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ISSUE

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ROBIN ONEILL PHOTO.

Feet First

There are very few safety nets when you're breaking new ground, not a lot of peer-support. Stuff happens out there on the edge, and sometimes it hurts. It probably should hurt a bit though if you're really going for it as best you can. Pain, hope, maybe death; or there's always that pot of gold on the other side of the rainbow. Nobody knows.

Which is exactly the point. Because risk, not variety, is the spice of life. Whether you're dangling on a soaking rope while a waterfall pounds you into the dark recesses of the earth or staring down Class III whitewater with nothing under your feet but a glorified surfboard – the real living is out there in the margins. So are all the secrets worth searching for.

It doesn't have to be death defying, it just has to be a conscious choice made to enter the unknown and see how she goes. This issue is for the pioneers and the entrepreneurs. It's for the thrill seekers and the voyageurs. It's for the risk takers, the long haulers, and the people you sometimes catch staring off into the distance, silently wondering "what if?"

The answer might be blowing in the wind or it might be just sitting on a rock somewhere high in the Coast Mountain summits. Or there is no answer, just blisters and life and doing your best. This summer, go seek and explore. Go find out for yourself. ■

–Feet Banks



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QUEST FOR THE CURSED GOLD

*High in the treacherous peaks above Widgeon Lake,
a 1950s plane crash site draws three friends into
the trek of their lives*

By Heather Lea
Photography by Francois-Xavier de Ruydts

THE SUMMIT

A front wheel jutted skyward, more or less intact, but the fuselage had caved in on itself and was still partially buried under snow. A piece of wing lay off to the side scattered amongst twisted debris and unrecognizable objects. There was no sign of the gold but we'd reached our goal – the plane wreck on the summit. Usually peak-bagging comes with high-fives and jubilant hollers but this wasn't a trophy summit. People had died here.

~

THE CRASH

In January 1953 a Canadian Air Force Mitchell B-25 bomber reportedly flying \$1.6 million in cash and recovered Nazi gold was suddenly enveloped in an ice storm and careened straight into the rocky peaks above Widgeon Lake at 300 kilometres an hour. No one survived. It took search and rescue teams several months to locate the crash and fight their way in through snow. Bodies were recovered but there's never been an official tally of the valuable cargo. Much was recovered, but no one knows how much was not.

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THE CURSE

"It should be right around here."

Francois-Xavier de Ruydts (aka, "Fix") circled a vague area on the map. I was unconvinced – millimetres on a map meant miles in the wild. Plus, I'd just met Fix two weeks previous and his plan – to bushwhack five days into the site of an old plane crash with valuable cargo – sounded tough, and route information was scant. Yet as I thought about it over the next few weeks, the lure of the high alpine "treasure" changed my mind but first I wanted to talk with someone who'd actually been there.

In 1982, Mike Boileau became the first civilian unattached to the crash to find the B-25 site. His first words to me were: "You know that place is cursed?"

A self-proclaimed "hobby explorer", Mike recounted tales of a vaguely reported event where members of a military search and rescue team sent to investigate the site were later killed in an air crash of their own. He told of two prospectors named Henry and Ed who'd contacted him looking for data in hopes of staking claims near the crash site. A few months later Ed drowned while trying to retrieve his floatplane, blown into the middle of Pitt Lake by a gust of wind. Not long after, Henry crashed his own plane in the Yukon and died from injuries while awaiting help.

Mike seemed to know his stuff. "Which route you taking?" he asked.

I relayed Fix's plan as best I could remember. Mike snorted, "You'll never find it that way. Here's what you gotta do: start at the..." I zoned out, delegating Fix for a follow-up call, and then asked my only real question for Mike: Had he ever found the legendary Nazi gold?

"I wouldn't tell you either way," Mike said. "But make sure you guys bring your guns."

~

THE QUEST

Day 1: Shawn Campbell, a mutual friend who said we had him at "treasure hunt" joined Fix and me for the adventure. With three in the canoe the paddle up Pitt Lake took about two hours and we joked about which of us wouldn't be coming back. Mike Boileau's tales of a curse was like seeing a large spider crawl under the couch – you knew it was there but didn't want to go looking for it. That night we camped on the lakeshore and stayed up until the only light around came from the tip of Shawn's clove cigarette. No one wanted to openly mention The Curse for fear of giving it wings.

Day 2: Mike Boileau's surefire route was anything but. After nearly two hours of being utterly lost, bushwhacking and debating the merits of GPS, we finally found our first waypoint – a bridge leading to a decommissioned logging road. Six kilometres of bitch-slapping branches and coiled-like-elastic snags were punctuated only with cursewords and the smell of dank bear wafting from moss-covered caves. I hurried along to keep close to the guys in case a paw darted out and found its grip on my boot.

Eventually we came to our second waypoint, a steep, dried-up waterfall drainage that led to much-unanticipated rock climbing. Although free-climbing lower-fifth-class rock with a heavy pack was a tad uncomfy it was The Curse slow-dancing through my mind alongside visions of bloody, cracked-open heads that caused the most stress. I began to doubt our route. How the fuck were we supposed to get back down?



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Elevation: 5124 ft / 1562 m

Photo: TIM KEMPLE



Camp that night was a large, flat ledge of rock with a killer view. Of the ten kilometres we'd hiked that day, six had been bushwhacking. Sleep came easy and dreamless.

Day three demanded much tolerance and true grit. In place of rock we faced a vertical tree-wall: the steepest, thickest bushwhacking encountered yet. Skyward evergreens and waist-high underbrush were stacked one upon the other. Well past the point where it's easier to push on than turn back we soldiered on in silence, retreating into ourselves.

Even if we found a pile of freshly polished gold we'd already decided to leave it all there. No one wanted to test whether greed prompted The Curse. At some point, we crested the summit ridge and caught that first glint of sunlight on twisted metal.

~

X MARKS THE SPOT

On this blue-sky day it was hard to grasp what happened to bring this plane down 60 years ago – the sound of engines screaming before metal hit rock was palpable in my imagination. We stood in a moment of silence and thought of those onboard, hoping their families had found at least some peace knowing the resting place was of such perfect beauty. I stayed awake most of that night watching the sky drop occasional fireballs towards earth.

Morning arrived and the only gold in sight was the welcome sun and we didn't feel particularly "Cursed." We didn't trust Mike's route, so we opted for Fix's original plan for the descent. The going was steep and slippery but easy – painfully easy. In just under three hours we'd descended what had taken us most of two days to ascend up the other side of the ridge. A few more frustrating kilometres of ego-slapping

"The gold may never be found but the mere idea it still exists continues to feed the fantasies of adventure lovers."

– Kenneth Welsh, host of TV's Northern Mysteries.

bushwhacking and we hit the shoreline of Widgeon Lake, finally allowing ourselves the cheers and high-fives of success. Our canoe was across the lake, however, and the shoreline was impassably steep. We'd done nothing the easy way on this trip and weren't about to start. Fix broke out a foldable saw and we collected deadfall to begin building a raft.

~

THE RETURN

The first dip of our paddles – y-shaped branches and canvas food bags held in place with hockey tape – elicited chuckles and wavering confidence. The raft was sewn together with every inch of cord we could find: rope, shoelaces, backpack straps... six hours and 25 logs had gone into it. We were a barely floating gongshow but we were moving, inching foot by soaking foot further from The Curse. The last leg of any adventure always brings that bit of introspection, that *denouement*. We hadn't found the gold we didn't want and had certainly suffered much more than we'd enjoyed. And yet with each stroke of the "paddle" we felt more alive and rich, not from missing gold or the fame of finding it but from the experience of being lost in the bush, in ourselves, and in a history few people had ever glimpsed. We had cursed Mike Boileau's name and questioned his route almost the entire way but here, at the end, I wanted to thank him – we'd planted footsteps in a rare place. ■



ABOVE: MARGUS RIGA PHOTO. BELOW: Tippie (left) and his campaign manager. FEET BANKS PHOTO.

TIPPIE FOR PRIME MINISTER

He promises to rule with a titanium fist

He pioneered freeride mountain biking in the '80s and '90s and is currently Pinkbike.com's Master of Disaster/Ceremonies but legendary ripper Brett Tippie's next role may be as the Prime Minister of Canada.

Black Tusk Jerky owner Dave May started the campaign as, "something fun to do with Tippie." Problem was, he forgot to tell the guy. *Mountain Life* grabbed hold of both of them to discuss Tippie's political platform, that he didn't even know he had.

Mountain Life: *To throw a guy into national politics without warning him is no joke. Are you guys old buddies?*

Dave: We met about a year and half ago through biking. Back in the day I had a few of his posters on my wall.

Tippie: At least they weren't on the ceiling. But I'm into it; I've always liked Dave's jerky. It's like the trail mix that Conan uses. It's Cimmerian trail mix.

Dave: I think lots of people are tired with the way things are being run and Tippie is an industry leader we all love. If you can succeed in one industry, you can succeed in another.

Tippie: I thought he said he wanted a "Primed" Minister.

ML: *Tippie, what is your stand on education in this country?*

Tippie: If you are going to take a test, do it in a restaurant because the customer is always right.

ML: *What about foreign policy?*

Tippie: No problem. I get along with all countries well, except they all have a different word for everything. I think, running against Harper, I am actually the most popular candidate outside of Canada.

ML: *How about the economy here at home?*

Tippie: It's time to go to work if you have a job to do. Otherwise, spend local and engage in the barter system as much as possible.

ML: *What about obesity and diabetes epidemics? How will you promote fitness and health for our nation's youth?*

Tippie: We need couch potato peelers followed with free bike rentals and free lift tickets for all. And free drinks for all the ladies at après. As well, I'd have après after every sitting of the parliament to boost cooperation.



ML: *What is your stance on global warming?*

Tippie: Solar-powered floating farms. And keep recycling – and that doesn't mean hit the same lines and jumps you filmed last year. Start with the small things, which lead to greater steps and eventually movements. Infect more and more people as you go, like bacteria does. You have to respect bacteria: it's the only culture that some people have.

ML: *Any last words of advice for the nation?*

Tippie: Everyone should do a couple laps in the park and then re-evaluate everything. Also, life is too short to eat gas-station jerky. 🍖

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– Feet Banks

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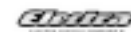
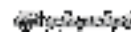


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park rats & **GRAVITY GIRLS**

As the popularity of Whistler's mountain bike park continues to grow, Sea to Sky women are keeping up and holding their own.





LEFT: Darcy Turenne. MATTIAS FREDRIKSSON PHOTO. ABOVE: Annie Bisson. BLAKE JORGENSEN PHOTO.

By Danielle Baker

Most of us ladies own more than one bike.

We buy them like other girls might buy shoes or purses and we're proud of our quivers. We have big downhill bikes and little XC bikes, cruisers and bar bikes, dirt jumpers and skinny tires but these days when us ladies hit Whistler it's often our big-travel gravity bike that we love the most. Ladies love the Whistler Bike Park.

"For me, those first few Garbo laps started what would become an obsessive love affair." – Siobhan, 32. Teacher and tattoo enthusiast, seven years riding the park.

The bike park line-up on an average summer day consists of roughly one girl for every four guys. Sure, some of those are adventurous girls being convinced that they too love their boyfriend's hobby but most of us are there to ride for ourselves. The hill will open and significant others will be ignored, small children will miss their mothers but most importantly, sendage will be sent. Beginner to expert; single, married, mothers, season pass holders and first-timers will all join in the love affair created by the fast, flowy, big air goodness of the bike park.

"Whistler helped me discover that I LOVE riding steep rock faces!" – Meghan, 36. Kick-ass rider, eight years riding the bike park.

My first time at the Whistler Bike Park I was terrified. I remember riding the chairlift sweating under my overabundance of protective

gear and men's shorts, looking like a mini Robocop. Nothing about me felt sexy or powerful... until I got on my bike at the top. There is a switch that flips in our brain. Once on your bike, you can do anything. Our bikes give us a kind of superpower.

"I inherently trust the park trail builders to build drops, jumps and landings that enable maximum success." – Susan, 39. Women's Ride Leader, nine years riding the bike park.

The lift allows you to session over and over without all that embarrassing wheezing of pushing back up epic trails. This leads to faster and easier progression and that makes us feel like superstars. The trail builders are the real stars, though. It's like all they want you to do is high-five all day and they build stuff to make that happen.

"My first time was awesome but also a little bit scary... I felt like my bike was going to break in pieces." – Norma, 29. New to Canada, one year of mountain biking.

Nearly every new rider has shared Norma's experience with "that jerk who tries to jump over you" as he's besting someone's Strava GPS results on *B-Line*. "ON YOUR LEFT!"

Many of us bike park chicks spend our first season consumed by a social fear – we spend too much time listening for and pulling over for other riders. Some ladies end up frustrated with the new terrain and leave after three laps, others push too hard and end up with a hematoma on *Easy Does It* (true story). But eventually someone will



Sure, some of those are adventurous girls being convinced that they too love their boyfriend's hobby but most of us are there to ride for ourselves.

curb our polite fears of getting in the way with a, "Why are you stopping? You're faster than most of the people on this trail." And our riding will take another giant confidence-fueled step forward.

***"He very kindly offered me to go first, no doubt so he could check out my bum."
– Sarah, 42. Supermom, eight years riding the bike park.***

Our biking abilities, priorities and fashion constantly evolve but the park remains a staple in our riding and social lives. It has no doubt started (and ended) more than a few relationships – many boyfriends with "helpful tips" are still wondering what happened. Other park ripper dudes suddenly find themselves at the bottom of the lift in kneepads and Leatt braces with a diaper bag over one arm and baby under the other while their lady hits the hill – the classic "baby hand-off." Sarah had her first date and wedding in the bike park. She still lights up at the thought of riding Whistler, "partly," she says, "because it's the most socializing this stay-at-home mom will have all week."

While it was the riding that got us into the park, the community keeps us there. A summer chairlift ride is one of the best places to make friends with like-minded adventurers. Even the GLC patio acts like a family... they'll heckle your mishaps (unless it's serious) but every friend and stranger alike has celebrated après over the same line: "THAT WAS THE BEST DAY EVER!"

TOP: Lula Darquier. MARK MACKAY PHOTO.
LEFT: Darcy Turenne. MATTIAS FREDRIKSSON PHOTO.

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ABOVE: Darcy Turenne and Birgitte Löwe Johansen. MATTIAS FREDRIKSSON PHOTO.
LEFT: Trish Bromley and Diana Bruculleri. JUSTA JESKOVA PHOTO.



“Going to the bike park will always be guaranteed fun.”

—Darcy, 29. Professional Athlete, 11 years riding the bike park.

Like with any lover, a girl's relationship with the bike park changes over time. What starts with the borderline obsession of a Justin Bieber fan can shift, as the years roll by, into the comfortable, taking-for-granted phase of a married life. We each choose how serious we want things to get.

For some “The Park” becomes a place to retreat on sunny weekends; others end up sessioning every weekday morning when they can have it to themselves. It's there when we are ready to get down to business and it waits during those times when we just need a break. But as more and more women take to the sport (and to the dust in our teeth, the funny crashes, and especially the après) it's nice to know the park will always be there for us, smiles for miles. 

Numbers Game: Bike Park Women

Most female participation stats in the mountain bike industry sit between 10-15 percent. The Whistler Bike Park currently has a 25 percent female participation rate (which balloons on sunny weekends). More importantly, as overall park numbers grow the female percentage keeps pace: for every four newbie guys waiting at the lift, one woman is discovering what “arm pump” really means.

Since starting their Women's Nights program the Whistler Bike Park has seen an increase from 333 to 2011 women and added an extra night weekly to accommodate the demand. These evenings bring the female riding community together and demystify the bike park for beginners while advancing others onto expert trails and sponsored race teams.

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Misty Morning on the Great River.

THE GREAT RIVER

Armed with smiles, whiskey and optimism not seen since the pioneers of the great Klondike Gold Rush, a motley crew of Whistler adventures paddle the mighty Yukon River through one of the highest water years on record

Text and photos by Shawn Sadler

June 18, 2012

The river is in control.

And we learned this pretty early on. One moment I was admiring Greg Wiens' and Chili Thom's graciously executed eddy turn beside an enormous bluff – two seconds later they're bathing in the frigid waters of the 3,190 kilometre-long Yukon River. Chili made it to shore but "Diamond Tooth Wiens" managed to stay with the canoe and rode that red cork upside down like some kind of deranged aquatic cowboy. Four hours into a 438 km adventure and things were going to shit real fast. Making matters worse, Five Finger Rapids loomed only about one kilometre downstream...

Our Yukon River paddle trip was meant to pay homage to the great Klondike Gold Rush of 1896-98 when tens of thousands of prospectors set off from San Francisco in hopes of striking it rich in the Klondike gold fields. Upon reaching Skagway, Alaska, by steamship and hauling thousands of pounds of supplies up and over the legendary Chilkoot Pass, hordes of committed prospectors constructed roughly 7,000 handmade boats and set off en masse down the Yukon River.

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We were six dudes in three canoes (one upside down) paddling a river that usually flows at a rate and capacity that's twice as massive as BC's mighty Fraser River. It had been a big winter, however, and spring melts had swelled the water levels 5-8 feet higher than average. With 250 pounds of waterproof gear tied bow-to-stern under the tipped canoe, Trevor Anstey and I felt the tug of every current as we frantically paddle-pulled that beast to shore.

Fifteen sweat-drenched minutes later we had everyone on dry land. Wiens was grinning like a man with gold fever but also very close to being hypothermic so we started a fire and chugged some whiskey and saluted those thousands of brave souls who had pioneered this same journey over a hundred years prior.

Five Finger Rapids dampened our clothing but not our spirits and for the next seven days we forged north averaging a speedy 10 km/hour. Many of the planned campsites were still below the high-water levels but it wouldn't be an adventure without some 12-hour paddling stints under a northern sun that hugged the horizon but never quite dipped beneath long enough for darkness to settle in.

Four hundred clicks later we scooped our way into Dawson City on June 21 – summer solstice – which meant 24 hours of perpetual daylight in the Las Vegas of the north. We'd reached Dawson a day early but our reward was also our demise as we stretched the longest day of the year into a 48-hour bender of casinos and showgirls and partied with the same sense of mayhem we imagined the Klondike prospectors would have felt after months in the wilds. All six of us took the fabled shot of whiskey with a dead miner's toe in the glass and although only Geoff Patterson won \$400 at blackjack, we all left rich in indescribable memories and gut-wrenching laughter.

The canoe is an integral piece of Canadian exploration – it literally put this country on the map. From the First Nations to the Voyageurs of Quebec to Alex MacKenzie to Simon Fraser and now us. Greg Wiens, Chili Thom, Geoff Patterson, Jason Martin, Shawn Sadler and Trevor Cooney Madeley Anstey. Forever scooping in the land of the midnight sun. 

*To read more about the boys' adventures on *The Big River* (and there are many more tales to tell) and view a video about the Yukon during the Klondike Gold Days, keep checking "In this Issue" at cm.mountainlifemag.ca*

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FULL SUPPORT

The Art of “The Backyard”

By Tannis Baradjiez. Photos by Mason Mashon.

“Travel the world, do what you love, make films and never ever know the grind of a Monday morning in the office.”

A generation ago that kind of “irresponsible” career planning would have made most parents cringe but right now it’s working just fine for the Coastal Crew, a trio of mountain bikers who’ve made a name (and living) playing in the dirt. And 22-year-old Coastal Crew rider Dylan Dunkerton’s parents not only support his unorthodox career path, they helped him build a super badass office.

“The Backyard” is a stand of second-growth rainforest behind the Dunkertons’ Sunshine Coast home. Over the past five years or so Dylan and his Crew have transformed the land into five acres of some of the best freestyle bike terrain in the Coast Mountains.

“[Dylan’s parents] Andrew Dunkerton and Joanne Laird let us do whatever we want with everything they have,” says 24-year-old Coastal Crew ripper Curtis Robinson. “Maybe because we are younger and stronger, and we’ll overpower them.”

The truth is, Dylan’s parents didn’t put up much of a fight. “We said to them, ‘If this is what you love, then you should go and do it,’” says Joanne. “‘Make it into a job and have fun while you’re young.’”

That “fun” manifested into a slalom track, a pump track, an X-wall, numerous tree-trunk “boner logs” jutting from the earth, and a number of huge primordial-looking dirt jumps. The Backyard is every downhiller’s dream, a Jurassic Park of mountain bike creativity built from joy, sweat equity and a little bit of inspiration from Mr. Andrew Dunkerton.

“Having that guy as a dad was instrumental,” Dylan says. “I grew up splitting wood and watching him in the shop. All these experiences around the farm taught me a good work ethic, and I learned how to build.”

Andrew Dunkerton, 68, is a cabinetmaker and carpenter who now spends his days carving Northwestern BC-style First Nations art pieces. Using tools given to him over 30 years ago, his intricate carvings and diligent work ethic has been paramount to the creative vision and execution of Coastal Crew ideas.

“Art can be a hard thing to describe,” the elder Dunkerton says. He built most everything on his land by hand and you sense he can find art in a building or a bike obstacle as easily as he does in his current favourite carving, a yellow-cedar eagle mask haloed with feathers.



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"Andrew's just a friggin' creative, super hard-working guy," explains Curtis Robinson, "So that really rubs off on us. We're like, 'Holy shit, he's three times our age and working harder than us.'"

Having a strong DIY role model (and his expansive workshop and tools) enabled the Coastal Crew to hammer, shovel and pound The Backyard together. "Dylan's creativity took off at an early age," Andrew says of his son. "He'd bring me pieces of wood when he was three, four, five years old with pencil marks and say, 'Cut here, dad,' and it would look fabulous."

Dylan now does much of the video editing for the Coastal Crew's unique (and highly successful) "Mountain Bike Lifestyle movies" but he's equally creative out shoveling dirt and jumping with the boys.

"I'm definitely proud, there's no doubt about that," Andrew says. "It's amazing the stuff he does in the air on his bike. And hanging on with only his index finger and his thumb on that right hand... it bothers me more than it bothers him."

Growing up in a woodshop hasn't been without its hardships. When Dylan was five years old he lost three fingers on his right hand to a wood planer. "There were plenty of tears," Andrew recalls, "but not for very long."

The Backyard is every downhill's dream, a Jurassic Park of mountain bike creativity built from joy, sweat equity and a little bit of inspiration from Mr. Andrew Dunkerton.

Joanne remembers the incident well. "By the time we got to the hospital he'd already figured out there'd be no tennis in his future but that he could still play the violin. Of course he quit the violin not long after because it involved too much sitting still."

For kids the backyard is paradise – a place to eat dirt and have fun, a magic kingdom where anything from monster slaying to human flight is possible. For Dylan Dunkerton and the Coastal Crew, nothing has really changed, they just fly higher over monster gap jumps, proving that mountain biking, like most other things worth doing, is an artform and in the Dunkerton family, art is in the land as much as it's in the blood.

"Art is something that feeds you from the inside," Andrew says. "I think it's a necessary component in all our lives. It takes some people a long time to figure that out."

And others are just born with it. ■





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CASTING A VOICE

Dimitri Gammer is a BC fly fisherman and filmmaker who's spent the last two years working on Casting a Voice, a film about the enormous risk the Skeena River faces under the proposed Northern Gateway Pipeline – a project which would see tar sands bitumen pumped across 773 BC watercourses, 660 of which are fish-bearing rivers and streams.

"Everything that we do as fly fishermen revolves around the river. A lot of people refer to it as their church or cathedral or whatever they want to call it. To me, I just find it fascinating to sit and watch the water and listen. An unspoiled river is a place that is still for the most part the way it should be. The more time you spend the more it enthralls you – where is all this water coming from? A river is constantly changing – the banks will move from year to year and the water is different every second that passes. You can never fish the same river twice."

"It was legendary fisherman Roderick Haig Brown who said it best: 'The angler should recognize problems and his concern should always be to err on the side of generosity – to the fish and to the resource as a whole.'"

The river is everything to a fly fisherman. You are always reading the water, studying it as a puzzle you are trying to break down. From the fish's standpoint, the river is everything too. Everything about their survival; they need a healthy river to spawn and reproduce. 

Casting a Voice is slated for release in Autumn 2013 and you can watch a five-minute trailer at cm.mountainlifemag.ca/category/in-this-issue. Learn more about the protest against the Pipeline in the Mountain Life Annual, on newsstands in late June 2013.

– Feet Banks

Judy Tavender halts her quest for summer-run steelhead on the Central Coast's Dean River in order to watch a male Pink salmon continue its journey upstream." ADAM TAVENDER PHOTO.



SCOTT WIPPERMANN / BRITANNIA CLASSIC PHOTO.

BALES & BAILS

The Britannia Longboard Classic

By Ace Mackay-Smith

The finish line consists of a table and a line of chalk scratched onto the pavement. The competitors dress in one-piece motorcycle leathers with their names emblazoned on the back like greaser gangs from the 1950s: "Pickle," "Hollywood Turbo" and "Scab Wilson." The Britannia Classic is *Mad Max* meets the mountain as longboarders from around the world converge on sleepy, south-of-Squamish community of Britannia Beach for one of the steepest and most technical longboard races in the world.

"This is definitely a double-black diamond," says organizer/founder Lee Cation. "Some Squamish locals took us out to the spot about seven years ago... nowadays we get to use Google terrain and Street View for exploring."

Finding a good spot for downhill longboarding is akin to discovering an unknown perfect surf break and for the last six years, the longboarding elite have converged high above Highway 99 in late May, with racers coming from as far away as Sweden, Brazil, Puerto Rico, Finland and Australia.


Just above the finish line, a short walk uphill

from the kind-of-secret-location parking area, the final tight corner of the racecourse is where all the action happens. The outside edge of the corner is lined with a row of hay bales separating the course from the announcer's tower, the sponsors' tents and three food trucks. Racers pushed to the outside will often careen into the hay with enough force to knock over spectators on the other side. Despite the announcer's periodic screams of, "Get off the bales!" we do see a grandmother and a five-year-old take a thundering hay bale hit. No one is injured and it really adds to the excitement (and turns out to be a common occurrence throughout the day).

The inside edge is a grassy, sunny slope and a safer place to watch the 64 competitors run four-rider elimination laps until only one remains. There's plenty of racing to be had over the three-hour event, and just as much carnage. "There were eight dislocated shoulders," says Lee. Another standing in soaked shoes is heard claiming to have crash-rolled right off a bridge and into the creek.

This brand of front-row action only adds to the fun and the Britannia Classic's rough-and-rowdy atmosphere is reminiscent of the old days and of authentic subcultures that are

getting stifled as fear of liability sweeps the big resorts with over-produced made-for-TV events. Longboarding definitely has its own style; this is the hot rod-racing of skateboarding and it's refreshing to watch.

The 2013 Classic had all the drama of a big sports ending too. Unsponsored Vernon, BC, rider Matt Rae overtook heavily sponsored favourite Kevin Reimer to win the first heat of the semi-finals. Both racers advanced but the underdog vibe was in the air – one spectator was even dressed as a bookie and taking \$2 bets in a cardboard box. As a pick-up truck shuttled the finalists back to the top, the crowds cheered and the racers waved as if in a parade. The storybook ending wasn't to be, though: Kevin Reimer defended his crown and rode to a \$5000 victory as the second and third place riders slammed into the bales on the final corner. The smell of soft polyurethane wheels skidding on pavement still lingered as the finalists swaggered up hill to collect their awards. It smelled like fun. 

Catch more longboard downhill action July 4-7 at the Whistler Longboard Festival and anyone can sign up for the Skate X Shoot Longboard biathlon for a shot at \$2000. longboardfestival.com



A vertical advertisement for Whistler Brewing Co. The top features a circular logo with a large 'W' in the center, surrounded by the words 'WHISTLER' and 'BREWING CO.' in a circular border. Below the logo, the text 'BREWERY TOUR & TASTING' is written in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Underneath this, in a smaller, italicized font, it says 'Taphouse open 7 days a week!'. The background of the advertisement shows industrial brewing equipment, including large metal tanks and pipes. A red banner across the middle contains the text 'Tours are \$13.95 per person' in a bold, sans-serif font. Below this, in a smaller, italicized font, it says 'Tues - Saturday at 2:30pm and 4:00pm'. At the bottom, the address 'Visit us in Function Junction 10 mins. from Whistler Village 1045 Millar Creek Rd 604-962-8889 ext 105' is listed. Below the address, there are social media icons for Twitter and Facebook, followed by the Facebook URL 'facebook.com/whistlerbrewingcompany'. At the very bottom, the website 'www.whistlerbeer.com' is displayed in a bold, sans-serif font.



DICK CULBERT

Text Alex Gabriel.

Photos by Glenn Woodsworth.

*"...there is always a Land of Beyond
For us who are true to the trail;
A vision to seek, a beckoning peak,
A farness that never will fail."*

Robert W. Service, The Land of Beyond

In the 1960s, a young and ambitious Dick Culbert was drawn like a magnet to the "Land of Beyond" and for a 15-year period, he was a tour de force in West Coast exploration and mountaineering. His appetite for achievements and adventure, fuelled by his mission to write a climbing guidebook to the Coast Mountains, was legendary.

He recorded valley after unmapped valley, meticulously gathering and verifying information, seeking the unexplored and ascending countless difficult and now classic routes. Culbert and his companions made some 250 mountaineering firsts including the East Ridge of Devil's Thumb, Cat's Ears Spire, the east face of Mount Colonel Foster and the first winter ascent of Mount Waddington.

Culbert's *Climber's Guide to the Coastal Ranges of British Columbia* was published in 1965. Bruce Fairley, author of *The Canadian Mountaineering Anthology* calls it "the finest achievement in mountain guidebook writing ever accomplished."

Born in Winnipeg in 1940, Culbert grew up in West Vancouver where he and his teenaged friends experimented with rockets, bombs and small explosives. ("We'd be classed as terrorists today," Culbert jokes.) Their second favourite pastime was hiking on the North Shore.

He joined the BC Mountaineering Club in 1956, and three years later wandered solo for a month in the Mount Howson region carrying a 45-kg Trapper Nelson backpack, plastic tarp, wool sleeping bag and supplies.

Speaking from his home on the Sunshine Coast, Culbert recalls: "It sounds strange ...

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but when I started there weren't even good maps. It was pure mountain exploration: Looking for the most challenging things and going at them. On some trips, we climbed everything in sight which I suppose would be peak bagging, but once you're in there... you might as well do everything you can."

He was fortunate, he says, to always have congenial climbing partners but "we were actually quite poor." Fortunately, government grubstakes were available for prospecting in rugged unexplored areas. "It wasn't much money, but we made do with a fair amount of hitchhiking and riding freight trains."

In 1963, Culbert and climbing partner Glenn Woodsworth spent a memorable, if unpleasant, "freight Christmas" riding an empty grain car with frozen sleeping bags and little food en route to unexplored territory between the Skeena and Terrace Rivers. Traveling freights "in a stupor... a hell of a way to write a guidebook," Culbert wrote.

Their boldest first ascent, Serra V in the Waddington Range in June 1964, was a pinnacle in West Coast mountaineering. "We were lucky to get off that alive," Woodsworth recalls. After hours of careful route-finding through dangerous terrain, a blizzard hit. They made the 11,800-foot-summit and descended in a raging snowstorm.

Culbert had other close calls such as a run-in/shoot-out with a mother grizzly bear while working for the Geological Survey in the Cariboo region. "There was about four feet between me and the nearest blood stain," he says. It was the only time he carried a gun (at the bosses' insistence), and used it.

Looking back, Culbert feels lucky to have survived with no serious injuries or friends hurt on any of his trips. He understood his limits and was supremely skilled at every aspect of the game, from building climbing walls at UBC to scrambling up rotten rock and route-finding through near-impenetrable terrain.

In 1974 his second guidebook *Alpine Guide to Southwestern British Columbia* was published and Culbert

turned his attention to his career in geology, exploration in South America, and raising a family.

The mountains still beckon. Culbert celebrated his 70th birthday cutting a new trail to the top of Mount Elphinstone. "I spend time keeping that and various other trails open around here," he says.

A year later Culbert returned to the Squamish Chief after a 40-year absence to climb *Skywalker* – a new route unearthed by local climber Jeremy Frimer. Culbert had put up the original line with Mike Warr in 1967. Aged 71 and sporting an artificial knee, Culbert felt justified using Jumars to ascend the rope on *Skywalker*. Mostly, he found it interesting to see how much rock climbing has expanded with climbers and routes everywhere on clean rock where it was once a West Coast jungle. Culbert's name is on other Squamish routes, including



Ten Years After on the Grand Wall, but he adds: "I was never was a big Chief climber. I usually climbed there in the winter when the mountains were under snow."

What does Dick Culbert consider his greatest legacy? "Writing the [first] guidebook ... and keeping track of who did what and how; I guess that's really one of the few contributions I made, other than working through clubs and things," he understates.

Glenn Woodsworth adds that Culbert's classic routes are important, but it's his style – a "sky is wide-open, exploratory spirit of adventure" – that is unique. Woodsworth is currently writing a biography of his friend, whom he considers "a remarkable person in so many ways." ■



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BEHIND THE PHOTO

With Malcolm Sangster

Mountain Life: *Where is this? Who is this and what is he smiling about?*

Malcolm Sangster: This is my good friend Callum Paterson on the north ridge of Tantalus Mountain along the Tantalus Traverse. I think he's smiling because we'd just finished having a break up there and finally getting a drink of water. We flew in the night before, climbed all evening, bivied and then that morning we didn't really have any water so we just climbed for 3-4 hours and this was the first water we found. This was in August and the cornice was dripping in the morning heat so we just sat there, downed a litre or so and enjoyed the view.

ML: *He's rocking a pretty compact pack, how long was the expedition?*

Malcolm: The whole thing was just over 30 hours. The weather was not looking great but it eventually cleared a bit and Black Tusk Heli dropped us on the col between Mount Tantalus and Zenith at around 6 pm. We did six or seven pitches of pretty vertical rock to get up onto the ridge. Then we spent the night, it was a

chilly one as I opted out of bringing a sleeping bag and just had a thin bivy. The next morning was the mega day: 17-18 hours of rock, snow, ice and coastal jungle. This picture is at about 2300 m (7545 feet) and was taken at about 9 am. We got to the Squamish River crossing and eventually the car, at sea level, around one the next morning.

ML: *The Tantalus is something most Sea to Sky locals know so well from a distance but few have seen up close and personal.*

Malcolm: It's amazing, that range. Everyone sees it from the highway and it really looks so close but it is a mission to get there on foot because of the river and starting at such a low elevation. Once you get up there, you see all these points and pinnacles and spires like the Witch's Tooth. It's big and technical and wild but then you have perfect cell reception and can see the nighttime lights of Squamish and Vancouver glowing to the south. It's a remote alpine experience but you can still check your iPhone in the bivy sack.

ML: *What's the best thing about being above a sea of clouds?*

Malcolm: There are lots of shapes and faces and shadows in the clouds that all move and play off each other as the light changes. And what's really cool is just the peaks are pointing out so it hides the comfort of the green valleys below. You just see snow and rock and ice and sky.

ML: *What's the most important piece of non-life-essential gear to bring on a trip like this?*

Malcolm: Your camera. You are going to want to remember these experiences and be able to dig up those photos and get stoked. 📷

Malcolm Sangster is one of the founders of Sherpas Cinema and is currently hard at work on their next ski film, a two-years-in-the-making artistic tour de force called Into the Mind that premieres in September 2013.
Sherpascinema.com

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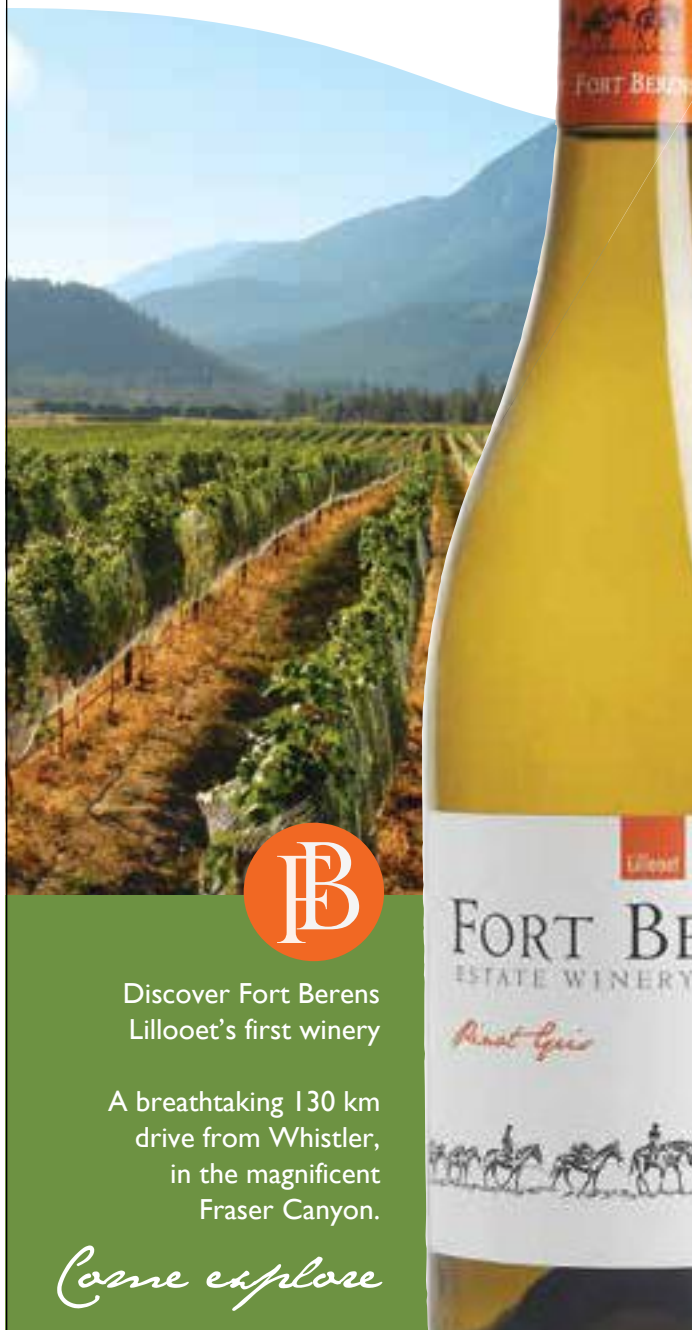
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LEFT: Amazon. MARSHAL CHUPA PHOTO. ABOVE: BC. TODD LAWSON PHOTO.

OUR COASTAL RESPONSIBILITY

By Tamo Campos

From every tap, to the hundreds of streams I've depended on while hiking through British Columbia's wilderness – water really is the essence of life in this province. Yet few realize that clean water is a privilege, and not one shared by everyone.

As humans we generally don't know what we've got 'till it's gone. As a 23-year-old snowboarder from North Vancouver I had to travel over 7,000 kilometres south to fully appreciate the incredible value in every drop of clean drinking water.

About a year ago I spent time volunteering in the Peruvian Amazon helping the people of Belen build floating community gardens. Home to about 70,000 citizens, Belen has grown on top of the garbage outflow from the much larger city of Iquitos. It's an incredible place where friendly and generous people live in houses on stilts to keep themselves above water during the flood season, a time when the open pit sewage and rotting garbage lining the streets and homes rises up to seven metres high.

With no hope of proper sanitation water-borne illnesses such as leptospirosis and dengue fever run rampant in Belen and drastically affect the health and morale of the people. While working on the community garden in 30-plus degree heat we'd be approached daily by kids begging for water.

The inequalities of our worlds couldn't have been more evident – Belen citizens would gladly drink the water that runs down our Canadian

shower drains each and every day. But even here in BC, the watery land of plenty, I'm realizing clean water may be something we have to start fighting for as well.

Last winter a few friends and I embarked on six-month, waste veggie oil-powered road trip across BC and one thing we discovered (other than a lot of great snowboarding) is that many of our own water sources are at risk. There are communities where leaching tailing ponds from

A family in Fort Chipewyan living downstream from the Tar sands, told us they are forced to drink bottled water and are scared to let their children shower.

the Alberta tar sands or water-and-energy-intensive natural gas fracking in Northeastern BC have rendered millions of litres of fresh water undrinkable.

We met frack site workers who told of "Do Not Drink Water" signs on all the faucets in and around their camps. They're drinking exclusively bottled water despite total industry denial of any downstream affect on communities. A family in Fort Chipewyan living downstream from the tar sands, told us they are forced to drink bottled water and are scared to let their children shower. These are haunting reminders of my time in Belen.

Life cannot thrive without clean water. I remember finishing gardens in Belen and feeling pride but also knowing that the lives of children and the

community I had met would continue mostly unchanged – lives without clean drinking water, lives held back.

There is a push for pipelines in BC today, whether natural gas or tar sands bitumen. We're told pipelines will stimulate the economy and create jobs but there is very little mention of the communities that have lost lakes, rivers, and drinking water.

You can't drink the economy, so putting deficits and business interests above ecology and water management planning is crazy.

Without water a human being will die in about a week, children in even less time. Opposing irresponsible development does not mean you're against oil in your cars or gas in your stove. It means you understand the value in safeguarding our most vital commodity. It also means you see the direct link between these projects and how climate change will affect communities like Belen. Water is life and now is the time to start protecting it at home. ■

*Tamo Campos is one of the founders of **Beyondboarding.org** a group of snowboarders and surfers looking to inspire positive change in BC and abroad.*

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Lani Imre



You need to know the rules in order to properly break them. And this may be why Squamish painter Lani Imre is the most technically talented artist in the entire Sea to Sky corridor. And although the soft-spoken, surf-loving mother-of-a-two-year-old would never make that claim herself there's no denying the skill, vision and talent with which Lani breaks the rules when her brush hits canvas.

"There's a difference between choosing to do something incorrectly and just doing it incorrectly," Lani explains. With six years of formal training at the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design, Concordia University and an independent semester in Berkeley, the 34-year-old admits she paints, "the exact opposite of what they taught me. I think art school is amazing – you develop an educated eye and understand what's happening – but there is also something incredible about the completely unstructured, free forms of urban street art."

Lani's work lies somewhere between the two. "I did get grief from a professor once for not fully exploring the materiality and texture of paint," she says. "At that point I was very intrigued by the use of visual media on a cultural level and when I began to paint commercially I stuck with smooth colour blends and black outlines that often characterize advertising and media."

Lani's paintings are almost exclusively of females ("I've only ever done a few dudes") with the occasional horse ("From my childhood growing up on a farm, for sure") and sometimes dogs ("From a Mexican, Latin American influence. I use surf trips to refill the well") and each has a distinct personality.

"My work is so much about faces and eyes," Lani says. "Each girl is an individual –vulnerable or defiant, it depends how I am feeling." And each of those individual faces will take hours, weeks even, to complete. "The more time I get with a painting, the more blended the faces will be. It starts off really fun and about halfway through it feels like work and by the end I hate it. Sometimes it takes years before I can see qualities about them that make me say, 'wow.'"

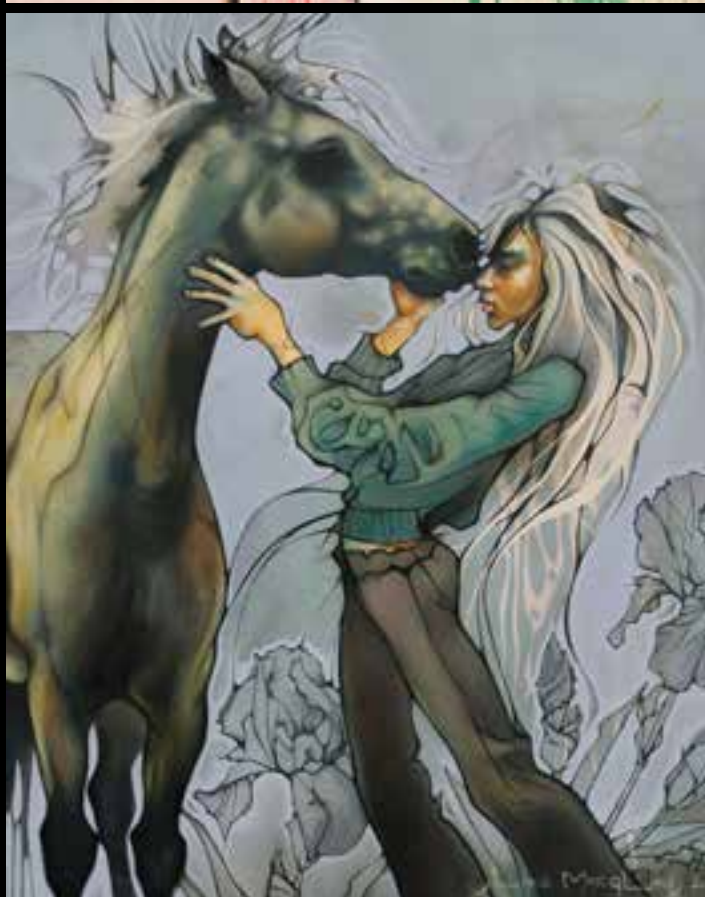
Few others have to wait that long. Lani's self-described "large-scale female characters in a sort of urban street-art style" sell to clients around the globe and are a permanent fixture in multiple Vancouver/Sea to Sky galleries. Something about those "chicks" is working for a lot of people.

But not absolutely everyone. "It's loaded for sure, painting women," Lani says. "The way I depict them, I do a fairly romanticized, perfect, skinny, very stereotypical beauty and that has caused conflict. I had a prof who was a '60s-'70s era feminist and she was not as stoked. But when you know what you are doing, you can play along the line. That is one of the things about women – there's the whole feminine sex stuff but there's also badass and in-control. For sure I think there are opinions and stereotypes that can really affect women in a bit of a dangerous or detrimental way. But there are parts of it that are empowering. I like to play within that realm. Women are so incredible and I think they need to be honoured. That is what I will teach my son."

Lani Imre also offers this advice for anyone who loves to create art: "You gotta keep your well full, feel the momentum and keep your soul on fire. Find a new scene if you have to, but you gotta keep producing. Everything is allowed; only you can draw your own boundaries. And beyond all, persevere." ■

– Feet Banks

See more of Lani's work at The Mix in Whistler and Ayden Gallery in Vancouver or hit up laniimre.com





SUPxploration

*The emergence of stand-up paddleboards is cracking open
unlimited paddling potential in the Coast Mountains*





Jon Burak, going down. Elaho River, Squamish. TODD LAWSON PHOTO.

By Todd Lawson

Down at the river's edge the butterflies start fluttering their little wings as soon as we arrive. Some are real, small black wisps that hop-jump from stone to stone along the shore. The others are the ones you feel doing laps in your belly when you know that pretty damn soon you'll be out of your comfort zone, stepping into nature's realm of reality.

Today that reality is a big, juicy, boiling set of Elaho River rapids known as the Steamroller. They didn't look too bad from up near the road, but the view by the water's edge tells a much scarier story. Can we paddle this torrent standing up? Can we avoid the rocks, pour-overs and huge holes that have flipped many a raft? Only one way to find out...

And as soon as we paddle into the swirling mayhem, the river answers for us. Although we've been earning our whitewater wings running backyard rivers on stand-up paddleboards for over two years, Steamroller flattens us all. We paddle. We swim. We spend some downtime beneath the crisp-cold water. Eventually we shoot out the other end splashing high fives with exhilarated smiles. That's the beauty of running a river on a SUP – when you fall, you hop back on and stand up again in time for the next wave-train. It's a different game and a brand new challenge. And a lot of fun.

And it's not just the rivers that have been taking us for a ride. Thanks to the incredible versatility of rigid inflatable SUPs and the diversity of the Sea to Sky's easy access to rivers, lakes and ocean the door to exploring new watery worlds has been unlocked with a paddle-sized key.



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Mamquam River, Squamish, BC. Todd Lawson photo.

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That's the beauty of running a river on a SUP – when you fall, you hop back on and stand up again in time for the next wave-train.

With board, pump and paddle inside a backpack, keeners with big plans can now embark on unique land and water adventures. Serene alpine lakes that have never before felt the slice of a paddle are now accessible. Bike/paddle combo trips are being hatched, climbers are hitting the cliffs of Howe Sound with shoes on deck, while other adventurers are using Google Earth to map out ambitious multi-day, river-to-ocean link-ups across the Tantalus Range. The choices are endless – on a SUP you can sit, stand, kneel, sleep, eat, drink, rest, relax or joust; you can even make your own comfy campfire couch. Anglers are using them to fish from. Yogis are finding new challenges with balance and focus. Fitness freaks are driving demand through the roof.



Some have compared this skyrocketing popularity of stand-up paddleboarding to the rise snowboarding in the 1980s and '90s. And just as with skiers and snowboarders in that era, there exists some animosity from traditionalist surfers and whitewater kayakers who see these SUP "sweepers" as kooks. Go far enough out, however – into the mountains or onto the lakes, rivers, inlets and secluded bays — and there is nobody watching or judging. There is no competition, no bragging rights, no first descents or ascents or personal bests. It's just you and your board and a new sense of discovery brightening the view.

And the butterflies, of course – the butterflies are the best part. 

ABOVE: Gliding through the West Coast jungle. Mamquam River. Squamish. JIM MARTINELLO PHOTO.

LEFT: Accessing the alpine. Jamie Baxter, Garibaldi Lake. JIM MARTINELLO PHOTO.




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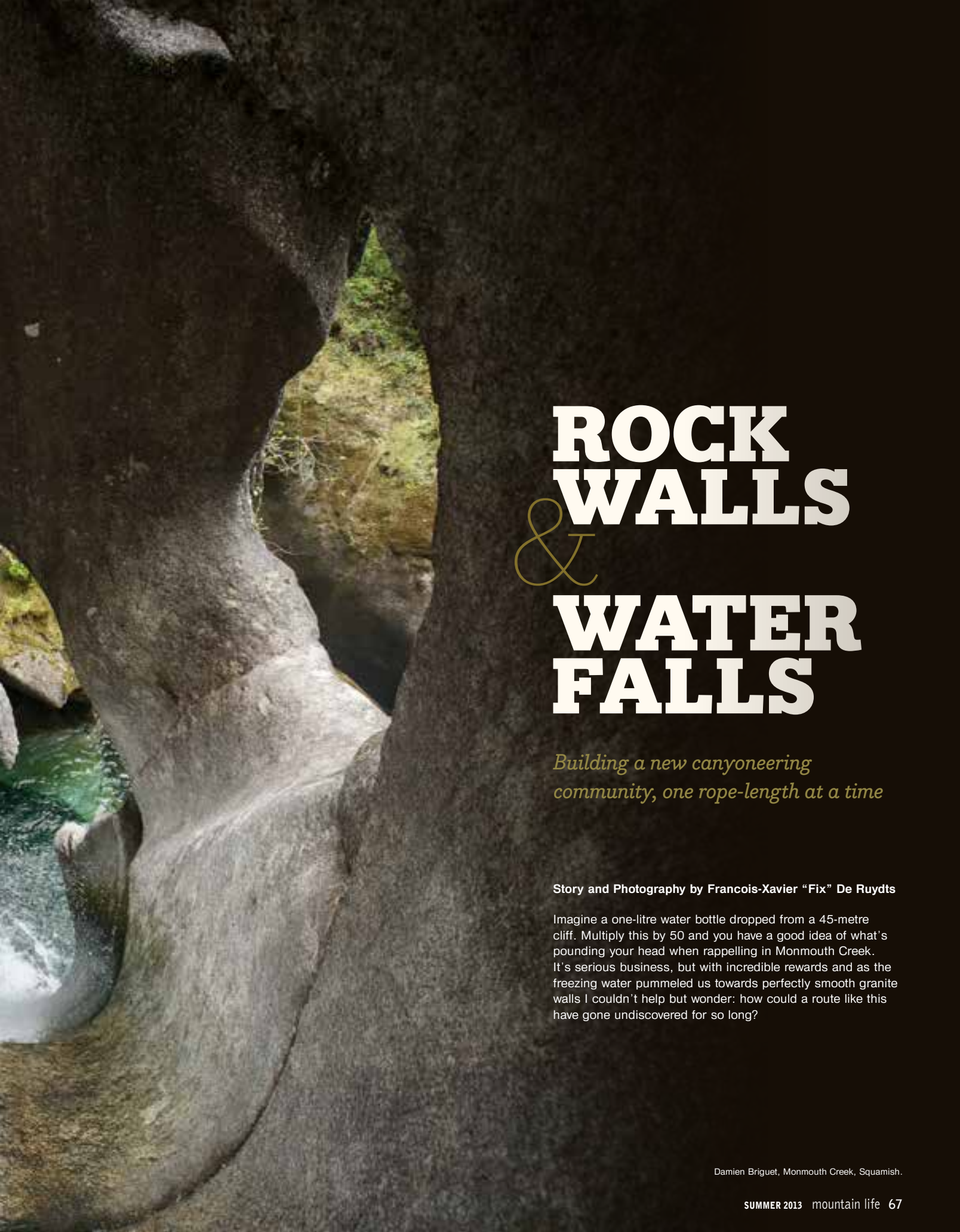


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ROCK & WALLS WATER FALLS

*Building a new canyoneering
community, one rope-length at a time*

Story and Photography by Francois-Xavier “Fix” De Ruydts

Imagine a one-litre water bottle dropped from a 45-metre cliff. Multiply this by 50 and you have a good idea of what's pounding your head when rappelling in Monmouth Creek. It's serious business, but with incredible rewards and as the freezing water pummeled us towards perfectly smooth granite walls I couldn't help but wonder: how could a route like this have gone undiscovered for so long?

Damien Briguët, Monmouth Creek, Squamish.



Writers and photographers have to be constantly searching for new, compelling, and hopefully unheard-of stories: I've always considered it to be the most difficult part of the job. And in an area like the Coast Mountains with no shortage of adventurers looking for adventures, finding fresh, captivating material is challenging.

community existed, that no expeditions were planned, that I didn't know much about canyoneering myself – I could see the potential and sometimes if you want something to happen you have to make it happen yourself.

One month later, a national magazine took the bait. I suddenly had an assignment but no real

Canyoneering is the art of descending canyon drainages. It involves swimming, hiking, rappelling through waterfalls, and jumping in pools.

For this reason I've always leaned towards photographing stuff that no one else wanted to do. I started with caving, which at first glance seems like a photographer's nightmare – nothing but mud and darkness. But those same conditions kept the competition away and soon this subterranean fringe sport became my niche. Canyoneering was the next logical step, equally fringe, but isn't a canyon just a cave with the roof off? At least I'd have some light to work with.

Canyoneering is the art of descending canyon drainages. It involves swimming, hiking, rappelling through waterfalls, and jumping in pools. It sounds like a lot of fun (it is) but the raw power of water rushing down a mountain is not something you want to mess with. Before you can even think about that, however, you need someone to go with. I needed some local canyoneers.

My initial research in the Vancouver area didn't come up with much – a few guys, a few canyons. Nothing organized. I was optimistic, though: this total lack of an established community meant plenty of room for growth. In the meantime I started pitching media on a local canyoneering story. Never mind that no such

story and still no canyoneering community. I sent email blasts, left messages on forums, Facebooked the crap out of it and finally ended up with 15 people in a bar. Five had canyoneered before, the others were motivated to learn. The beer helped.

At the same time I'd decided to get into film-making. Following my tried-and-tested "just do it and see" method of business management I bought a camera and headed straight to Cypress Creek Falls Provincial Park in West Vancouver, the classic canyon in the area. While I was testing out my new toy on the rocks, bubbles and ferns I heard someone splashing around downstream. What or who could it be? A canyoneer I didn't know?

Originally from Switzerland, Damien Briguet used to be a canyoneering guide. I told him about the (almost) burgeoning community, we exchanged phone numbers, and he carried on downstream. A week later he called with news of a sweet route on the other side of the Squamish River called Monmouth Creek. With no recorded descent, Monmouth sounded like the kind of compelling, unheard-of adventure I was looking for.





It was all that and more. For two days Damien and I made our way through a magical world of perfectly smooth water-carved granite, magnificent water curtains and bright green mist-fed beds of moss. The Monmouth canyon was so otherworldly I half-expected to see a dinosaur poke its head out from behind a fern. I felt fortunate to experience such pristine beauty and especially lucky to capture this first descent on camera.

On our way down Monmouth we had spotted a tributary creek that looked like it could lead to something interesting. Damien and I returned a week later for a reconnaissance hike. The creek began to dig deeper into its own valley and soon enough majestic spires of basaltic andesite towered over us. Lush ferns and moss clung and stretched across the rock faces, creating a vegetal roof above our heads — it almost felt like caving. Then we turned a corner and saw the mother of all canyons spread out right in front of us: a huge granite wall, its face split in two by a straight, deep slot. Water blasted out of the bottom, filling the air with sparkling mist. Camera in tow, we hiked up the mountain and dropped into the unknown.

That initial group of 15 canyoneering enthusiasts has since expanded. People are excited about this “new” sport and the potential for exploration. Things didn’t go at all the way I had expected but that may be because I wasn’t expecting much of anything. For me, it seems the best way to make something happen is to believe in it, work at it, and never be afraid to get a little dirty or wet, or both.

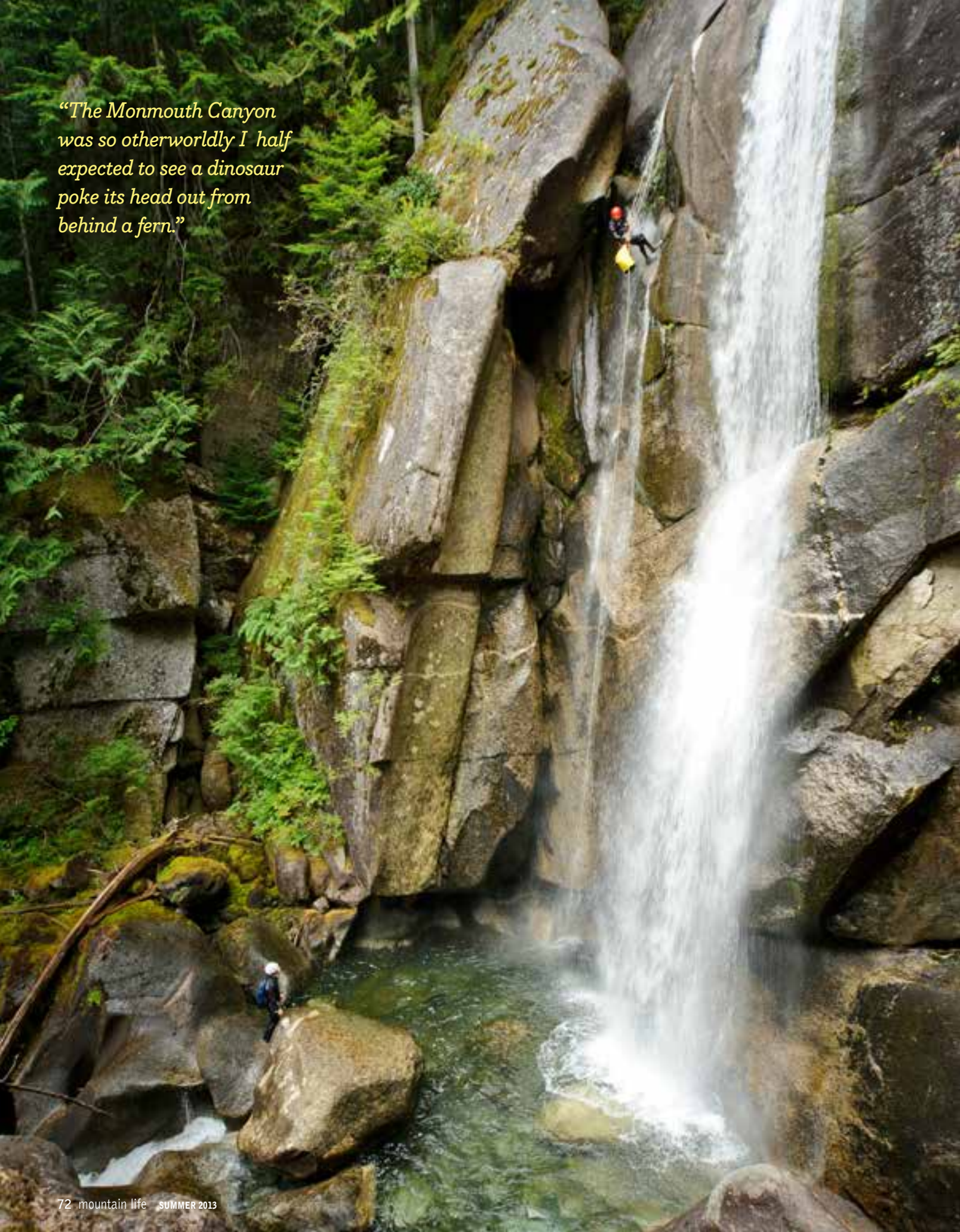
“Fix” De Ruydts produced a short film, “Down the Line,” during his adventures in Squamish’s canyons. Hit up the “In This Issue” tab at cm.mountainlifemag.ca for a trailer of that film and links to Fix’s website for more info on canyoneering in the Sea to Sky. 

TOP: The Rope is the lifeline. Bring a back-up.
RIGHT: Damien Brigue, Monmouth Creek, Squamish.
ABOVE: Cypress Creek, West Vancouver.

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*"The Monmouth Canyon
was so otherworldly I half
expected to see a dinosaur
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Kyle Norbraten, Brohm Ridge, Squamish. STERLING LORENCE PHOTO.



Hollie Jones and Steve Storey, Sooke, Vancouver Island. JUSTA JESKOVA PHOTO.



Paradise Valley, Squamish. JIM MARTINELLO PHOTO.





Andy Orr. Solo sunset session. Tofino, BC. NICOLAS TEICHROB PHOTO.



Morning light on pruning day. DANO PENDYGRASSE PHOTO.

HOLDING DOWN THE FORT



The owners of Lillooet's Fort Berens Winery are doing more than breaking new ground. They're pioneering a future.

By Feet Banks

"There's always a cost to pioneering," says Rolf de Bruin, proprietor of Lillooet's Fort Berens Winery. Most likely he's referencing the trials of starting the first vineyard and winery in what might (or might not) end up being BC's next great wine country. But judging from the grimace that slips across his face with each clip of my pruning shears, he could also be talking about the pain of watching total amateurs hack back his grapevines, his livelihood, with the grace of a runaway lawnmower.

The Winemaker's Boot Camp at Fort Berens is very hands-on. We clip and snip in the late March sun, examining the vines with mostly lost expressions – every grape counts and

each chunk of twisted, bud-covered wood that hits the ground feels like pouring a half-glass onto the earth. It can't be easy for Rolf to watch but when you're breaking trail in the BC wine industry, you have to be willing to get your hands dirty, and let your customers do the same.

...

Originally from The Netherlands, Rolf and his partner Heleen Pannekoek arrived in Canada in 2008 with dreams of opening a small family vineyard. They looked at options in Ontario's Niagara region as well as BC's world-famous Okanagan valley, "But it either wasn't right for us or was overpriced," Heleen recalls. "Eventually some consultants pointed us out here."



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Thirsty? DANO PENDYGRASSE PHOTO.

With a hot, arid climate and plenty of water flowing by in the Fraser River, Lillooet has been on wine peoples' radar for a while. In 2005, then Lillooet mayor Christ'I Roshard and the BC Grape Growers Association oversaw five test vineyards and placed 83 temperature gauges up and down the valley to determine the area's potential. The Coast Mountains suck up most of the precipitation that comes in off the ocean and sweeping winds off Seton Lake help cool nighttime temperatures to slightly lower than those in the Okanagan. This gives the vines a chance to rest after each day of blazing sun.

"It was still very early when we arrived in 2008," Heleen recalls, "but we researched the data and tried some wine from the local grapes. It was amateur stuff but they were delicious. Then we got offered this property before it was officially for sale. We did soil research and climate research. It was a bit bigger than we wanted, but..."

The property also came with a big history. Lillooet was "Mile 0" for the great Fraser/Cariboo Gold Rush of the late 1850s. The land was allocated

to be a planned Hudson's Bay Company fort to serve as a trading post and supply outlet for the gold-fevered prospectors heading north and key fishery post to collect the Fraser River salmon. Construction of Fort Berens was halted before it began however, when the wagon trail bypassed Lillooet altogether.

One hundred and fifty years later Rolf and Heleen planted 20 acres with six varieties of grape and set off on a new path of their own, working with expert winemakers and viticulturalists to bring their dreams to fruition. As their vineyard matured the first Fort Berens wines were made from grapes brought in from growers in the Okanagan but 2011 saw the first batch of pure Estate wines. Today, they are hacking those very same vines to pieces. And Trevor Hammond, Fort Berens' new vineyard manager, is encouraging us to have at it.

"We want to get all the vines running north," Trevor explains. "We're trying to get uniformity in the vineyard and then find the magic so all the fruit comes at the same time. It's got to be pencil thickness; anything less...ditch it."

Trevor, a trained pro with lots of experience in big Okanagan vineyards, has been pruning the vines at Fort Berens every day for the last three months and throws agri-concepts and farm-speak at us as fast as his freshly sharpened clippers snap off canes.

"Energy comes up from the ground and goes out to the end of the vine," Trevor barks. "Manipulate that to maximize the number of buds on the line of energy... a fork in the vine will split your energy in half, right away. Think about that. And the more buds you leave on, the more energy it needs. Prune high, two inches above your last bud, to avoid die-back. What we are doing is looking at each vine and determining how much fruit it can bear."

Actually what we Bootcampers are doing is mostly looking at each other with shrugged shoulders and indecision. Pruning someone else's grapevines is stressful but working the fields at Fort Berens beneath Lillooet's jagged, snow-capped peaks also builds a real connection to what we consume – next year's wine will taste that much better.



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"I watch you hacking away fruit," Rolf says good-naturedly. "Last year we took 48 tonnes. Will we get more? How much wood do we have on the wire?"


"It's how many buds we have on our wood that's important," Trevor responds confidently. "If I was a farmer growing fruit to sell at a grocery store I'd leave on everything, but I work for a winery – I have to grow for quality."

That quality has won Fort Berens numerous awards and enticed some 400 people to join the Discovery Club, a one-case commitment which gives members first crack at new vintages and reserve wines as well as a chance to walk and work the land during these twice-annual Winemaker Boot Camps.

The Discovery Club was created to attract outside interest but Lillooet residents make up over 20 percent of the membership. "The community has been incredible," Rolf says. "We signed up 50 people last Christmas. Some of them don't even drink wine; they just want to support a local company. We wouldn't have found that in the Okanagan."

Fort Berens now has 40 acres of vineyard, over 70 kilometres of grapes if you walk both sides of every row (like Trevor has to when he prunes for 8-plus hours a day for three straight months). "We're looking to bring it up to 12,000 cases a year," Rolf says. "In August 2009 we had the forest fires and suddenly the town was evacuated and our nearest grocery store is an hour away. We literally had a trial by fire but we like it, we like the small town."

Rolf and Heleen make sure our day's work (really only a few hours) finishes in the humble-but-workable Fort Berens tasting room, where barrels of next year's Estate wines rest peacefully along the back wall. "The tasting room is integral," Rolf says. "It's hard to sell wine off the shelf if people don't get a chance to taste it. But mostly it is about being able to meet people face to face and tell the story. The story ultimately sells the first bottle."

After that, it's up to the wine, and the spirit of the pioneers who created it. 

Learn more about Fort Berens wines at fortberens.ca and if you see a bottle of their Cabernet Franc anywhere, buy it.



TOP: Midsummer vines. FORT BERENS PHOTO.

BOTTOM: Rolf de Bruin, spring pruning. DANO PENDYGRASSE PHOTO



ABOVE: Devils Club, goes down easy. FEET BANKS PHOTO.

SPIKED LIQUOR

Pemberton Distilleries finds a new use for the plant local hikers love to hate.

By Laura Gallant

Devil's club. The ubiquitous Coast Mountain plant looks enticing at first – its maple-shaped leaves balance shiny clusters of red fruit on top. But a closer look reveals long, leggy canes with needle-like spines covering every inch. The tip-off might be the plant's Latin name: *Oplopanax horridus*.

And yet Devil's club is both foe and friend. The spiky bane of summer hikers it is also widely revered for its spiritual and medicinal uses among First Nations and now, thanks to the innovative minds of the Schramm family at Pemberton Distilleries, Devil's club is a key ingredient in their new made-in-Pemberton absinthe.


"We wanted to incorporate Pacific Northwest influences into our absinthe," says Master Distiller Tyler Schramm, already known around the world for his Pemberton-made vodka and gin. "Devil's club grows along the coast from

Alaska to Oregon," he explains, "and First Nations consider it one of the most medicinal and spiritual herbs found in this area."

Seeing past its spiny exterior, First Nations people have used Devil's club for centuries. "We use Devil's club to treat acute and chronic illnesses such as headaches, arthritis and maintaining blood sugar levels that ward off diabetes," says Lucy Joseph, a herbologist with the Lil'Wat band. "We steep it into teas, mash into salves, chew, sip and steam it."

"We felt that fit really well with the origins of absinthe," Schramm says. Those origins are a bit prickly themselves. In the early 19th century a few widely publicized scandals and murders were blamed on absinthe as well as Vincent Van Gogh and Oscar Wilde's mental health issues. Rumours spread that absinthe contained poison, prompting countries around the world to ban the liquid from their borders. Nearly 100

years later, in 2007, the ban was overturned in Canada and distillers such as the Schramms started taking a second look at the storied drink.

How about those well-known tales of absinthe hallucinations? Tyler Schramm suggests any dream-like states are more likely the result of sipping too much, which makes sense given the 60 percent alcohol content of his brew (that's middle-of-the-line as far as absinthe goes). Schramm recommends diluting a glass with water or lime juice and seeing where things go from there. 

Schramm Distilleries is also releasing North America's first organic single malt whiskey this September. Tyler was trained in Edinburg, Scotland and hopes he's created a by-the-books single malt his Scottish friends can be proud of. Hit up cm.mountainlifemag.ca/category/in-this-issue/ for the story behind that.



ALL HAIL THE KING

If the 60 percent alcohol content of absinthe seems a bit full-on but you still want to go above and beyond this summer, Howe Sound Brewing has you covered. "King Heffy" is a 7.7 percent high-gravity hefeweizen brewed with a special yeast that gives it a strong banana clove flavour.

"We like to make stronger imperial beers," says Howe Sound head brewer Franco Corno. "The King Heffy is a summertime beer – a bit stronger, a bit more carbonated and that residual banana sweetness. Those who like it, like it a lot."

And there are a lot of people who like it. King Heffy recently took home gold from the 2013 Canadian Brewers Awards and has multiple medals at the recent North American Beer Awards as well. "Awards are nice but I just want to make good beer," Franco says. "I'm one of those guys who loves flavours and cooking, and pairing beer with food is popular now. It's an exciting time to love beer."

You can find King Heffy in liquor stores but for the real experience, head into downtown Squamish and taste it from the source. Long live the King.

– Feet Banks



JIM MARTINELLO PHOTO.



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DAVE BARNES ILLUSTRATION.

HAPPY, HEALTHY OR BOTH?

*The Art, Science &
Philosophy of Movement*

By Dr. Carla Cupido, Hon. B. Kin, D.C.

The art of movement is obvious – we see it in the dance a climber shares with the rock or in the paint-like strokes a skier carves into the side of a mountain. Watch a skateboarder fluidly kick-flip a staircase or a surfer gracefully arc a bottom turn and it's all very apparent – the human body is true sculpture in motion.

The science of human movement is well studied and understood by the medical community. For decades we've delved into biomechanics, neuro-anatomy, physiology, and every other -ology that we can think of to gain a pretty decent understanding of the science of human motion.

So why is the philosophy of movement neglected? Why do we discuss the "how" so much? Is "why" we choose to move less important? Could ignoring the art and philosophy behind human motion possibly contribute to any of our health issues today?

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." Further to this, many other definitions now also include spiritual well-being as an integral component of our overall health – happy, relaxed people tend to be healthier than embittered, sky-is-falling types.

Yet the commercialization of movement pushes us towards the movements that will best sculpt our abs or lower our cholesterol rather than ones that may bring us true joy. Does forcing yourself into a daily gym routine really make you healthier than romping through the forest connecting with

nature? Are burpees and crunches really better for you than laughing with a friend as you paddle out past the break?

In an Outside Television interview, surf legend Gerry Lopez talks about own movement in artistic terms. "The wave was really the music," Lopez says. "My surfboard was my partner and in a way when I am on my snowboard it's kind of the same thing too ... the mountain and the snow, the way the snow is set up, is again the music and all I am doing is trying to dance."

Lopez is 64 years old and living in evidently great health and happiness. Could we not learn something from what motivates his movements and the way he sees them?

Movement truly is an art, a science, and a philosophy but the question remains: what combination of the three dictates your optimal health? Perhaps how we view and experience movement requires a paradigm shift. The definition of art is "the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination," so why shouldn't we return to moving with the heart and mind of a child, evolving our movement into inspired art and loving every minute of it? Think about that in between your next set of reps on the Total Gym. ■

We all move for our own reasons, subsequently influencing our health in one way or another. Have you ever thought about why we move? Aiming for simplicity, most of us move for:

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OUR OCCUPATION

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Which of these "whys" do you value most? Have you ever considered shifting your attention from how movement can make you healthier to how it can make you happier? Perhaps your overall health will correspondingly improve.

– Dr. Carla Cupido, Hon. B. Kin, D.C.



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Bob Dylan was right – The times they are a'changin' and here at *Mountain Life* we're committed to rolling right along with them. While our passion for inspiring adventure stories and photographs hasn't changed much in the past decade, how we share them has. And so the *Mountain Life* family is proud to welcome a new member into the fold—*Mountain Life Annual*.

Spring-boarding off the success of our regional publications in the Coast Mountains and Georgian Bay, *Mountain Life Annual* offers readers across Canada and around the world a deeper, more meaningful connection to the incredible mountain kingdoms we call home.

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The Mountain Life Annual is edited by ski-bum/literary adventure legend Leslie Anthony and is a proud member of the "1% for the Planet" initiative. Look for the FSC-paper print edition mid-June at select outdoor retailers and bookshops throughout Canada's mountains towns, in big-city bookstores and at all MEC stores across the country. The full issue (plus special editions to come) will be available as digital download on the Apple Newsstand. And check out mountainlifemag.ca for a daily dose of all the best of life in the mountains.

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– ANDRÉ GIDE



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JIMMY MARTINELLO PHOTO.

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The Ziptrek Ecotours adventure area is located above Whistler Village, in a spectacular temperate rainforest valley between Whistler and Blackcomb Mountains.

Our Guest Services desk is in the **Carleton Lodge** across from the Whistler Village gondolas

604.935.0001 or **1.866.935.0001**

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