole Christmas fleece pajama pants, we were set to sleep like angels. A bit of rockfall in the night kept me awake anyhow. The gully to the right saw quite a lot of action from the melting snow up high.

The next day we awoke with vibrant energy,

Brette Harrington at the bivy on top of pitch four. Photo: Tony McLane

and we began picking our way through the maze of flakes and roofs. Around midday, I made a belay behind a giant tower and started up what would be the first crux of the route. I traversed around a bulge, leaving Tony around the corner and out of sight. Above me, a shallow groove led through a roof of crumbling blocks. Like jagged teeth, everything felt like it was about to break off. I gingerly swung my left foot from under the roof and hooked my heel over my left shoulder for additional support to pull over the roof.

As Tony was seconding the pitch, the song "Rocket Man" by Elton John spontaneously started playing from his phone, as if Elton was there witnessing this special moment. Once Tony reached the belay, he stopped the music, but just as quickly "I Guess That's Why They Call It the Blues" came on.

Tony led us through an off-width, then through bands of red material that I find hard to call rock since it is so decrepit. We were making decent time and arriving high on the wall, but our route options were narrowing. A blue limestone wall striped with dark fissures expanded to the left above the deep grey basin. I traversed a thin flake as air dropped below me. A microwave-sized rock hung above me and with one gentle touch I nearly knocked it right off. To avoid it from slicing my rope, I gave it a powerful shove as it sailed off the wall and into the sea of grey below.

Feeling somewhat relieved but now jittery from the lack of confidence in the rock, I teched my way up delicate 11c climbing. It wasn't till dusk that we found ourselves on the summit, completely exhilarated and exhausted. After snapping some summit pictures, we set up our bivy and went to sleep.

We woke at 5 a.m. the next morning to beat the oncoming rainstorm that was forecasted to hit mid-morning. We downclimbed and rappelled the north ridge for a descent, making it back to the base of the mountain just as a torrential storm hit. We then sloshed our way down the trail, soaked to the bone, but completely satisfied.

Our climb, as harrowing as it was at times, felt like a reprieve from a shattered world. Returning to civilization and the endless news cycle was a rude awakening.

"What should we call it?" Tony asked.

"How about The Hammer and the Dance?" I replied.

Tony nodded his head, smiling. "Sounds appropriate."

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**Summary**

The Hammer and the Dance (5.11R/X, 700m), east face, Neptuak Mountain, Valley of the Ten Peaks. FA: Brette Harrington, Tony McLane, August 5–6, 2020.

Scramble up 4th-class terrain to get to the base of a prominent chimney

P1: 5.5, 20m. Start up a low 5th-class chimney making a belay on a ledge.

P2: 5.7, 30m. Climb up the face, following your nose. Make a belay with a Pecker and small cams.

P3: 5.10+ X, 25m. Face climbing with very little pro. Bird Beaks are necessary.

P4: 5.10- R, 25m. Committing face climbing leads to a rightward traverse into a corner.

P5: 5.10+, 60m. Step left to enter a steep crack system.

P6: 5.11- R, 60m. Difficult stemming moves

The Hammer and the Dance on the east face of Neptuak Mountain. Photo: Brette Harrington

off the belay lead into a corner. Climb the corner as it turns into a chossy pillar. Sling the pillar and make thin face moves to enter into a crack. Climb up a right-facing corner to reach an extremely chossy ledge. Traverse rightward into a corner and make a belay atop a stance.

P7: 5.11-, 35m. Climb easy cracks to reach a technical traverse over clean rock.

P8: 5.6, 45m. Follow easy terrain up.

P9: 5.6, 65m. Traverse left along ramps of extremely loose rock, aiming for the free-standing tower.

P10: 5.7, 30m. Easy chimney leads to belay stance behind the tower.

P11: 5.11b/c R/X, 50m. A few moves of down-climbing lead to a tricky leftward traverse. Place a #.5 in the pegmatite band. Enter a corner with very loose rock and up through an overhang. Make a belay on a shoulder.

P12: 5.10- X, 30m. Unprotected face climbing leads to an easy off width.

P13: 5.9 X, 30m. The Red Band. Climb through the worst rock on the mountain, following an obvious weakness to gain the ridge.

P14: 4th class, 45m. An easy ridge leads to a pillar. Move left around the pillar and into a corner.

P15: 5.9, 15m. Tricky face move leads to moderate ramps. Make a belay soon.

P16: 5.11b R, 40m. The Limestone Band. Traverse leftward by use of a delicate flake. When the flake ends, use thin edges to traverse into an obtuse corner. Climb the corner, careful about pulling off large blocks. Climb the steep face and make a belay just below the large ledge.

P17: 3rd class, 30m. Traverse across a large shale ledge until the rock looks easy to climb upward, then make a belay.

P18: 5.7, 20m. Climb up easy terrain and make a belay.

P19: 4th class, 25m. Trend leftward and make a belay in the shale bands.

P20: 4th class, 30m. Trend up and left to make a belay below a chimney.

P21: 5.9 R, 40m. Climb through the chimney and up steep rock.

P22: 3rd class, 45m. Step left and climb 45 metres of shale to belay below a steep corner.

P23: 5.9, 25m. A lose corner leads to a belay.

P24: 5.6, 25m. Continue up loose terrain to reach the summit ridge.

# Perseids Ridge

Kevin Rohn

OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS I've been highly motivated for local adventures. Like, really local—things I can see from my porch as I drink my morning coffee. I want to climb the walls I've stared at and admired since I was a child. I was born and raised in Canmore, a town nestled amongst towering limestone monoliths and ridgelines that beckon to anyone passing by them. It is an amazing venue for mountain people to do mountain things, but for some reason I've always seemed to drive elsewhere to recreate. There is a lifetime's worth of amazing adventure around every corner of this earth, but the sentimental part of me wants to deepen my connection with the valley I grew up in—to grow intimate with the faces and drainages that make up the landscape. I find this brings a richness to my life that I really value.

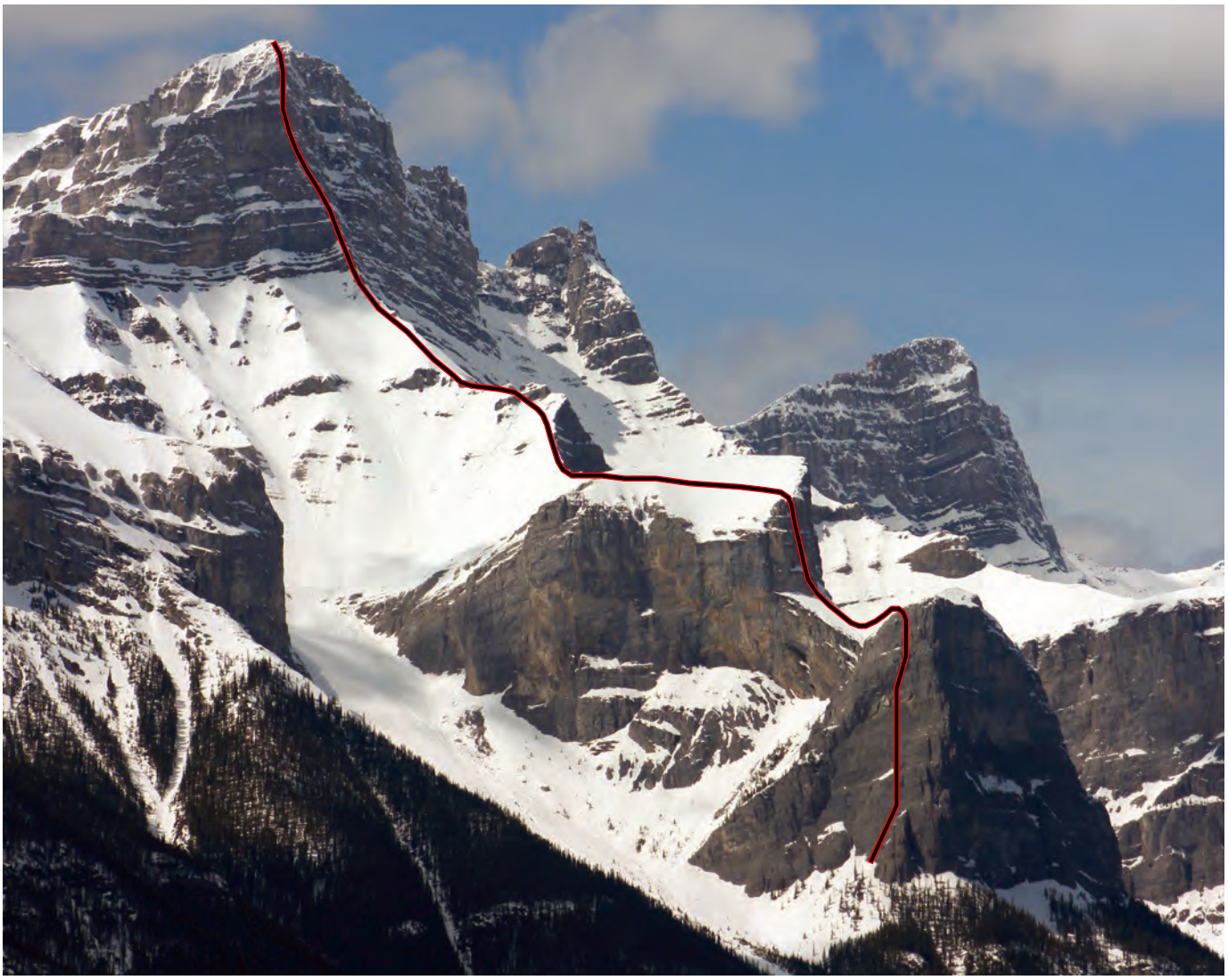
One of the local peaks that stands out is Waskahigan Watchi (Mount Rundle). The mountain is composed of numerous limestone turrets connected by an endless chossy ridgeline, all soaring proudly above the Bow Valley. The eighth buttress and the ridgeline that connects it to the true summit has been on my radar for quite some time. But, if you find yourself eyeing up an attractive line within a hundred kilometres of Canmore, you can be rest assured that Alik Berg has either climbed it or looked at it, or that it's on his to do list. Knowing this and having explored several of the mountain's other buttresses with Alik already, I spoke to him about it, and we decided that we needed to check this one out together. We ended up waiting much of the summer to line up schedules, but in mid-August, things fell into place. We packed our bags, loaded up our bikes and began the familiar journey of biking the Canmore Nordic Centre trails towards our route. The approach to these buttresses is often an adventure in its own right—steep, mossy forests intersected by rubbly creek beds. With a little luck, we managed to fill our dromedary water bags with some residual meltwater to begin our quest.

The lower buttress proved to be a great adventure—tenuous cracks through faint chossy weaknesses. High up on the face, I broke a hold and fell while following a particularly awkward and poorly protected section of Alik's lead. Dejected and upset about what could have happened if I had been leading that pitch, Alik casually reassured me, "Oh well, that always happens on TR. You're not in the zone. You wouldn't have fallen on lead." I took his word for it. Atop the first buttress, we savoured a moment of bliss. It was a beautiful day with stunning views up and down the valley. Looking back at my childhood cul-de-sac, I reminisced about days spent admiring this mountain's features. To my knowledge, no one had ever stood on this minor summit before. Be it true or not, I revelled for a moment in that special sentiment.

Some exposed 5th-class scrambling led us to the base of the second buttress. I led an enjoyable pitch of moderate climbing on perfect stone. The next pitch looked hard—steep walls connecting intermittent weaknesses. A splitter crack midway up the face enticed us and gave us something to aim for. Alik masterfully quested up this face with his trademark nonchalant style, running out thin, technical face climbing over beaks and other heady, thin pro. Sustained, steep hand and finger cracks lead passage to the top of the second buttress. As I followed this pitch, I appreciated Alik's skill and experience. He is truly in a league of his own.

That night, we spent a cold, exposed bivy on a dug-out platform below the final buttress. We lay awake star gazing for hours. To the east, an intense electrical storm lit up the prairies. Above us, the magnificent Perseids meteor shower (named after the constellation Perseus) streaked the sky.

The last buttress took us a whole day to unlock. Beautiful crystalized-limestone climbing with black chert features was reminiscent of Banff's Tunnel Mountain. The climbing was



Perseids Ridge on Waskahigan Watchi. Photo: Kevin Rohn

mostly loose and runout with several engaging pitches. A steep, bouldery crux gave passage to a fun crack high up on the face. Just before the climbing eased, we encountered a small roof. I used the last of my strength to jam and stem my way out under the roof and lock off as I cleaned big loose blocks with my hammer. Once most of the loose rocks had been cleared, a final effort to pull the roof put us onto easy ground. As Alik led above for the final easy pitch to the summit, I relaxed and took in the views. It was exactly what we had hoped for—a difficult and engaging adventure that drew a near-perfect line to the summit of an iconic local peak. It was one of my greatest adventures to date with a truly inspiring, kind and talented friend. These are highlight moments of my life. We are beyond blessed to call this our home.

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**Summary**

Perseids Ridge (5.10+, 1000m, 15 pitches), north-east face, Waskahigan Watchi, Canadian Rockies. FA: Alik Berg, Kevin Rohn, August 12–13, 2020.

# Mount Forbes

## Quentin Roberts

"HEY, Q! TIME TO DO THIS!" were the muffled words that woke me from Alik's splayed-out sleeping bag. I looked over through bleary eyes. He was propped up against the wheel of his Pontiac Vibe, stove roaring and coffee in hand. It was October 1, and Alik Berg and I were on the gravel of a Saskatchewan River Crossing parking lot. We were riding the tail end of a huge good weather system, and there were two days left. It was a warm window, but we hoped that Mount Forbes, at 3,612 metres, was a high-enough objective that the ice hadn't fallen apart yet. I took the coffee Alik was handing me and swallowed my reservations about the upcoming 27-kilometre approach to a face that may well be out of condition.

The bush travel was smooth and better than we had anticipated. We made our way southwest towards Glacier Lake and on through the river flats before turning south towards the Mons Glacier. We trudged our way up and into the wilderness, interrupting a grizzly bear feasting on the last wildflowers of the season. I have never climbed anywhere with the same ease of access to true wilderness as the Canadian Rockies. Within hours you can be completely alone in places barely touched by humankind. It was fall but felt like late summer. We walked and walked amongst the brilliant colours of the autumn wild, bathed in soft golden sunlight and the fading embers of summer before the eight-month freeze of winter. At the tongue of the Mons Glacier, we wrapped back east toward the north face of Mount Forbes. We pitched our tent on a rock outcrop above the north glacier's tarn. The water glimmered as the sun kissed the highest summits goodnight. Our objective, the unclimbed east face, was still out of sight.

Alik had climbed a new route on Mount Outram with Maarten van Haeren on October 1 the previous year, a beautiful left-leaning cleft on the mountain's north face. From the summit of Outram, they had seen a frozen east face of Forbes with various possibilities for a line of ascent. We knew it was much warmer this year, but we had also heard good news from our friends Uisdean

Quentin Roberts on the east face of Mount Forbes. Photo: Alik Berg

Hawthorn and Ethan Berman. They were on their way down from Yexyexéscen (Mount Robson) after climbing frozen terrain on the Emperor Face. We hoped that conditions might be similar on Forbes and kept our fingers crossed, hoping and hoping as we fell asleep with our sleeping bags wide open.

The next morning, we crunched our way up the north glacier, over the northeast shoulder and down to the base of the east face, gaining around 800 metres but losing around 200 metres of easy elevation in the process. Moon shadows danced on the ice as we worked our way up the glacier with no need for headlamps. Travel could not have been more perfect. Cresting the shoulder, the face finally came into view. The first rays of sunlight were curving over the horizon and bathing the face in a soft alpenglow. The mountain was already running with water, and the rising force of the sun would only make this worse. We decided to go for a walk and traversed the length of the wall in search of climbable ice. What little ice we found was delaminated and collapsing, but we did find an easy snow ramp that took us to an ice gully tucked away out of the sun. We couldn't see where it went, and we hadn't planned to climb there, but we hoped it would get us high enough to find useable ice.

We never really found that ice, but it wasn't too hard to mix climb our way around each consecutive feature. Every time it seemed as though we would have to do some serious climbing, there was an escape a few metres to the left or right. This is typical of the Rockies, but you can also usually expect one or two cruxes on this kind of alpine face. We were almost disappointed not to find one! Fortunately, the climbing was still technical and interesting throughout, despite never being overly difficult. We climbed the route in short simul pitches from sheltered spot to sheltered spot and made it to the summit with ample daylight to spare. I'll always carry a memory of Alik tearing through the steep, unfrozen summit shale using his gloves to excavate while wearing a T-shirt in the baking sun. Aside from the temperature, the conditions were perfect in every way. Like us, the mountain was wearing too many layers for that autumn warmth. We were lucky to sneak a sheltered path up the face while it was shedding its clothing of ice and snow.

The east face of Mount Forbes. Photo: John Scurlock

We descended the north side of the mountain, which Alik mentioned was first skied by Jon Walsh and Ptor Spriceniecks in 1997. That sure sounded fun as I smacked the giant snowballs off my crampons on every third step. We crunched our way down the bare ice of the glacier toward our tent while the sun was setting behind the Columbia Icefield. Darkness fell, and we settled back into camp, dumping our packs and wriggling out of our harnesses. Soon, clouds were obscuring the stars, and a rare calm only found this far from humankind moved in around us. We stayed up into the evening, embracing the last warmth of the summer. In the morning, blowing sleet pushed us back along the final 27 kilometres to the road, and we drove home fulfilled by three truly special days in the mountains.

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**Summary**

East face (M4 WI3, 700m), Mt. Forbes, Canadian Rockies. FA: Alik Berg, Quentin Roberts, October 2, 2020.

# Siksika Buttress

## Maarten van Haeren

"YOU'LL HAVE TO PULL THE ROPES towards you, cut it and tie back in! Let me see if I can push this rock off the rope!" The large block that was headed my way fortunately exploded on the ledge in front of me. Unfortunately, it exploded right on our ropes, rendering them 15 metres shorter. Halfway up the east face of Crowfoot Mountain, we were experiencing the terrain I often envisioned from the road. The summit appeared further away than before with our now 35-metre ropes, but getting to the summit seemed more attainable than descending.

The written climbing history in the Canadian Rockies encapsulates the explorations of the white men and women for its first many decades. This often required trekking arduously through road-less valleys to the base of the tallest peaks. Despite scarcely being mentioned in the written account, First Nations guides, cooks and stable hands made important contributions to facilitating these expeditions. In true colonial fashion, these trips often involved mapping and naming these peaks to the liking of the explorers. In 1894, Samuel Allen visited the Canadian Rockies for the third time. His academic language studies created a keen interest in learning the complexities of the Stoney language. Amongst other trips, he made the traverse from Paradise Valley over Wasatch, Wenkchemna and Opabin passes and back in a single day. Along the way, he had the rare cultural foresight to name the surrounding peaks and geographic features in the Stoney language. Most memorably, he named the peaks surrounding Moraine Lake after the numbers one to 10 in the Stoney language. Unfortunately, all but three of these mountains (Tonsa, Neptuak and Wenkchemna) were renamed in the early 1900s. In a cruel case of irony, the third peak was renamed from Shappee to Mount Allen. Previously, the literature has referred to renaming these peaks "in honour" of individuals. With our current knowledge, we can recognize the colonialism in renaming mountains after white explorers.

Christian Schlumpf on pitch 14 of Siksika Buttress. Photo: Maarten van Haeren

Back on Crowfoot Mountain, I felt shaken enough by the rockfall to relinquish the sharp end for the day. Once below the final headwall on the buttress, Christian took the lead on a committing traverse, taking us to the final crack leading to the top. The position on the mountain continued to get better with views of the Crowfoot Glacier, below from which we had started. The Cathedral Formation limestone on the top pitches was of excellent quality, providing a great finish to the day. Once on top, we were struck by the far-reaching views. From the Wapta Icefield across the valley to the front ranges, everything we could see east of the Great Divide

was Treaty 7 land. The name Siksika Buttress later struck after referencing *Canadian Mountain Place Names*. They wrote:

> CROWFOOT: Glacier, Mountain [3050m]; 1959; Waputik. The Blackfoot Chief Crowfoot (1833?-1890), adoptive father of Poundmaker, did not permit his people to partake in the 1885 Riel-led uprising, despite his disillusionment with the Canadian government.

Thus, I had assumed Crowfoot Mountain was named for Chief Crowfoot, a Siksika chief who worked tirelessly during his lifetime as a mediator between his people and the Canadian government. In researching this article, I was disappointed to learn the Alberta Geographical Names Database lists the official reason for the naming due to its crowfoot-like glacial tongue in the early 20th century. The name had been used on Department of the Interior maps since at least 1925. Despite this, Siksika Buttress seemed a fitting tribute. Chief Crowfoot was a strong advocate for First Nations rights, including his Siksika people, in the signing of Treaty 7 in 1877.

Cultural differences in negotiations were almost certainly not appreciated to their fullest extent in the late 1800s. The oral traditions of First Nations in North America were often valued less than the written traditions of white colonialists. With hindsight, it is possible to see how Indigenous leaders could have been misinformed or misguided, unintentional or otherwise. Oral agreements might have held stronger importance for Indigenous leaders than for their counterpart negotiators. These discrepancies make current day truth and reconciliation efforts complex and complicated.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, these 11 post-confederation treaties were instrumental in European colonization of Western Canada and resource extraction in those areas. For Indigenous communities, these treaties formed the bases for relocations to reserves, forced transitions to an

Christian Schlumpf on pitch 13 of Siksika Buttress.
Photo: Maarten van Haeren

agricultural lifestyle, and cultural genocide through residential schools and other government programs.

The conscious recognition that colonizers were not the first to set foot in these mountains, or this continent, has yet to fully permeate the climbing community. Once again, important lessons can be learned from First Nations peoples with regards to honouring those who came before us. While I am not necessarily proposing the renaming of mountains in our national parks, perhaps Crowfoot Mountain's official record can reflect a more meaningful naming reference for this striking peak along the Icefields Parkway.

As climbers and alpinists, it is often our objective to leave no trace in the mountains, returning only with a named line on a photo and an article in the *CAJ*. Over the past few years, additional scrutiny has been passed over route names. While this discussion is beyond the scope of this article, as climbers we can be more responsible in the future when naming our routes, particularly in the alpine realm. By becoming more informed of pre-colonial history, perhaps climbers can positively contribute to the greater understanding of this history. If these names can reflect local history, when appropriate, we might be able to do our small part in creating additional respect for this common past in our society. We all carry a responsibility to contribute to truth and reconciliation to challenge the legacies of colonialism.

This climb is located on traditional territories of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) and the peoples of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, including the Siksika, the Métis Nation of Alberta, the Piikuni, the Kainai, the Tsuut'ina and the Stoney Nakoda First Nations, including Chiniki, Bearpaw and Wesley First Nations.

**Summary**

First ascent of Siksika Buttress (5.9, 600m), east face, Crowfoot Mountain, Wapituk Range, Canadian Rockies. FA: Maarten van Haeren, Christian Schlumpf, August 4, 2020.

Siksika Buttress on Crowfoot Mountain.
Photo: Maarten van Haeren

# A Firm Specimen

Steve Tersmette

**Summary**

A Firm Specimen (5.8, 375m, 7 pitches), east face, Mt. Aeneas, Stanford Range, Kootenay Ranges, Canadian Rockies. FA: Matt Honeyman, Steve Tersmette, July 11, 2020.

THE WESTERN SLOPES OF THE Canadian Rockies are generally not associated with alpine climbing. Unlike the Bow Valley, where towering limestone walls rise above the valley floor, the big faces are not as plentiful and certainly not as visible in British Columbia's Kootenay Rockies. Pedley Pass, near Windermere, B.C., has been long known as a popular day-hiking venue with good access by forestry road, a quality trail network and stunning views. It is also blessed with an abundance of large limestone faces, which have been largely ignored by climbers until recently. These east-facing walls feature steep slabs, distinct corners and clean lines with textured rock that willingly take protection.

After establishing a couple of climbs nearby in previous years, I returned with Matt Honeyman in the summer of 2020 to explore a bigger line on the most prominent feature near Pedley Pass. I was sure the face would not remain unclimbed for much longer and was keen to explore. As we hiked in and crested a broad, treed saddle at the pass, Mount Aeneas came into view with two large walls dominating the landscape. The most captivating was a diamond-shaped face split by an immense crack that runs from the bottom to a notch near the top. From a distance, the prospect of this route was intimidating, and we questioned whether or not we should throw ourselves at it.

As we descended from the pass and approached the base of the wall, the angle visibly backed off and the line looked inviting. After organizing gear and an enthusiastic fist bump, we started up the face, finding clean rock, lots of holds and surprisingly abundant protection. For the first four pitches, we ignored the large gash entirely—the climbing on the face was just too good to worry about moving into the more obvious feature on our right. Higher up, the rock quality deteriorated to a level much more characteristic of the Rockies. We found ourselves moving into the large, wide chimney for the upper pitches as the angle eased even further. We finished the route, straddling a notch on the ridge, before descending and walking off the backside of the route.

While not a difficult climb, the venue and the views are top notch. For a new route in a new zone, it was nice to come across a firm specimen.

A Firm Specimen on the east face of Mount Aeneas. Photo: Steve Tersmette

# Amnesiac

Alik Berg

Alik Berg on the first pitch of Amnesiac.
Photo: Uisdean Hawthorn

My body was tired, but the rat was still hungry. I had thought it would be satiated by a generous portion of Dirty Love, but it wasn't enough. It never is. The weather was undeniably perfect, the snow conditions as good as I'd ever seen them in winter. The choice to go for another seemed obvious and inescapable. A reasonable day trip from town, a short approach and descent, and more ice than I'd seen on it in the past. Best to go take a look.

On the slope at the base of the face, we hopped about on the crust looking for a weakness through the initial rock band. The rock was excellent—too good, in fact. Promising corners led to smooth blank sections with no ice in sight. My blind optimism was, thankfully, countered by Uisdean's sound logic, and he steered me towards a more featured area and a possible line. A closer look revealed more uncertainty, but it didn't look worse than the other options, and it seemed appropriate to try something.

A quick roshambo and before we knew it, Uisdean was dodging mushrooms as I cleaned every scrap of snow off the wall hunting for gear. Just enough materialized, and the lure of possibility spurred me on. The wall steepened. The rock improved. The good holds ran out. The sun kissed the wall, and the gloves came off. A hard move off a tiny side-pull protected by a perfect small cam, just in time. Immersion in the task at hand was complete and uninterrupted. As the rack got lighter and the rope heavier, a continuous crack system finally presented itself and coaxed me on to a good ledge.

Having used up all of the day's direct sun leading this pitch, Uisdean was forced to second the barehanded crux section with numb fingers and the big pack as I dumped spindrift from the belay ledge on him with each slightest movement. He arrived understandably keen to lead, and I was content to relax on top-rope for a few pitches of tricky route finding and facet wallowing. Ever the gentleman, he handed me the rack as soon as we found ourselves on useable ice and enjoyed another pitch of seconding under my spindrift as I simuled up the snow slope above to the base of the headwall. The obscene geniality continued as my friend insisted I lead the beautiful strip of ice we had ogled from the valley below. My own selfish desires for sexy ribbons of unclimbed ice overrode all my training in Canadian politeness, and the Scot won again.

Though fleeting, the position was indeed

magical, and a few more hours of snow and ice had us at the top of Little Whymper. With the mild temperatures and a starry sky, the feeling of having once again gotten away with something, of having snuck into the mountains unnoticed only to quietly slip away, was palpable. How lucky to be living here with free time, the right partner, the right weather and the right line all coming together. With the summit of Whymper conveniently concealed by darkness, we descended to the col and headed down the southeast slopes where we were promptly stymied by an evil breakable sun crust. My bruised shins reminded me of the same awful crust we'd battled on the walk down from Mount Wilson a few days before. Karma? Retribution? Nope, opportunity. The slope steepened, and we began the mother of all bum slides back to the road.

Dots connected, friendship strengthened, bodies depleted, the cup was full. The rat was fed.

Alik Berg on pitch eight of Amnesiac.
Photo: Uisdean Hawthorn

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**Summary**

Amnesiac (M7 WI5, 500m), northeast face, Mount Whymper. Alik Berg, Uisdean Hawthorn, March 17, 2021.

A roadside alpine route with a short approach and descent on the northeast face of the east sub-peak of Mount Whymper above the mouth of the Chickadee Valley. The central feature of the route is a strip of ice through the upper headwall, which forms most years. It forms early, and the route is perhaps best climbed in October or November before the thin ice on the lower face disappears and while the cornices are smaller. The face gets a few hours of sun in the morning in the spring and almost none in November. The initial rock band is quite compact and provides the crux.

Gear: Double set of cams; nuts, including some brass; pitons; ice screws, including stubbies.

Approach: From the Great Divide parking lot, ski up the Chickadee Valley for 40 minutes until below the face. Head south through trees and directly up the avalanche-prone slopes to the base (two hours total). Start about 50 metres left of the fall line below the upper ice. In an area of slightly lower-angled rock, a faint series of left-facing corners and grooves leads to a more prominent right-facing flake in the upper half of the rock band.

P1: M7, 50m. Start on the left at first, then

Amnesiac on the northeast face of Mount Whymper. Photo: Alik Berg

after 10 metres move right on ledges into a slight left-facing corner (M4 R). Continue up corners with improving protection and increasing difficulty until possible to step left into the prominent flake. Climb this and the groove above to ledges. This pitch was originally climbed mainly with bare hands in dry, mild conditions. Drytooling in snowier conditions would likely be harder.

P2: M3, 20m. Climb the easy groove to snow ledge above. Follow the snow ledge right for 80 metres to a break in the short, steep wall above. With better ice conditions more direct options will be available.

P3-4: M5 WI3, 90m. Bouldery moves off the ledge gain a short right-facing corner and easier terrain above. Follow ledges back left with short ice steps. Belay below a steeper pillar.

P5: M5 WI4, 50m. Start in the corner to the left of the pillar past loose blocks (fixed piton on the left), then gain the ice and follow it to snow slopes (ice belay). Walk up 50 metres of snow and find a rock belay on the right a short distance below the upper headwall.

P6: WI5, 70m. Climb the ice strip above. Belay as high as your ropes allow.

P7-9: WI3-4, 130m. Above the headwall, climb numerous short curtains interspersed with snow gullies. Belay below the final two steeper, narrower pillars.

P10: M4 WI4+, 40m. Climb a short, steep pillar to easier ground. Avoid the final pillar by a thin smear on the right and move right to easy ground. Snow climbing with some 4th-class for 150 metres rock gains the ridge a few metres below the summit.

Descent: Descend the southwest ridge to the col (non-technical). Turn left and enjoy the 700-metre bum slide to the road (1.5 hours).

# Seeds and Stems

Liam White

JACQUES LAKE TRAIL at the northern end of the Queen Elizabeth Range in Jasper National Park features remarkable limestone peaks with sustained slabs—rising 600 metres from valley bottom to summit—laced with cracks and corner systems throughout. For Canadian Rockies standards the approach is almost too easy since there is an actual trail. On August 26, 2020, I did my first trip into the valley with intentions of rope-solo free climbing the most appealing line I could find. The west face of the northernmost peak (unnamed) on a formation of three summits rising above Beaver Lake was my obvious choice. With no walk-off though, the route would have to be rappelled, and with only one rope to save on weight, this would mean 30-metre rappels and lots of pitons.

The game plan was to climb and descend the route in a 24-hour push. I would spend the first day climbing the first half of the route, establishing half of the needed anchors before descending back to camp. Due to the typical Canadian Rockies limestone, building anchors would inevitably be the most time-consuming part of the climb, and this would allow for the full ascent the following day without having to worry about building all the rap anchors in one go.

By the end of day one, I had climbed three pitches. The climbing was solid stemming in a large shallow break, which ascends the first half of the face. The protection and anchors were a joke, typically two tied-off pitons. Climbing alone either means frequent struggles to feed myself slack mid-sequence or dumping slack with the potential for big whips. I don't like feeding myself slack every few seconds or big whips, so as the climbing got harder and the hail began to beat down, and the protection remained far apart and dubious, I made the decision to get off the face.

The next day I climbed up to my highpoint, and despite the clear conditions, an eerie sense of non-belonging washed over me. I didn't feel like trusting tied-off pitons and rapping off single pieces, so I retreated. In early September, I returned with a new line in mind, a system of corners as opposed to the breaks and cracks leading up the centre of the slab. Only having one full day to climb, I decided to try and do it all in one push. Setting off from camp at 5 a.m., I arrived at the base at 6 a.m. and began climbing. The line followed two corner systems connected by a fist-to-wide crack before stepping onto the face for the last pitch of horrendous loose climbing. Difficulties were sustained around 5.6 with occasional moves up to 5.8, particularly on the last pitch where high steps and reaches were necessary to bypass loose blocks. I reached the summit for sunset and after a quick five-minute break, I began the 18 rappels to the ground through the night. On the ground, I got on all fours and inhaled water out of a creek 23 hours after setting off.

**Summary**

Seeds and Stems (5.8, 550m), southwest face, unnamed peak (52°54'02.6"N, 117°45'04.5"W), Queen Elizabeth Range, Canadian Rockies. FA: Liam White, September 9, 2020.

Seeds and Stems on the southwest face of an unnamed peak in the Queen Elizabeth Range. Photo: Liam White

# Skiing Cascade

Andrew Wexler

THE EAST FACE OF CASCADE MOUNTAIN is the imposing facade that one stares at while driving west from Canmore and Banff. As far as I know, the face has not been skied before, so Justen Bruns and Kevin Rohn joined me for an attempt in February 2021.

The day began at 6:15 a.m. in the Cascade Falls parking lot. From there, we set off across the airstrip towards the mountain's south aspect (the face that seems to overhang Banff's Main Street, which often gets confused for the east face). Apart from the typical ski mountaineering gear, we carried a few pitons, nuts, ice screws and two five-millimetre 50-metre ropes. After weeks of staring at the proposed ski line from the Lake Minnewanka Road, we hoped that we might be able to ski the face with no rappels. Still, we planned on exiting the lower mountain via the Urs Hole ice climb and knew that we would need to rappel this feature to return to the road.

Four hours after leaving the car, we topped out on Cascade Mountain. The south face was in similar shape, if not a little steeper, than the last time I went up and down it in April 2011.

Kevin Rohn rigs a rappel during the first descent of the east face of Cascade Mountain. Photo: Andrew Wexler

From the summit, our next goal was to traverse the mountain's north ridge towards the saddle and the start of our descent. In an ideal world, we would have skied directly from the summit, but on this day, the snow quality did not inspire us to do so.

I lost track of how long it took us to finally gain the top of the line. We ended up dropping down from the ridge on the mountain's west side and crossed a moderately exposed snow slope before regaining the ridge and looking down the east face. After years of staring at this face from the Trans Canada Highway, it felt surreal to finally be standing there. Once above our desired line, we transitioned into ski mode and discussed our options. The snow quality was not great, but the weather and stability seemed favourable. We decided to ski down and have a look.

The first crux came after a few hundred metres of skiing and involved a steep pitch over a cliff. From the road, this was the section that we hoped might present a hidden passage. Once we got to it though, it became clear that—short of airing the cliff—we would need to find an anchor and rappel. Kevin skied first and started looking for gear in the compact rock. Justen skied second and accidentally uncovered some ice under his skis. I followed third, and we built a V-thread in the exposed ice and rappelled into the heart of the face.

The middle section of the face was fairly straightforward. The first few turns held some nice snow but then deteriorated into firmer conditions. We trended down skier's left in order to gain passage to a ramp that would take us back right below the ice pillar. From the road, this section seemed straightforward, but there were enough hidden cliffs that we ended up rappelling three more times, between ski pitches, to finally exit the upper face.

Once off the upper face, we found the best skiing of the day (and many rocks) on our way down to the top of the Urs Hole ice climb. Since paragliding in Banff National Park is still not permitted, we rapped and skied the ice climb and made it back to the car about 11.5 hours after leaving.

The line of descent on the east face of Cascade Mountain. Photo: Andrew Wexler

The east face of Cascade is a classic, technical descent, and I hope to ski it again from the summit in better snow and with fewer rappels. For now, at least I can drive by it without always stopping to look up and wonder.

**Summary**

First ski descent of the east face (1600m), Cascade Mountain, Vermillion Range, Canadian Rockies. FD: Justen Bruns, Kevin Rohn, Andrew Wexler, February 18, 2021.

# The Technical Quad

Adam Campbell

THE CANMORE QUAD is a Canadian mountain-running test piece. First knowingly completed by Rockies hard man Jack Firth in approximately 20 hours, the Quad consists of running up and down the four iconic peaks that surround Canmore: Grotto, Lady Macdonald, East End of Rundle (EEOR) and Ha Ling. The order and route do not really matter; the only real rule is that you have to travel between the trailheads for each climb on foot and stand on the summit of the four peaks (most of them have hiking routes with short sections of scrambling to the top). It amounts to around 53 kilometres of running with 4,892 metres of ascent.

Eric Carter on the North Ridge of EEOR. Photo: Adam Campbell

People have always travelled fast up and down mountains, but over the last few years there has been a boom in popularity of fastest known times (FKT). As an article in *Outside* magazine put it: "A growing number of trail runners are finding a new way to test themselves, and it doesn't involve race fees, bibs or finish-line chutes." Instead, trail runners are "enlisting their own stopwatch, navigational prowess, and determination to set trail fastest known times. They pick a route, decide whether they'll receive help in the form of food or aid along the way, and try to cover the distance as fast as possible."

For an FKT to become accepted by FastestKnownTime.com, the self-professed gatekeepers of FKTs, a run has to be verified with a GPS data file and the route has to be significant enough to warrant inclusion. Regarding the latter point, the website states that an FKT should be "notable and distinct enough so that others will be interested in repeating it." The current FKT on the Canmore Quad was set on July 7, 2020, by Leif Godberson in an astounding seven hours, 48 minutes and 26 seconds. The seconds really matter because the second-fastest time, ran the same day, is seven hours, 49 minutes and 45 seconds. Masochists Jeremie Philibert and Andy Reed have completed a double quad (all four summits twice in a single day), and others have done it in winter.

On June 27, 2017, I was out doing the Quad as training for an upcoming race when I ran into Marc-André Leclerc. We chatted for a minute, and he told me he was out scrambling. I found out later that his scramble was what he dubbed the Canmore Half Pipe—a speed solo of Eeyore's Tail, a steep and loose 360-metre 5.8 on EEOR, and Cheesmond Express, a 600-metre 5.10 on Ha Ling, in a mind-bending three hours and 23 minutes.

Being, at best, a middling climber and not being fast enough to compete for the Quad FKT, I figured if you can't be the strongest or the fastest,

why not be the first? My friend and fellow mountain endurance enthusiast Eric Carter was visiting Canmore from Squamish, so I pitched the concept of a Technical Quad, combining Marc-André's vision with the mountain-running version and doing a technical climbing route on each of the four peaks, and running between them. Eric was more than keen and had dreamed of a similar line.

After some hemming and hawing and asking Kris Irwin and Jacob Dans for route beta and suggestions, we settled on EEOR's North Ridge (5.8, 400m), Ha Ling's Northeast Face (5.6, 450m), Lady Macdonald's East-Southeast Ridge (III 5.4) and Grotto's Northwest Ridge (II 5.3). When it was all said and done, the route covered more than 57 kilometres of travel and just under 5,000 metres of total ascent. Although Marc-André would have been comfortable soloing these grades, Eric and I are not, so we opted to use the rope for the first two climbs and then scramble/solo the last two.

We set off first on July 7 at 6 a.m., but when we arrived to the base of EEOR's North Ridge, it looked like there might be a storm coming. After climbing the first pitch, we bailed. It proceeded to rain and snow that day, so we had made the right call. We went home, happy for another rest day before setting off the next morning. We were onsighting the North Ridge, which is not a commonly climbed route and often meant very loose rock. Jacob Dans had given us a hand-drawn topo that proved invaluable, although it did have the alarming note "pull a few 5.10 moves" in one section, which is never what you want to see on a supposedly 5.8 route. It proved adventurous, and at times engaging, to climb safely and efficiently, but the position and final ridge walk to the summit made it a great route. From there, we ran from the summit back to my car, where we stuffed our faces with chips and a sandwich before running over to Ha Ling, a route we both knew well. We soloed the first section then climbed the rest in two pitches, me taking the lower half and Eric raging to the summit at Mach speed, with me getting the upward pull of my life.

Knowing that we were going to be soloing the rest, we ran back to my car and ditched our climbing gear. We ran across the valley, stopping at the local convenience store to fuel up on ice cream, sandwiches and Coke—we are athletes after all. The hike up Cougar Creek and the windless flank of Lady Macdonald was a bit soul crushing, but otherwise uneventful. Realizing it was going to take us longer than we had prepared for, we called our friend Joel Desgreniers, who met us with more fluids and then joined us on Grotto. Along the summit ridge, as the sun set, we were rewarded with an incredible show of a full moon rising over Waskahigan Watchi (Mount Rundle) as an electrical storm raged over the foothills. We ran down the mountain, on our now-pulverized quads, to friends with pizza and beer waiting for us at the parking lot where we had started 18 and a half hours earlier.

Eric Carter on East-Southeast Ridge of Mount Lady Macdonald. Photo: Adam Campbell

# Icefall Brook

David Rone

As the view of the helicopter and the sound of its pounding rotors disappeared down valley, Jon Jugenheimer and I came to grips with the isolation and the magnificence of our home for the next couple of weeks. It was late afternoon in early March 2020, and we had just been dropped off below the towering ice-streaked walls of Icefall Brook.

The main intention of our trip was to scout out new routes, so as the pilot did a lap around the cirque for us, we had our faces pressed up against the glass, looking to see which ice lines were in. There are no conditions reports for this place, so you don't know what's in until you get there.

Dave Rone on pitch four of Satiata.
Photo: Jon Jugenheimer

Thankfully, there was a lot of ice, particularly on the lines we believed to be unclimbed.

Unfortunately, there was also a lot of snow, and as we transported gear to our campsite, we found that travel without wearing our snowshoes was impossible. We set up a great camp among the trees, well out of any avalanche danger, and only 20 minutes from water flowing in the brook.

Icefall Brook is composed of four major walls. Looking up valley, the Popsicle Wall is first on the left. Next is the Icefall Wall with routes up to 600 metres. The Lyell Wall, which now contains nearly two dozen routes, wraps around the back of the cirque. Lastly, on the right is the Mons Wall where the first routes were established. The lines we were interested in were on the Lyell Wall, which is guarded by a steep, 300-metre avalanche-prone slope that took us almost two hours to switchback up every day.

As we slogged up to the Lyell Wall the first day, our excitement grew. The two lines we were going to attempt looked great. But when we started climbing, we quickly discovered the ice was mostly sn'ice—a poor-quality aerated mix of snow and ice. Nevertheless, on our first day we established Covid Quarantine (WI4, 110m) and Entrenched Biases (WI5, 120m). Entrenched Biases featured a 10-metre shell of thin ice at the top, which had been hollowed out by rushing water behind. At the final belay/rappel anchor, we stood on the sill of a window in the shell, looking down into the bottomless hole. Spooky to say the least!

Next, we set our sights on a towering line on the far left side of the Lyell Wall. It would require a 600-metre traverse across steep, deep snow, and adding to the difficulty, additional snow and wind every night obliterated any track we put in the day before. Thank goodness for Jon! Being an old-timer, I'm slow, so he did most of the arduous work of re-establishing the track every day.

I've gotten used to depending on Jon. Over the years we've had countless adventures together

on ice and mixed routes in the Rockies, and I couldn't ask for a better partner. He's safe, never gets rattled and is up for anything. Not only that, he supplied an awesome menu for the trip, bringing homemade breakfast burritos, pulled pork, jerky and cookies. And he brought a huge tent for lounging in front of the heater.

For two days, we established bolted running belays along the base of the wall. On the third day, we completed the 900-metre approach and traverse, all on snowshoes, by rappelling into a deep bowl and then climbing to a belay high on the left side. Finally, we were below the route, but it was getting late at almost 7 p.m. We decided that rather than head down and have the incessant snow and wind wipe out our track for a later attempt at the route, we would keep going, which would mean climbing well after sunset.

The first two pitches went quickly, but the belay for the third pitch was super wet. There was no escaping the water streaming down from above, and by the time Jon had joined me, it was dark. Climbing by headlamp, I set off on the third pitch in search for good ice and a dry line—neither existed. The pitch was a steep, sustained mix of slush, candlesticks and sn'ice, and the wet, icy ropes pulled on me harder and harder as I climbed higher and higher. Needless to say, progress was slow. Unfortunately, once I reached the top, Jon was soaked and cold, so I rapped off and we headed down, leaving a cache of gear at the base. We finally staggered into camp about 1 a.m., but Siege Tactics (WI6+, 160m) was done.

We slept in the next day, and then for the first time in a week, awoke to clear skies and sunshine. The valley is so tight, however, that it only shined on us for about three hours, but we basked in the sun while we could, and then it got cold. For the next few days, lows were –25 C, and it was–15 C for highs. We kicked the heater up as high as it would go.

Our next objectives were three unclimbed lines to the right of Siege Tactics. Completing the entire traverse one last time, we retrieved our gear and traversed into a gulley where all three lines converged. The centre line proved to be unclimbable, so we moved right, and for first time of the trip, we found great ice to complete Le'etonnement (WI5, 110m). To the left, we found an ice-filled groove leading to insecure climbing over steep, pick-dulling sn'ice and snow-covered rock and finally finishing with good ice. Deviation (WI5+, 110m) was in the bag. It was another long day as we humped out about 60 kilograms of gear, reaching camp about 11 p.m.


The left side of Lyell Wall:
(1) Back from the Storm
(2) unclimbed
(3) Siege Tactics
(4) Deviation
(5) unclimbed
(6) Le'etonnement (hidden)
(7) Happy Hours
(8) Fossen Falls
(9) Happy Birthday
(10) Covid Quarantine
(11) Sun Pillar (unformed)
(12) Entrenched Biases
Photo: Dave Rone

With our trip drawing to a close, we decided to check out a narrow, iced-up slot on the Mons Wall. We had gone past it everyday, and it was an easy half-hour approach. Steep snow and a short ice curtain got us to the base of the slot where Jon's second-pitch lead of a 15-metre un-protectable gravel pile had me shaking in my boots. He eventually finished on good ice. A fun third pitch led to an improbable-looking curtain of ice pouring through a large cleft in a five-metre roof. We stood around debating if we should try it or not, but decided what the hell. I climbed a free-standing icicle near the back of the roof to access the curtain. Traversing out the hanging curtain led to exciting moves turning the overhang where I found 10 metres of perfect ice and eventually the top of the slot. We both agreed that Satiata (M4R WI6, 180m) was the coolest route we did.

A couple of days later, the helicopter picked us up, and on the ride out Jon asked the pilot: "Hey, what's new in the world?"

Mike's reply: "Well, a world-wide pandemic is looming, the stock market crashed and the border is closing."

Jon: "Give me a break! You're shitting me!"

Unfortunately, he wasn't, but the memories of completing six new routes and our time in this amazing place will hold us over until we can return again.

# Rockies Report

Ian Welsted

THERE IS A RENAISSANCE in new route activity in the Canadian Rockies these days, with a wide cast of characters establishing new routes in all of the climbing genres. Mixed multi-pitch cragging routes came thick and fast at the start of the winter, but rock and alpine ascents also featured heavily in an exciting period of exploration.

To begin with the most audacious, Brette Harrington and Tony McLane climbed a perilous grade on one of the bigger walls in the heart of the range. The Hammer and the Dance (5.11X, 700m) on Neptuak Mountain's sheer northeast face was climbed over two days and required a portaledge [see page 111]. Though these grades are rarely climbed on the biggest faces, these routes do show the potential for this type of climbing in the future. Harrington later soloed the Toft route (5.8, 475m) on nearby Haddo Peak.

In the same summer season, Alik Berg continued his spree of climbing the obvious rock faces above Canmore. On June 23 with, Raphael Slawinski, he completed The Northeast Buttress of Miner's Peak (5.10b, 250m). The line has bolted belays on the first few pitches from previous attempts by others. The fact that this rock directly above town remained unclimbed for so long goes to show, yet again, the local potential. The third buttress of Waskahigan Watchi (Mount Rundle) yielded The Georgetown Wall (5.10a, 450m) with Kevin Rohn on July 2, which was an obvious natural line on the main east face. Proceeding at a new route every two weeks, next Berg climbed Plantaris Pillar on Noseeum Mountain (5.10, 250m plus 350m of scrambling) with Maarten van Haeren on July 14, which ascends the right-hand of two prominent buttresses on the south side of the peak. Berg then climbed the East Spur of Panorama Ridge's south peak (5.9, 300m) with Quentin Roberts on July 28, which is an obvious quartzite pillar in the Taylor Lake area that gains the south ridge about 700 metres south of the main summit. Truly inspiring was a two-day ascent of the main summit of the iconic Waskahigan Watchi) with Rohn on August 12 and 13. The Perseid Ridge (5.10+, 1000m) ripples above the Bow Valley and climbs all three tiers of the eighth buttress of the northeast aspect of the mountain [see page 114]. Finally for Berg on the rock front, he climbed Corner Story (5.11-, 450m) with Dave Peabody on August 25, which ascends the west face of Mount Robertson's south tower and continues to the main summit.

Others were not idle in the summer. Peabody and Angela Tse climbed the West Face, Right Corner of Elpoca Tower (5.9, 200m) in the Elbow Lake area. On August 5, van Haeren and Christian Schlumpf snagged the obvious buttress north of the northern terminus of the Crowfoot Glacier. The Siksika Buttress of Crowfoot Mountain (5.9, 600m) seems destined to become a classic [see page 118]. With Jasmin Fauteux, van Haeren also climbed the northwest ridge of Mount Whymper (5.8, 900m, 8 pitches) from Chickadee Valley, though the rock quality will keep this from becoming a classic.

Around Jasper, Francois Laplante and Sam Wall attempted to climb New Orleans is Sinking on Roche Miette. Although the first four pitches matched that route description, their Gut Feeling (5.10, 335m) escaped left at a large roof and undoubtedly was new ground. Daisy Dukes (5.7, 450m), a route that will be repeated more often and was established by Laplante and Jesse Milner, is located on the northern edge of the lower flank of Mount Kerkeslin. The rock is excellent and starts in the black rock just to the left of an orange overhanging wall visible from the Goats and Glaciers parking area.

In the Slate Range, the prolific Rob Schnell added a moderate finish to the left of the North Ridge on Lychnis Mountain with Mark Heard (an orthopedic surgeon to whom half the Rockies owes thanks). And in the Pedley Pass area near Windermere, Steve Tersmette and Matt Honeyman added A Firm Specimen (5.8, 7 pitches, 375m) on Mount Aeneas [see page 121]. The route follows a

very large obvious crack that splits the lower east face. This and other previous routes are in the new guidebook *East Kootenay Rock* by Tersmette.

Most locals wait for things to freeze together before venturing onto new ground, and once a good weather window hits, it is game on in the fall. Such was the case at the beginning of October. On October 1 and 2, Ethan Berman and Uisdean Hawthorn climbed the biggest face in the range on Yexyexéscen (Yui-hai-has-kun), which is also the highest peak in the range. Running in the Shadows (VI AI5 M6, 2000m) required approaching in the rain after multiple previous visits to the face, a committing day of climbing in uncertain weather to the Emperor Ridge through a number of technical pitches, and a full day to the summit [see page 6]. In the same window, Berg and Roberts made the first ascent of the east face of Mount Forbes (M4 WI3, 700m), the tallest peak in Banff National Park and a day's walk from the highway [see page 116]. Dylan Cunningham and the Rockies legend Jim Elzinga added to the collection of climbs on the northwest side of Cirrus Mountain during the same time. To the right of Elzinga's original 1983 route, they added a new variation to Cloud Nine that they called The Anna Smith Memorial Route (IV M5 AI3, 11 pitches).

By the end of October, the mixed and ice action was in full gear, but first to report are a few mixed and ice routes from the spring of 2020. In the Waiparous Valley, between Caroline and Marion Falls, Slawinski was joined by Seth Keena and Maia Schumacher to establish Little Fluffy Clouds (M7 WI4, 155m). Over three days, they established five pitches, four consisting of drytooling with a midway blob of ice and topping out on a dagger [see *CAJ*, 2020, vol.103, p.124-125]. In the Ya Ha Tinda area, near another Slawinski route, are three new single-pitch ice climbs: A Dream Come True (WI4, Mike Banko, Chad Crouch, January 19, 2020), which is 50 metres right of Nachtmahr; Consciousness (WI3, Luka Bogdanovic, Jean Peloquin, April 7, 2020), which is above Nachtmahr; and Dream Eater (WI4+, Bogdanovic, Peloquin, April 7, 2020), yet higher above.

Also in the spring of 2020, Dave Rone and Jon Jugenheimer of the United States established six new routes in Icefall Brook. Dropped off by helicopter before the North American outbreak of COVID-19, they had a surreal return to civilization [see page 130].

Stas Beskin on pitch three of Katana. Photo: Sebastian Taborszky

First ascents at mixed multi-pitch venues come and go in waves, depending on what forms the most ice. The Storm Headwall was surely the hot spot in the fall of 2020. Signaling the activity to come, Ball of Confusion (M6 WI5+, 80m), completed by Slawinski and Landon Thompson in February 2020, was attempted by four people before the actual first ascent. This October, the same characters were all back, led by Sebastian Taborszky, who nabbed four new lines. With Niall Hamill, he climbed two steep pillars on the last pitch of Smith N Wesson (WI6 A0, 125m), with a six-bolt aid

Jasmin Fauteux on pitch four of Ferrethawk during the first attempt.
Photo: Sebastian Taborszky

section on the second pitch eventually freed at M6+ by Slawinski and onsighted by Stas Beskin. Next, Sleight of Hand (WI4+R, 95m), 20 metres right of Shocking Alternative, was a thin-ice, two-pitch route done by Jacob Dans and James Walter. Walter and Taborszky extended the Jon Walsh single-pitch Splitter Choss with a tension traverse to a full-pitch WI5+ to top out. Getting more adventurous, Cunningham, Peloquin and Taborszky explored the upper Storm Headwall above The Shocking Alternative to climb Surprise Attack (M6 WI3, 70m). They reported a lot of ice on this second tier.

Also at the Storm Headwall, on October 28, Niall Hamill got in on the Fancy Feast (WI6 M4, 130m) with Patrick Maguire—an all-ice version of his route from last year, The Sphynx. Above the fire-break approach to the Storm Headwall, Takeshi Tani and Toshiyuki Yamada climbed a bold smear clearly visible to all in three pitches as Ichinen (WI5R M4, 130m).

A distance south, in the Highwood Pass area, Berg, Slawinski and van Haeren added two direct pitches to Kindergarten at M5 WI4. A record of this start having been previously climbed has not been found.

The end of October marked two significant attempts. Alik Berg, along with Peter Hoang and Cunningham, backed off when he encountered running water a few body lengths from the top of a very striking ice line (M5+ WI4, 410m) and therefore insists it not be counted as a first ascent. The line is on Goat Mountain, just left of Yamnuska Peak and clearly visible from the Trans Canada Highway. This face often features ephemeral ice smears in the late fall. Starting near the rock route Manitou and finishing near Oreamnos, it arguably awaits a complete ascent by the narrowest of margins. Less precise in their conventions, Cunningham, Rohn and John Price climbed a gully on the north face of Boom Mountain to half height and named it Red Beard (WI5 M5, 420m). In previous years, they climbed two of the other main gullies on this reputedly unclimbed major face to half height without continuing any of the lines to the summit, so these lines undoubtedly do await complete ascents.

At the start of official winter, images from Katana (WI6+X, 245m, Beskin, Cunningham, Taborszky) clearly demonstrate the mastery of the ice medium by Beskin (who led and argued to downgrade the crux pillar), a frequent visitor to the range. On an east face above Margaret Lake, next to Hector Lake, the route featured two freestanding pillars mid-wall and is a clear contender for most audacious pure ice line ever climbed in the range.

Last winter, Sarah Hueniken completed her dream of linking the three routes in the Hydrophobia basin, amounting to one of the most impressive days of climbing ever seen in the range, leading every pitch [see *CAJ*, 2020, vol.103, p.36–43]. First was Cryophobia (M8 WI5+, 7 pitches), then Nophobia (M10- WI3, 5 pitches), and finishing with Hydrophobia (WI5+, 4 pitches).

Hueniken wisely decided not to top out on Hydrophobia after an ice damn broke at the top of the climb. She humorously reports that she will support anyone who wants to complete the entire link-up. This season, in a safer venue, she climbed every route in the Haffner Upper Cave in a day: Dick Jones (M7), Caveman (M10), Piltdown Man (M12), Neolithic (M11+), Fire Roasted (M10+) and Homoerectus (M8+).

Further up the Icefields, Mount Murchison was a centre of activity. A hundred metres left of Cosmic Messenger, Slawinski and Juan Henriquez memorialized the passing of an icon from a much more popular sport with Hand of God (M7 WI5, 135m), which is four pitches with bolted drytooling leading to the obvious dagger. Below this on a lower band, Ferrethawk (WI3+ M6, 160m, Taborszky, Walters) was the site of a 20-metre whipper onto a micro-cam by a previous suitor. Left of Murchison Falls by 200 metres, beginning on the ice climb Aboriginal Genocide, Continuum (WI4+ M5+, 230m, Rob Owens, Mike Stuart, Jacob Dans) climbs a rightward-slanting rock corner in three pitches. Also on the Icefields Parkway, at the back of Hector Lake, Marche ou Creve (WI4, 135m, Taborszky, Walter, van Haeren) is to the right of the remote Orion Falls.

Not to be left out by the popularity of Storm Headwall, two new routes were established at the Stanley Headwall. Slawinski completed a project to the right of his God Delusion, reputed to be the highest-graded multi-pitch at the Headwall and the hardest new mixed route of the season. Clafoutis (M9 WI5, 150m), with Gery Unterasinger on the send, climbs a striking hand crack on pitch two to some of the most exposed ice at the Headwall on the last pitch. This effort is the culmination of Slawinski's incredible history at the Headwall, with it reported that he has climbed every mixed and ice route there (totaling approximately 45). That he might have missed a few minor pitches only proves the point that the amount of climbing he has done at the venue over the past 25 years is a truly peerless effort. Don't Stand So Close to Me (M7+, 90m, Berg, Hawthorne) is a pitch of steep drytooling to a thin ice pitch located between An Ideal For Living and Ghost in the Machine.

At last year's favourite crag, Rory O'Donnell and Ryan Daniel Patterson climbed just to the left of Grab the Cupcakes in Protection Valley. High Hanging Fruit (M6+R WI4, 305m) intersects with Grab the Cupcakes at the midway easy ground and then climbs out left to a waterfall pitch before finishing on bold face climbing to the rim. In the Kicking Horse Canyon, Slawinski and Hamill climbed Gasoline Alley (M5+ WI4, 160m), the buttress to the left of The Asylum, topping out on a flow of ice that appears most years.

With a significant part of the winter season left, the renewed interest in new routing is bound to offer more outings yet.

Jacob Dans on pitch five of Continuum.
Photo: Rob Owens

# The East

## The Tablelands

Paul Tizzard

KNOWN FOR ITS RUGGED COASTLINE, rich history and thick accents, the island of Newfoundland isn't by any means a climbing destination. Outside of two major centres on the east and west coasts, and a handful of world-class rock and ice-climbing routes found in the province's spectacular fjords, climbing on the island is largely undeveloped. The rugged terrain that covers Newfoundland, also called The Rock, is home to unique areas of renowned topography and geology.

The Tablelands, a part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site in Gros Morne National Park, are the first of four ophiolite massifs dotting the west coast of Newfoundland. Spanning from north to south, they rise up 700 to 800 metres from the Atlantic Ocean. This area housed research in the 1980s that helped scientists confirm the theory of plate tectonics and is one of only a few places on the planet that the earth's mantle is at the surface. A major goal since I started rock climbing was to learn trad and explore this rare gem in my own backyard. As my experienced climbing partner Andrew and I rounded the bend on Highway 431 that morning, the stunning Tablelands' plateau came into view—a stark contrast of lush green vegetation on one side and completely barren orange-brown peridotite rock on the other. The Tablelands were formed over 500 million years ago when the ancient Iapedus Ocean was pushed together by tectonic plates, thrusting the earth's mantle to the surface, to be preserved in the supercontinent Pangea. After millions of years of continental drifting, glaciers ground the formations into the table-top mountains that are characteristic of the region today. We had a rough plan in place but hadn't decided on where exactly we would make our ascent. Having spent time backcountry skiing and snowboarding in the area, we felt that Winterhouse Gorge would be a good spot to search for a line. We packed a standard rack of gear up to a #5 Camalot, with doubles in finger- and hand-sized pieces, and started off towards the gorge on the well-trodden tourist path. Thousands of tourists flock to the UNESCO World Heritage site every year, marvelling in the natural beauty and geological wonders, but for now, we had the mountains to ourselves. Entering Winterhouse Gorge, we eyed up the west wall towards the back of the glacier-scoured gorge—likely the spot with the most promise of an adventurous line to the top of the plateau. Hopping across talus, we made our way through the alien landscape that resembled a Martian crater. The main rock type here, peridotite, is low in calcium, high in magnesium and has toxic amounts of heavy metals, meaning that very few species of vegetation can grow. Peridotite is also high in iron, which accounts for the distinctive reddish-brown colour, reminiscent of Mars. Underneath this oxidized layer, the metamorphic rock is dark green in hue, sometimes seen on recently fractured faces. As we approached the wall, the mountain revealed endless possible routes through the

Andrew Stokes approaches Winterhouse Gorge.
Photo: Paul Tizzard

vertical maze of blocks and slabs. We chose a line beside a long streak of wet rock that we used as reference, leading to the most obvious section of ridgeline to gain the summit. Fixed protection is banned on the UNESCO-protected rocks, so topping out was of the utmost importance, leaving the option to bail on pitons only as a last resort.

The rocks were warming in the early September sun as we reached the base of what would be the first pitch. Excitement mounted as we sorted our gear, tied in and racked up. Having experience with mostly single- and multi-pitch sport climbing, I couldn't think of a better place to get acquainted with the choose-your-own-adventure style of traditional climbing found here. No set route but endless options on good-quality rock, using gear anchors only. After a quick safety check, Andrew started up a series of geometric boulders, and roughly 20 minutes later, the "Off belay!" command came over the two-way radio hanging from my harness. I quickly changed shoes while the slack was pulled up. Setting off on grippy rock with good feet, I moved up, alternating between slab monoliths with deep scars that perfectly fit fingers. After a few minutes of flowy climbing, collecting gear along the way, I reached the ledge where Andrew had slung a huge boulder for the belay. "Man, this is amazing!" I said to Andrew, "Such an alpine feel for being so close to sea level." One pitch up and already hooked, I could see myself exploring much more of this untouched rock in the future. I quickly re-racked and prepared for what would be my first time placing gear on the sharp end. After lots of practice with placing protection, building anchors and seconding over the past year, I felt ready and excited. I began pitch two with a few moves over a bulgy block, made harder by my backpack and a heavy rack of pro—carrying more pieces than needed to make up for my lack of experience. After a few more metres of unprotected climbing, I placed my first nut and felt secure and confident. This is what it's all about, I thought to myself. I made my way up the Mars-like pitch of massive rust-coloured blocks, through a series of spikey ridges and into a short, slabby dihedral. Gear placements were generally good on the way up, although sometimes tricky to find due to the flared and fractured nature of the glacier-worked rock. Runouts weren't worrisome, though, as the climbing was easy (but still engaging). I paused to examine the interesting rock formations. Seams of serpentinite, created by metamorphosis of the peridotite rock, dissected the huge blocks, while split boulders displayed an intricate mosaic layer of iridescent greens and blues. The cracks lined with serpentinite were polished and useless for Camalots, but after a little searching, I built a bomber anchor and belayed Andrew up to meet me. After swapping leads three more times up the next 120 metres of climbing, I began leading the sixth pitch of the route. I don't imagine most traditional climbing to be what one would call relaxing, but at this grade and with such terrain, it was just that. The safe, secure climbing made for fun route finding without battling fear, and the geological uniqueness of the area was a real treat. I reached a level patch of grass, slung a boulder at the top of the 65-metre final pitch and again belayed Andrew up to meet me.

We celebrated on the summit by taking in the phenomenal views. The barren Winterhouse Gorge directly beneath us, the Atlantic Ocean and coastal communities in the distance, with the park's namesake, Gros Morne, beyond that. With feet back in our approach shoes, we scrambled up to the trail leading back to the parking lot and were given a final farewell with the silhouette of a caribou in the distance. The perfect end to a stellar day adventure trad climbing in the Tablelands.

Andrew Stokes tops out on the final pitch of The Coconut Bangers Ball. Photo: Paul Tizzard

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**Summary**

The Coconut Bangers Ball (5.7, 245m, 6 pitches), Winterhouse Gorge, The Tablelands, Newfoundland. FA: Andrew Stokes, Paul Tizzard, September 2, 2020.

# La Saison de glace au Québec

Ian Bergeron

LES HAUTES-GORGES-DE-LA-RIVIÈRE-MALBAIE ONT VU BEAUCOUP D'ACTION en cette saison particulière, marquée par une météo insolite et les limitations de déplacement liées au couvre-feu. Le déneigement de la route d'accès depuis quelques années a également changé la donne et démocratisé l'accès aux cascades du pays de Menaud. Les pluies torrentielles de la période des fêtes ont certes contribué à la formation de nouvelles cascades, notamment la voie Klondike (IV WI6R, 220 m), ouverte dès le début 2021. C'est au trio composé de Charles Roberge, Jean-Philippe Bélanger et Yan Mongrain que l'on doit cette première nouvelle ligne majeure dans le parc des Hautes-Gorges.

Charles Roberge dans Klondike.
Photo : Yan Mongrain

La découverte initiale de Klondike revient à Charles Roberge, qui avait remarqué la mince ligne de glace en 2017. Les pluies diluviennes et les températures chaudes du 24 décembre 2020 l'ont persuadé de retourner voir si la ligne éphémère s'était reformée. La chance a souri au trio, ce qui a lancé la saison avec fracas.

Charles et Jean-Philippe ont d'ailleurs renforcé cet élan quelques semaines plus tard en faisant la première ascension de Tabasco (WI6+, 115 m), à l'extrémité gauche de La Pomme d'or. C'est une voie difficile d'accès, étant perchée assez haut sur le massif et nécessitant une solide approche.

Toujours au début de janvier, Patrick Gagné et Vincent Demers ont fait la première de C'est pas la mer ciboire (WI5, 120 m). La voie se situe entre Le Triolet et Hystérie collective, bien avant L'Écluse et aussi sur la rive ouest de la rivière Malbaie. Quelques jours plus tard, Carl Darveau et Jean-François Girard ont ajouté une variante à cette ligne afin de rejoindre le sommet. Ainsi un grade 2+ de 60 mètres et une longueur en M7– de 40 mètres ont été ouverts. Comme ces nouvelles longueurs ne font pas partie de la ligne originale, Carl et Jean-François ont nommé leur voie Inconscient collectif (Wl5 M7–, 100 m).

En février, Sébastien Morin et Patrice Beaudet ont fait un passage prolifique dans les Hautes-Gorges en ouvrant trois nouvelles voies : Le Retour de Papy (WI5, 90 m), La Goulotte des tropiques (WI4+, 70 m) et Passion hivernale (WI 4+, 65 m). Klondike a d'ailleurs été la bougie d'allumage qui aura fait revenir Patrice et Sébastien dans les Hautes-Gorges après une absence de 10 ans, leur dernière visite ayant été une tentative avortée sur La Loutre. Les deux hommes en ont profité pour répéter Klondike,

Patrice Beaudet dans Passion hivernale. Photo : Sébastien Morin

qui en était déjà à sa troisième cordée.

La Loutre (WI5+) a aussi vu son lot de piolets. À en lire les comptes rendus sur les médias sociaux, elle a presque vu autant d'ascensions en une saison que durant tout le reste de son existence. La Ruée vers l'or a également vu quelques cordées la gravir avec succès. Bref, une saison exceptionnelle pour le parc Charlevoisien.

L'autre parc de la région, les Grands-Jardins, semble avoir été un peu délaissé cet hiver. Le Gros-Bras a néanmoins eu droit à une grande nouvelle voie : Baba Yaga (V M8 V2, 165 m), fruit du travail de Louis Rousseau et Jean-François Girard [voir la page 146]. Cette ascension de 14 heures a combiné « traversée délicate, dalle en crampons, mince fissure à lame, surplombs, cheminée, gros blocs instables » a expliqué Louis Rousseau. Fait cocasse, c'est la première fois que l'on a vu apparaître une cotation de bloc sur une voie alpine. Ainsi, la cinquième longueur s'est vue affublée d'une cotation V2 dû aux mouvements de bloc que le duo a effectués pour franchir un passage. Louis et Jean-François ont terminé la sixième longueur, la plus difficile (M8 A1), à la frontale.

Toujours sur le Gros-Bras, Benoit Dubois et Éric Légaré ont répété Folie de jeunesse (5.11–). Cette voie de roche, originalement ouverte en 2018 par Pierre-Alexandre Paquet et Jacques Lamontagne, n'avait jamais été répétée. Bien que l'ascension de Benoit et Éric ne soit pas officiellement une ascension hivernale, printemps oblige, elle demeure une première en style mixte en condition froide. Les 230 mètres de la voie, avec un passage en M8+, ont pris un peu moins de 13 heures au duo. Le couvre-feu en vigueur a contraint les deux grimpeurs à passer la nuit dans la boîte de leur camionnette après leur aventure.

Ailleurs dans la province, Jean-François Girard a poursuivi sa saison « ordinaire » avec l'ouverture d'Ad Absurdum (WI5+ M6, 105 m) à Gros-Morne en Gaspésie. Pour cette ascension, il était accompagné de Mathias Arroyo Bégin. La première longueur s'est faite sur une dalle de glace mince avec un glaçon vertical à la fin. La deuxième longueur s'est déroulée en M6 sur du rocher de qualité douteuse, ce qui a aussi rendu le rappel hasardeux. « La roche aurait pu couper notre corde de 8 mm ou tout simplement s'écrouler sur nos têtes », a confié Jeff.

Malgré que les parois du Québec soient sillonnées depuis des décennies par les glaciéristes, cette saison confirme qu'il est encore possible de faire de belles découvertes sans pour autant devoir faire des heures de voiture et de motoneige. Les aléas de Dame Nature nous réservent parfois de belles surprises.

# Red Rock Mountain

Caleb Mazurkiewicz

THREE YEARS AGO, I had no idea how strongly I would come to identify with rock climbing. It has certainly helped define who I am today. So many of the amazing individuals I have met through climbing seem to not only give great insight into the sport but also share important life lessons. More than ever, I feel a true sense of community and see the role that plays in fostering support, courage, strength and friendship. I've watched this awareness slowly shift my focus from "how hard can I climb" toward "how can I give back."

I figured that developing more routes in New Brunswick might be one of the best ways to serve the community and leave an impact for years to come. Not knowing the first thing about route development, I began reading and asking around in hopes someone could point me in the right direction. Luckily, fellow climber Francois Cote was kind enough to take me out last spring. He showed me the processes of developing and bolting a new route. My newly formed curiosity in route development quickly led me to scouting new climbing areas with untapped potential.

In the back of Dom Carron's 2019 guidebook, *A Rock Climber's Guide to New Brunswick*, a place called Red Rock Mountain is mentioned with only a short excerpt: "…five routes—not like its Vegas counterpart." Having already explored a couple of nearby areas, I thought it wouldn't hurt to at least find this cliff. I asked some locals if they had heard of it and got some lighthearted answers, such as "Yeah, that's where we used to meet up, drink beer, play horseshoes and do rasslin'." With my interest piqued, I located Red Rock Mountain on a map and found my way to the base in mid-May last year. While hiking along the bottom of the 500-metre-long band of granite, I passed several broken-up cliffs, ranging from nine to 35 metres in height. I was taken aback by the potential: short, pumpy overhangs; perfectly featured faces; small roofs; and, to top it off, what might turn out to be some of the best granite slabs in the province. I couldn't help but feel inspired.

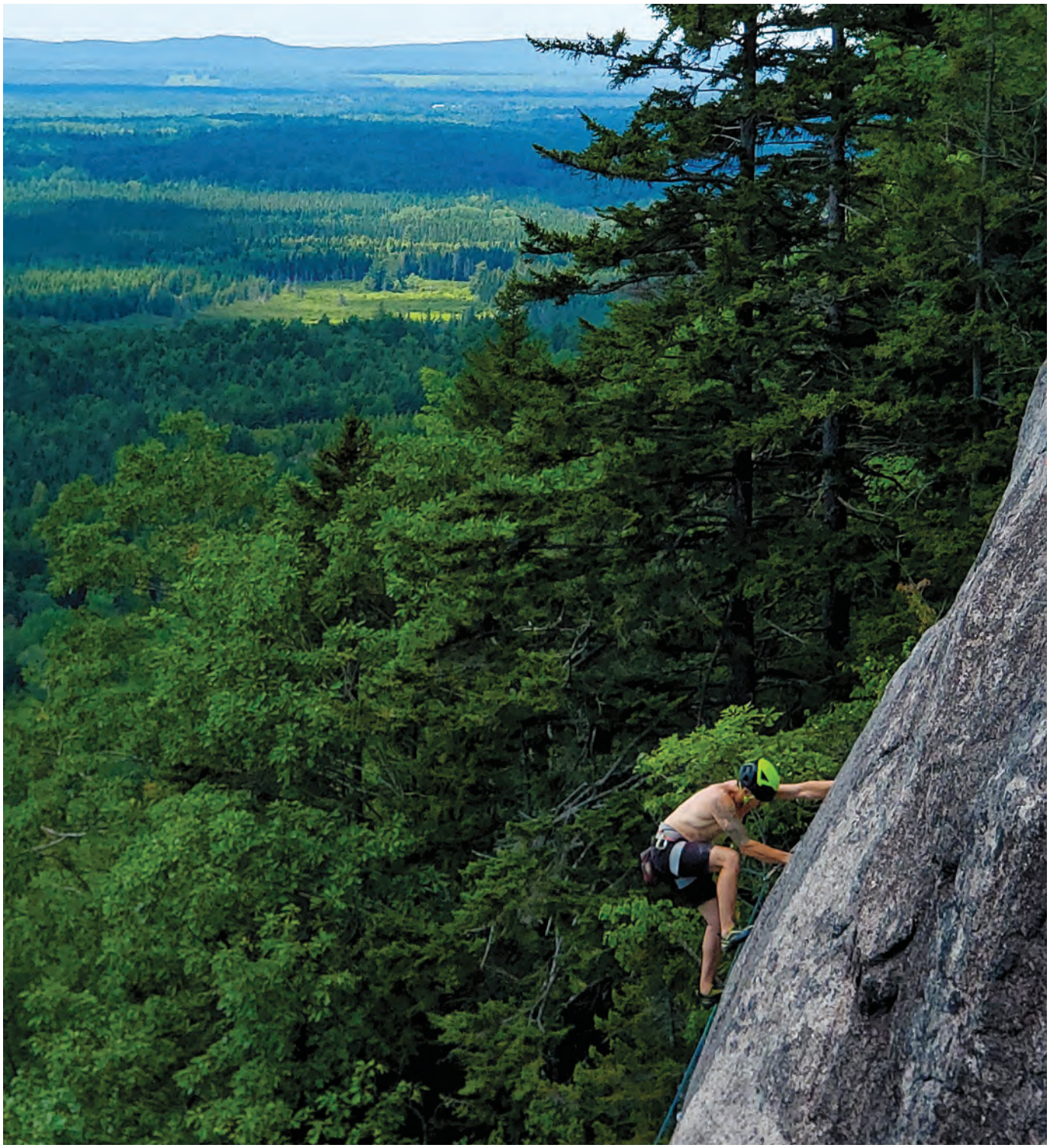
Before I could start developing and climbing, I needed more information about the area, so I reached out to Greg Hughes—local climbing guide and president of Ascent NB, the New Brunswick climbing association. Not surprisingly, he was able to provide a bit of insight: "This cliff was first explored back in the summer of 2008 by Chris Norfolk, Erick Burley, Fred Berube and Jon Corey. There was a brief flurry of activity with some scrubbing of rock and preening of trees. Bolts and rappel stations were installed, but only one of five routes was actually climbed ground up on lead. The group never went back to do any more work, and all have since moved on to other things."

We met at the cliff the following week. Two routes with a single bolt were visible from the ground, though we had no descriptions to work with. As we stood at the base of one of the climbs, Greg looked to me and said with encouragement, "I think it's either a 5.9 or 5.11." With that, I racked up and set off on my first-ever, ground-up first ascent. Five metres of face climbing pulled onto a beautiful granite slab, which delivered thought-provoking movement over the following 30 metres. As I smeared and edged my way through the crux, I was reminded of the joy climbing provides. I topped out and turned to take in the view as excitement rushed over me. I knew that the route, that experience, would be shared with generations of climbers.

Horseshoes and Rasslin' (5.11a, 35m) was our first new route at Red Rock Mountain—a real slab-climbing test piece. It was partially bolted by Fred Bérubé and abandoned for more than a decade. Four bolts were added after our first ascent to eliminate runouts and potentially nasty ledge falls.

After that day, I completely fell in love with the area and the process of route development. I have since spent countless hours exploring, cleaning and putting up new routes. Scrubbing dirt off a cliff is not glamourous work, but all the cuts, bruises, sunburns and bugs are worth it when you see others enjoy the result. With the help of friends, I cleaned and bolted 55 routes, transforming a forgotten cliff into one of New Brunswick's premier sport crags.

Luc Gallant on Horses and Rasslin' at Red Rock Mountain. Photo: Caleb Mazurkiewicz



# Bullets Before Breakfast

Reg Smart

WITHIN THE FIRST FEW WEEKS of the pandemic, no one seemed to know what was happening and how to respond—don't wear masks, always social distance, don't touch cardboard or plastic surfaces. A shortage of toilet paper and bad frozen food added to the overwhelming. In Ontario, climbing areas in provincial parks and conservation areas and gyms were closed with no reopening in sight.

I was calling to cancel the RV sites across the United States that I had booked for my three-month climbing, mountain biking and skiing trip. I was going to start in Arizona, and then head north as areas became too hot, ending in the Kootenays to ski with my daughter. I was amazed by the response from each campground manager I called, "We got no problem down here with the COVID." Telling them that the border was closed and that I was unable to leave Canada didn't convince them enough for any refund—not a single one. A whole winter of training seemed to be heading down the drain.

My brother Dave called in mid-May and said that we needed to go to Algoma, because he had a great new project cliff named Riverside on the way into the Eyeball. The cliff he had in mind was 10 metres off of a logging road. There were no routes on the cliff, and there was no trail to the top. The cliff was 110 metres at the highest point and about a kilometre long. It was isolated, so we needed to bring everything with us, including a generator to charge batteries for the drills. He ended the conversation with, "Oh yeah, there will be bugs."

This was my first time to the Eyeball area. I have climbed in northern Ontario before, climbing amazing multi-pitch crack lines in Orient Bay and enjoying the vibrant climbing scene around Sudbury. A few years ago, I attended a slide show by the greatest explorer of Algoma, Danylo Darewych. Danylo's passion and enthusiasm for the area is infectious and stayed with me.

Algoma is well-known for the Eyeball—an impressive cliff that doesn't seem to fit in with Ontario's smaller crags. It is several kilometres long and up to 130 metres high. Over the years, the Eyeball was divided up by a few groups who claim potential routes by leaving ropes and staking out areas of the cliff, in some cases for years. A myth started about the Eyeball from a post on social media, boasting that if you were not a multi-pitch 5.11+ climber then this cliff wasn't for you, even though the first ascensionist, Danylo, established many routes on the Eyeball at 5.8 or easier. The appeal to me was that Riverside had a fresh energy.

Dave and I arrived at the base of Riverside with enough daylight to scope out the possibilities for a new route. Standing at the base, I felt that old feeling of excitement. Looking over to Dave, I mumbled, "I love this." Forty-two years of climbing with my brother added to my enjoyment of being there. We decided where to rap down in the morning and where we would hike up. Within minutes of sunset, the black flies were out and stayed out for the next three days, 24 hours a day.

In the morning, the temperatures were unusually warm for that time of year. We had bug hats, gloves, pants tucked into socks and 20-kilogram packs. After three hours of hiking and one tumble down a slope, we reached the top of Riverside with its stunning view of the Little White River.

We took a chance and rappelled to a ledge that was so huge we got separated looking for the rest of the route. The ledge was inhabited by massive white pines. The unlogged ledge added to the beauty and mystery of Riverside. We later named the ledge the North Channel after the channel between Manitoulin Island and the mainland.

A few hours later we found a potential route. Bolting and cleaning lichen and loose rock for the next few days revealed a spectacular climb. The rock on Riverside is a mix of pink granite with veins of mudstone. I found large pieces of mudstone at the base of the cliff that had fossilized ripples from ancient riverbeds. Mudstone lends itself to in-cut holds and perfect edges. The pink granite is featured with short cracks and a variety of different hold shapes.

On the third day, we realized we were not going to complete the route that trip. We had cleaned five pitches and done 80 per cent of the bolting. At dinner that night, Dave came up with the name for the route, Bullets Before Breakfast. During our two trips to Riverside, Dave would practice his shooting skills with my Cooey 22. He wasn't a good shot before, but by the end of the second trip, and a couple of thousand rounds later, he was a master.

Four weeks later, we headed back to Riverside with John Kaandorp. I have known John for 40 years and have been climbing with him on and off for the past 20. John is one of my favourite people to be with. He has energy and passion for almost anything, causing him to have many projects on the go at once. At John's place, he started loading stuff into my truck from what looked like a pile of garbage that was actually his equipment. His weirdest piece of kit was an oversized wooden toolbox that looked like he had stolen from Super Mario.

We took the ferry from Tobermory to Manitoulin Island to save time and break up the drive. John entertained us with his epic stories of multi-day solo sailing on his Laser. As we passed islands and large open bodies of water, John would point and say things like, "Oh yeah, I slept on that island. It's full of rattlesnakes," or "I was pinned down in that bay for days," or "My mast broke there. It was really bad."

This time we were prepared for the 24/7 bugs and spared nothing with a 12-by-12 screened bug tent, silverware, stand-up propane grills, Persian rugs for the tent floor, generators for lights and drills, and my greatest enjoyment, the six-person tent with a queen-size mattress, chairs and a small table.

We completed the cleaning and bolting during a 30-Celcius day. While we were on the cliff, a couple went by in a canoe. A guy yelled up, "Hey, do you know Paul? He climbs too." I yelled back, "Yes we do! We don't like him!" as they passed around the corner. Later that afternoon, we were cooling off in the Little White River with Danylo and his crew. The beauty of Algoma felt so real with all of us sitting in water, washing off the dirt and lichen, surrounded by sounds of the river, smells of the forest and sight of the breathtakingly blue sky that within in a few hours would be vivid with the Milky Way.

Dave Smart on pitch three of Bullets Before Breakfast.
Photo: Reg Smart

The next morning the bugs disappeared as the day heated up. We swung leads, completing the first rock route at Riverside, Bullets Before Breakfast. The first pitch is 5.9 face climbing. The second pitch is an easy traverse with a few 5.9 moves at the end, which reminds me of climbing on Yamnuska. The third pitch is a vertical mix of mudstone and granite with amazing movement at 5.9/5.10. The fourth pitch is a short 5.8 corner to the North Channel ledge and a 40-metre walk to the fifth pitch of 5.8 with outrageous exposure.

Three weeks after the first ascent of Bullets Before Breakfast, Dave and I were back at Riverside. Driving past the cliff, I noticed two parties on our new route, and to our surprise, Bullets Before Breakfast had many ascents over the rest of the season.

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**Summary**

Bullets Before Breakfast (5.10, 110m, 5 pitches), Riverside Cliff, Eastern Algoma, Northern Ontario. FA: John Kaandorp, Dave Smart, Reg Smart, June 20, 2020.

# Baba Yaga

Louis Rousseau

LE MATIN DU 19 MARS 2021, dans le parc national des Grands-Jardins, l'hiver bombe fièrement le torse pour marquer sa dernière journée. Les premières lueurs du jour tapissent le haut du Mur des rencontres, mais nous savons pertinemment qu'à notre arrivée au pied de la face nord du mont du Gros-Bras, le rideau de lumière s'estompera avant même qu'on ait le temps de mettre nos crampons pour tenter notre nouveau projet. Nous connaissons cette face pour avoir essayé d'y répéter Le dernier Rōnin [*CAJ*, 2015, vol. 98, p. 114–115]. Ce versant n'étant éclairé qu'une minuscule heure après le lever du soleil, le froid a eu raison de nous au premier relais lors de cette tentative. Avec le vent mordant qui balaie le stationnement aujourd'hui, nous nous disons que nous allons probablement revivre la même expérience.

Nous avons déjà été en reconnaissance pour vérifier qu'il y a bel et bien une mince fissure à lame de piolet, à gauche de la deuxième longueur de la voie Le dernier Rōnin. Cette faiblesse dans la paroi nous permettra de nous frayer un chemin par-delà ce mur noir et lisse d'une quarantaine de mètres jusqu'au grand plateau qui sépare la face nord en deux. La suite jusqu'au sommet nous est encore inconnue. C'est lors de cette même journée de prospection que nous avons aperçu un arbre hideux au milieu de la première longueur. En contraste avec le ciel bleu, ce petit bouleau noir sortant du rocher couleur charbon ressemblait à une main de sorcière lugubre prête à nous agripper. Sans l'avoir grimpée, nous avons nommé la voie « Baba Yaga », le nom de la sorcière diabolique et cannibale des légendes slaves.

Baba Yaga, face nord du mont du Gros-Bras. Photo : Louis Rousseau

L'ascension jusqu'au sommet nous prend 14 heures et combine traversée délicate, dalle en crampons, mince fissure à lame, mouvements de bloc, surplombs, cheminée, gros blocs instables dans les deux dernières longueurs et une finale en M8 A1 à la frontale. Les six longueurs sont très singulières et intimidantes. C'est pour cette raison que nous avons baptisé chacune d'elles en nous inspirant du conte populaire russe *Vassilissa la Belle,* dans lequel la sorcière Baba Yaga est une figure marquante. Les longueurs vont comme suit : Le Bouleau noir (M6+), Le Portail (M7), La Cabane aux pattes de poule (M4), Le Mortier et le pilon (M6), La Poupée de Vassilissa (M6/M6+), Le Crâne lumineux (M8 A1).

L'escalade hivernale de cet itinéraire en face nord a été une aventure hasardeuse tout comme cette histoire de la jeune héroïne Vassilissa qui a dû compléter des tâches impossibles pour éviter d'être dévorée par la sorcière et mériter le fameux charbon qui brûle tout l'hiver.

**Résumé**

Baba Yaga (M8 A1, 165 m), face nord, mont du Gros-Bras, parc national des Grands-Jardins, Québec. PA : Louis Rousseau, Jean-François Girard, 19 mars 2021.

# Défi au mont Larose

Jérôme St-Michel

LE MONT LAROSE POSSÈDE des parois qui sont parmi les plus impressionnantes de la région des Laurentides. L'escalade y est variée, avec des voies hyper techniques en dalles, des surplombs parsemés de quelques réglettes, ou encore des fissures pures. Le versant sud offre les parcours les plus majestueux. Haut d'environ 80 mètres, il est majoritairement déversant et comporte d'anciennes lignes d'escalade artificielle, dont certaines n'ont toujours pas été libérées, et également de récentes voies d'envergure en libre.

L'ambiance du mont Larose est rendue plus fascinante par la présence d'un centre de télécommunications qui avoisine directement l'endroit. Les immenses soucoupes et les antennes paraboliques de celui-ci créent un univers tiré tout droit d'un film de science-fiction.

J'ai entendu parler du mont Larose pour la première fois lorsque je débutais en escalade. Les grimpeurs discutaient souvent d'une de ses lignes les plus classiques, qui s'appelle Black and White. D'autres itinéraires difficiles et obscurs intéressaient les gens, entre autres Le Temple du soleil (5.13a), La Promenade sur Mars (5.12d) et 5 km (5.13c).

Au début des années 1990, la face la plus raide et la plus continue du mont Larose n'avait toujours pas été libérée. Cependant, Fun with a Gun, un itinéraire engagé en artificiel et complètement sur protection naturelle, présentait un potentiel pour une première voie en libre. D'après le premier ascensionniste, Bob Cartwright, la ligne était libérable.

Pierre Cornelier, l'auteur du livre guide du mont Larose, m'avait déjà proposé de jeter un coup d'œil à Fun with a Gun, mais j'avais la plupart du temps la tête ailleurs, étant occupé par d'autres projets d'escalade. Les rumeurs affirmaient que la voie était pour les suicidaires, ou encore qu'elle était inaccessible à cause de sa difficulté.

Au printemps 2020, après un hiver aventureux passé à grimper des cascades de glace, j'étais à la recherche de défis en escalade traditionnelle. Le rocher ensoleillé du mont Larose était un bon endroit où commencer. J'avais également derrière la tête ce projet de libérer une ligne d'artificielle majeure. Depuis assez longtemps, en fait, c'était quelque chose dont je rêvais ; ce serait certainement une grande occasion d'apprentissage.

L'idée de faire Fun with a Gun en libre grandissait rapidement ! Dès le début, il était question d'éthique. Comment allais-je découvrir la voie ? Devais-je partir du sol en utilisant les techniques de l'escalade artificielle ? Ou bien descendre en rappel depuis le sommet ?

Les prévisions pour la dernière fin de semaine de février étant prometteuses, j'allais enfin pouvoir évaluer la possibilité de grimper cette voie en libre. Le samedi, j'ai fait le trajet jusqu'au mont Larose seul, avec toute la quincaillerie nécessaire pour tenter un repérage depuis le bas.

La ligne de Fun with a Gun monte tout droit dans la section la plus impressionnante du grand mur. Vu du sentier d'approche, cette partie du mur donne l'impression de figurer dans *Jurassic Park* ; c'est assez intimidant. L'itinéraire suit quelque chose qui, depuis le sol, ressemble à une fissure à doigts. Facile de s'imaginer que l'escalade pourrait y être modérée. Par contre, le système de fissures est légèrement discontinu.

D'une manière ou d'une autre, j'ai fini par me dégonfler avant même d'essayer à partir du bas. Après tout, c'était le grand confinement à cause de la COVID-19 et le débordement dans les hôpitaux de la région ne m'inspirait pas beaucoup. J'ai donc décidé que j'allais découvrir la voie en partant du sommet.

Je n'avais pas passé beaucoup de temps dans le vide auparavant. Ma peur des hauteurs, qui était totalement injustifiée, a refait surface lors de ma reconnaissance aérienne. En zieutant la voie, je me suis rapidement rendu compte que non seulement la grimpe serait difficile mais aussi la protection. En effet, la plupart des placements semblaient douteux. Bref, j'étais content de découvrir la voie depuis le haut.

Le style et l'éthique ont toujours été des choses que j'essaie constamment de comprendre. Quand

j'ai commencé à envisager de faire la voie en tête, après plusieurs dizaines d'essais en moulinette, c'était beaucoup de travail de trouver les protections. La protection adéquate du passage clé s'est avérée particulièrement difficile, et elle serait compliquée par le risque d'une chute sérieuse lors d'une ascension en tête. Après m'être creusé la cervelle au maximum, j'ai enfin décidé de marteler un piton !

Plus tard, après quelques conversations avec des locaux, j'ai compris que mon acte était inacceptable. J'avais carrément modifié la voie. Ajouter ce piton, c'était admettre une sorte de défaite morale face au véritable défi de gravir la voie naturelle. Je me suis donc rétracté et j'ai retiré le piton.

Une manie obsessionnelle-compulsive s'est ensuite emparée de moi dans le processus d'affronter la voie. À un certain point, j'essayais de démontrer avec des calculs mathématiques que je ne frapperais pas la vire si les choses tournaient mal au passage clé. Après des recherches, j'ai pu obtenir la force appliquée pour un facteur de chute spécifique, ce qui m'a permis d'évaluer l'élongation potentielle de la corde.

Ensuite, j'ai pris une photo à haute résolution de la voie. Connaissant la localisation du dernier bon placement, ainsi que la longueur de corde dans le système, j'ai pu estimer à quelle distance de la vire la chute pourrait se terminer. C'était proche, très proche, mais grâce à ces calculs j'ai pu me convaincre que le risque demeurait tolérable.

Le matin de l'enchaînement, je me suis réveillé dans ma Honda Element avec l'impression de ne pas avoir assez dormi, mais aussi en me disant que ce ne serait pas la première fois que je me lançais dans un défi après seulement quelques heures de sommeil. La météo n'était pas au rendez-vous. Il avait plu pendant la nuit, et toute la forêt était encore trempée. J'étais particulièrement calme ; mes pratiques de yoga et de méditation des derniers jours semblaient m'avoir enfin apporté la paix. Le brouillard entourait la falaise comme je ne l'avais jamais vu auparavant. L'air était assez humide et il faisait froid.

Mon assureur pour la journée est arrivé alors que je prenais mécaniquement mon petit déjeuner composé de céréales circulaires et de dattes dénoyautées.

Jérôme St-Michel dans Fun with a Gun.
Photo : Richard Mardens

Pierre a une silhouette de grimpeur de singe, avec des cheveux grisâtres et des lunettes hipster carrées. Sa présence me rassurait. Environ de l'âge de mon père, il a beaucoup d'expérience en escalade. J'avais le sentiment qu'il pourrait probablement me secourir en cas d'une mauvaise chute. David Marche, un grimpeur bien impliqué au Québec, était également présent. Grand et costaud, David me rappelle Sylvester Stallone, avec sa voix super-grave. C'était réconfortant d'avoir ces deux grimpeurs chevronnés avec moi ce jour-là, mais en même temps je ressentais une certaine pression de performer et j'avais envie de leur montrer de quoi j'étais capable.

Comme première étape, j'ai marché lentement jusqu'au sommet de la falaise et j'ai fait un rappel dans la voie pour y installer une corde fixe et y jeter un dernier coup d'œil. Après m'être méticuleusement échauffé, j'ai fait un essai en moulinette dedans. Et pour la première fois j'ai enchaîné le passage clé en partant du bas de la voie. J'avais les mains gelées, mais l'adhérence du rocher était parfaite.

Une heure plus tard, nerveusement mais sûrement, je m'apprêtais à faire une tentative en tête. Si je n'enchaînais pas à cet essai, l'ascension allait probablement devoir attendre quelques mois. On était le 1er juin et il faisait déjà très chaud dans les Laurentides.

En commençant à grimper, j'étais calme et ma concentration me surprenait. La peur et la pression ne me préoccupaient pas. En l'espace de quelques minutes, je me suis retrouvé au repos directement sous le passage clé. C'est un bon repos, donc j'ai dû m'appliquer pour garder un état d'esprit guerrier et ne pas commencer à délirer comme je le fais souvent quand les repos sont trop confortables. (En effet, lorsque j'ai l'occasion, je me repose trop et mes pensées s'égarent vers des possibilités d'échec et d'autres choses qui peuvent m'empêcher de grimper de manière optimale.) Cette fois-ci, c'était le tout pour le tout ; j'allais tout donner, et s'il fallait prendre la chute j'étais prêt.

Alors que je commençais le passage clé, ma fréquence cardiaque s'est accélérée, mais en même temps l'excitation grandissait en moi. J'ai attrapé le bac final, et à ce moment-là, j'ai su que c'était dans la poche. J'avais pris environ 30 minutes pour compléter la voie, en utilisant chacun des repos à son maximum.

# Abroad At Home

Matt MacPhee

SPRING IN NOVA SCOTIA traditionally marks a seasonal migratory pattern for our local climbers. As the birds return to greet the warm weather, we flock to airports to find drier rock to the south and west. Our airports and highways fill (relatively speaking, at least) with approach-shoe-shod wannabe dirtbags as we avoid our wet, bug-filled shoulder season.

April has been a launch month for me to visit U.S. highlights such as New Hampshire, Red River Gorge and Yosemite, among others. I come home stoked for the season with a few lead falls under my belt, ready to throw myself at our relatively limited collection of single-pitch sport and trad projects.

Climbing here in the Maritimes has always felt like protracted training that helps me climb cooler routes in other places. Exploration and adventure always came after a plane ride to Calgary or Las Vegas. That all changed in March of last year with COVID-19. As the world ground to a halt, our provincial government took an aggressive approach to control the spread of the virus. Like many parts of the world, we were told to only leave the house for necessities, don't associate with anyone outside of your family, and basically don't be seen in public. Nova Scotians are mostly good about following the rules, and we abided by these with the hope of a saved summer and quick return to normal.

James Kesten and Sean Therien on pitch two of Snake Eyes on Cape Clear. Photo: Matt MacPhee

Normal, however, quickly took the shape of our internationally recognized Atlantic Bubble. The four Atlantic provinces had freedom of internal movement, but travel outside of this region was strongly discouraged with mandatory, fine-enforced 14-day quarantine periods upon return home. Suddenly, the quarterly adventure exodus that we took for granted was an impossibility. Our options were clear: either enter into a purgatory of potentially unrequited lust for climbing outside our region, or change our focus and work with what we had.

Our last official guidebook, the excellent *Nova Scotia Rock Climbing,* lists approximately 700 routes in Nova Scotia, located almost entirely on the mainland. The Cape Breton Highlands had seen some development in the 80s, and then again sporadically through the 2000s, but had largely gone untouched due to it's relatively long and rugged drive from Halifax and limited seasonal window. Could this be the adventure replacement we needed?

On June 4, Todd Foster, guidebook author, developer extraordinaire and one of the few climbers to have put up routes at Cape Clear—by far the largest rock feature in the province—took novice route developers Kelly Buchanan and myself on a recon mission to check it out. We loaded the truck up with a weekend's worth of food, bolting gear and landscaping equipment and hit the road for the five-hour drive from Halifax. After a close nighttime brush with a startled moose on a logging road, we inexplicably got stuck—at first literally, then figuratively—by three feet of snow in the road, several months after the last snow melted away from the rest of the province. We were undeterred, however, and made camp at the edge of our glacial stand-in. Living up to its reputation, Cape Clear did not and does not give up its treasures easily.

After an optimistic early morning reading of Google Maps, we loaded up our packs with 20 kilograms each of chainsaws, loppers, static lines and not enough water, and then trudged for two hours along what ended up being almost six kilometres of logging road to the top of Cape Clear. We spent the day reviving old trails cut along the base of what is known as Wave Wall, an impressive ridge line comprised of unique 3D granite that in some places exceeds a hundred metres in height—a variable El Capitan for a region where routes rarely exceed 20 metres. A few old routes existed here but the wall was almost entirely untouched. Our necks (and everything else) were sore from a full day of trail work and gazing up at several lifetimes of undeveloped potential.

The next morning, we made an even more optimistic reading of Google Maps and planned a straight-line bushwhack to avoid the long hike in. This took us through equal parts massive clear cuts and untouched steep ravines, in an approach that was equally as long but far more tiring than the previous day. We spent the day scrubbing some new lines before resolving to come back soon to install bolts.

The snow had melted by our next trip two weeks later, only to be replaced by the worst black flies any of us had experienced. Still undeterred, we discovered that they were slightly more tolerable on the wall than off, so we equipped bolts on several new lines and sent an instant classic two-pitch 5.9 called Highland Heatwave. Rumour of our work spread faster than a contagion could under our strict Atlantic Bubble, and multiple other development teams soon descended on Cape Clear from Halifax and New Brunswick. The race was on to pluck Wave Wall's plumb lines.

The next few months saw an explosion of traffic at Cape Clear. During our next visit, we had to wait for actual line ups to clear on Highland Heatwave before we could start cleaning and trundling new lines. Normally, the only place you'd see a line up in Nova Scotia that summer was at the liquor store, and never for a climbing route, so we took this as a clear sign that Maritime climbers were looking for a taste of adventure and were willing to put the work in to find it. Routes were being equipped and sent at an unprecedented rate, with teams adding mostly bolt-protected routes up to four pitches in length, with Greg Hughes and company adding the last bolts as early snowflakes fell in late October. In total, teams equipped 15 pitches of climbing, opening four new multi-pitch lines before winter closed in and leaving two others until 2021.

The mostly undeveloped walls of Cape Clear. Photo: Alex Maclean

With spring, old patterns are back. The birds have returned, climbers are looking forward to rock, and just two days before I sat down to write this piece, a third wave of COVID-19 has once again forced our provincial government to enforce a near-total lockdown of business and movement. As in 2020, the world of the Nova Scotian climber remains small. Will we wait and watch and hope for escape to other areas, or will we return to Cape Clear and continue to transform our home into the climbing destination we need it to be. I can't speak for everyone, but I will say that my bolt gun is charged and ready to go.

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**Summary**

Highland Heatwave (5.9, 95m, 3 pitches) Cape Clear, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. FA: Kelly Buchanan, Todd Foster, Greg Hughes, June 20, 2020.

CB Cool Down (5.10a, 55m, 2 pitches), Cape Clear, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. FA: James Kesten, Matt MacPhee, July 4, 2020.

Champions Club (5.10d, 55m, 2 pitches), Cape Clear, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. FA: Todd Foster, Matt MacPhee, August 22, 2020.

The Price of Admission (5.9, 90m, 4 pitches) Cape Clear, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. FA: Greg Hughes, Emily Keast, September 18, 2020.

# Foreign

## Arrayán

Drew Marshall

THREE YEARS AGO, my good friend and longtime climbing partner Clinton returned from adventures in Southern Chile. He had stories of wild remote bivies, approaches so long they mandated rest days, gourmet campfire meals and, of course, big granite walls. This was the first I had heard of a place called Valle Cochamó, and I've wanted to go ever since. Clinton and his friends had established a new route called Arrayán on Cerro Trinidad Sur. He said it would go free but after weeks spent aiding and scrubbing, he was satisfied with the adventure and ready to move on. He made a topo and left it an open project. This spring Clinton proposed another trip to Cochamó, and I proposed back a free attempt on Arrayán. His eyes lit up.

Over the summer, our motley fellowship grew. We had climbed with Joe Marin since we were in school. Nat Bailey and Jaron Pham, two young guns from Squamish, also joined the team, and Aussie local legend Elliot Vercoe rounded the crew to an even six. Our team received the John Lauchlan Memorial Award for the trip, and without this financial support, the trip would not have been possible for all of us.

A few months later, we were all living under a rock in the Trinidad Valley. I woke up at 3 a.m. to the patter of heavy rain falling outside the bivy boulder. It looked like the day would be a write-off, so I grumpily turned off my alarm and went back to sleep. I later woke to discover that Clinton had not written off the day and instead had let me sleep in while he made yerba mate. The bitter tea filled me with caffeine and optimism. "If we're not back tonight, it means we're sending," we told the homies as we took off for the push.

After a damp (but very nice) corner pitch and a scramble, we reached the deep chasm that divides Trinidad Central and Sur. There, the morning's rain was not an issue since the north wall of the gully overhangs for 150 metres. Above us lay an absolute ass-kicker of a crack, rising 50 metres diagonally across golden granite. My lead this time. I scraped my way up hand jams and finger locks to the only good rest, a hanging ledge positioned mercifully below the crux. I found a new sequence and managed to hang on through the last desperate section of thin hands. When I finally collapsed onto the belay ledge, I was covered in sweat despite the cool conditions. What a pitch! This must be one of the most bitchin' crack pitches in Cochamó, provided you like to go heavy on the burl sauce. Once I regained the ability to operate my thumbs, I put Clinton on belay, and he followed clean. We were on point!

After some earlier tries on the lower pitches, we decided our best chance would be to climb the route in multiple days. We fixed a line, and returned and climbed three more pitches, stashing a portaledge and two days' worth of supplies at the base of a thin stem corner. This corner was the biggest question mark on the route. Clinton had never done all the moves but remembered thinking it would go. Our plan was to try the hard pitches down low until we sent, and then climb to the ledge, giving us two days to work the corner and summit.

Clinton Leung on pitch seven of Arrayán.
Photo: Jaron Pham

Drew Marshall on pitch six of Arrayán.
Photo: Jaron Pham

THE SUN EVENTUALLY came around and burned off any moisture on the upper pitches. Temperatures were unusually cool, and the friction felt good. Although we had two days of food at Pirate Ledge, the forecast would only allow us one. Still, it seemed like that was our best opportunity. With the ass-kicker pitch down, the pressure was on.

Clinton pulled onto the wall. He cruised a section of steep face climbing but fell from an awkward slot higher up. We pulled the rope, and I made it past the slot, gaining a splitter finger crack but slipping unexpectedly out of the sharp locks. Once again we pulled the rope. As soon as Clinton surpassed the slot, he re-entered his natural habitat and fired the rest. I managed to follow clean. The day's hardest pitches were out of the way now. The next three pitches would take us out of the chasm and onto the exposed upper face where steep cracks gave way to delicate stemming.

I took a heartbreaking winger 40 metres up the next pitch, and Clinton had to take over the lead. "My calves are so pumped," he told me at the anchor. "My arms are so pumped!" I countered. We restacked the rope so that Clinton would lead the bouldery next pitch. This left me with the magnificent Angel's Penis pitch, a stem flare reminiscent of the Shadow in Squamish. As the sun dipped behind the peaks on the opposite side of the valley, we finished a spicy face traverse to Pirate Ledge. We now stood perched on the most exposed part of the wall where overhang turned to slab and the chasm dropped away beneath us. This granted us a sublime sunset view as we began to untangle our portaledge.

The next morning after a beautiful sunrise, we enjoyed a casual start over mate and oats. I won the rock-paper-scissors and hangdogged my way up the corner and arête above, discovering tricky beta and nut placements. Clinton belayed comfortably on the portaledge below, the Jolly Roger whipping in the wind—sky cragging at its finest. Soon we each had a sequence. The sun came around the corner, and I de-layered down to

a T-shirt. Conditions were nearly perfect. I pasted both feet on the left wall and started bumping my palm up the arête when I heard a whoa from below and a whoosh from above. I looked up in time to see a giant condor drift just above me. I continued into its wake, only sheer luck and a blind crimp keeping me from teetering off. When Clinton followed, he seemed to float up effortlessly. I could tell he had wanted to lead the pitch, but we both knew this wasn't the time—our morning of T-shirt sky cragging was coming to an end.

The weather can quickly change in Cochamó. A wind picked up in the west, raising clouds from the next valley. It felt like rain, so we transitioned to fast and light. I led a wandering pitch of excellent slab and finger crack, and Clinton took us to the top via an endless glory hand crack. At the summit we awkwardly hugged it out, elated to realize a month-long dream. We agreed that this was the hardest climb we had ever done. And in so many ways, we had just gotten away with it. As we finished the first rappel, snagging our rope on a flake, we felt the first drops of rain.

We later returned to Arrayán with Chilean local Inti Mellado (who nearly onsighted the tenuous crux pitch) and our buddy Jaron Pham, an up-and-coming climbing photographer. We added three bolts to the route, Clinton finally led the crux pitch and Jaron got some great photos. We reflected on the route and the journey. We hope one day it will be climbed in better style—in a day and without yo-yoing. Mostly though, we're happy that other climbers will now enjoy the route like we did.

**Acknowledgements**

This trip was supported by the John Lauchlan Memorial Award.

**Summary**

Arrayán (5.12d, 400m), Cerro Trinidad Sur, Valle Cochamó, Chile. FFA: Clinton Leung, Drew Marshall, January 26–27, 2020.

Arrayán on the north face of Trinidad Sur.
Photo: Drew Marshall

# 2020 International Winter Meet

Peter Hoang

MY FRIEND Maarten van Haeren suggested I join him at the 2020 International Winter Meet in Scotland, an event that has a reputation for drawing some of the best climbers in the world to a venue that is considered to be the epicentre of mixed climbing. When I reached out to my colleagues for beta, they all described the location as having some pretty awful weather, tricky pro and heady leads—conveniently rounding up all the things I typically hate. Somehow, all the conversations closed out with "…you'll love it!" I wasn't exactly sure what I signed up for, but I was quite keen to find out why Scottish winter climbing had left such a positive impression on my friends, despite their descriptions.

Once every two years, the meet lures climbers from around the world to experience the fine art of Gaelic suffering. Visiting climbers are paired with locals of a comparable skill level for a week of sampling classic lines, pushing test pieces and sometimes even establishing new routes. Canadian climbers who have previously been invited to this unique event include Raphael Slawinski, Ian Welsted, Jon Walsh, Michelle Kadatz and Sean Isaac, leaving some pretty big shoes for Maarten and I to fill.

We decided to head to Scotland one week early in order to acclimate ourselves, which was mostly a blessing but also a curse in my case. Scotland lived up to its reputation for having rowdy weather and committing climbing, and I quickly discovered that physical climbing ability was secondary to simply having the tenacity to survive the conditions and mental fatigue. The climbing was insecure, the protection took time and the weather loves to hate you. Though we had almost a full week before the meet, the only routes we managed to climb were Savage Slit (V 6) and Big Daddy (VII 8). Between fatigue and bad weather, we mostly just visited the local distilleries and called ourselves cultured. We did, however, get an extra day of drytooling in, but we can pretend that didn't happen.

While sampling Scotland ahead of the meet gave us a taste of the climbing, it also provided me a bit of the curse I mentioned earlier, knowing that I had a full week of Scottish gnar ahead. Maybe it wouldn't have been so bad if I was there on my own schedule, but being tied to the meet's timeline, while also representing my country, definitely added to the anxiety.

The International Winter Meet began with a warm welcome at the Aviemore Youth Hostel, where we met our host climbers and all the other wonderful folks from around the world. In previous years, it was hosted out of Glenmore Lodge but has since changed its format when the Scottish Mountaineering Club (SMC) adopted the event. The meet now begins (and ends) in Aviemore, with climbers rotating between various SMC huts in between, including the famous CIC Hut at the base of Ben Nevis.

Having recently moved to Canmore, I'd been completely unaware of the climbing world outside of the town's bubble, so when I found out that I was paired with Neil Adams, I had no idea who he was. Luckily, he turned out to be a local crusher and a humble, nice guy, which was just what I was hoping to find in a climbing partner. Neil made my week not just successful but a lot of fun as well—or at least as much fun as one can have while fully soaked.

As expected, the week began with high aspirations, early starts and long approaches, which quickly dispelled my unfounded notion that approaches in Scotland were somehow flat. Wind-burned faces, aching legs and hearts full of abject fear were nursed at the end of each day with good company, copious amounts of additional liquid culture and the heart-warming meals that were prepared by generous volunteers.

Through the meat of the meet, Maarten and I cranked as hard as our little Canadian hearts could handle. Maarten quickly made his mark with partner Andy Inglis by establishing a new route on

Ben Nevis's Minus Two Buttress, Calculus (VIII 8), which takes a series of overhangs before joining up with Central Route (VI 7). Maarten was of course very keen to reach the summit proper, so he soloed Orion Face Direct (V 5) the following day, while his partner Andy happily chopped veggies at the cozy CIC hut for the Hawthorn family of volunteers. Maarten and Andy went on to repeat Central Grooves (VII 7) on Stob Coire nan Lochan, and I also heard that Maarten may have added to the Canadian reputation for not being afraid of logging some air time.

Neil and I started on a much humbler note, repeating Sundance (VIII 8) on Beinn Eighe before getting turned around on Creag Meagaidh the day after due to avalanching slopes. We found more success when we moved up to the CIC Hut, however, repeating Kellett's North Wall Route (VII 7), The Shroud (VI 6) and Mega Route X (VI 6) with a bonus summit of Ben Nevis. Both The Shroud and Mega Route X are ice routes, but they are very different from Canadian ice. Ice in Scotland is formed by a combination of freeze-thaw cycles, precipitation and wind. The ice grows sideways, holds a bite-y (but weak) structure and fractures in strange ways. At the time of the ascent, The Shroud was a curved hanging dagger, which stretched out several feet from the wall like an umbrella—fairly engaging, even by Canadian standards, I think. Our celebrations were soon quelled, however, when I ripped some turf and took a winger on Defenders of the Faith (IX 9). It took some effort to finish the route and certainly made me appreciate the fact that turf climbing wasn't just mindless swinging.

Somehow the long days passed, and we arrived at our final climbing day of the meet. Maarten and Andy went to Cairn Lochan to play on The Vicar (VIII 8), and a small group of us went to Garbh Bheinn to go exploring. Garbh Bheinn doesn't often come into shape because of its aspect and elevation, which I'm sure contributes to the fact that there are only two routes there. Nonetheless,

Maarten van Haeren on the first pitch of Big Daddy.
Photo: Peter Hoang

Neil's intuition suggested that things would be in good nick, and right he was. Of course, with good conditions comes bad weather, and that last day was the wettest and coldest I had been during my time in Scotland. Our efforts paid off, though, as Tim Miller, Callum Johnson and Damian Granowski made the first winter ascent of Scimitar (VII 8), while Neil Adams, Lukas Klingora and I made the first winter ascent of Gralloch (IX 10).

Gralloch is about 50 metres and an E2 summer route that follows a left-trending crack and ramp system—an extremely obvious feature that begs for a winter ascent. Luckily, Neil and Lukas both offered me the sharp end on this one. It began on some delicate ice before entering the crack system, which was way less positive than I had hoped for. I had forgotten that the ice in Scotland isn't quite as laminated as we're typically used to, which resulted in a ripped placement that launched me into an inverted whipper. I ended up about a couple of metres from the ground with my back against the wall. Frustrated by my carelessness, I quickly asked to be let down and restarted the climb, this time taking it to the top. In many ways, Gralloch was the perfect capstone of the meet for me, as it possessed in spades many of the reasons why I love climbing—athleticism, aesthetics, mental engagement—and really drove home the special nature of ephemeral routes in Scotland.

By the time we had gotten back to the car, I felt like a cold prune that was covered in a wet plastic bag. My waterproof pockets were full of water, which made for a fatal swimming pool for my cell phone, my boots were fish bowls and my jacket felt like heavy canvas. Though I sat in soggy discomfort, it felt like an amazing reward to be out of the wind, watching the rain ride down the sides of the car window.

Back in Aviemore, I indulged in a hot shower and changed into some dry clothing before heading out to the final dinner, where I had a chance to catch up with everyone who wasn't in my rotational group. Despite all the fear, terrible weather and discomfort, I strangely found myself fondly

Peter Hoang on the first winter ascent of Gralloch.
Photo: Callum Johnson

describing my experiences, using adjectives that would sound contrary to the experience at the time.

I asked a fellow climber why they thought Scottish winter climbing held such a draw, to which he said something to the effect of: "Leads here take a long time, you have to battle for every foot and every piece of pro while the weather hammers in on you. When you find a sequence, or that bomber piece of pro, there's elation, and you feel like you can manage to go a bit higher, to which you'll eventually top out."

His description as to why Scottish winter climbing was so addictive strangely mirrored my hardships of getting by every day during the meet. I thought it was quite poignant. I will add, though, that routes in Scotland really do feel ephemeral—eventually a good one will come, and as a result of pressing on, you'll have the tools in your pocket to tackle opportunities.

After the meet, I decided to spend a few days in Edinburgh to rest the body and enjoy some urban scenery. One of the things a friend suggested I do was hike up to Arthur's Seat, a nice elevated plateau outside of town that provides a lovely view. True to Scottish form, it was quite blustery there, but the weather didn't deter several hearty hill walkers from getting to the top, in city attire no less. The wind rustled everyone's jackets and whipped our hair around, and the sun only came out from between the clouds for a brief stint, but everyone on that hilltop was in good spirits. I'm pretty sure it was then that I figured out why my friends in Canada loved climbing in Scotland so much.

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**Summary**

Calculus (VIII 8), Minus Two Buttress, Ben Nevis, Grampian Mountains, Scotland. FA: Andy Inglis, Maarten van Haeren, February 24, 2020.

Gralloch (IX 10), Garbh Bheinn, Northwest Highlands, Scotland. FWA: Neil Adams, Peter Hoang, Lukas Klingora, February 28, 2020.

Peter Hoang on the first pitch of Defenders of the Faith. Photo: Neil Adams

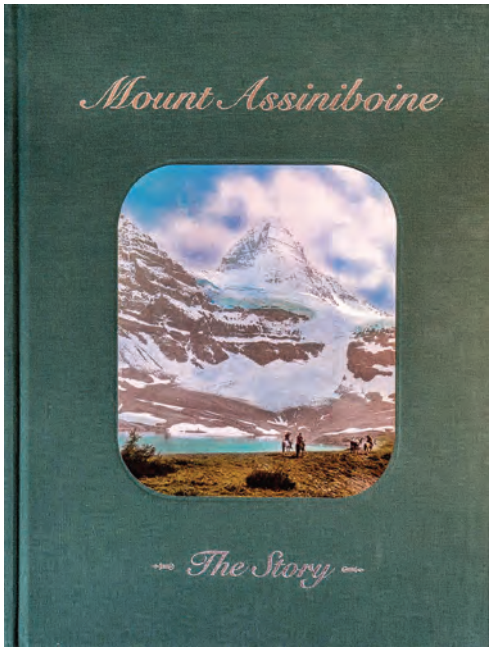
# Reviews

## Mount Assiniboine: The Story

Chic Scott (Assiniboine Lodge, 2021)

Chic Scott's new book *Mount Assiniboine: The Story* is a hefty volume chock full of interesting characters and anecdotes from the early 1800s through to the present day. It will be of particular interest to anyone who has stayed at Mount Assiniboine Lodge, the Naiset cabins or for those who have climbed the peak. Much of the book's focus is around the history of the lodge and small tourist outfits run by committed outdoors people like Erling Strom, Barb and Sepp Renner, and Lizzie Rummel, who each spent decades living in and around the peak and sharing the wonder of the place with visiting guests from around the world.

As always, Scott's research is meticulous and comprehensive when it comes to exploration of the area by European settlers. All the trials and tribulations of getting to the remote wonderland are revealed, not to mention the building and complicated upkeep of the much loved lodge. A colourful cast of outfitters and guides come and go through the course of the book, many names recognizable to those living in the Bow Valley. Many are given small vignettes, highlighting their contributions to the history of the area. The details and stories about Ken Jones, BC Parks' first warden of Mount Assiniboine Park and long-time friend of the lodge, are particularly fun to read, which is no surprise given his reputation as a prolific storyteller. Jones was invited to the lodge well after his official duties had subsided. He became a Rockies icon and entertained many visitors with his animated tales fuelled by a few nips of "cougar's milk."




The list of famous visitors to the area is surprising; so many from abroad felt a strong connection and affinity for the beautiful spot. Locals such as Bill Peyto, Peter and Catharine Whyte, Hans Gmoser and the Brewsters were regular visitors and supporters. Many international visitors like Caroline Hinman, Tenzing Norgay and James Munroe Thorington are also of interest, not to mention the fascinating history of aviation in the area.

Particularly enjoyable is the note about Jackie the horse who worked for the lodge for 27 years. He was the most trusted pack horse of the herd and acted as esteemed egg carrier because of his calm demeanor and is estimated to have lugged over 30,000 eggs to the lodge in his lifetime.

The history of the climbing in the region is also included—everything from the first ascent by James Outram, Christian Hasler and Christian Bohren to the tragic mishap on Eon Mountain involving Mrs. Margaret Stone to Tony Dick and Dave Cheesmond's forward-thinking alpine ascent of the East Face Direct.

The history of the Alpine Club of Canada huts (now known as the Naiset Huts) is also recorded, including the exchange of these huts to BC Parks in return for the construction of two new huts, the R.C. Hind Hut at the base of Assiniboine and the Conrad Kain Hut in the Bugaboos.

As always, Scott's commitment to research and history has made for an impressive volume that is one to savour over many nights by the fire with a drink in hand and will spark great memories for anyone who has visited the place. There is a small mention of Indigenous history of the area at the beginning of the book, but the notable absence of any comprehensive First Nations' history in the volume is hard to ignore. As Scott himself mentions, historians know many people likely travelled to the area before the tourist towns of Banff or Canmore even existed, and it would have been interesting to know what they called the peak in their native language, for example. An anthology of stories from local Elders is perhaps a project unto itself, but would be a wonderful companion to Scott's work.

—Joanna Croston

## Surveying the 120th Meridian and the Great Divide: The Alberta/BC Boundary Survey, 1918-1924

Jay Sherwood (Caitlin Press, 2019)

The first of this two-volume series by Jay Sherwood, *Surveying the Great Divide: The Alberta/BC Boundary Survey, 1913-1917*, detailed the first five years of the survey of Canada's longest interprovincial boundary, and highlighted the role of surveyor and founding president of the Alpine Club of Canada (ACC), Arthur Oliver Wheeler. This second volume covers the period 1918 to 1924 and describes the completion of the Great Divide Survey and much of the 120th Meridian Survey.

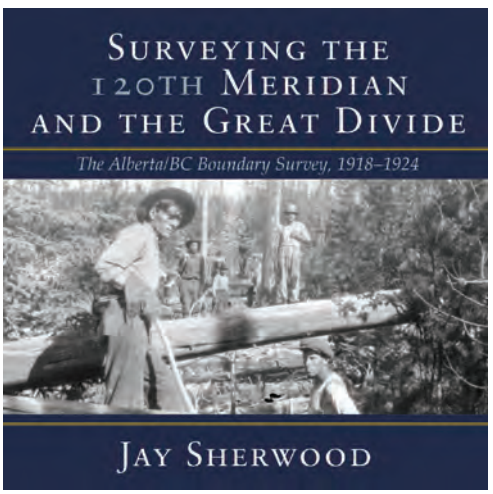
Wheeler continued to lead the B.C. crew responsible for surveying along the Great Divide, using a combination of triangulation and phototopographic surveying. R.W. Cautley continued to lead the Alberta crew responsible for surveying the economically important Rocky Mountain passes. The respective teams had worked closely during the 1913 to 1917 period as their surveys often intersected, completing the survey from the United States border north to Howse Pass and jumping ahead to survey the Yellowhead Pass.

In 1918, the B.C. and Alberta crews continued to work together to survey six more mountain passes: Fortress, Athabasca, Whirlpool, Tonquin, Miette and Robson. Otherwise, their work diverged as Wheeler continued the Great Divide Survey and Cautley focused on the 120th meridian. Field seasons were short, typically three months between July and September, and both men's work took on new dimensions.

Cautley now surveyed a geographically fixed straight line through an entirely different landscape. To facilitate this work, the Dominion Observatory first established an accurate longitude near the B.C. community of Pouce Coupe, using the telegraph line to give a precise time signal. From there, Cautley measured some eight kilometres east to pinpoint the 120th meridian, then south towards the intersection with the Great Divide and north through the agricultural land of the Peace. His work was complicated by the need to cut long sightlines through forest and by the relative lack of gravel in the lowlands with which to construct monuments.

Wheeler had fewer surveyed mountain passes to tie into north of the Jasper area, and so Canada's Surveyor General, Édouard-Gaston Deville, arranged for H.F. Lambart of the Dominion Geodetic Survey to assist him for the last three years of the survey by establishing a triangulation network and series of survey stations between the Yellowhead Pass and the 120th meridian to which Wheeler could connect. Wheeler's task was to locate the Continental Divide, and thus the general location of the interprovincial boundary, and then to survey it. To accomplish this, he used both triangulation and photography, a side benefit of which was a large number of precisely located and dated historic photographs. These are now being used to track vegetation and glacial change over a hundred years by University of Victoria's Mountain Legacy Project, discussed in the ACC's 2018 State of the Mountains Report. The work was arduous and often dangerous, carrying a 20-kilogram instrument kit across glaciers and to the top of many mountains, sometimes in the midst of extreme electrical hazard.

The book opens by reintroducing the boundary survey's main protagonists: Deville, representing the Dominion Land Survey, Cautley representing Alberta, Wheeler representing B.C., and A. J. Campbell, the assistant in charge while Wheeler was away attending ACC camps.




The 1918 season was especially hard for both Wheeler and Cautley as money and experienced men were in short supply in the final year of the war. As well, the weather was unusually wet, limiting

surveying and making stream and river crossings difficult. The Spanish flu pandemic shut down Cautley's season early, and Wheeler had to deal with increasingly hard-to-access terrain as he worked north from Howse Pass along a "very erratic" watershed. In the first month of Wheeler's season, he slipped on an ice slope and slid a considerable distance into a crevasse. His crew also had a narrow escape from falling ice, braved electrical storms at high survey stations, and Wheeler had a close encounter with a grizzly bear that "ran like blazes." Then, while Wheeler was away at the ACC camp in Paradise Valley, one of the crew who was inexperienced in mountain climbing lost a precious book of field notes into a glacial stream, requiring many of the earlier survey stations to be reoccupied.

The 1919 season was better staffed, with Conrad Kain and A.S. Thomson rejoining Wheeler's crew. Kain had side interests to climb new peaks wherever he could and to build a cabin as a base for trapping during the coming winter. Wheeler, as usual, left for the ACC camp in late July, this year in the Yoho Valley. The 1919 season also had its challenges, with the death of a packhorse, a concussion suffered by Thomson and a serious knee injury experienced by Campbell. Both the 1918 and 1919 surveys were affected by wildfire smoke. Despite these setbacks, many now familiar features of the Rockies were climbed and surveyed around the Columbia Icefield. On Fortress Lake, they build a raft in order to transport gear, a vessel they grandly name *The Fortress Queen*. I was interested to read of their stay at Camp Parker above Nigel Creek, as it was almost exactly a hundred years later that I was there for the first time in July 2019.

Wheeler continued as boundary commissioner for B.C. for the remaining years of the survey, but from 1920 onwards he began to devolve responsibility for much of the actual surveying to Campbell. Wheeler had reached the age of 60 and was finding mountain climbing harder; however, he continued to contribute a fair amount of field work each year. As well, he turned his attention to developing a commercial walking tour between Banff and Mount Assiniboine. To that end, he leased land from the B.C. government for a seasonal camp at Mount Assiniboine, petitioned for the establishment of a provincial park to protect the area (achieved in 1922) and arranged for the ACC to hold its 1920 summer camp there. One significant addition to the crew that year was Wheeler's son, Edward Oliver Wheeler, who was seeking surveying and climbing experience to bolster his forthcoming survey work for the British government in India and subsequent bid for Everest.

The Boundary Survey progressed slowly northwards through Jasper National Park towards the 120th meridian. At Lambart's urging, 1921 saw the start of the first aerial flights over the Northern Rockies, and both he and Wheeler were quick to see the benefits. Although it would be a while before aircraft would be regularly employed for aerial photogrammetry, their reconnaissance flights over the 1922 survey areas saved them considerable time on the ground. Later that season, while surveying down the Smoky River to Bess Pass, Wheeler was able to tie into his ACC-sponsored 1911 survey around Yexyexéscen (Mount Robson) that was instrumental in the establishment of Mount Robson Provincial Park in 1913. I enjoyed their accounts of the country north of Robson to Bess Pass and Jackpine Pass and on to Mount Sir Alexander and Mount Ida and the Narraway River, as I have researched and backpacked through many of these areas.

1924 was the 12th and final year of the survey, except for the northernmost section of the 120th meridian that would not be needed until 1950 for oil and gas development. New technology in the form of radio telegraphy now made it possible to determine the precise longitude at any location using telegraphic time signals.

Official approval was required from the B.C., Alberta and federal governments to conclude the survey, and as part of that process a ceremony was held at Robson Pass. This was coincident with the 1924 ACC summer camp that saw the first female ascents of Yexyexéscen by Phyllis Munday and Annette Buck. There is a fine photograph in the book of Wheeler and Cautley standing next to their commemorative

monument at Robson Pass, near where the ACC fittingly proposes to build a new mountain hut a century later. It was interesting to learn more about the roles of Wheeler and the ACC in the establishment of two of B.C.'s flagship provincial parks at Mount Robson and Mount Assiniboine.

Both books in the series are well-researched and are great reads. This history is timely with increasing use of the Great Divide Trail between Waterton Lakes National Park and B.C.'s Kakwa Provincial Park, and with future route options currently being explored north from Kakwa Lake to Monkman Provincial Park and the Tumbler Ridge UNESCO Global Geopark. Lavishly illustrated with historic photographs and maps, each volume is a large-format, soft-covered book in the tradition of Sherwood's earlier photo-journal works about 20th-century B.C. surveyors. They are great value at under $30 each and provide a unique look at the surveying of Canada's Rockies and the young ACC.

—Mike Nash

## Winter 8000: Climbing the World's Highest Mountains in the Coldest Season

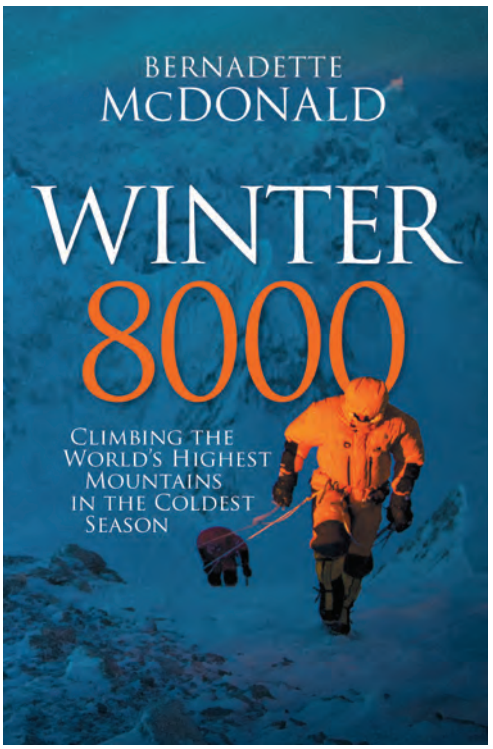
Bernadette McDonald (Mountaineers Books, 2020)

The best books are those that from the moment you open their cover and begin reading make you feel transported into a whole new world, one drastically different from your own. With their powerful wand of words, the writer casts you under their spell. You become intrigued, engaged and hopelessly captivated as you travel the journey they have mapped out from page to page, like following unfamiliar trails up valleys and ridges to a summit, and then back down the far side of the mountain.

The world of climbing Earth's 14 highest peaks in winter—the coldest, nastiest, least forgiving and most lethal season—is one that is foreign to most of us, and with good reason. Few can even begin to imagine why anyone would deliberately choose to embark on such a multi-week ordeal, a pursuit that has been appropriately branded "the art of suffering."

Humans, however, are a diverse and varied species. Tenacious comes to mind too, as does intrepid, brave, competitive and, sometimes, foolish. Those traits, and plenty more, are displayed as Bernadette McDonald introduces the reader to a colourful, determined, tough-as-nails and, on some occasions, overly optimistic cast of characters in *Winter 8000: Climbing the World's Highest Mountains in the Coldest Season.*

These stories are no smooth ride. Climbers gasp for what little oxygen exists in the thin air. They suffer retching stomachs, endure coughs that badger until their last breath, and bear frostbitten fingers and toes that ooze smelly puss and must be later amputated. They are sometimes left frozen solid on airy ledges of ice that never melts, and sometimes abandon their partners when they descend to get help, denying the futility of their effort. There is no shortage of drama in any of this book's chapters, one for each of the 8,000-metre-high peaks.




This is terrain McDonald knows well, having previously written two award-winning books that delve into the intriguing personalities and accomplishments of the Polish climbing community whose members dominated winter Himalayan climbing through the 1980s, from the first winter ascent of Everest in 1980—a chapter aptly titled First Time Lucky—to that of Lhotse, the world's

fourth-highest mountain in 1988, with Krzysztof Wielicki succeeding on both, summitting solo on the latter.

With a natural chronological pause as 16 years pass between Lhotse and Shishapangma's first winter ascent in 2005 by Piotr Morawski and an Italian, Simone Moro—the first non-Pole to climb an 8,000er in winter—the book engages in a new and welcome gear as each chapter benefits from a few more pages than the earlier ones. The stories become fuller, the details richer, the characters more multi-dimensional, and with several of the key players still alive—compared to a smaller pool for the book's first half—each ascent develops a more dynamic life. It is here that McDonald's exceptional writing and astute observations rise to the task, as do her sly sense of humour and breezy elegance with words, all of which help balance the darkness and sorrow of climbers not returning home.

Describing the team assembled to climb Gasherbrum II in February 2011, she writes, "And so, the trio was formed: a taciturn, military-hardened Russian whose smouldering features and searing stare could penetrate stone; a flamboyant and animated Italian with a wide-open smile and an insatiable need to communicate; and a wild-haired American, tall and fair, with the saddest eyes."

With the fuller stories though, comes more pain, more heartbreak, astonishingly compartmentalized love between family members, and emotional words from survivors—not only rope mates, but also spouses, sons and daughters. The chapter on Gasherbrum I is unapologetically titled Lost Fathers.

It is these passages that require writing as masterful as the athletic prowess demanded by climbers dressed in bulky protective layers akin to astronaut suits while executing delicate climbing moves on glistening ice as hard as stone in cold, thin air. And in these passages McDonald is equal to the challenges.

These are the passages that make the book most worth reading. The ingredients for a captivating volume spill from every page: audacity, absurdity, callousness and stubbornness, with equal measures of boldness, teamwork, camaraderie and cooperation, sprinkled with intrigue, betrayal and public humiliation, as if hurricane-force winds and relentless physical and mental suffering through open-air bivouacs on the longest nights of the year weren't enough.

Despite the frequency that the pursuit of climbing these peaks in winter comes bearing the highest price though, 13 of these chapters tell stories of success. Through these stories, McDonald pays deserving tribute to those who face these daunting challenges with vigour and confidence, those who sacrifice for the bonds of friendship and teamwork with boundless strength and determination. In this she captures the best of the human spirit.

In these alternately uplifting and heart-wrenching stories, ultimately all the experience, all the highest-tech modern gear and clothing and state-of-the-art satellite weather forecasts cannot reliably compensate for the frailties of the human body, or the errors of the human mind, cannot overcome the tenuousness of human survival above 8,000 metres, in winter.

Her writing is delicate and sensitive, but also matter of fact and honest as she sifts through the detritus of expeditions that often end in shambles, not only for those who barely survive them but for the families of those who do not.

In the second-last chapter, titled The Magnificent Obsession, she shares Daniel Nardi's words, written prior to his death high on Nanga Parbat.

"…If I didn't return, the message I would leave my son would be this: don't stop, don't give up, do your thing, because the world needs better people to make peace a reality and not just and idea… it's worth it."

McDonald sums up so much, punctuating Nardi's message with just four words of her own.

"Not all would agree."

—Lynn Martel

## Emilio Comici: Angel of the Dolomites

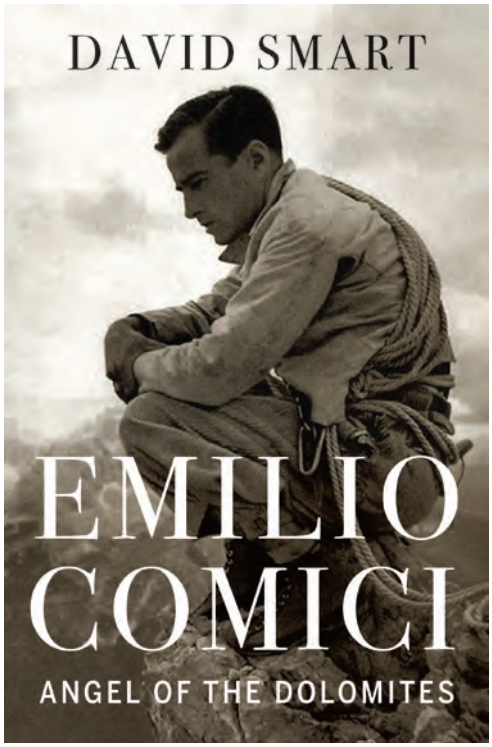
David Smart (Rocky Mountain Books, 2020)

From the moment you first hold *Emilio Comici: Angel of the Dolomites* in your hands, there is a sense of something special. It begins with the dustjacket cover photo, an incredible capture of its subject, legendary Italian climber Emilio Comici, on top of the Cima Grande in the Dolomites. Crouched at the edge of what we know is a yawning void, he is simultaneously coiled tight as a spring and yet frozen as a gargoyle; made of the same stone as that which he has just climbed. His head and shoulders are in the clouds, angelic. He is thoughtful, reflective; one detects a hint of sadness. And one is not sure why—does the melancholy come from a realization that even in reaching these heights he is still not free of something on the ground? It is a stunning portrait, and like all great photographs, it is infused all at once with moment and art, symbol and questions.

If the cover photo is a visual précis of Comici, what follows in the pages of this outstanding book by David Smart is one of the best biographies written about a climber, from any period. In some ways, it picks up where Smart's previous book, *Paul Preuss: Lord of the Abyss*, concludes. In that book, Smart explored the life of Preuss, who before his death in 1913 (and in the years that followed) became a legend for his bold solo ascents, strict ethics and pure style. In that book we came to understand not only Preuss's own history and climbs, but their political and cultural context, and the hints of things to come. *Emilio Comici: Angel of the Dolomites* continues this approach but is arguably more poignant. Whether it is because both the climbing and the politics feel more on top of the present, I'm not sure. What is obvious, however, is that Smart feels a clear responsibility to not be a mere chronicler, and he truly brings Comici and his times alive. As the better historian, Smart gathers all the pieces and reveals a particular and compelling version of the past; at the same time, he makes Comici's story feel current and relevant.

Comici was born in 1901 and died in 1940. He grew up in a working-class family in Trieste, and was to become one of the strongest and most influential rock climbers of the inter-war period. Places can shape us, and Trieste is relevant to Comici's development, a "city of wind and stone" as Smart describes it, with its sea air, cliffs and nearby caves. Until 1918, it was also one of the most important cities in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and known for the cosmopolitan, often melancholy, artists, writers and thinkers who frequented it.

Europe changed massively in Comici's lifetime. He and his family and his contemporaries were subjected to or witnessed upheaval on social, economic and political levels that are hard to fathom. Smart shows how this time contained for many people a challenging mix of romantic ideals, art and philosophy, a cultural malaise, the collapse of old empires, poverty and unemployment. This was also when fascism emerged on the landscape, and it plays a very important part in Comici's story.




As Smart said to me, "… many people had diverse, high hopes for [fascism] when it began. Many Jews in Trieste, Comici's hometown, believed it would improve their lot over Austria-Hungarian rule. Italians in Trieste were a persecuted majority under Austria-Hungary, so they were ripe for exploitation by Mussolini. Fascism was [also] embraced by Cassin, Gervasutti and many other climbers." Hindsight bias

often leads us to ignore climate and context; the truth is that in the 1920s, elements of fascism offered exciting alternatives to the chaos of democracies and kingdoms that were in failure. *In Fascism: A Warning,* Madeleine Albright wrote, "[Mussolini's] initial priority, surprisingly, was good government. He allocated money to build bridges, roads, telephone exchanges, and giant aqueducts that brought water to arid regions. He gave Italy an eight-hour workday, codified insurance benefits for the elderly and disabled, funded prenatal health care clinics, established seventeen hundred summer camps for children, …"

And of course there was the dark side. But outdoor sports and athleticism were encouraged; first to rebuild physical health, then as political propaganda, and ultimately they became militarized and preparation for war. The book shows how Comici—with his strong sense of nationalism—embraced the pride of fascism but over time began to turn away from it. Smart gives the right emphasis throughout its pages, for it is impossible to discuss Europe at this time without it. In the end, Comici was by all accounts more of a complex romantic struggling with class divides recognition, and as someone who was quick to disillusionment, had bouts of ennui and likely at times even lived with depression. *In Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche said, "One is fruitful only at the cost of being rich in contradictions." Ideas and beliefs change. The skilled reveal of personal layers in combination with politics of Comici's country and his climbing makes for great biography.

The book, of course, contains details of many of Comici's legendary climbs—his ascents in the Dolomites, such as the massive 1,100-metre Northwest Face of the Civetta and the North Face of the Cima Grande, were groundbreaking. He later returned to the Cima Grande and in a masterstroke soloed it in a little over three hours. If you see film footage of him climbing, he is elegant and graceful as a dancer, full of fluidity and power. Comici was prolific in the Eastern Alps but also climbed in Greece, Spain and the Sinai. He will forever be known as one of the key authors of modern technical rock and big wall climbing, and helped bring about the sixth grade.

Like a sonic boom moving past the sound barrier, Comici and a few others picked up the torch left by Preuss and broke the sound barrier of post-Victorian climbing. But it was a new time, after the Great War, and recovery and ambition, and probably some fatalism brought about by those days, ushered in the modern age of pitons, etriers, hanging belays, tricky mixed free and aid, and complicated rope work. It was marked, as Walter Pause once wrote by "…unbelievable courage, bordering on lunacy… combined with careful planning and the highest degree of prudence, so they were able to refute the charge of 'madness' and legitimize their new style."

*Emilio Comici: Angel of the Dolomites* was appropriately recognized as the winner of the Climbing Literature Award at the 2020 Banff Mountain Book Competition. It has a cinematic quality that starts off strong with Comici's own words, "I embrace you, in the sixth grade," pulls us through his complicated life and climbs, and concludes just as powerfully. Smart said to me, "I have been looking for the most unique and creative figures in the history of climbing, the people who truly moved the game into new realms, rather than those who were merely the hardest climbers in a pre-existing idiom. Climbing is a cultural activity, [and] there should be magnificent biographies of the greatest figures, just as there are in music and art." He is right. Smart has succeeded in producing the biography of meaning, that which celebrates history and also contributes to a deeper understanding of ourselves.

—Jon Popowich

## Hooking Up: The Ultimate Big Wall and Aid Climbing Manual

Fabio Elli and Peter Zabrok (Versante Sud, 2021)

"How's it goin', eh?" with that least noble—and most Canadian—opening to any climbing book, Pass-the-Pitons Pete Zabrok, uber-Canuck, begins this magnificent, massively informative and often hilarious journey thorough what is arguably the least appreciated, least understood and least practiced of the many forms of our game.

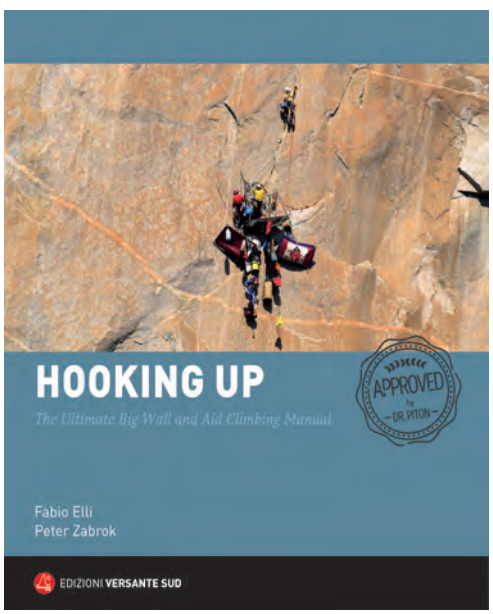
Zabrok is a perfect guide for the trip. With 68 ascents and 800 nights clocked on El Cap alone, he understands the intricate demands of aid climbing as well as anyone else who's ever touched a wall, and he's managed to translate that understanding and passion into a fantastically detailed how-to manual. *Hooking Up* combines an incredible wealth of information with great pictures, every bit of detail you could possibly need to get up and down the vertical world safely and properly, and great stories about life on the wall from many of the masters, all wrapped with Zabrok's specialty: an overdose of unabashed, often eye-roll-inducing hoser humour delivered by his not-so-alter alter ego, Dr. Piton.

Anyone who's ever tried to explain climbing to a novice knows how hard it can be to get it right, and that's all the more true when you're trying to describe the most gear-intensive, most precise and potentially most dangerous version of climbing. But this book excels here. The level of detail is remarkable, with step-by-step instructions about every aspect of wall life: ratings, gear, hauling ("championship pig wrestling"), speed climbing, surviving storms, what to eat and how to poop, how to be a degenerate (detailed exhaustively) and Dr. Piton's prized list of "Bitchin' Places to Climb."

A bit of backstory helps explain one of the more interesting things about the book from a learning point of view. After years of writing columns about wall skills, Zabrok says, he always wanted to write a manual, and then was given an Italian book called *Intelligenza Artificiale*. He thought it was exactly the book he wanted to write, so he approached the two Italian authors, Fabio Elli and Diego Pezzoli, to see if they'd be interested in collaborating on an English-language version. Zabrok ended up extensively retrofitting it, doubling its size, adding his humour (both Canuck, such as the glossary explanation of calling everyone "Buddy," and dark, with some version of the phrase "Do that and yer gonna die!", which appears on just about every second page, and quite rightly so), and most intriguingly, deciding to build on what, in his opinion, were numerous errors in the original.

It was a choice that drove me mad at first. Why include a picture of bad technique or badly outfitted gear instead of just showing us the right stuff? But his madness soon started to make sense. As cloying as it sometimes was to listen to Dr. Piton hector all these other experienced people in the photos, he was ultimately offering a better learning process, helping me understand not just what to do, but what not to do. He levelled the playing field by showing how even the best wall climbers, including himself, constantly go through a steep learning curve that adapts to new practices, new ethics and new equipment. Meanwhile, of course, this is aid climbing, so keep in mind as you learn that "Yer gonna frikkin die!"

The only thing that Zabrok insists that he intentionally left out of the 671-page book was any kind of analysis of the mental part of the wall game. He told me that he'd shortened that to four words: "Shut up and climb."



That claim doesn't hold water at all. The stories of climbs scattered through the book speak volumes about the ways that wall rats handle the tensions and trials of long, hard days on aid, and the frequent sidebars from Dr. Piton hint at what might be the best mental strategy of all: Be ready to laugh at how ridiculous the game is, and at your own foibles and fumbles, whenever you possibly can.

It's been said that even if you only ever intend to sport climb for the rest of your life, there is no better way to learn everything you need to know about systems, gear, partnership and yourself than to spend a few days on an aid route, but this book is thorough enough that, thankfully, you might never have to buy a portaledge, step into an étrier or crap in a tube to get those lessons.

As Zabrok promises at the beginning, "This book has been written for you." Eh?

—Geoff Powter

## Stories of Ice: Adventure, Commerce and Creativity on Canada's Glaciers

Lynn Martel (Rocky Mountain Books, 2020)

Glaciers bleed blue. That's just a great line any writer would be proud to pen, but it's typical of many in Lynn Martel's most recent book, *Stories of Ice: Adventure, Commerce and Creativity on Canada's Glaciers.* It also has meaning: anyone who frequents glaciers knows their deep blue colour, but I'd never really thought about exactly why they are so blue (dense ice absorbs all colours but blue), or understood the precise role of rock flour in colouring the iridescent turquoise lakes of the Canadian Rockies. That Martel can make the cold science of ice so warmly interesting defines this book to me. I kept reading parts of it aloud to whomever was handy (kids, wife, dog) just because it's really fun reading—especially for a "serious" book about a very heavy subject, glaciers.

> Markedly more than picturesque decorations on the mountain scape, those glaciers are alive. For those who recreate, work, run businesses, study and create art on and around glaciers, they are living, growing, moving and endlessly interesting elements of our planet. Like the ocean to a sailor, a surfer, a fisherman or a marine biologist, glaciers are unique environments that reveal themselves to those who choose to experience them through different means.

That is Martel's thesis, and she backs it up with hundreds of very readable pages illustrated with photos from legendary photographers, including Paul Zizka, John Price, Bruno Engler, Pat Morrow, Amy Liu, Chic Scott, the Mountain Legacy Project and a collection of Martel's own excellent photography. Each story is about ice, but she always returns to the people around the frozen water to bring it alive. It's those human stories of people battling with, falling into, skiing over and just engaging with glaciers that I enjoyed most. The ice is frozen, but the people, even the historical ones who seem so stiff in their portraits, are warmly thawed and brought to life in each chapter.

If you've ever fallen into a crevasse while on a rope, you know you likely won't want to do it again, but the options weren't so good in 1897 when Charles Thompson fell into one on while climbing new (to Europeans) peaks the Wapta Icefields. Thompson fell 20 metres and got stuck headfirst in the icy walls of a gravity-powered vice. There was no helicopter rescue to call (for another 70-plus years, and Martel goes into some of those stories too), so Norman Collie, "who was not only the lightest member of the party, but unmarried," went down on a rope after him, eventually lassoing his hand while hanging headfirst on the rope tied just around his waist, and then dragging Thompson to safety. Now that's adventure!

Martel also takes time to note that Europeans weren't the first to discover or travel on North America's glaciers, even if they acted like it and renamed everything in sight. "…It's most unlikely the Indigenous inhabitants who'd travelled in the area for centuries weren't fully aware that a massive field of ice filled that high plateau and fed the glaciers descending from it. … What self-respecting young Indigenous traveller wouldn't have hiked up higher to take a look?" She also looks at the Jumbo Glacier area from the Ktunaxa's perspective, and the story of Kwaday Dan Tsinchi, which means "long-ago person found" in the Southern Tutschone language. While he was lost more than 500 years ago, DNA testing found 17 of his direct descendants living in the area today. I often think of how "new" the history in North America seems compared to Europe, but Martel's writing made me think about the thousands of years of history I'd ignored in my home mountains. While we're all products of our environment, Martel makes a clear effort to see glaciers from an Indigenous perspective, and the book and reader are richer for that work.

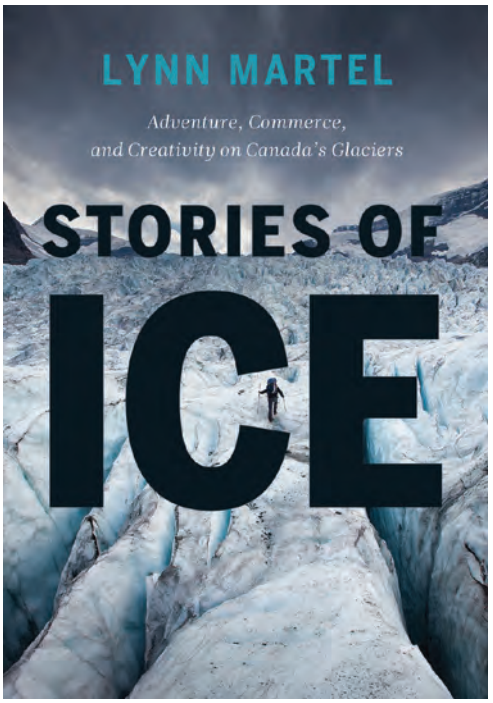
I've enjoyed Martel's writing for years, including some of the writing in this book that was published earlier in her long career. I was a little concerned when I received a copy of it that there wouldn't be much I hadn't seen before, but most of the material is not only new, it's information that I'd never heard of. In an era of fast journalism, this is a glacial-ice-hard thesis on Western Canada's glaciers, backed up by a three-page bibliography. I know Martel has read every book in the list because they are referenced repeatedly, with great quotes and sometimes entire essays.

There's no writing about glaciers today without writing about the loss of the same due to climate change, a fact conveniently omitted in much of the large-scale tourism centred around the Athabasca Glacier and the Columbia Icefield. Martel's tour of the Athabasca Glacier on a diesel-swilling, fume-spewing SnoCoach had no mention of climate change, nor did the Skywalk attraction just up the road. Martel writes about the Columbia Icefield visitor centre, "But the only place I could find the simple phrase 'Human fossil fuel use contributes significantly to climate change' was outside on a kiosk. Comparative photos of the Athabasca in 1918 and 2011—showing a staggering difference—were displayed on the back wall, on the side least likely to be seen by anyone walking up the stairs into the building. Front and centre it was not."

These observations are likely not without a price for Martel; the SnoCoach and Skywalk operators are some of the biggest political players in the Canadian Rockies, as is Parks Canada. Criticism tends to be noted. But you can't write honestly without writing what needs to be said, and I admire Martel's integrity in saying the unspoken in a tourist economy that she also lives in. As Martel notes, it's the water from the glaciers that connects us all, and you can tell Martel is fighting for it, not just business.

The very richness of this book means it should be read in chunks rather than attacked like a starving climber at a buffet, and each chapter is a meal unto itself. At times Martel's writing can become a little florid and emotional, but that's what also makes it read well: she cares. The epilogue is titled Be the Change You Want to See, and outlines how to do that. After reading the book, I hope you'll agree with her. The world needs more of Lynn Martel's writing and more change.

—Will Gadd



# Remembrances

## Richard Kenneth Guy
### 1967–2019

Richard kenneth guy died on March 9, 2020, at the age of 103. He often said, "I count myself as the luckiest person in the world. I was married to the best wife in the world for 70 years, and I was paid for doing what I like doing."

Richard was born in Nuneaton, Warwickshire, England. Both his parents were teachers and imparted their son with good principles: "They were always impeccably honest, straightforward and outspoken against anything that was not for the common good."

Richard was sent to Warwick school, the third oldest school in Britain, where he was a bit of a prodigy, excelling in mathematics, physics and chemistry. When he was 13 and in the sixth form and making a choice on his academic path, he decided to study mathematics.

At about 17 years of age, Richard bought a copy of Dickson's *History of the Theory of Numbers* and was fascinated by the book. He remembered, "It was better than getting the whole works of Shakespeare and heaven knows what else."

In 1935, having won three scholarships, Richard entered Cambridge University where he was a student at Gonville & Caius College. Recently he admitted that he was not a good student. "I played 24-hours-a-day-bridge, 24-hour chess and 24-hour snooker." Richard graduated in 1938 with a second-class honours degree.

Richard met his future wife, Nancy Louise Thirian, in 1937. She liked to dance and he liked to dance, so they hit if off right away. In addition, they both loved mountains. In the summer of 1939, they set off for a two-week holiday in the Lake District of northwest England. Staying in hostels, which were segregated into men and women's dorms, they hiked the paths and reached numerous mountaintops. Their trip no doubt raised eyebrows and got tongues wagging, but they didn't care. Louise later confided that after that trip, "I decided that he was reliable." Richard and Louise were married on December 21, 1940, in Nottingham.

At first, the war didn't make much difference in their lives. Richard was teaching at the Stockport Grammar School and enjoyed his job. But in 1941, he trained as a meteorologist, forecasting for bombers flying over Europe and later for transatlantic flights. He was first posted to Prestwick in Scotland then to Iceland. It was there he was given a commission as flight lieutenant in the Royal Air Force. In 1944, Richard was posted to Bermuda where he stayed until he was demobbed in 1946.

Although Richard was far away most of this time, he did get home on occasion. His daughter, Elizabeth Anne, was born in 1941, and sons Michael John in 1943 and Peter Richard in 1944.

When Richard returned home after the war, he resumed teaching at Stockport Grammar School, but before long the family moved to London where Richard got a job teaching math at Goldsmiths' College, a teachers training college associated with London University. It was an exciting and busy time in his life: "I worked much too hard. I spent a lot of time on chess endings, a lot on graduate mathematics, a lot on the job, and far too little on my family. I was teaching 22 periods a week and many of the lectures were pretty much university-level courses."

Soon, however, wanderlust took over and Richard and Louise and the family moved to Singapore where Richard taught at the University of Malaya. Although the children would be sent back to boarding school in Britain after two years, Richard and Louise stayed for 10 years. They lived luxuriously and enjoyed the services of a gardener and a cook. They were members of the Royal

Singapore Yacht Club and successfully raced their Snipe-class sailboat named Louise.

In January, 1962, Richard and Louise moved to Delhi where Richard taught at the newly forming Indian Institute of Technology. They again had a house and servants, but the climate got to them—it was just too hot. So when a letter arrived from Edna Lancaster, the wife of an old colleague of Richard's, Peter Lancaster, with photos showing their family frolicking in the snow in the Rocky Mountains of Canada, it looked so wonderful and refreshing. When Peter suggested that Richard and Louise come to Canada, they agreed, "Why not?"

So at almost 50 years of age, Richard and Louise came to Canada and started a new life—a big undertaking when you think that most of us are getting ready to settle into retirement by then. Richard went to work teaching mathematics at the University of Calgary with the condition that he would not be head of department, but on April 1, 1966, the department head resigned and Richard was talked into taking over.

The university was a hive of activity in those days. During the 1966–67 term, there were 19 faculty members in the math department and two-thirds of them were new that year. The university was growing rapidly, and there was an enormous demand for faculty in all subjects. Richard remembered, "I spent my first three summers visiting British universities, raiding their math departments." Many of his new hires were mountain climbers as the Canadian Rockies west of Calgary were a big draw. "We were all newcomers to the university, all happy to make new friendships and try new adventures."

The big new adventure that Richard and Louise embarked upon was mountain climbing and skiing. Richard and Louise had climbed in the Swiss Alps, made their way to the summit of Mount Kinabalu in northern Borneo, and visited the Rhotang Pass and the Kulu Valley in India, so they were familiar with mountains. But here in Canada, they devoted themselves to the mountains, first with their friends in the math department then later with the Alpine Club of Canada (ACC).

Every year since the ACC was formed in 1906, it has organized a General Mountaineering Camp at a different location. Louise attended 31 of these camps and Richard attended 29, climbing hundreds of mountains. They took up cross-country skiing and were out on the trails every weekend until they were 90 years of age. In 1989, when they were in their early 70s, they undertook a ski adventure across the immense icefields of the St. Elias Range near Mount Logan, Canada's highest peak. For many years, the pair celebrated Richard's birthday at Mount Assiniboine Lodge, and on his 90th birthday, he reached the top of the Towers (2,996 metres), a challenging climb for anyone. A couple of years later, he and Louise skied the 11 kilometres to Lake O'Hara Lodge for Valentines Day.

In 2016, Richard celebrated his 100th birthday at Mount Assiniboine Lodge by hiking three kilometres to Wonder Pass and back, and then the next day hiking to the top of the Niblet. Even at 100, Richard was enjoying life and played chess in the evenings (Richard always won).

Richard loved mathematics, publishing about a dozen books and more than 300 scholarly articles, but he said that he regarded himself as an amateur: "I'm an amateur in the more genuine sense of the word in that I love mathematics and would like everyone in the world to like mathematics…. My desire has been to pursue mathematics, mainly in the selfish way of just enjoying it on my own, but also wanting to pass this enjoyment on to other people, particularly as I get older and feel that at least I owe something for the terrific privilege that I've had of being able to live, all the time doing what I wanted to do."

Richard continued to go to his office at the University of Calgary and do mathematics long after his retirement in 1982. He used to joke that he had worked at the university far longer for free than he did on salary. Richard last went to his office on Friday, February 21, 2020, only two weeks before he died.

But the great love of Richard's life was his wife, Louise. A beautiful woman with a bright

mind and a vivacious personality, she played a huge role in his success. Richard was dedicated to Louise even after her death in 2010—when he climbed the Calgary Tower for the Alberta Wilderness Association during their annual fundraiser, a framed photo of Louise hung around his neck. For the past 10 years of his life, Louise's photo sat on his kitchen table while he ate his meals.

In 2015, the ACC built the Louise and Richard Guy Hut on the Wapta Icefield, thanks to a large donation from Richard in memory of Louise. Richard earned many honours in his life, including an honourary doctorate from the University of Calgary in 1991, the A.O. Wheeler Legacy Award from the ACC in 1997, honourary memberships in the Alpine Club of Canada (2008) and the Calgary Mountain Club (2010), and he and Louise were patrons of the Mountain Guides Ball in 1998.

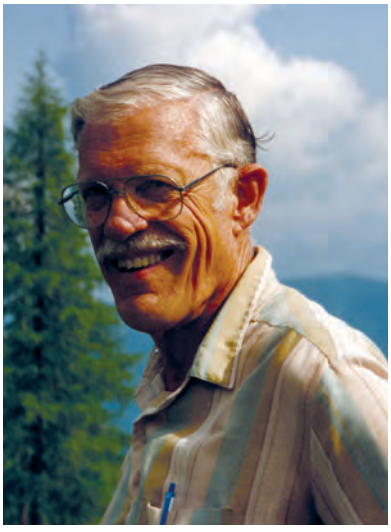
Richard lived at home until his last few weeks and had wonderful support from his neighbours on Barron Crescent in Brentwood, from the folks in the Brentwood Co-op store and the M&M Food Market in Crowfoot, from his colleagues at the University of Calgary and from a group of young friends who had become his family here in Canada.

Richard leaves his three children, Anne, Michael and Peter, his grandchildren, Kenny, Andy, Rosie, Carol and Kathy, and his two great-grandchildren, Sarah and Emily.

In 2012, I wrote a book about Richard and Louise called *Young at Heart: The Inspirational Lives of Richard and Louise Guy*, and it is available from the ACC.

—Chic Scott

## John Manry
### 1922–2018



John Manry, long-time member of the ACC and the Calgary Section, died on September 14, 2018, after a brief illness. He was 96. John was born in Berlin in 1922 where his parents were conducting missionary work, which they continued in India where John developed his love for the mountains as his boarding school was high in the Himalayas.

John was a member of the United States Army after Pearl Harbor, and upon his discharge came to Calgary as a geologist. At a Calgary Section party, he met his future wife, Jeanette Farman, who was a very active member of the ACC's clubhouse committee. John was a chairman of the Calgary Section where he continued climbing as an active member. His work took him to Australia, Indonesia, P.E.I. and Canada's Arctic.

My fondest memory of John was on Jim Tarrant's epic hiking tour of every province of Austria in 1992, where nine Calgary Section members hiked the trails for nine and half weeks, travelling in three VW Golf sedans.

We hiked more than 546 kilometres, climbing 25,000 metres of elevation (an average of 10 kilometres per day), all the while consuming numerous glasses of wine and beer and devouring many Wiener schnitzels while enjoying the hospitality of our Austrian hosts. We also did some modest climbing, which was impressive as the average age of the group was 72.

John was a voracious reader and had an encyclopedic memory when it came to geography, probably honed by his travels as a geologist in many countries. In his late years, in order to stimulate his mind and to exercise his aging body, John undertook riding across Canada (albeit on an exercise bike in his room), but to add to the interest, he plotted his progress on a map, noting where he ended up each day, and via the internet researched the history of his current location.

His vast knowledge, his personality and his friendship will be sorely missed.

—Bruce Fraser

# Eric Lomas
## 1932–2020

The ACC lost a long-time member in February 2020 when Eric Lomas passed away. I first met Eric when I attended a Rocky Mountain Section board meeting in the winter of 1993. Eric was the chair of the section at that time. When he assumed this role, the section was struggling. Under Eric's leadership, the section attracted many new key volunteers and pretty quickly things took off—something that continues to this day. Eric always supported my volunteer efforts, and I consider him one of my important mentors over the years.

Eric's contributions to other parts of the ACC have had an impact on many members over the years. The activity where Eric had the most impact for all ACC members, past and present, was in partnership with Bernie Schiesser. The two of them built the Mount Alberta Hut, the Peter and Catharine Whyte Hut (Peyto), the Scott Duncan Hut, the Neil Colgan Hut and the old Freshfield Hut. Due to glacial recession making the approach to the Freshfield Hut too dangerous, Parks Canada had proposed to burn the structure. Eric and Bernie negotiated with Parks to remove the hut. They moved it to a beautiful bench southwest of the current Freshfield location where it became the beginnings of the current Campbell Icefield Chalet. This chalet has been used by many sections for week-long ski camps and recently as a location for an ACC summer camp. Eric developed the initial plan for the current chalet, which was then revised by an engineer. Also, in partnership with Bernie Schiesser, they discovered the safest route exiting the famed Wapta Traverse, which is now called the Schiesser-Lomas Exit. Eric also partnered with Rudi Kranabitter in building Engadine Lodge in the Rockies' Spray Valley.

Eric became a Parks Canada certified guide and a CSIA ski instructor in 1960, and then went on to be one of the founding members of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides, an organization that today is world-renowned and is a leader in all aspects of mountain guiding.

Back in the 1960s, Eric developed an interest in avalanche control while working at the Mount Baker ski area in Washington State. For Eric, this was a means to get into fresh powder snow before it was skied out. It was during this time that he met his future wife, Dorle Hofmann, also an avid skier. Later, Eric operated Banff Climbing School with fellow guide Peter Fuhrmann (former ACC president and honorary president). After this job, Eric moved on to running the Whistler Ski Hill, and then avalanche control for the Granduc Mine near Stewart, B.C. Eric was very involved in the development of avalaunchers, recoilless rifles and the use of helicopter-placed explosives for avalanche control. As I write this, a helicopter is flying a mission over the east end of Waskahigan Watchi (Mount Rundle), doing explosive avalanche control, the technique Eric helped develop. All of these are now commonplace in avalanche control.

Eric was an honorary lifetime member of both the Alpine Club of Canada and the ACMG. He also received the ACC's A.O. Wheeler Legacy Award and the Distinguished Service Award. He was always more comfortable working behind the scenes than in the spotlight.

As an outdoor leader, Eric was very empathetic to the people he was with, always setting a good pace and watching out for the slowest member of the group. He made short rest stops for drinking water or talking about flowers, trees or views to give the slower hikers a chance to catch their breath and to hold the runners back. Eric had a wicked sense of humour, something he loved to share while leading outdoor groups. The first thing everyone mentions while reminiscing about Eric is that they will miss his mischievous grin and his sparkling eyes. Eric will always be missed and remembered.

—Rod Plasman

## Charles "Chas" Yonge
### 1945–2020

Chas yonge died from cancer in the Canmore hospital at age 74. He had many interests throughout his life and pursued them all with intelligence and passion. Chas made significant contributions to cave exploration worldwide and developed many new rock climbs both in eastern and western Canada. He was a natural academic and maintained an interest in teaching and university research after circumstances caused them to be put on hold for a while. He was a reluctant businessman, but when required he built the successful cave-tour business in Canmore to provide for his family, an achievement which he ranked amongst his finest. However, what set him apart, and what his many friends will remember him for, was his warmth, broad depth of knowledge and fondness for engaging conversation.

Chas grew up in England. His father was a wing commander in the RAF who later retired to the farming county of Kent. Chas's stories from this time include leaving the parking brake off on the tractor and watching it roll back into the river, and while experimenting with homemade bombs, firing a metal projectile through both sides of a building where his father was working. Misadventure came naturally to Chas.

He studied physics at the University of Surrey and then at Sheffield University where he worked on moon rocks from the Apollo missions. It was there that he developed his passion for caving and, somewhat secondary at that time, rock climbing. Dave Morgan remembered Chas's exploits in a Facebook post:

"Monday mornings were always interesting when Chas breezed into the university cafeteria with tales of the latest weekend's crazy, speleo-adventures (unless, of course, it was one of those weekends when Chas didn't make it back for Monday, trapped underground until rising water levels subsided). On one occasion, even Chas seemed a little chastened: he had 'pushed' through a tight downward unexplored section of passage that he was unable to reverse given the head-down position he found himself in. He had no choice but to continue downward until further progress was checked by water. Fortunately, there was just sufficient room for Chas to turn around and head back upwards. I think he realized it was a lucky escape, but it didn't slow him down at all."

Having completed his master's degree, Chas applied to McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, to study for a PhD in karst paleoclimatology, most likely with the huge scope for cave exploration and rock climbing in North America in mind. Here he worked with the notable cave researcher Derek Ford. Chas made a number of first ascents of rock climbs on the Niagara Escarpment and Bon Echo Rock, and, with a very active group of fellow students, explored extensive cave systems in the southeastern States and Mexico. He met his future wife, Pam, and together they moved to Western Canada, first to Edmonton, for a post-doctoral fellowship, and then to Calgary.

I met Chas in the early 1980s in the Ghost River when we had both climbed new routes on almost the same piece of rock (Mantissa and Ziggurat). However, we didn't climb together until much later, after Chas had moved to Canmore and started his cave-tour business in Rat's Nest Cave. Chas's most notable climb at this time was the third ascent of Dave Morgan's Alberta Jam, a 5.11c hand crack that in 1982 was near the upper limit of technical difficulty.

Sean Dougherty wrote a very fitting tribute to Chas in a recent Facebook post that described their exploits:

"I first met Chas in 1984 via Dave Morgan and Chris Perry in Grotto Canyon, an encounter that began a chain of adventures and misadventures in the Rockies. Looking through my diaries, I see many, many days together, seeking out new routes, repeating many others, scaring the shit out of ourselves, taking the piss out of each other, shooting the breeze, but always, always having so much fun—Goat Buttress, Kid Goat, Nanny Goat, Windtower, Ha Ling, EEOR, Heart, Barrier,

Grotto, Cougar Creek, Back of the Lake, Burstall, Castleguard Caves, Rat's Nest and many others. Chas was always so calm and such a steady hand to deal with whatever adversity might have thrown our way—perfect companion and a perfect foil. There are so many stories and everlasting, fantastic memories from those times hanging out together."

In 1993, Chas and Pam decided to move to Canmore with their triplets, Carolyn, Emma and Alexander, with no idea how they were going to support themselves. Initially, Chas worked overseas with university teaching in Bhutan and curriculum development work in Indonesia, but as ecotourism became more viable, they both worked hard at developing a cave-tour business in the nearby Rat's Nest Cave. The business prospered and Chas had more time to go climbing.

Although we explored a number of some longer climbs together (West Rib of the First Sister and the Fourth Buttress on Waskahigan Watchi (Mount Bundle)), our focus inevitably shifted to sport climbing, an activity which had grown considerably in scope and suited our age-related need for shorter days.

Climbing at this time was very social, and Chas always insisted that the day end "with a jar in the pub." His broad depth of knowledge and wry humour elevated any conversation. Chas once commented that we weren't strong enough to injure ourselves sport climbing; instead, he relied on a technique he called "mincing." This involved edging up the rock using miniscule foot holds until better ones could be reached. It worked well for him and culminated in his ascent of Panacea, a new route on Guides Rock on Mount Cory, which involves 30 metres of sustained 5.11 mincing with the occasional 5.9 move as a rest. He had many other climbing partners at this time, including Gloria Folden, Al Pickle, and Adam Walker and Shauna Morey who worked for him as guides in the cave business. Caving was always in the mix, however, with exploration in the Monashees and Rogers Pass, guiding in the Crowsnest Pass area, and consulting work in Barbados. There will be tributes to Chas in this year's *Canadian Caver* magazine and on the Alberta Speleological Society website that more fully describes these exploits.

Both of us began to establish new sport routes, which we did separately until the projects were ready to climb. Chas focused on Sunshine Rock, which had previously been an obscure top-rope area and was completely overgrown when he persuaded me to climb to the top of the leftmost slabs and add the first anchors. I left him to it, but he persevered and developed many fine technical routes that brought immediate popularity. Most people climbing there now, with its manicured trails and paved parking lot, do not realize that none of that would have existed without Chas's foresight and effort. He also transformed Kid Goat from a forgotten old-style crag with runout easier climbs into a major multi-pitch sport-climbing area with a fine network of enjoyable mid-grade routes on perfect rock.

Other areas benefitted from Chas's attention, both with new routes and retro-fitting. They include Grotto Canyon, Buffalo Crag, Brewster Crag and Crag X. One of his biggest efforts, however, was the 17-pitch route Heart Line on Heart Mountain, which he completed on his own over the course of a single winter-spring season. It has now had numerous ascents and is a local sport-mountaineering classic. Chas often mused about the name of an existing climb, Three Bolts Closer to Divorce, but his wife, Pam, never tried to limit his climbing. It was only when he injured himself quite badly in a fall while climbing solo did she feel the need to rein him in, and then just a little.

Chas reconnected with his academic background later in life. He published a number of scientific papers in refereed journals, gave conference presentations and was made a fellow of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society in 2018. The following year, he was awarded the Sir Christopher Ondaatje Medal for Exploration by The Royal Canadian Geographical Society and published his book, *Understanding the Banff Hot Springs Through Karst Hydrogeology.* He was a lifelong learner, and the hike up to the crag was often illuminated with his latest ideas on such topics as particle physics, genetics, astronomy and environmental issues.

Chas had a good life, one filled with adventure and discovery, with many close friends and a loving family. We all miss him and have benefitted greatly from knowing him.

—Chris Perry

## Margaret Imai-Compton
1952–2019

My dear friend, Margaret Ko Imai-Compton, reached the end of her journey with cancer on April 12, 2020. Margaret passed in her Toronto home in the company of her daughter, Carly Mei, and her brothers Shin and Ray. Margaret was born in Kichijoji, Japan, in 1952, and the Imai family immigrated to Canada when Margaret was a toddler.

Cancer picked a challenge when it decided to land in Margaret's spirit, it's first naggings pulling on her in the village of Chhukhung on our way to Imja Tse (Island Peak) in the Khumbu region of Nepal in 2011. She underwent numerous treatments over the next nine years with her oncology team saying over and over again, "We've never had a patient like you before." And the undeterred and undefeated, not five feet tall, smiling Margaret would walk out to her next climbing adventure. Hair gone, bandana on.

Margaret and I first climbed together in 2003 on Citlaltépetl, Mexico's "Star Mountain," and North America's third-highest peak. Over the next 16 years, the World's Happiest Woman and I climbed in New Zealand, Peru, Bolivia and Nepal, plus three trips to France and one final week in Italy in September of 2019, as well as dozens and dozens of days in the western cordillera of Canada, climbing mountains, rock and ice. Margaret was a loyal client but not an exclusive one. She tied in with a goodly number of the guides in Alberta and British Columbia and attended a number of ACC General Mountaineering Camps. She was also active with the Toronto Section of the ACC, frequently hosting ice reviews out of her cabin in the Beaver Valley.

In the pre-dawn of our summit day on Citlaltépetl, I was introduced to "Stumblina" when our team of four stopped for a breather and were surrounded by verglas-glazed rock that fell away into the black night. Margaret's alter-ego suddenly toppled over backwards with me grabbing at her while shouting to Paul and Bill below, "Stop her! Stop her!" And Margaret replying "Sorry, sorry. I'm OK, I'm OK!" as she was arrested by Bill and Paul. Not a trait that a guide looks for in a guest, but Margaret came up smiling, and over the hundreds of days we were destined to spend in the mountains, we learned to anticipate the arrival of Stumblina and mitigate her antics.

I don't recall Stumblina even showing up in the Southern Alps of New Zealand the next year where Margaret climbed The Rolling Pin and the Hochstetter Dome. I do remember Margaret laughing and beaming at our last meal in the country as we raced the eleventh hour to make our flights—"Oh wow. They have Big Macs here too!" And I'm sure she catalogued that into the Rolodex of her mind to pull out at her next high-end corporate marketing consultancy. I would have loved to be a fly on the boardroom wall when wee dear Margaret took off the kid gloves and dealt out the hard advice to beer companies, food conglomerates or soap manufacturers. She was mostly sunshine, an abnormal amount of sunshine actually, but that lady had a spine and could calmly and compassionately deliver news that was challenging to hear, to a corporation or to a friend.

In the Cordillera Blanca of Peru in 2007, we made ascents of Nevado Ishinca, Urus and, in the early morning hours on our way to the apex of the trip, Tocllaraju (6,032 metres), Stumblina showed up. I guided Stumblina through a boulder field when her host, and alter-ego, Margaret, began to think that she couldn't continue. I told her about how symposiums, a term and tactic from her professional marketing life, were actually ancient Greek drinking parties that were often linked to vomitorium, which I misinformed her was for what it sounded like. It worked. Margaret got sick, and Stumblina vacated, and we summitted. On the top of Tocllaraju, Margaret wept tears of joy.

The next year, Margaret summitted Pequeno Alpamayo, Piramide Blanca and Huayna Potosi, all in the Cordillera Real of Bolivia. Our cook hoodwinked her into thinking that the chicken he walked into our base camp was a pet—who one day died of altitude sickness. Margaret was

shocked and a bit heartbroken, but she did enjoy some mighty fine chicken fixin's that night.

I hold a number of memories of making too much food in the mountain huts of the Canadian Rockies and Margaret wiggle-walking over to a different group, beaming beatifically, and offering our overage and an "I'll just leave this here and you can bring it back when you're finished." A quick and curt pivot and wiggle away. Often our pot came back empty—such a blatantly bold and brazen lass!

Margaret's personal altitude record was Lobuche East in Nepal at 6,119 metres, about a week before the first pricks of cancer bit into her. The disease did slow her down, like on a day in the Bugaboos, several years later, when she opted out of climbing and lay in the sun outside the Kain Hut, reading and watching a Columbian ground squirrel slowly approach, get close and bite her toe. Not knowing that squirrels rarely carry rabies, I whisked her to the Golden ER. The next year she needed to lay on her pack and sleep for 15 minutes after we'd climbed the President and Vice President (We had climbed Mt. Kerr and McArthur the days before. I may have slept on my pack too!).

From 2015 to 2019, most of my and Margaret's climbing was in the Rockies and the Alps, often in the company or her daughter, Carly, and a half dozen other folks who'd join us in our chalet in Chamonix, or our final one in Cortina d'Ampezzo. She had a God-given gift for bringing people together to head off into the hills. Four trips to Europe over as many years, with Margaret inevitably arriving in a bandana. "We've never had a patient like you before." She'd always be smiling, the embodiment poster child and champion of "Fuck Cancer!"

I've heard it said that attitude is everything. Margaret's life held challenge and heartbreak, yet she chose joy. Fought for it. Lived it. On every summit she'd throw her arms open skywards in a wide V, not in victory, rather in an opening of bliss, just like a rose opening to the sun. She believed in unicorns and rainbows and taught my daughters to believe in them too. Hell, she dressed up in a unicorn rainbow suit and danced at nearly all of their birthdays from 2004 to 2019. My family loves Margaret and she loved us. She is Fairy Godmother to my daughters and showed them how to grab parking spaces like a Torontonian, how to smear chocolate cake everywhere, how to wash dishes by hand and how to hold a wee focus group with black felt-tipped marker and flip chart, the aim being to enumerate everything that my daughters wanted to do. She is my partner Nicole's guardian angel.

I love you, Margaret. Unicorns and rainbows exist; I saw them with you. You get to guide me on my last ascent and it will be so very fine to see you, and to climb together again. Happy trails!

—Barry Blanchard

## Marilyn Cram
### 1951–2021

Marilyn cram's name is recognized by outdoor people from coast to coast to coast, although she never published a story on any of her numerous adventures. Marilyn was the Queen of Ski Tourers in Canada, taking part in more than 30 long-distance, multi-camp ski tours in Western Canada from 1987 (or earlier) to 2013. Those who were with her on those tours considered Marilyn a "Mountain Jewel." Always smiling and never complaining about any adversities on the trip, she always had cheerful kind words and pitched in to help to stymy any difficulties.

In summer, she climbed and trekked, and during shoulder seasons, she was on the water, kayaking the West Coast or canoeing the awesome rivers of the north country. If at home near Chilliwack, British Columbia, weekends would be spent climbing the local hills or skiing at Mount Baker where the Cram family had a chalet. How did this remarkable lady come to achieve so much?

Marilyn was in a medical family. After her father completed medical specialist studies and an internship in Toronto, Ontario, they moved to Thunder Bay where skiing became their life outdoors. While she was a teenager, her father decided to take his practice to Chilliwack and the family skiing to nearby Mount Baker.

After finishing high school, Marilyn continued to University of British Columbia's physiotherapy program, where on weekends she would return home to ski patrol at the newly developed Hemlock Ski Resort (now known as Sasquatch Ski Resort). Upon graduation (circa 1973), she headed north to work for the Canadian Arthritis and Rheumatism Society out of Prince George in a broad and demanding region. It was a very tough job.

In the early 1980s, Marilyn worked four seasons for Canadian Mountain Holidays at their new Cariboo Lodge. This caught her interest to real alpine skiing and honed her abilities in the deep and steep, be it fluffy powder or cement-quality crud. She met and skied with all the guides and the well-to-do clients who came from all over the world.

In this clique, she met Ruedi Beglinger, who was establishing one of the first alpine ski-touring lodges in Canada, located next to Durrand Glacier between Glacier and Mount Revelstoke national parks. After returning to Chilliwack and setting up a private physiotherapy practice, Marilyn became a frequent visitor to the Durrand Glacier Chalet (Selkirk Mountain Experience). From the Durrand, Ruedi invited Marilyn to be on a team that would carry out two ski ascents of 4,000-metre peaks in the St. Elias Mountains, with successful conclusions. From then onward, there was no stopping Marilyn—she pursued one or two multi-day ski tours each winter with one full-fledged mountaineering camp each summer. She joined the Chilliwack Outdoor Club (COC) and the British Columbia Mountaineering Club (BCMC) on her return to Chilliwack, and in later years, she was with two or three other outdoor groups, including the Vancouver Section of the Alpine Club of Canada (ACC).

She was always on the move through the alpine of Western Canada, ascending peaks on ski or foot, or otherwise making plans for new pursuits. Outside of Yukon, one of Marilyn's highest peaks was Mount Sir Wilfred Laurier at the ACC Centennial Camp in 2006. She also climbed in the United States, including two of its highest volcanoes and several 14,000 footers in the Colorado Rocky Mountains. The BCMC icefield ski camps in the Coast Mountains were a special attraction for Marilyn—she took part in eight camps with several significant ascents.

Close at home, she was a weekend warrior on the hills, climbing or maintaining trails. She worked three summer stints on the Guy Hut in Yoho and one week at the new chalet on the Spearhead Traverse near Whistler. Marilyn was an outstanding volunteer for many benevolent actions and was awarded a Lifetime Honorary Membership by the COC for her never-ending efforts.

In a 2013 COC trek to Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park, several people noticed some unusual outbursts by Marilyn. Her youngest sister, a medical doctor, was notified and immediately organized a thorough medical examination—Alzheimer's was detected! Her family quickly set the stages of limitations on her outdoor activity, and in 2014, Marilyn's cadre of friends were notified.

Long ski trips ended, I became her caregiver, and the family took control of her assets and medical limitations. Her last ski was on the final day of operations at Whistler-Blackcomb Ski Resort with Maëlle Ricker in May 2017. To do such with an Olympic champion was the only way to let skiing slide away. In January 2018, Marilyn was painfully introduced to a 24/7 care home in Chilliwack. A very tortuous three years followed, very heartbreaking for a "Mountain Jewel," and equally tough on her friends and relatives.

Marilyn's home near Chilliwack has a commanding view of the mountains to the north, east and south. The most inspiring of the lot is Mount Slesse, a peak she would see every time she opened her front door. Unfortunately, she never reached its summit, being weathered off the final summit tower on one very good attempt. This anomaly will be rectified. There will be a memorial ascent of Mount Slesse in Marilyn's name in 2021, organized by the BCMC, COC and ACC. After a brief eulogy, a small memorial stone plaque will be left on the summit.

Marilyn's motions and smiles have stopped, but her alpine spirit will be with climbers for decades.

—Karl Ricker

# David R. Fisher
## 1927–2020

David Fisher died on July 1, 2020, in Vancouver, British Columbia, at the age of 92. One of the most influential members of the Alpine Club of Canada in the second half of the 20th century, he was a tireless servant of the ACC, most notably through the 1950s, 60s and 70s, being well known to most members during these times. Described as a "died-in-the-wool mountaineer" (by Henry Hall in proposing him for membership in the American Alpine Club), David's legacy is nonetheless as much about his behind-the-scenes work on behalf of the climbing world as it is about his own climbing exploits.

David was born in London, England, in 1927. He was an energetic and adventurous child who seemed destined for a life in the mountains. His climbing career began in 1945 when he became part of the post-WWII generation of British climbers. In the decade following the war, he climbed continuously in Wales, the Lake District and Scotland, including winter climbs on Ben Nevis and in the Cairngorms. He started climbing in the Swiss Alps in 1947, and in 1948, joined a trip to Kleine Scheidegg that the Alpine Club sponsored as a way to encourage a British climbing renaissance, since many climbers were killed during the war.

After his military service (1946–48), David attended Cambridge University (Magdalene College), where he was active in the Cambridge University Mountaineering Club from 1950 to 1954. Summers were spent on classic routes in the French Alps, including making the first British ascent of the East Ridge of the Dent Du Crocodile with John Streetly in 1952. On a more whimsical note, in 1953, David was on the first party to summit the "Three Peaks" inside 24 hours, having climbed the highest mountains in Scotland (Ben Nevis), England (Scafell Pike) and Wales (Mount Snowden) within that timeframe, noting that Ted Wrangham's Jaguar helped speed things along between peaks.

The major expedition of David's Cambridge years was to Mount Rakaposhi (7,788 metres) in the Karakoram Range of Pakistan in 1954. This was actually two expeditions, if one includes the 44-day drive from London to Rawalpindi, with incredible meetings of peoples and places along the journey. As recounted in George Band's book Road to Rakaposhi, the Cambridge climbers survived a cornice-breaking incident and managed to open up the route that would ultimately lead to the summit, but they were themselves denied the first ascent due to bad weather, having to descend in a snowstorm.

In 1955, David left Britain to see the world. His last act of mountaineering before departing was to organize the packing for the 1955 Kangchenjunga (8,586 metres) expedition that was to make the first ascent. In gratitude for his preparation work, David was presented with a mounted piece of rock from the summit. This was to be emblematic of David's climbing life—not always making the summit himself but being rewarded for his invaluable support to those who did.

After crossing the Atlantic Ocean on the Queen Mary, David headed to Alaska to join an expedition led by Brad Washburn (Boston Museum of Science) to complete the survey network for a large-scale map of the Denali region. This trip included a first ascent by David and Washburn of Mount Dickey (2,909 metres), a mountain which incidentally has one of the tallest rock walls in the world at about a mile high.

David landed next in Toronto, Ontario, where he began his civil engineering career with the Proctor & Redfern firm and became a founding member (in 1956) of the reformed Toronto Section of the ACC, which had been dormant for more than 20 years. He met his future wife, Marnie Gilmour, at a climbing social event hosted by the alpinist couple Eric and Dorothy Baer. Marnie knew that David had fallen for her

when he volunteered to carry her pack to a high camp when they were together at the Club's 1956 Glacier Camp. They were married in June of 1957.

In the fall of 1956, David and Marnie, together with Alan and Kay Bruce-Robertson, put up the first routes at Mazinaw Rock in Bon Echo Provincial Park, the very first of which (Birthday Ridge) was named in honour of Marnie's birthday. As chair of the Toronto Section (1960–63), David was then closely involved in leasing the land and building the cabin that created the base for what remains a prized North American climbers' cliff.

In addition to time spent rock climbing in Ontario and in the Shawangunks, New York, David attended every ACC General Mountaineering Camp (GMC) but three between 1956 and 1972, missing seasons only due to his wedding to Marnie, the birth of their first child and the death of Marnie's father. In this period, he also had two seasons (1961–62) in the Premier Group of the Cariboo Mountains that included five first ascents.

After 1972, the focus shifted away from ACC camps to having adventures with Marnie and their three children, including a 1973 season in the Rockies that introduced the children to the Elizabeth Parker, Wheeler and Stanley Mitchell huts; regular trips to the Montreal Section's Keene Farm Hut in the Adirondack Mountains; and a 1976 season in the Yukon that also involved an elaborate float-plane expedition into Lonely Lake on the edge of Nahanni National Park in Northwest Territories.

In 1964, David began an intense eight-year period on the ACC board of directors. He was vice-president from 1964 to 1966, Eastern vice-president from 1966 to 1968, board member from 1968 to 1970, and president from 1970 to 1972. As chair of the ACC's reorganization committee from 1964 to 1966, he played an instrumental role in modernizing the club, with a new constitution and by-laws being passed at the 1966 AGM. During his time as president, he also oversaw the relocation of the ACC Clubhouse from Banff to Canmore, being intimately involved in the concept and architecture of the new building, making sure the budget was realistic.

In a letter from Marnie to David's parents penned after the end of his presidency, she wrote: "He is still very involved with the building of the clubhouse and keeps getting calls from Banff and Calgary about various problems that arise. He is really the only one who has all the details involved at his fingertips." She also wrote that he was made chair of the finance committee when he was past-president, not because he knew anything about finance but because he alone knew all the detailed ins and outs of the Club's business. Indeed, mastery of detail was David's strength.

A major highlight of David's life was his coordination of the ACC's 1967 Yukon Alpine Centennial Expedition (YACE), which demanded everything of his extraordinary skills as a planner, organizer and mountaineer. One of the largest expeditions ever undertaken in the history of mountaineering, it involved about 250 climbers and 26 first ascents in dramatic and remote regions of the St. Elias Mountains in Yukon. It consisted of three phases. First was the first ascent of Good Neighbour Peak (4,791 metres) on the Yukon-Alaska border by a combined Canadian-American team in celebration of the joint centenaries of Canada's confederation and the United States' purchase of Alaska. The second phase targeted 13 unclimbed mountains in what was called the Centennial Range—the highest mountain was named Centennial Peak (3,755 metres) and the remaining ones named for each of the 10 provinces and two territories (as existed in 1967), attempts on all of which were made from three separate glacier camps. The third phase was the GMC located beside the surging Steele Glacier. Lord John Hunt, leader of the 1953 first ascent of Mount Everest, was present for a fortnight at the Steele Glacier camp. David had wanted to have a day of climbing with Hunt but, alas, was too busy in his organizer role for this. The expedition is proudly memorialized in the book *Expedition Yukon*, edited by Marnie.

David maintained lifetime memberships in the Alpine Club (from 1951) and the ACC (from 1955), and was a member of the American Alpine Club from 1956 to 1983. In recognition of his many contributions to the ACC, David was awarded the Silver

Rope for Leadership in 1958, the Distinguished Service Award in 1970, and the A. O. Wheeler Legacy Award in 1995. He was also honoured as Patron of the Guides Ball in 1997 in recognition of his coordination of the YACE 30 years earlier.

In 1989, David retired and moved with Marnie to Vancouver Island so they could live in a maritime climate and be closer to long-time climbing friends. They had a variety of adventures in their senior years, as well as annual trips to Lake O'Hara and to the family cottage in North Wales, where they and friends continued to enjoy hikes and scrambles on the peaks. David also never lost contact with his British climbing associates, enjoying many reunions, including at the 150th anniversary Alpine Club dinner in 2007. He was a great friend to climbers everywhere.

—Andy Fisher

## Troy Kirwan
### 1965–2020

Grief, sorrow, joy. On January 3, 2020, Troy Kirwan reached the end of his seven-year journey with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). He passed away surrounded by close friends and blanketed in love. His daughter, Cassidy, and Troy watched their last story together, and later he left in the arms of his beloved wife, Sophie. The pain of his withered body is behind him now and his spirit is free to soar, as it always has.

Troy was the second born to Garry and Jenny Kirwan. Garry was with the RCMP for his entire career, and the Kirwans moved around a lot, but Troy's heart remained in Banff where he was born, in the mountains. His dad taught him to hunt and fish as well as introduced him to hockey. Troy discovered climbing on his own, and like anything he put his hand to, he was good at it. My friend was one of the most naturally gifted athletes I've ever known. He was good at climbing and skiing, hockey, fly fishing, playing the drums and guitar, and flying helicopters. Hell, before I even met Troy, I'd danced a night away to his band, The Scuffed Shoes, at the Canmore Hotel in 1982. Troy was only 17, in the bar illegally, but POUNDING it out on his kit. Later he confessed, "The cop's kid is always the worst," then added, "The highlight of my young life was The Scuffed Shoes opening for George Thorogood and the Destroyers at the Banff Centre." And he cracked his winning smile, and his eyes crinkled to frame those amazing sea-blue eyes.

Neither Troy nor I can remember the exact date that we first shook hands in Mountain Magic in Banff. We both know it was in the late 80s sometime. He worked there. I remember that we chatted about climbing, and he told me about his recent extended trip to New Zealand. Troy was interested in becoming a mountain guide, a journey that I was partway through at the time and would mentor him a bit, but then he went and aced all of his exams and earned the guide's pin before I did.

But in August 1990, I was an ACMG alpine guide and Troy was an assistant guide, and we were hunkered down with our three guests on top of the Dome below the Kain Face of Mount Robson. The weather was going horrid when two climbers from Spokane trudged into our camp, having just descended the Kain.

"There's a guy with a broken ankle in the bergshrund below The Roof," one of them declared.

It was late in a day that had gone to grey. Troy and I grabbed all the clothing, food, fuel and an extra stove that our team could spare, and we charged up the Kain Face, both of us up it in under 38 minutes. By 8 p.m. we were in the 'schrund with the injured party and two experienced Coloradans who had come to their aid. We gave them what we'd brought and promised to return, and then Troy and I descended to our clients through waves of rain. Thirty-six hours later we were able to climb back up and get everyone down to the Dome. Two days later, a Bell 204 helicopter lifted us all back to the road, where the national media had been covering our plight and rescue. Troy's dad was the staff sergeant of the Jasper detachment, and the rescue was big news. Troy and I were lauded as heroes and were well received at the Astoria Bar. Troy's mom and dad and the superintendent of Jasper

Park were there, and it was so cool to see his parents beam with pride.

At 11:22 a.m. on June 13, 1991, Troy and I stood with our three guests on the virgin summit of Mount Upton (3,520 metres) in the St. Elias Range. The north side of Mount Logan bore witness 29 kilometres to the south-southeast. We went on to climb pretty much all of the peaks ringing our glacial basin, and after eight days of bluebird weather we flew out early.

"I think we did a mighty fine job in there, buddy," Troy said, and we tapped cold glasses of beer in the Capitol Hotel in Whitehorse.

In December of that year, with Joe Buszowski, Troy made the first ascent of Mixed Master (5.8 WI5, 300m), one of the routes accredited with starting the modern mixed-climbing revolution, in spite of the fact that it is a traditionally protected route.

The next summer, Troy made another of his significant contributions to Canadian climbing when he established The Raven (5.10d, 75m) on what is now The Raven Crag on Sulphur Mountain, above the Banff townsite.

In 1993, Troy became a IFMGA/UIAGM mountain guide, and along with fellow guide Peter Arbic and me, he spent 68 days living on and below the south face of K2. On our strongest attempt, Troy was turned around at about 7,300 metres by a cruel headache and falling off the pace. He'd hit his altitude wall that day, and with tears weeping from the corners of his blue eyes, he hugged Pete and me then began his descent.

My buddy Troy and I spent hundreds and hundreds of days climbing and guiding on four continents, partying, and working on movies at home and in New Zealand. We lived life as best mates and helped each other through divorces, deaths and injuries. Troy's knee went south in the mid-90s, so he became a helicopter pilot, and was soon famous for making the lives of heli-ski guides easy with "I think you can ski over there."

Sophie Fortin and Troy found each other in 2006, and they were the loves of each other's lives. They were blessed with Cassidy in 2011, and she is a spirited young lass with hair the colour of sunshine and who refused any help in the deep end of the pool when she was five, insisting on dog paddling like mad, frantically gulping air and smiling all the time.

Troy was diagnosed on October 23, 2013.

"It's pretty bad news," he told me. I could see the weight of the world and the responsibility of fatherhood pressing down hard on his shoulders. It's one of the cruelest diseases out there. I watched it shut him down from the fingertips and toes inwards over the next half-dozen years. ALS can go straight to hell in my book.

I love the fact that Troy's last flight, before his license was pulled, was to take Cassidy and some of her friends up over their house in Radium.

Sophie and Troy were married by his dad on July 7, 2014. In 2016, they built a wheelchair-friendly house in Revelstoke and moved back to the town where they'd first met. Troy had an innate ability at establishing friendships, and the front door became a revolving one as musicians, helicopter pilots, guides, climbers, fly fishers and just plain-old neighbours stopped by to visit. People from right across the social spectrum all stopping by because they loved Troy, Sophie and Cassidy. Towards the end, he had to communicate via his eyes through an iPad, and it would take him time to compose his jokes, but they were still pure Kirwan, as were those blue, blue eyes. Finally, he was home on a respirator, and his body had shrunk to skin and bones, and Sophie cared for him day and night and would have done so forever because she loved him totally. He was in a lot of pain yet always made time to watch stories with Cassidy, sit with her cradled in his emaciated lap. I know he hung in as long as he did because of his wife and child.

"I always hope that we'd get to do this," Troy said to me a few years ago. Two middle-aged men, sitting on his deck sipping coffee and watching our daughters—Cassidy, Rosemary and Eowyn—play and play and play.

"This is just so great." He smiled and so did I.

"I love you, man," I blurted.

"I know, I love you too, buddy."

And we took another sip, "Isn't the sunshine nice out here right now?"

And I saw contentment in my buddy's beautiful blue eyes and realized that he was past his wars and so happy to just be home. Thank you for showing me that, Troy.

—Barry Blanchard

## Philippe Delesalle
### 1929–2020

Philippe delesalle, the architect who designed many of our most notable mountain structures, died in Canmore, Alberta, on July 6, 2020.

Philippe was born near Lille, in Normandy, France, on September 17, 1929. His father was a successful industrialist, and Philippe grew up in a comfortable home where he learned to ride horses at an early age. The Second World War interrupted his childhood, and living in Normandy, Philippe and his family were very near the action.

In 1950, at 20 years of age, Philippe set off to travel the world but fell in love with the Rocky Mountains and settled in Banff in 1952. During the winter of 1952–53, he worked as a lift operator on the Strawberry rope tow at Sunshine Village Ski Resort where he met Hans Gmoser, who was guiding clients to Mount Assiniboine. The pair became fast friends and shared many great adventures together, including: the first ascent of Wasootch Tower and a new route on the east face of Mount Edith in 1953; a rugged trip to explore the Albert Icefield in 1956; an ascent of the East Ridge of Mount Logan in 1959; and an attempt on the Great Divide Ski Traverse in 1960. In 1969, Philippe climbed the elegant Alpamayo in Peru with Peter Fuhrmann and Hugh Considine.

Philippe graduated in 1959 with a degree in architecture from McGill University and had a very successful career. He designed five churches in Calgary, including Holy Trinity Church, the first reinforced concrete church built in the city. Another of Philippe's churches, St. Luke's Catholic Church, was honoured with the City of Calgary Historic Resource designation. Philippe also designed Bishop Grandin High School, a precast concrete structure for 1,600 students. According to engineer Mike Simpson, Phil's bold, brutalist concrete concept challenged the norms of the time.

But it is as a designer of mountain structures that Philippe is known. In 1967, he designed Bugaboo Lodge for his old friend Gmoser, and over the years, designed several more heli-ski lodges for Canadian Mountain Holidays—in the Cariboos, Bobbie Burns and Adamants. One of his innovations in these lodges was the adaptation of the double-roof method by which the snow-bearing roof is separated from the standard roof by a crawl space.

Fellow architect Robert Leblond, with whom Philippe worked for several decades, wrote: "Your buildings capture the imagination of all skiers and hikers for much of the seasons with subdued but adventurous exteriors, and cozy warm interiors fostering relaxation and conversations amongst the guests.… Every lodge tends to convey a different message of welcome, adventure and excitement, peace and tranquility. They are all alive with CMH's spirit, energy and call for actions."

One of Philippe's finest creations is the original Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies in Banff, which was constructed in 1967–68. Philippe built the museum from what he called "noble materials"—stone, wood, steel and concrete. His good friend Catharine Whyte asked him to design the building and worked closely with him on the project. Philippe always included art in his buildings, and the Whyte Museum was no exception. He commissioned Robert Oldrich to design a steel grill and magnificent steel candelabra, which still can be seen near the stairway at the north end of the Gateway room.

Leblond wrote: "Your work is generated from your soul and laid bare for everyone to contemplate it. It is honest, energetic and very generous much like your personality and convictions."

Philippe's work also includes the hotel (1965) and the day lodge (1967) at Sunshine Village Ski Resort.

A keen mountaineer, Delesalle played a key role in designing small backcountry shelters for skiers and climbers: the Asulkan Hut near Rogers Pass; and the first iterations of the Balfour, Peyto and Bow huts on the Wapta Icefields.

In 1960 with Martin Cohos, he created Cohos Delesalle, which still exists today as Dialog—one of Canada's most successful architectural firms.

In 1960, Philippe married Mireille Le Bars,

from the south of France, and they settled in a little house in Canmore along Policeman's Creek. Philippe called the house "The Shack" to begin with, and over the years they built and rebuilt the rustic structure into a beautiful and delightful home in the heart of Canmore. They had three children: daughter Nathalie (1961), and sons Bruno (1963) and Marco (1867), now an ACMG mountain guide. Marco recently wrote: "My father was an integral part of my life, and I am forever grateful for the life he has given me. The three most important things I have learned from my dad are to live life with freedom and dignity, and to be loyal to friends and family. His adventurous spirit has been instilled in me since my youth, and he has inspired me to live my life to the utmost of my ability."

An adventurer at heart, Philippe lived with the Inuit in Alaska for six months, crossed the Sahara Desert on foot and camel, sailed the Atlantic Ocean and flew a light plane the length of the Americas. In 1970, he purchased Swansea Ranch in the Columbia Valley, where he took great pleasure raising horses and working the land. According to Philippe's wife, Mireille, "For Philippe, it was quite important to live with horses. Riding was a big priority when he was a boy, and he felt it was an important experience for our children, but also for our friends' children. It was a positive experience for all the children."

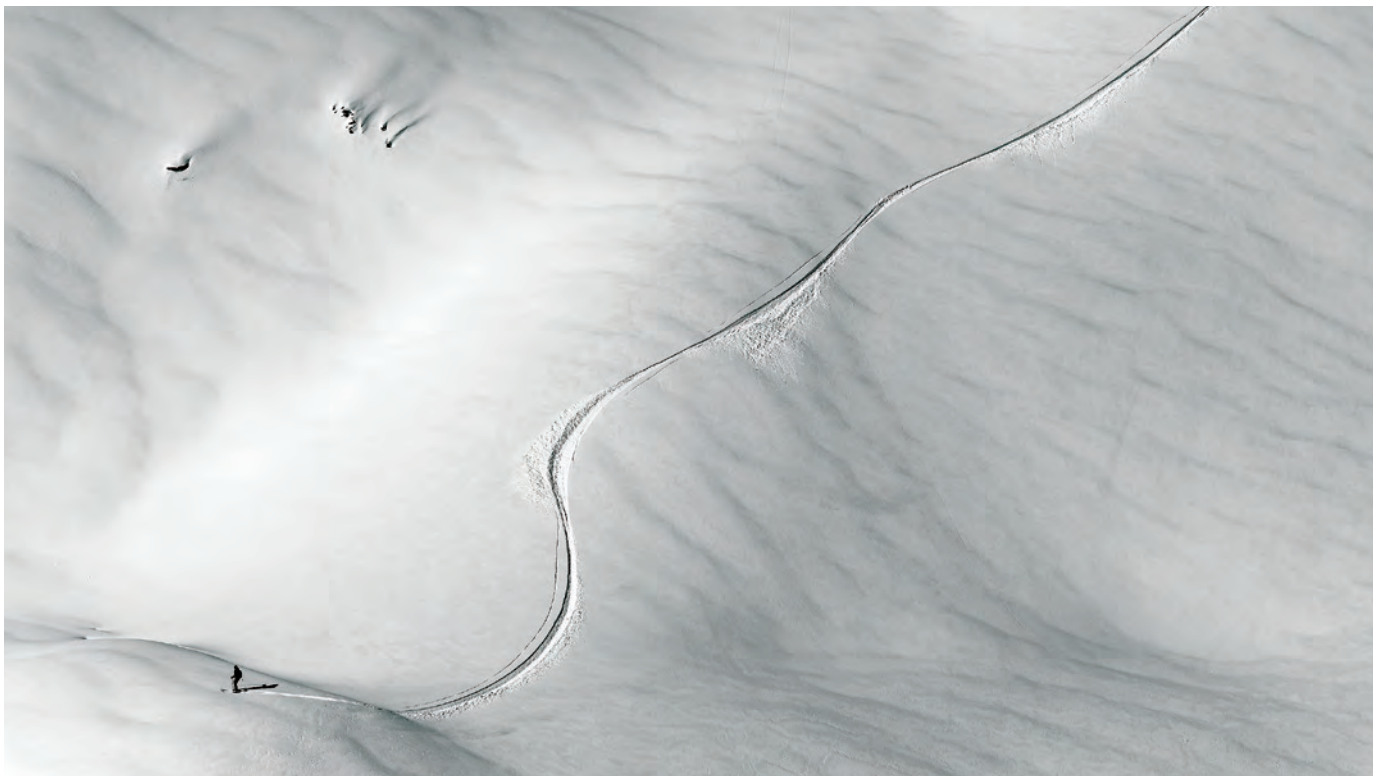
Philippe lived a rich and interesting life. He loved good music, good books and, above all, great architecture. He also was a very talented photographer. He had many friends and was blessed with a wonderful wife with whom he shared 60 years.

Delesalle played an important role in our Rocky Mountain community and was awarded the Bill March Summit of Excellence Award in 2011.

Donations in memory of Philippe may be made to The Alpine Club of Canada's "Philippe Delesalle Fund," created to support and benefit disadvantaged children and youth who would otherwise have limited opportunities or prospects to experience the mountains, mountain life and mountain culture.

—Chic Scott

Photo: Bruno Long



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# The Alpine Club of Canada

*Helping you reach your summit*

- **The John Lauchlan Memorial Award** assists Canadian alpinists with their expeditions.
- **The Karl Nagy Memorial Scholarship** is awarded to aspirant ACMG guides and ACC volunteer leaders to cover the ACC's General Mountaineering Camp fees, where they will shadow and learn from full guides.
- **The Jen Higgins Grant** supports young women in their alpine-related outdoor pursuits.
- **The Jim Colpitts Memorial Scholarship** supports young people on mountain-related training courses.
- **The ACC Environment Grant** assists individuals and groups in their pursuit of activities that contribute to the protection and preservation of mountain and climbing environments.

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John Lauchlan Memorial Award 2021 recipients ascend the East Ridge of Mount Logan. Photo: Peter Hoang.