



# The Chinook

The Newsletter of the Calgary Section of the Alpine Club of Canada

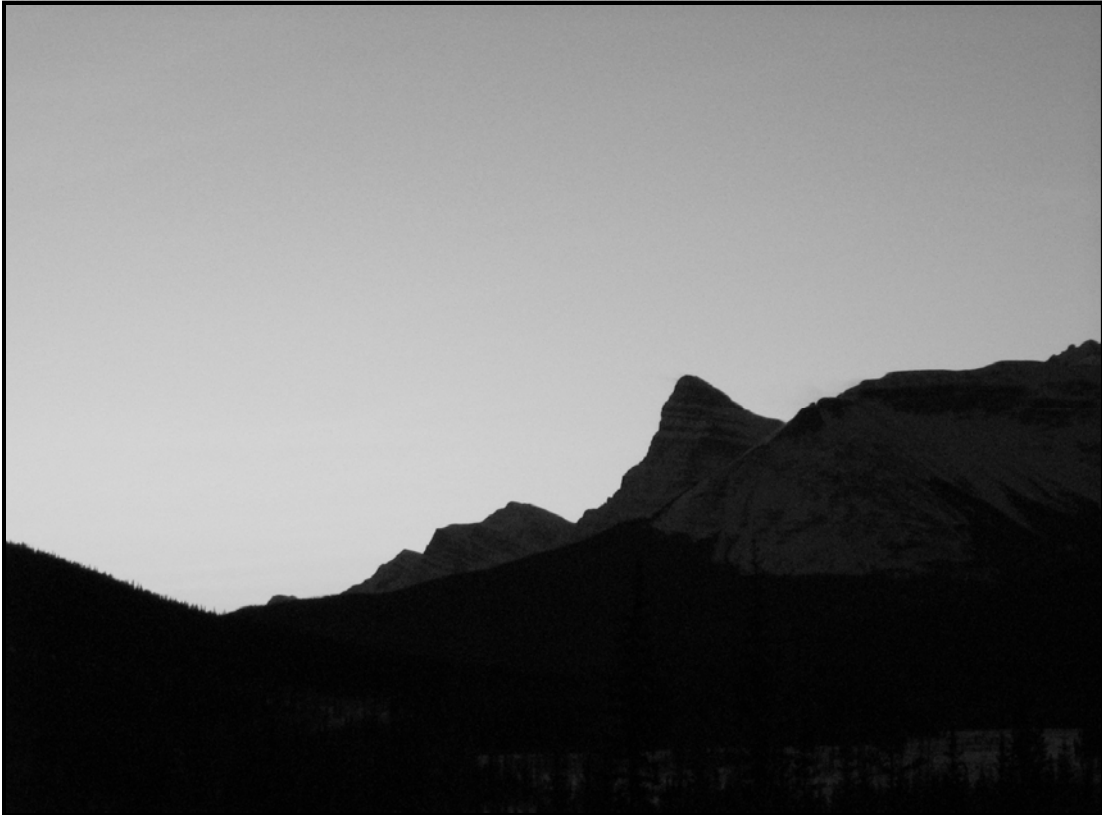
Volume 42, Number 01

February 2007

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The next Calgary Section Meeting is at 7:30 pm on Tuesday, 20 February  
2007 at the Bow Waters Canoe Club, 1975—26th Street SE

This Month:  
**FORBIDDEN VOLCANOS OF MEXICO**  
Co-ordinated by Gord Currie



Christmas Eve  
Carmie Callanan

**Inside this issue:**

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**ACC CALGARY SECTION MEETING**

Date: Tuesday December 19, 2006  
Location: Bow Water Canoe Club  
Commenced: 19:35 (The Potluck dinner started at 18:30)  
Adjourned: 20:00 (The historical film and Elizabeth Parker Show started at 20:20)

**MEETING MINUTES**

Section Business

- Ray asked for volunteers for hall clean-up at the end of the evening.
- Members were encouraged to sign up to volunteer with the collating of the Chinook. Chuck Young demonstrated an after-market winder for an ice screw – Peter, however, commented there may be a safety issue with the rope getting caught in the winder.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Ski Committee

- Tom described the problem that is created when club members sign up for trips and then do not attend or do not give the trip leader enough notice if they decide to cancel. Many trips are filled up soon but run with low participation numbers because of this trend. Tom urged members to not 'shop around' (ie book several trips for the same day) for trips and to contact trip leaders by Wednesday at the latest if they must cancel. Heather is collecting cheques for ski weekend.

Climbing Committee

- The annual Ice Review will be held in the Ghost on January 6-7, 2007. The Ghost

Management Plan states vehicles are not allowed in North Ghost. This will affect popular ice climbing destinations and the committee is exploring the idea of setting up a temporary bridge for the weekend. Participants are encouraged to bring hip waders. Participants are to meet at A&W at 7:00 am to sign waivers and organize car pooling. Chili and beer will be provided for \$20 fee per person.

- Peter asked for volunteer leaders and volunteers for the tent set up and food preparation.
- Peter made it clear that the ACC Calgary Section will respect the Ghost closure. Submit trip waivers to Peter

Safety Committee

- The Calgary Section Safety Committee is composed of Ray, Peter, Tom & Paul. Changes in National policy require clear protocols for incident reporting. Trip leaders are required to contact the Calgary Safety Committee in case of incident. The committee will publish an article in February Chinook detailing the procedures for reporting incidents and near misses.

Training & Leadership

- Frederic made several announcements:
  - Trip leaders were encouraged to submit course invoices and trip waivers for refunds.
  - Frederic welcome Mark Lane to the committee (to replace Scott Montgomery). Other T&L members include: Stacey, Andy, Mark, Roberto & Frederic.
  - Ice Leadership Weekend: January 20-21, 2007. This course is open to current trip leaders and to potential new leaders and is a good opportunity to learn to lead club trips. The course will be taught by Jeremy Mackenzie. Deposit cheque \$150 is required to reserve a spot once you are selected
  - Risk & Safety Management Evening Session: On Feb 1<sup>st</sup> and led by by Murray Toft. This evening session is for both active and potential coordinators. More info will be passed along via the weekly Breeze emails
  - Skill Review Evening On March 27th and led by by Murray Toft. This 'hands-on' session geared towards active coordinators and will be held at the UofC climbing wall.
  - Rock Rescue: In April. This session is for active coordinators and will be held at the UofC.
  - New Coordinators Evening: In May. This session is for both active and potential coordinators and will be held at CAOC.
  - New Coordinator Map and Compass Navigation Day: In June. This 'hands-on' session is a 'companion' session to the CAOC evening session. It is geared to both active and potential coordinators and will be held outdoors.

- The T&L Committee bought 15 outdoor leadership book to give as door prizes during evening courses.
- The T&L Committee didn't organized a ski leadership weekend this year. However, the Ski Committee is organizing a "Ski Leaders Review Weekend" on January 13-14, 2007. Please see the Trip Schedule for more information.  
The Winter Course Schedule is posted on the Section Website. This is the place to find courses for members who are not yet trip leaders and are interested in developing their skills.

Social Committee

- Jacqueline thanked members for participating in the Potluck this evening.
- January speaker: Jon Rollins will speak on caving in the Rockies and Belize.
- February speaker: Gord Currie will speak on Mexican volcanoes.
- Tonight we have special ACC Centennial Presentation.
- Westworld magazine November issue had good article on ACC Centennial.  
Exhibit at Whyte Museum is held until mid January 2007 (13 mountaineers and artists).

Treasurer

- The 2007 Budget was published in the December Chinook.
  - A few items discussed include:
    - Surplus for 2006: No surplus because rope and other purchases.
    - Forcasted revenue: \$25,000 for 2007. The Chinook and courses are the main expenses.
    - A member asked how much money we have. Trevor replied that we currently have \$75,000 in capital fund. The goal is to break even with operating budget.
    - Peter proposed we adopt the 2007 budget.
    - Heather seconded.
    - All were in favour and the 2007 Budget was approved.
- Summer Section camp participants should contact Trevor for refund cheques.

OTHER

Ray advertised the sale of centennial t-shirts. Shirts are available in 5 sizes for \$15 each. An ideal Christmas present!

Sandy Walker announced that the Calgary 2007 Section Camp will be in Benedict-Iconoclast area. This area is described in the Selkirks North guidebook. The helicopter is not yet completely confirmed but it is likely the camps will run from Sunday to Sunday because of limited availability. The four camps will run from July 15-22, 22-29, 29-5 to

August 5-12 (with RMS). Sandy will explore the area in March and will be able to answer questions then.

Cam Roe mentioned that Swiss Alpine Club should assign reciprocal rates because both they and the ACC are members of UIAA. Cam will provide member who asked question with contact information.

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**ACC CALGARY SECTION MEETING**

Date: Tuesday January 16, 2006  
Location: Bow Water Canoe Club  
Commenced: 19:45 Adjourned: 19:55

**MEETING MINUTES**

Section Business

- Paul chaired the meeting in Ray's absence
  - Paul asked for volunteers for hall clean-up at the end of the evening.
- Members were encouraged to sign up to volunteer with the collating of the Chinook.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Ski Committee

The snow conditions are great. There are several trips coming up, including Kokanee trip.

Climbing Committee

Ice Long Weekend: February Family Day weekend. This trip is geared for experienced climbers and will be held at the Center for Outdoor Education in Nordegg. Cost \$180 includes food and accomodates for 3 days and 3 days. Deposit of \$100 will secure a spot. Make cheques to Calgary ACC Section. Contact Sandy for more information. This event will be posted in the Breeze. Climbs range from grade 2 to five plus but participants need to be competent.

Safety Committee

The Ice Review attracted 50 participants and the weekend went well, despite the high winds. Many participants left early Sunday morning due to the wind.

Training & Leadership

- Frederic made several announcements:
  - Ice Leadership Weekend: January 20-21, 2007. This course is open to current trip leaders and to potential new leaders and is a good opportunity to learn to lead club trips.

The course will be taught by Jeremy Mackenzie. 6 participants were selected from the 16 applicants.

○ Risk & Safety Management Evening Session: On Feb 1<sup>st</sup> and led by by Murray Toft. This evening session is for both active and potential coordinators and will be held at CAOC.

○ Skill Review Evening on March 27th and led by Murray Toft. This 'hands-on' session geared towards active coordinators and will be held at the U of C climbing wall.

○ Rock Rescue: In April. This session is for active coordinators and will be held at the U of C.

○ New Coordinators Evening: In May. This session is for both active and potential coordinators and will be held at CAOC.

○ New Coordinator Map and Compass Navigation Day: Also in April. This 'hands-on' session is a 'companion' session to the CAOC evening session. It is geared to both active and potential coordinators and will be held outdoors.

○ Advanced Alpine Weekend: In June held by Cyril.

T&L is looking for volunteer interested in organizing courses for the general membership, instead of for leaders.

Treasurer

New budget passed last meeting. See Trevor if need reimbursement for expenses

**OTHER**

Next month's speaker will be entitled "Forbidden Volcanoes in Mexico".

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Richard Berry will be the presenter at the March Section meeting, scheduled for Tuesday 20 March 2007. His topic will be MOUNTAIN PHOTOGRAPHY

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**Nordegg Ice Climbing Long Weekend**

Date: February 16-19, 2007 (coming up VERY soon by the time you get this)

Is this trip for you?

This trip is organized a bit differently than the annual Ice Review. For the ice review, the section encourages all climbers of all abilities to participate. We always have several climbers who are very new to ice, or that don't get out much that enjoy the mentoring of our more experienced leaders. The Nordegg weekend is intended for confident and experienced ice climbers. While there is usually a more experienced climber or two that are willing to take less experienced climbers out, the weekend typically draws climbers

that are willing to lead ropes and trips together to enjoy a weekend away. If you are not sure if this is the trip for you, drop a line to [sandysauer@shaw.ca](mailto:sandysauer@shaw.ca) describing your experience level.

**Cost:** \$180.73 (Includes GST, but not tip) This includes:

1. Accommodation at the Center for Outdoor Education on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.
2. Three meals for Sat. and Sun and breakfast and lunch for Monday.

**A minimum deposit of \$100 is needed to reserve your spot.** If you would like to pay in full that would be most appreciated by the organizer!! Cheques should be mailed to Sandy Sauer at 101 St. Moritz Place SW Calgary, AB T3H 0A6. Please make the cheques payable to Calgary Section of the ACC. Please include your email address and phone (cell too) numbers with your deposit so a contact list can be made for the participants.

**The Plan: To have fun, play hard and eat lots!!!**

The plan is to drive up to Nordegg on Friday afternoon/evening. We will have all day Saturday, Sunday and Monday to climb. People generally break into their own small groups. The evenings, have in the past been filled with singing, dancing, hot-tubbing, various physical challenges and your basic socializing!

**Questions?** Email [Sandysauer@shaw.ca](mailto:Sandysauer@shaw.ca)

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### **Liberty Mountain Recalls Climbing Harnesses Due to Fall Hazard**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - 12 December 2006 -

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, in cooperation with the firm named below, announced a voluntary recall of the following consumer product. Consumers should stop using recalled products immediately unless otherwise instructed.

Name of Product: **Edelweiss Challenge Climbing Harnesses**

Units: About 5,900

Distributor: Liberty Mountain, of Salt Lake City, Utah

Hazard: **The buckles on the harness' leg loops could fail**, posing a fall hazard for climbers.

Incidents/Injuries: Liberty Mountain has received five reports of the leg buckle failing. No injuries have been reported.

Description: The sit harnesses are worn around climber's waist and legs and attach to climbing ropes to protect climbers from falling. The harnesses have three buckles including one on the waist belt and one on each leg loop. "Edelweiss" is printed on the waist belt. **Only harnesses using the para buckle system are included in this recall.** Para buckle

harnesses have a single bar installed in the center of each of the three buckles.

Sold at: Climbing equipment retailers, Liberty Mountain's catalog, and by various Web retailers from January 2005 through September 2006 for about \$47.

Manufactured in: France

Remedy: Consumers should immediately stop using the recalled harnesses and contact Liberty Mountain for instructions on returning the harnesses including a return authorization number. Liberty Mountain will provide a free inspection and free repair. Send your harness for repair to:

Liberty Mountain, 4375 West 1980 South, Salt Lake City, Utah 84104.

Consumer Contact: For more information, contact Liberty Mountain at (800) 366-2666 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. MT Monday through Friday, by fax at (801) 954-0766, by e-mail at [info@libertymountain.com](mailto:info@libertymountain.com), or visit the firm's Web site at [www.libertymountain.com](http://www.libertymountain.com)

To see this recall on CPSC's web site, including pictures of the recalled product, please go to: <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prerel/prhtml07/07049.html>

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### **Calgary Section - Iconoclast Group Mountaineering Camp 2007 By Sandy Walker**

Every year the Calgary Section offers its members the opportunity to spend a week exploring mountaineering objectives with like-minded people and build climbing partnerships that will hopefully last beyond the end of the camp. This year, the destination has been set for the Iconoclast Group in the Selkirk Mountains of BC. To avoid the well-documented bushwhack that the few visitors to this area have faced, this will be a fly-in camp.

This rarely-visited and difficult-to-reach area is located North-West of the Rogers Pass and South of the Sir Sanford Range in the Selkirk Mountains. It is made up of 35 peaks with plenty of alpine and sub-alpine terrain. The rock quality varies with the best routes boasting quartzite. The area's Ventego Lake has the distinction of being the largest alpine lake in the Selkirks.

The camp is self-guided, self-catered, and self-managed so participants should have the requisite skills to contribute in every way to ensure a successful and safe camp. Please note that it will be almost impossible to avoid glacier travel and therefore a snow and ice course (or the equivalent experience) is required at minimum. All participants will be required to contribute to the camp by taking responsibility for pre/post camp task, for daily tasks, and for leading trips or rope teams. For more information or an application form check the Section Website or contact Sandy Walker ([sandy.w@shaw.ca](mailto:sandy.w@shaw.ca)).

#### **Dates**

There will be three 1-week camps with spaces available for 12 people per week

for Calgary Section Members. A fourth week is being added for Rocky Mountain Section members. For those of you with dual-membership in both Sections, this gives you 4 weeks to choose from. Note that each of these weeks is for Sunday-to-Sunday.

- . Week 1: July 15 - July 22 (Calgary Section)
- . Week 2: July 22 - July 29 (Calgary Section)
- . Week 3: July 29 - August 5 (Calgary Section)
- . Week 4: August 5 - 12 (Rocky Mountain Section)

**Cost**

We estimate that the camp fees per week this year will be \$475 per person. The Section Camp is run on a break-even basis with all costs being shared equally among the participants. The actual cost will not be known until all the bills come in. Additional fees may be required or refunds may be issued depending on what actually gets spent. If you are purchasing something on behalf of the trip please have your purchase approved by your camp manager first and submit your receipts to Trevor Penford. Expenses submitted after September 15 2007 will not be refunded. Section policy is that the camp coordinator and week managers receive a free camp. Full accounting for the entire trip will be provided to all participants once all of the bills are in so that you know where the money went.

**Reference Materials**

Maps: Glacier 82 N/5 and Mount Sir Sanford 82 N/12  
Guide books: Selkirks North by David P. Jones  
Web: <http://bivouac.com/>  
Alpine Club members get a 15% discount off maps and books purchased through the ACC's National Office: <http://www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/store/index.html>

**Objectives**

The level of difficulty in the area varies from easy scrambles to technical alpine routes. There is no shortage of peaks - some examples to whet your appetite:

Iconoclast Mountain, The Wizard, Ventego Mountain,  
Mount Vertigo, Window Peak, Variety Mountain.

Flipping through the Selkirks North book you'll see a large variety of 3rd, 4th and low 5th class options to keep you busy - some farther away than others.

**Booking:** To reserve a spot we require a non-refundable fee of \$475 with your application. We cannot hold a spot for you until we receive both your application form and your cheque. Your application must include volunteering for specific tasks. Failure to indicate a willingness to help with the chores or leading will result in the application being returned.

Please make cheques payable to ACC Calgary Section and send along with a completed application to: Sandy Walker, PO Box 8040, Calgary, AB T1W 2T8

**CASA Ghost Access Update for January 2007**

Eric Hoogstraten for CASA

*Eric is currently Past President of the CMC, a founding member of CASA, owner of Cariboo Mountain Service, past advisor for climbing related issues for various levels of the BC Government and is the current CASA / Climbing Community representative for the Ghost Stewardship Committee...and may have accidentally run over more than his fair share of Bull Trout over the years while denting a formerly new pick up in the Ghost.*

The current state of the motorized access past Junction #39 is unchanged, i.e. the May 2006 Ghost Waiparous Operational Access Management Plan (GWOAMP) legislated closure of motorized access past this point is still in effect. In a similar vein the vehicular access on the Waiparous / Johnson creek drainage also remains unchanged with the May 2006 restrictions being the status quo (that is to say no driving across the meadow to get to Hydro or into Johnson Creek). The implications are that for the time being you still may be recorded and or ticketed if you choose to drive past this closure. The Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) has indicated to the Climbers Access Society of Alberta (CASA) and other recreational users that the Ghost Forest Land Use Zone (the official designation for the Ghost) is being monitored by SRD employees, Conservation Officers and paid guardians. Certainly your chances of being tagged if you are in contravention of the closure have increased since the fall. Realistically can you get away with driving into the Malamute? Probably, but non-compliance does hurt our efforts to get the area open again. So the choice for all climbers still comes down to one of self-gratification by ignoring the current boundaries versus being community minded and abiding.

As a climber residing in Calgary I understand the level of frustration that the implementation of the GWOAMP has wrought on current climbing opportunities in the Ghost. I have not appreciated the walk that is now required to get to the places I have driven to last year. Like many people I find some of the idiosyncrasies of the plan, such the closure at Junction #39, to be more than aggravating given that it is dry for most of the winter. The designation of this point as the end of the line was exclusively chosen by SRD in conjunction consultation with the Ministry of the Environment and the department of Fisheries and Oceans. Neither members of the climbing community nor any other recreational users had any input at all into this decision. It should be obvious to anyone that our community would not have selected this spot if asked.

However, I am still willing to give the implementation of the GWOAMP a chance as it is the only venue we have to re-establish traditional access patterns that are ecologically sensible and environmentally sustainable. Of course we are not alone in our dislike of many of the restrictions and SRD is being hard pressed by other motorized recreationalists to initiate the process for the expeditious reopening of selected tracks and trails.

SRD has recently reaffirmed (January 2007) that it is not willing at this time to make major changes to the GWAOMP, as they perceive that this will undermine the role

of the developing GWOAMP-mandated Ghost Stewardship Committee, which will be the body that oversees Ghost FLUZ motorized access issues. The Stewardship Committee is being developed with the input and direction of personnel from the former Ministry of Community Development, now Tourism, Parks, Recreation, and Culture, and is following a set process towards consensus based land management – which is the model the Government supports for the Ghost and purportedly, eventually all public lands. As a member of said Stewardship Committee I can report that like myself, many of my fellow members are anxious to get to the task at hand and start managing the FLUZ by accepting applications and establishing more logical access models. Unfortunately the Committee is still in a formative stage and is only expected to be operational by late spring /early summer – which will not be in time to do much about this season's ice climbing.

Even so, CASA, which has representation from the CMC, the ACC, MEC, non affiliated climbers, and supports awareness to the ACMG, other retail stores and other soft tread recreational users, is proceeding with several access applications on behalf of the climbing community that will be submitted to SRD and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in the hope that some timely compromise can be forthcoming in an effort to address our unique concerns with motorized approaches to ice climbs. Technically we should be submitting our access applications to the Stewardship Committee but for reasons mentioned above that is not currently possible. Pragmatically I don't expect much success but it doesn't hurt to try at this point and will hopefully force one or all the governmental agencies involved to clearly delineate the criteria that must be met for reestablishment of access to the upper Ghost drainage to the boundary of the Ghost Wilderness Area. Over the last 7 months we have heard requirements range from a simple 1 day environmental field assessment to a 2 year aquatic study to reopen the fords, dependant upon which level of government we speak to.

We will endeavor to get winter access across junction 39 and on to the flats before the first crossing of the Ghost River – the Bastion Wall ford. This in the very least is a more logical and sensible staging area. Secondly we are attempting to substantiate our position that fords of the Ghost River to allow access to the This House of Sky parking area are not deleterious to Bull Trout habitat. Unfortunately this will be a bit trickier as there is a side stream that does indeed carry Bull Trout that must be crossed. Our solution is to ford the river at carefully designated and specifically marked spots and bridge the side channel / creek where needed. We feel it is a reasonable solution but SRD, the Ministry of the Environment, and DFO may think otherwise. The whole thing may be moot given that SRD may choose to not entertain our proposal at this epoch anyway.

So is/ has CASA, doing / done anything to mitigate the access problems we are experiencing? The answer is an unqualified yes. It may not seem like much is getting done but we are trying and have tried numerous avenues to broach our concerns for this season. The aforementioned proposals are but the latest attempt. Like many other perturbed groups who have traditionally enjoyed greater access to the Ghost FLUZ we are being stymied by the logistical catch up of the Stewardship Committee at the moment.

I have no doubt that with enough perseverance; eventually, we will be able to reestablish more climber-amenable motorized access patterns in the Ghost. It won't be the same as it was with the ability to go pretty much anywhere unfettered by rule or regu-

lation but there will be a sensible and sustainable system of tracks and trails which will allow reasonable approaches to most if not all existing climbs. We just don't want the process to move at a geologic pace and CASA will continue to press the government for a speedy resolution of our concerns. So hang in there, hope for the best and stay tuned by checking the CASA website at <http://climbersaccess.ab.ca/> as well as the SRD site at <http://www.srd.gov.ab.ca/areas/southernrockies/Ghost/index.html>.

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**TECH TIPS FROM PAUL MASIAR**

**Being a second on an ice climb – Equipment and Best Practices Tip**

So you've signed up for a trip, and you get to go on an ice climb where your job is to second the leader. What should you bring, but more important what should you know to protect your leader - that is the discussion in this little piece. Remember Alpine Club leaders are not professional mountain guides, so every one has a role in the party's safety, every person is a participant not just a follower.

In an ideal world the leader will lead the climb and bring up the second, and this action repeats itself, one or several times.

However, things happen, and the situation may differ from the ideal routine. A leader assistance and/or rescue may be required. The first line of defense is the leader's own team, the second are professional rescuers and the RCMP.

To assist in a leader rescue **YOU MUST HAVE SOME GEAR ON YOUR HARNESS**; you do not count on the leader's gear, or the gear that is placed on route. On the ice the absolute minimum is two screws (one is long), cord (5 m, 7-8 mm) or webbing, Abalakov hook and couple of extra carabiners.

There is also the knowledge, the "how to" part. The most difficult scenario is when the leader cannot be lowered to the ground. A rescue then becomes a five step process:

Create a bottom anchor, the second has to decide whether he can trust the lead rope, either prussiking up it, or sliding prussiks up as he/she climbs the ice alongside.

Reinforce the anchors, and attach the leader to the anchors.

Descend the rope, unload the bottom anchor, and transfer the load to the top reinforced anchor

Ascend the rope to the leader, clean the pitch if possible

Lower the leader

Obviously from this brief description it would be very hard to undertake a rescue, and it is not recommended to attempt one unless you thoroughly know and practice the process. The actual "how-to" in any one step above is somewhat more involved, as in each step there are quite a few intermediate steps. The point is to make you think about what you don't know. However, the process is fully explained step by step, with pictures in a great little book by David J. Fasulo, Self Rescue from the "How to rock climb"

series.

Please gain some knowledge, at least in theory, how it is done. Better yet, seek some training, be it with the Alpine Club or other organizations. If you want to practice, pick WI2 ice with easy flat steps. It is easy to simulate assistance or a rescue of a leader on an easy ground with relatively little risk to the participants.

So much for the hard part, which one hopes never happens. Now the easy part:

Always construct some sort of an anchor on ice and tie yourself into it. The anchor can be an ice screw, tree, piton in a rock, sling around a boulder, remember you can't hold any leader fall just standing on ice.

If possible stand in front of an anchor, with the sling feeling tight.

Watch the leader carefully at all times, if the leader is out of sight, increase your situational awareness by reacting quickly to slight tugs on the rope, when the rope stops moving by estimating the time it takes for a leader to place a screw, developing a feel how much rope is going through your hands between stops, etc.

Never take the leader off belay or jeopardize the belay to make an adjustment of any kind.

Have a system for communication and/or agreed upon signals for what to do when you can't hear (or see) the leader.

Don't get distracted from the belay duty by socializing, chatting or other "mind" issues; trouble can happen super fast and your reactions have to be equally fast. Know how to belay with thin, icy ropes; remember these ropes have a lot of stretch, so don't leave a significant amount of slack in the rope.

If you arrive at an anchor - check it, if you feel you need another anchor point, sink in a screw - one of the two that you must have, and tie in with the rope.

Check the anchors before rappelling.

Back up rappel anchors with a screw making sure there is no weight on the backup screw. Test the rappel anchor by tugging at it strongly while being attached to a screw, and establish an order in which the team rappels. Usually the heaviest person goes first, the lightest person removes the screw and goes down last. A team also has to be flexible, so if the lightest person is the most experienced, and his/her job is to establish the next rappel anchor, send that person down first.

Rappel with a prussik, & take your time to check your set-up.

Learn how to make an Abalakov anchor or V-thread, that's what your long screw is for.

Cut away mercilessly any old, faded cord or webbing; remember that's what the new cord on your harness is for.

If you have doubts about anything, or something does not feel right, speak up, ask questions.

Well, hopefully this helps in being a good second, being a valuable team member; after all teamwork is everything in this sport.

### **Warning: Snow Trench Collapse Hazard Orvel Miskiw**

The recent deaths of 2 backcountry skiers on the Wapta Icefields has undoubtedly caused a lot of consternation among mountaineers and snow campers in this region. CBC Calgary TV reported a surge of website visits from the usual 2000, to 6000 on the day that this accident was first reported in mid-January, and even non-camping CBC staff identified that story as the reason.

The bodies of the victims were located near Mt. Collie, under about 1.5 metres of snow in a collapsed snow shelter, originally referred to as a cave. Because snow caves are known to be very strong and safe when made right, snow campers are understandably on edge. The title above holds the key to an explanation, since the basic snow TRENCH is the weakest of common snow shelter structures.

Several curiosities were apparent in the media reports available to the public in this case:

1. National Parks searchers said the only visible sign that drew them to the accident site was the tip of a shovel handle showing above flat snow, so...where were their skis?
2. The accident site was reportedly on relatively level terrain; that would make a snow cave inconvenient and so an unlikely choice, although possible.
3. In the first several news reports that I heard, the term "cave" was used, but then the word "trench" appeared in one of them: my impression was that whereas "cave" could be considered a generic term which the public could easily understand, it began to bother some official 'in the know', so he finally said "trench" in one interview, as a correction.
4. Heavy snowfall was reported in the Wapta in the few days after the victims were last seen alive. That would not be of much concern to people in a regular snow cave, but would definitely threaten a snow trench with a wide, flat roof typically consisting of skis, a tarp, and a small amount of snow to hold everything in place. Such a roof is inherently weak and becomes dangerous in heavy snowfall.

I phoned the National Park wardens in Banff for clarification, and was told that in fact the two victims were found in a collapsed trench in which their skis had been laid flat to form a roof. The cause of death was said to have been asphyxiation, but to be fair, it's possible that it was caused by stove fumes for example. In any case, the trench did collapse, and that would be most likely during or immediately after a heavy snowfall, rather than after the snow consolidated and so became self supporting. Also, Golden RCMP reportedly said that a diary found with the victims mentioned a previous snow shelter collapsing on them.

In summary, winter campers don't need to worry about the safeness of snow caves, or even igloos, or quinzhees, as long as these all have substantial walls of firm snow and a peak- or arch-shaped roof, as that tends to transfer vertical center loads outward to the side walls and base.

The problem with digging a cave on flat terrain is that the removed snow has to be thrown upward through a small doorway to the surface. There it accumulates and has to be moved away from time to time to keep the area clear. It helps to have a

helper, but in any case, this is awkward and difficult work, and especially the person down below tends to get wet.

So for the situation of level terrain, a trench is more convenient to dig, since the whole thing is open to the sky. If you decide to use a trench, and if the snow condition permits, a good procedure is to dig a narrow slot, not much wider than your body, and somewhat shorter than the floor space you need, and gradually widen it lower down until the cavity is wide enough and long enough, then continue straight down until it's deep enough. Finally, flatten the floor and cover the slot, ideally with snow blocks, especially if you'd like to use the shelter for more than one night while traveling around in the area, but using skis, poles, and tarps if necessary for a single night's use. An entrance is best provided in the form of a tunnel at one end of the trench. This all results in a hybrid trench/cave with a reasonably strong triangular roof structure and a narrow unsupported level section which should be able to hold up any depth of snow which may pile up on it.

In all winter shelters it's a good idea to ensure clear vents for an air supply, especially while cooking, and to not leave any stove running while sleeping.

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**Rock Rescue at University of Calgary Climbing Wall  
(30-May 2006)  
by Angela Pocsik**

Duration: 3 hours - Short, focused on a few rock rescue techniques.

We covered scenarios where you had to transfer a load from a belayer to anchor via a prusik sling, how to shorten a sling, prusiking up to do a rescue, improvised lowering with munter and monster munter hitches and how to lower both yourself and the partner that you just rescued at the same time.

We discussed scenarios and talked through possible solutions as a group. This was a valuable activity because it gave insight as to the different angles from which the same situation could be approached.

Highly recommended; the time to figure out how to do a rescue is not during a real life situation.

Participants: Danielle Tardif, Denis Longuepee, Roberto Salguero, Jacqueline Louie, Stacey Karalash, Mathiew Bourgeois, Chuck Young, Alan Fortune, Angela Pocsik, Joe Turnham, Marcus Eyre, Shaun Fluker, Sandy Sauer, Tom Fransham, Gabrielle Savard, & Gerry Drotar.

THAT'S ALL, FOLKS.  
LET'S HAVE A FEW MORE TRIP REPORTS FOR THE MARCH EDITION, EH?  
SURELY SOME OF YOU HAVE BEEN ENJOYING THIS WINTER !

**SECTION ENQUIRIES:**

P.O. Box 1995  
 Calgary, AB  
 T2P 2M2

**ADDRESS CHANGES:**

The Alpine Club of Canada  
 P.O. Box 8040  
 Canmore, AB T1W 2T8  
 (403) 678-3200 678-3224(f)



NO CALLS AFTER 10 PM IS THE POLICY OF THE SECTION, THANK YOU

### Calgary Section Contact Information

**Chair:** Ray Norman 403 609-0337  
 x raynorm@telus.net  
**Past Chair:** Vacant  
**Vice-Chair:** Paul Masiar pmasiar@shaw.ca  
**Treasurer:** Trevor Penford 238-3486  
 tpenford@buffalo-oil.com  
**Library:** Cam Roe 253-5463  
**Secretary:** Renee Lavergne 697-8482  
 climbingren@hotmail.com

**Member Services:**  
 Chair: Elizabeth Dupuis 298-6561

**Social Committee:**  
 Chair: Jacqueline Louie 289-5787  
 Derek Kemp 253-5339

**Climbing Committee:**  
 Chair: Peter Lloyd 247-0204  
 Orvel Miskiw 932-2800  
 Andy Strangemann 220-0212  
 Rebecca Haspel 275-5656  
 Dave Hanson 827-5441  
 David Roe 282-8025  
 Tom Fransham 880-4455

**Club Ropes:**  
 Stan Bobrow 217-2260

**Access Committee:**  
 Chair: Nivea L. de Oliveira  
 nldeoliv@ucalgary.ca

**Training and Leadership Committee:**

Chair: Frédéric Labarre  
 frederic\_labarre@yahoo.ca  
 Stacey Karalash 283-1206  
 Mark Lane  
 Roberto Salguero 262-3913  
 Andy Strangemann 220-0212

**Ski Committee:**

Chair: Tom Fransham tfransham@shaw.ca  
 Alan Fortune fortune2@telus.net  
 Ben Stephenson  
 Stephensonben@hotmail.com  
 Heather Eadie Heathereadie@hotmail.com  
 Jason McCrank jasonmccrank@hotmail.com  
 Lisa Bergen lbergen@hotmail.com  
 Lisa-Lee Johnson lisa\_leej@yahoo.com  
 Mike Gendreau dmg100@gmail.com  
 Ryan Macauley ry\_and\_coke@hotmail.com

**Chinook:**

Carmie Callanan (Editor) 813-8959  
 callanan@telusplanet.net

**Collating:**

Chuck & Lesley Young 239-4611  
 c.young@shaw.ca

**Calgary Section Web Site:**

<http://www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/calgary>

**Email List Service** (post and subscribe)

acccalgary@hotmail.com

**Chinook Submissions:** Any article relating to the Club or the mountains is welcome. Please send submissions as an email attachment to **callanan@telusplanet.net** before the 26th for the next month's issue. Microsoft Word documents (Arial font) work the best. Submissions become the property of the Alpine Club of Canada and are subject to editing.