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INTRODUCTION BY STEVE OGLE

THERE'S A LOT OF WHITE in this frame. An excessive amount, in fact. A snowy scene set against a snowy backdrop, the simplicity of which draws your attention to the basic outline of a building. It's not the Royal Bank or Burger King but instead a foreign edifice—perhaps a Japanese temple? Oooh. A sound, but also an action. A pursing of the lips, a shift in the shoulders, movement that belies a sense of intrigue. If you're a skier, it could even be the beginnings of a cuss. So far, simplicity and exotica have set you in motion.

A good photograph has the ability to move you. It's a figure of speech, but when you think about it, there is some physicality involved. Upon flipping open a double-page spread, your first response might be to raise your eyebrows—a movement of sorts.

It was a record snow year when I took this picture in Niseko, Japan, and since it's one of the snowiest ski resorts on the planet, that says a lot. The reality of the situation is not lost on the poor fellow excavating a tunnel out of this building's upper floor window. His presence, the human factor—perhaps more than any other feature—allows you to connect in some way to the image.

Or not. Personally, I wouldn't want to relate to this guy, given the arduous and perhaps life-threatening task at hand, especially knowing the local municipality has futuristic snow blowers

plying the main street. If that isn't enough, they pump hot spring water under the asphalt to melt as much snow as possible. As for the rooftops, the Japanese haven't figured out a better way to clear a second story roof than with a very long shovel. This cultural element is another reason to sit up and have a closer look. Suddenly, you're on your feet.

Now consider this: it's not really a temple; it's a hotel. I've shot my last frame of the day because more than a metre of fresh snow has fallen on top of a five-metre base and it's time to hit the slopes. Our friend with the shovel? Well, he won't be skiing today. The snowploughs and heating ducts have failed. In fact, the whole system is in chaos, so he's preparing an alternative entrance to his place of work should the ground floor disappear and the tourists need to get in. This bit of context is notable not only because it digs down and exposes the roots of the image, but also the roots of the culture. The moment transports you from your present location to this dream-like setting, thousands of kilometres and millions of moments away. To make you wonder, to figure out one particular instant in a land and culture very different than your own. As a photographer, it's these seemingly unimportant scenes that travel with me from country to country, people to people. What is everyday to some is marvelously different to others.

On the following pages, you'll find images put into context by their accompanying photographers. They explain why their images moved them, and ultimately, how they might move you.

Rodopi Fisherman
By Kari Medig

After shooting ski photos in Bulgaria for about a month, I'd already had my fair share of interesting side trip stories: I was picked up by Count Dracula in a hearse while hitchhiking, I watched a woman use an ice pick to dig her dead dog out of two inches of ice, I fought off a pack of feral dogs with my tripod. Now I was sipping *rakia*, Bulgaria's potent national drink, with three ice fishermen from Sofia. I saw these guys sitting in the middle of Batak Lake, while I was busing through the Rodopi Mountains en route to Plovdiv. I yelled at the driver to stop, jumped out and wandered out onto the ice where small groups were huddled around tiny holes, pulling out countless five-inch rainbow-coloured fish. "Hey, can I hang out and take some pictures?" They looked at each other, puzzled, and turned their attention back to the holes in the ice. Then one of them searched around in his coat, pulled out a flask and handed it to me. I was in.



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Mussels
By Patrice Halley



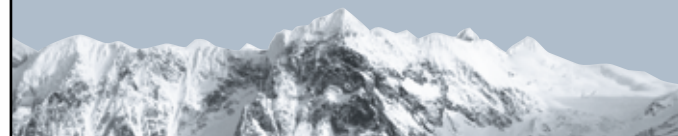
When we need food, most of us go to the nearest grocery store. We tend to forget that in Canada, some people still rely on the land to feed their families. When my friend Lukassie Nappaluk invited me to a subsistence ritual that only takes place in his village, I immediately knew I was offered a unique privilege. Picking food offered by our generous planet is something almost holy—a communion with nature.

Harvesting mussels in summer is easy; you just stroll the Arctic beaches at low tide and cut them off the rocks. But in winter, when the bays are covered with thick ice, it's another story. Ingeniously, Inuit have learned to locate caves under the ice by looking through surface cracks. Created by the forces of the incoming tides, these caves allow access to the sea floor. When in need of food, Inuit travel to the edges of the bay, dig a hole into the ice and descend into these caves. There, on their knees, they gather as many fat blue mussels as possible before the tide comes back in. Of course it's dangerous, but in a land where an ancient manhood ritual involved killing a polar bear with only a spear and dogs, picking up mussels is still regarded as a safe way to get a fill of protein.



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Huts and Guitars
 By Marke Dickson

George dropped his chainsaw and a hand stained by roll-your-own tobacco reached to briefly shake mine. As a new park worker, I looked at the machine this veteran of the New Zealand Alps had carried by hand for hours, and then I looked at his backpack. "What's with the guitar?" I asked. He said nothing. "I'll do the cutting, you do the carrying" were his only words the next morning, and he walked off leaving no doubt the saw was mine to bare.

After a day of tough hiking we reached the next hut. Some huts have warden's quarters, in others—like this one—workers sleep in open quarters with people from around the world. That night, George took a couple of shots of the communal whisky, pulled out his guitar and was transformed into an instant entertainer, a very talkative one. What's with the guitar? My question was answered.



photo: Guillame Charton

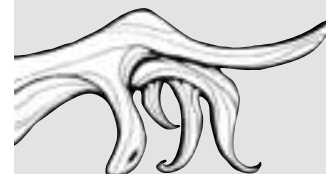


photo: Hugh Van Noorden

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Chokue
By Nils Larsen

I had heard stories of Chokue long before meeting him. Local skiers in the Chinese Altai Mountains spoke of him in reverential tones. Sháken, a powerful man with a great scar traversing his face, told us that as a boy, he'd watched Chokue run down elk on skis on a steep mountainside. Other skiers spoke of him as "the greatest skier" and claimed "he never tired, he has skied through all these mountains."

He was around 80 years old when I met him, still strong and active. Reticent at first, he soon warmed to us with his stories. He spoke of winter hunts and long ski treks through the mountains, of pulling a goatskin sled through the deep, cold snow for days at a time. With my decades of ski experience and the best western gear, I knew that I was no match for Chokue in his prime, this man who describes himself as "just a simple goat herder."



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Photo: Todd Weselake

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Photo: Douglas Noblet



Likir Festival
By Ptor Spriceniaks

When I arrived in Ladakh, a region in northern India, in the dead of winter to begin a trans-Himalayan ski tour, I found the Tibetan Buddhist culture in the midst of winter festivals. During my days in the capital of Leh, where I was organizing logistics, I heeded to many recommendations that I should attend the ceremony at the nearby Likir monastery. Not knowing what to expect, I arrived to find crowds of Ladakhis celebrating the end of the Tibetan year during their traditional respite in the harsh winter months. Inside the monastery, which was founded in the 11th century, people had clambered onto its walls and precipices, as well as squeezed together on the main floor to best view the elaborate music and dance. Monks in costumes and lamas with instruments played out a ritual homage to the demons and deities responsible for the workings of everyday life. Outside, surrounded by snow-capped peaks, the locals continued the festivities, enjoying food and *chang*, the local barley brew.