



# The Prairie Pitch



## Alpine Club of Canada Saskatchewan Section

### Events/Miscellaneous

Upcoming Trips:  
**Saturday, July 7 -- Scott Semple** will be instructing a half to full day "course" on Basic Rock Rescue. It will be based on a multi-pitch, swinging leads scenario. Topics covered will include escaping the belay, transferring to a lower, creating mechanical advantage systems and counterweight rappels. Time permitting, ascending ropes (improvised) and knot passes will also be covered. Course

to be held at **Yam Bluffs or Wasootch Slabs**. Maximum 4 participants. **Climbing experience necessary; multi-pitch experience an asset. Contact Scott at scowsem@hotmail.com <mailto:scowsem@hotmail.com>**

**Saturday, August 18 - Scott Semple** will be leading a climb on Ha Ling Peak (formerly Chinaman's Peak) NE Face 5.6. This is an excellent route which is lots of fun! Maximum 2 participants. Contact Scott at scowsem@hotmail.com

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<mailto:scowsem@hotmail.com>

#### 4 Season Tents and Sunscreen

*by Kim Hitchings*

Why do you need a 4-season tent when camping in Kananaskis country?

Because you can have all 4 seasons in one day! But don't let that scare you away from the Sask. section's annual Thrasher's Weekend.

For an introduction into rock climbing there is nothing better. I would drive from Rosetown to Canmore at 30 mph, through rain and snow to get there. Well, actually I wouldn't, but Jason would.

Proving that even the beginners can be hardcore and that was before the climbing started.

For Alix and I the trip began a couple of days early. Our first day was nearly rained out but we managed to get in a couple hours at the bluffs on Yamnuska. If you are from Calgary you wouldn't waste your time but if you're from Saskatchewan it's great

just to be on real rock!! At "Yam bluffs" you start at the top so it is easy to set top-ropes. There are lots of easy climbs but a helmet is a must. We spent our second day in Grotto Canyon and whether you want to hike or climb this is a great place to spend a day. There are tons of sport routes and some trad, everything from 5.6 to "how the hell do I get to the first bolt?" The easier climbs are a 1-2 hour hike in but what you see on the way makes the walking worthwhile and the distance cuts down on the traffic (Note: These climbs are not polished like Wasootch. Not yet.)

When the rest of the group arrived Friday evening we had an exciting story to tell. Less than 500 yards from the parking lot at Yamnuska, Alix and I saw a cougar and (Australian accent) "Kryky!! Did you see the size of that thing!!" would be a fitting response. Finally everyone was there and we were ready to go climbing. Saturday started out sunny and quickly deteriorated to rain. That did

not slow the Sask. section down though, with a morning hike to warm up and the rock dry by noon we were finally climbing. What's the problem with getting lots of top-ropes set up at Wasootch Creek? I bet you can't get all those ropes down before it starts to snow!! By 4pm we were back at the Yamnuska sweeping 4 inches of fresh snow off the tents. "I think some ones fly blew off and landed over there." "No, that would be Mike's tent!" After supper we sat on the grass in Yam "horse-poop" meadows and watched the sunset in a beautiful clear blue sky. What a day!

Sunday the beginners returned to Wasootch while others spent the day at Heart Creek. The weather held and I ended up with a nice sunburn. After a day of climbing the now famous routes of D slab and Pete's Crack nothing feels better than a shower at the ACC clubhouse (currently under expansion). Then it was off to Canmore for "steak at the Drake." (Sorry vegetarians but "cauliflower at the Drake"

doesn't sound good!) Pack the warmest sleeping bag you have and I'll see you next may long on the Thrasher's weekend!

**Competition Climbing 2001**

**by Sue Holowach**

Competition Climbing had a quick and dirty season this spring starting in February and ending with Nationals in Naniamo, B. C. May long weekend.

Saskatoon climbers Jason and Amy Holowach had a great season, finishing top three at all the locals they went to.

Regionals were another story, Amy finished 5th and Jason had a bad day and finished seventh after DQing at both qualifiers. That meant the pressure was on to finish in the top 1st or 2nd position at Nationals to make it onto the National Team.

Nationals was an exciting event at Romper

"If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew to serve your turn long after they are gone, and so hold on when there is nothing in you except the will which says to them: 'Hold on!'"  
-Rudyard Kipling

**QUOTE**

Room. Jason and Brett Ehlers fought to the finish as they had all season and made the competition exciting with their power and finesse. Jason placed 2nd and Brett 1st.

Amy had a great day in qualifiers and placed a very strong 1st going into finals. She was ballet on walls to watch. In her final she read something wrong and fell early to a 5th place finish. A hard blow, because her overall points put her in 5th place for the season and the top four are chosen for the National team. Jason's finish put him in 4th overall and gave him a berth on the team. It was an exciting and hard season, unfortunately Jason could not go to worlds June 19-21 this year due to finances and school. Jason and Amy extend their thanks to the ACC Saskatchewan section for their sponsorship of the competitions and to Vic's Vertical Walls for their sponsorship as well as their coaching and everyone at Vic's for cheering them on.

They say they are pumped for next years season

and are aiming for Worlds at Corymeyer, France in Sept. 2002.

### **Georgia of the Caucasus**

#### **by Gil Parker**

I am organizing a private trip to Georgia for this September, a two week period between Sept 2 and 22. I led a group of 15 from the ACC to Georgia in 1990. Lado Gurchiani, our host over there, was at the ACC Guides Ball at Lake Louise in about 1993.

#### ***The Trip***

Where can one find an undiscovered mountain nation with an ancient culture, spectacular scenery, yet on the edge of Europe? In Georgia, or as the citizens call it, "Sakhartwelo!"

Bordering the Black Sea, with Caucasus mountains dividing it from Russia, Georgia is exerting its independence for the first time since 1921.

Ten years ago, as some of the West's first visitors, we traveled to Georgia to experience the challenges of the Caucasus

peaks, and in the process, became friends with local alpinists. We helped to foster an exchange of students between Tbilisi State in their capital city and Victoria, Canada. Now, those people are waiting for us. In particular, Lado Gurchiani will be welcoming us, who was once "master of sport" of the Soviet Union and one who first climbed the walls of Ushba, "Matterhorn of the Caucasus."

This will not be a luxury trip. Recovering from severe economic dislocations of their political separation and the subsequent civil conflict, progress has been slow. We will again be pioneers, helping to reopen contacts with the outside. In September, 2001, our visit will emphasize the trekking and mountaineering opportunities, with companions who are more concerned with wild nature than fine hotels. But the two week program will include tours of historical sites, the wine country of Kaheti, and the seacoast of Batumi. We

will enjoy the music of Sakhartwelo and wine-arts known for centuries.

Our preliminary assessment of cost indicates the airfare at \$ 1850 (Can.) from Vancouver, and land costs of \$ 2800 for 14 days in Georgia. This may change, as we are discussing details with Lado by a slow Email connection.

Contact Gil Parker [gparker@telus.net](mailto:gparker@telus.net) or phone 250 370 9349 325 Irving Road, Victoria, V8S 4A1

"One of the tests of leadership is the ability to recognize a problem before it becomes an emergency."  
*-Arnold Glasgow*

**QUOTE**

**Leadership Development**

**by Cameron Roe  
VP Activities ACC**

There has been some confusion recently regarding leadership programs being offered by the National club, where those different programs are going to go in the future and what those mean to members and sections. Into that void

perhaps I can inject a little background.

The Alpine Club of Canada has always been a leader in providing mountaineering skills and leadership courses to its members. This is something that we can be particularly proud of. In looking at section course offerings it is amazing how far we have come in even the last 10 years. Doing some quick math, the Calgary section is offering almost 200 hours of skill and leadership development courses this winter with many of them full before there was snow on the ground! The Rocky Mountain section is very similar in the amount of instruction offered along with subsidy offerings to members who wish to take selected multi-week Canadian Avalanche Association courses. Other sections, and in particular Edmonton and Vancouver should be justifiably proud of the traditions of skills and leadership training that they have offered for many years.

This training is not limited to the west or to large

sections, and most sections offer at least ice and rock climbing courses during the year. In all, close to 800 hours or 6 months of training is offered by the ACC through its different sections.

These courses accomplish several things. Most obviously, they help people climb safely. They introduce people to all aspects of mountaineering and eventually provide competent mountaineers capable of leading others in the mountains safely.

Several years ago at the national level, the board noticed that it was becoming more difficult to find enough competent mountaineers to lead and manage trips at national camps. There were enough warm bodies but many were without the skills and experience that were thought necessary to lead at these camps. We also recognize that the standard of care expected is increasing. National activities use about 40 volunteer leaders per year to take members to the mountains with many people

returning year after year. The attrition rate was such that we needed to replace between 8-15 volunteers per year.

These volunteers need to be held to a higher standard than normal for several reasons. Some of these include;

1. Expectations for a member who was paying real \$'s for a trip are rightfully much higher than for a volunteer section trip.
2. Much of the climbing involved working with a guide or guides. One of the reasons that the ACC is able to offer these camps for less money than anyone else and still make a little profit to subsidize other programs is because the guides are willing to work closely with the ACC volunteer leaders. This means however that these leaders must be competent enough to ensure that safety is not compromised.
3. Large groups and therefore large rope teams are the norm. This means

that 'industrial strength guiding' is also the norm. For example, Anchors, rappel/lower techniques change with large groups. Consequences of a mistake are ..... bad! Group dynamics are now very apparent.

4. All the trips are extended trips with as much as 3-5 weeks being spent in a harsh mountaineering environment. Mt. Logan for example. Some trips involve travel in a foreign country and all the dynamics that are introduced in that environment.

After a lot of effort by many members, we now have several corporate sponsors that heavily subsidize leadership training for leaders at national camps as well as women's and youth mountaineering. These include The North Face, Marmot and Patagonia and more recently Helly-Hanson. However, in the course of researching leadership training and as a consequence of several

'incidents' one major point became apparent. If the ACC is going to continue to lead trips in the mountains, then we have a legal, fiduciary and more importantly (I think) a moral obligation to try to have the best, safest people we can to lead those trips both at the section and the national level. The ACC is unique in that we still have a very active club and trip schedule in each section as well as nationally.

The Union Internationale des Associations d'Alpinisme (UIAA) is the pre-eminent mountaineering organization in the world and represents about 3.5 million members worldwide. (The ACC is Canada's representative to this organization by the way). The UIAA has a working group called the "Training Standards Working Group". This group, in conjunction with member countries sets standards for volunteer leaders.

The program works like this: the group puts together a training program or syllabus. The training program is then reviewed by the working

group and either approved or not. If approved, an observer from the working group is sent to participate in the initial training. If the initial training reflects what was outlined in the training syllabus, then the program is approved as meeting the UIAA standard. You may well ask, "Who would go through all that hassle and administration?" To answer: the usual European countries with huge memberships such as Germany, Austria, United Kingdom, France, Spain, Slovenia, Russia, and Italy. As well as clubs with similar membership to Canada such as Denmark, Sweden, Norway, South Africa and Holland. The icing on the cake however is that this program is not even unique in Canada. The Ecole Nationale d'Escalade du Québec has applied and received approval for their rock and ice programs.

Ignoring everything above, the question still remains, "Why do we have to do anything at all? Why can't we simply continue to do what

we have done?" The answer lies; I believe, in the changing attitudes of the public and governments, both in Canada and in other countries. In the larger mountainous nations (Germany, Austria and soon France and Italy) it is the law that you must meet these standards to lead a group in the mountains on behalf of an organization like the Alpine Club.

Would this ever happen in Canada? I believe that eventually it will. More and more the legislative bodies are becoming involved. For example, the BC Children's Commission recently recommended that the ACC close ALL of our huts in the winter as they represented a hazardous destination. This came down as a result of an accidental death of a young person going to Abbot's Pass hut. I believe that eventually, as in Europe and elsewhere, it will be legislated that leaders of groups meet minimum standards before going out in the mountains. This would not be aimed at the ACC per se,

but would include the ACC along with the various school boards, scouting groups, outdoor clubs, etc. For those of us who have been around a while, you might recall that the Alberta government under Peter Lougheed went to the Alberta Campers Association at one point to investigate outdoor leader standards! If you buy into this train of thought, as I do, then I believe we can do one of two things. We can wait and see what standards are eventually legislated or imposed upon us, or we can be proactive and forward looking and set them ourselves. I believe in the latter approach. One of the major issues that came up early in the process offering training and a question that often comes up at sections is the question "Are you going to have to be certified to lead a trip for the ACC?".

The short answer is NO. Currently, in effect, the ACC nationally and its sections 'certify' its' trip leaders now. Granted, it is informal, often simply a "Yes, I know X – he/she/it is OK".

Some sections, most notably Rocky Mountain, Calgary and Edmonton have recently had their own initiatives to formalize this process. In the foreseeable future I don't see this changing. At the National level however it is a different kettle of fish as I've alluded to above. The BOD and I would like to see a sequence of training, proof of competency, and regular review set in place at the national level.

This training would meet some standard, the most obvious being based on the UIAA standard. This would of course filter to the sections as leaders who wished to pursue this training, led trips for their sections as well. (A quick check at the Calgary section indicates that 93% of people who have gone through TNF leadership program lead trips for the section this year as well.) This training would also provide a standard that could be used by the sections for their own training initiatives.

For those people that are currently leading trips for the club at the national level,

yes, there would be some sort of "grand fathering" with a gradual introduction of regular skills reviews etc. This review of skills has been done in the past and is happening now anyway. It is an interesting side note that the UIAA standards are not significantly different from the standards set out in the ACC training syllabus made 15 years ago by Brian Spear.

As for 'certification', I see this continuing to be self-regulating and still be relatively informal at the section level.

There are many other questions that I just don't have room to answer. Questions with regard to insurance, litigation, liability, will this discourage or encourage people to lead trips, etc. In conclusion, I believe that our goal should be to set in place some sort of standard to which to train our members and to take a leadership role in the setting of this standard. We have a chance now to either lead or eventually to follow. I personally would rather have significant input to

the process than have it imposed on me, ergo this letter to you! The October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2000 proposal is the first draft of a plan and is certainly not the 'be all end all', but instead represents the beginning of a living document. I will be at the Calgary Section meeting in April to hopefully talk to you and hear your suggestions and concerns.

I hope that this fosters discussion as opposed to polarization and in the end leads to a better, safer and fun club.

### **\$\$ Grant Funds Available \$\$**

The ACC has permanent funds in place to support a variety of mountaineering-related projects and initiatives. The ACC Endowment Fund provides grants to projects consistent with the Club's constitution, goals and objectives (alpine research, mountain culture, leadership development). The ACC Environment Fund provides grants supporting projects aimed at preserving and protecting mountain and

climbing areas. The Jen Higgins Fund provides grants that promote creative and energetic alpine-related outdoor pursuits by young women (25 and younger).

The Helly Hansen Mountain Adventure Award is designed to celebrate human passion for alpine areas. That passion is expressed in many forms - mountain exploration, recreation, culture, education, research and alpine access preservation. Annual application deadline is December 31st. Interested?

Visit our website: [www.AlpineClubofCanada.ca](http://www.AlpineClubofCanada.ca) to download full details and application forms. Or, for a hard copy of the same details and forms, contact: The Alpine Club of Canada National Office P.O. Box 8040, Canmore AB, T1W 2T8, Canada phone: 403-678-3200, ext. 112; fax: 403-678-3224; e-mail: [accprogs@telusplanet.net](mailto:accprogs@telusplanet.net);

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**DEADLINE for articles for the next issue  
of the newsletter — August 15, 2001**



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