

Stash

WHERE YOU FIND SPECIAL THINGS

and I, with friends Ann and Richard Brenton of Argenta guiding the way — then snowshoed and hiked to the peak. We've come to salute Allan Drury, but at the moment I'm tumbling through reverie. Allan is smiling, I trust, for he liked dreaming, too. Big kid dreams.

From here sweeps Shangri-La, the paradise known as Selkirk Wilderness Skiing, the seminal backcountry cat operation in the world, founded on a vision and a leap in 1975 by Allan and his wife, Brenda, who built it on desire, imagination, grit — and bountiful heaps of fluff. A thousand skiers have sampled its delights over time: the stunning scenery and pitch-perfect plunges through rolling cuts and quiet cathedrals, in wild song and mystical moments when light and motion and powder and people achieve states of grace in the passing whoosh and hiss. Up in the cat, down to the bottom, then back up again: trackless, empty, dreamy bowls, chutes and glades. In other words, in deep.

Many are guests who return year after year — couples, families, chums — drawn by the vibe, fellowship, exquisite food, fun. The Drurys first ran the business from an old farmhouse they renovated at the foot of Meadow Creek Road, then later constructed their beautiful lodge on the mountain, accessed only by cat and powered by its own hydro that Allan designed. They recall the early days as a struggle — remote location, long hours, broken gear — inventing, improvising, learning as they went, true pioneers. Yet their love for skiing, spirit of adventure, taste for hard work and sense of community won respect and loyalty from clients and neighbours alike, including the many locals who have worked at Selkirk over the years as guides, cooks, drivers, mechanics, housekeepers and managers, a testament to Brenda and Allan's generosity, passion and playfulness; while the business, in its own way, helped boost the local economy. The Drurys imagined, then created a remarkable culture: a way of life for themselves to share with others. Sometimes dreams conjure magic; in this case, it was gold, which became the standard.

Thus an industry blossomed and flourished.

So it was no surprise when on May 7, 2008, nearly 500 people from near and far gathered at Selkirk College in Nelson for a memorial service to celebrate the life of Allan Drury, who died last January after a two-year fight with cancer. In moving tributes to an extraordinary athlete, skier, husband, father, seeker, visionary, raconteur, mountain man and — to the great delight of those who knew him, a twinkle-eyed mischief-maker — family, friends and staff recounted some of his greatest gifts in stories and songs tender and deep, salty and sweet. Of many adjectives invoked about Allan that day, "infectious" surfaced most: his infectious laugh, outlook, kindness, spirit, drive, love of big air, love of life. Perhaps most touching was a slide show, set to Dylan, that daughters Rachel and Andrea assembled for their dad, who at 68 had passed much too soon — a joyful cavalcade of moments chronicling the Drurys' special lives together at the head of the lake, Allan gleefully whirling in the vortex, living the dream, loving his family, building a legacy, Meadow rising gracefully behind.

Up at the summit there's a small cairn in Allan's honour, placed for the moment, Ann and Richard note, during a private service held for family and friends shortly after he died last winter. A more permanent marker will eventually be built, they say. We snap a few pictures, say our farewells to Allan and start down. The view is astounding. I'm standing at the crest, knees bent, ready for the drop.

Great place for dreamers.

John Gaterud is editor and publisher of Blueroad Press, a literary arts publishing company in Janesville, Minnesota.

EVERY DAY AFTER SCHOOL years ago in my New Jersey hometown, when conditions were right (meaning any three inches of snow would do), I would strap on my red wooden skis and, after skirting a wide bramble near a grove of trees behind our house, stand at the crest of a bank that sloped 100 feet into a gravel parking lot behind a local insurance agency run by a guy who knew my dad. I'd push off and take the drop and clatter onto the flat, practice hockey stops left and right, then herringbone back up, round trip after trip, until the people in the office, who I'd sometimes see watching me out the windows, left for the day, then I'd take a few more runs before going home myself at dark. Sometimes I would plant sticks from the woods for slalom gates (four), as seen on TV, and build a killer jump, a couple feet high, that would last the season. My skis had interlocking segmented metal edges, each section screwed into the base, and they would rip. So began the dreams.

I'm thinking about this atop Meadow Mountain, at the north end of Kootenay Lake, on a lovely spring afternoon, the magnificent jagged panorama of Selkirks and Purcells glazed in a meringue of ice and snow, royal dome above, sun warm on our faces, Duncan and the Lardeau far below. We've sledged up to Meadow's Areba Ridge — my daughter Abbey



Allan flies over Rolling Thunder, 1983

Beautiful Dreamer

Celebrating the life of Allan Drury

BY JOHN GATERUD

Misery Sticks

The nordic side of the story
BY JEAN MCALLISTER



IN MOUNTAIN CULTURE, the word “skiing” is mistakenly owned by the downhill kind. In conversation, a weekend spent skiing is always assumed to be at an alpine area, where a mechanical engine does all the work to get you up. Or it’s backcountry, where skins attached to your skis provide enough friction to climb a tree. Really, what’s the excitement? Snow up the cuff. Snow in your eyes. Snow down your pants. Freezing your ass off sitting on a metal chairlift. Powder is overrated. First tracks on miles of track-set corduroy at the cross-country trails is the perfect day for me.

Back in time when skiing was first attempted, it was cross-country. It was most likely developed in Scandinavia, Russia or Mongolia, in pre-historic times, as a way to travel through deep snow and hunt for dinner, animals like reindeer and moose. Rock drawings of skiers bearing one long pole date back to 2,000 BC, and a ski 8,000 years old has been pulled from a Russian bog. The word “ski” is derived from a Viking word that means “a stick of wood.” Skiing soldiers armed with ski poles tipped with spearheads and bearing crossbows were heroes in the Scandinavian military for centuries.

Photo: Kris Dobie

Alpine skiing evolved much later—about 120 years ago in the Swiss Alps.

In Canada, Jackrabbit Johannsen (1875-1987) is considered the godfather of cross-country skiing; he raced until age 75, skiing well past 100 years of age and encouraging his listeners to “go out and enjoy the woods” until his last days. And getting out into the forest for a ski costs nothing. The rental fee for a machine-groomed three-metre-wide, 30-kilometre-long stretch of cross-country ski trail is about the price of a movie ticket.

Nordic skier types and characters abound: Some don wool knickers or one-piece Lycra. Some types are persnickety about their time-out. Some are persnickety about their waxing—watch out for these ones, they’ll have fast skis. And some are persnickety about staying in front.

The Nordic Antics and Excuses

A XC day often starts with a conversation about how we will be going for an easy ski, how the skis haven’t been glide waxed since last season, or the kick wax is left over from spring skiing, “which provides a good base wax.” On the first uphill things begin to go wrong—the pace seems a bit

fast. Heartbeats are well above the easy zone.

The tempo progressively worsens. The ski becomes more of a race than a leisurely jaunt through the woods. I pray a stranger doesn’t sprint past because there is no doubt our pack would be obliged to chase—really poor etiquette, but some things just can’t be stopped.

The weaker ones may get dropped and have to find their way back alone. A bonked skier navigating an unfamiliar trail system reacts like a metal ball bearing in a small plastic maze. Tilting weight to the right and gliding down, the momentum carries the body up and around a small hummock and over the other side. They should hope to make it back without too many extra loops and dead ends.

Cross-country skiers are not all psychotically competitive. There is more to skiing nordic-style than the thrill of a pounding heart and lungs. Most are smarter and glide over the snow in a more peaceful way, taking the time to savour a few hours when time will not be rushed, the list of tasks left far behind. Peaceful types chat with friends; they hear more in the woods, encounter pine martens, chickadees and the fresh tracks of bigger creatures.

The Scenery

Perhaps this is where nordic and alpine see eye to eye. Both swoop in rhythm together through the towering cedars and hemlocks. Mushroom rocks in the creek. Fairy tracks on the hoar frost. White pixie dust sprinkles over the mountain peaks.

If powder is your nirvana, then be as you were. One breed of skiing is not cooler, smarter, sicker or right, be it skinny skis, fat skis, snow-board, long board or cafeteria tray—wood fibre or carbon fibre, pine tar or fluorocarbons, skating or classic. It’s not what you do, but how you do it.

My friend Kootenay Kenny says that on a powder day, when everything is perfect, the trees talk to him. The language is of ancient origin—lost to most of us over the centuries. I imagine the trees parting in his path as he moves through the forest, watching them moving back into place as he glides by, in a kind of time-lapse photograph from an Emily Carr canvas.

The drive back to town is filled with giggles of the endorphin kind. There are stories and accusations of who was attacking, who was the most worked over. And the evening is always followed by the deep, deep sleep of winter.

Mineral Exploration in the Kootenays by Kootenay People

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Showcasing the Crown Jewels

Geotourism comes to the Rockies

BY DAVE QUINN



GEO•TOUR•ISM *noun*: Tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place: its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and the well-being of its residents.

Tourism in the late 20th century was a bleak affair. It seemed everyone was fishing desperately for the elusive tourist buck by trying really hard to be somewhere else. Disneyland. The Hawaiian suite. The Bavarian City of the Rockies. European-style delis. It all seemed a bit like a natural beauty cheapening herself with a thick crust of makeup.

The modern tourist is no longer satisfied with false promises of instant gratification and cheap facades. Tourism marketers are beginning to focus on the informed and enlightened tourist whose holiday goals include more of the same.

Geotourism, a new approach to destination tourism, championed by the National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destinations, aims to change all that by celebrating the true character and essence of a place. The first geotourism project in Canada was launched right here in the Kootenays and features one of the most intact and ecologically diverse regions in the temperate world: the Crown of the Continent.

Coined in 1895 by the father of Montana's Glacier National Park, George Grinnell, the Crown of the Continent label describes more than this region's airy perch along the rocky spine of North

Photo: Henry Georgi

America. The region also sparkles as a veritable ecological and cultural gem that stands out on a global scale.

This 10-million hectare region of the Rocky Mountains, shared by Alberta, Montana, and British Columbia, represents one of the most intact ecosystems in the temperate world. And now it is wired to boot, with its own web portal and downloadable geotourism mapguide.

"National Geographic selected the Crown of the Continent geotourism project due to its tremendous diversity on a global scale, as well as its unique cultural intactness," explains Project Coordinator Steve Thompson, from his office in Whitefish, Montana.

"Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, at the core of the Crown, is one of the best kept protected areas on the planet," continues Thompson. "When you add the vibrant modern culture and strong presence and heritage of the Ktunaxa and Blackfoot First Nations into the mix, you have an entire region that is worthy of celebration and protection."

THE PROJECT, which includes a downloadable PDF map and a comprehensive web portal, was distilled from the essence of the region itself—the residents. Thompson and his team tried to develop a snapshot of the region over

an intensive series of meetings in 64 communities across the region. "We asked people two things: what is special about your local area, and what are people trying to do to keep it that way?"

The project team sifted through hundreds of nominations and came up with the map and interactive web portal tool found at crownofthecontinent.net.

Planning a Montana road trip? Select towns along the way and the map reveals everything from cultural and historical sites to natural wonders and arts and entertainment highlights. A wired, meaningful vacation at your fingertips.

Some of the Kootenay highlights on the mapguide include Sparwood's Coal Miner Days and the Tobacco Plains Aboriginal Days festivals, Island Lake Lodge, Elk Lakes Provincial Park and the world-renowned transboundary Flathead Valley—the home of North America's highest diversity of carnivores.

With the web and mapguide project comes a chance for governments and citizens to work together to protect the character of their place, through principles outlined in the Geotourism Charter. With this project, the Crown of the Continent joins regions like Norway, Vermont, Peru, Romania and Guatemala in placing heritage, culture and quality of life high in a vision of their futures.

Today's amenity migrants and thoughtful tourists are on a quest for authenticity, a mission to keep things real. Or at least get a taste of this by visiting places that have succeeded in protecting their essence.

Geotourism champions what most of us in the Kootenays already know. This region needs no makeup. The Kootenays are the real thing, and the Crown of the Continent is as real as it gets.



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Learning to Fly

"Like all humans, I am learning to fly. Sometimes skis are my tools for soaring, and on them I can resist resistance." Freeride mountaineer and ski icon Ptor Spriceniaks can articulate it like no other. Now he has taken his vision of flying to the next level.

Initially conceived in 2001 and further refined in 2003, Spriceniaks' ski-wing prototype, the Phawked UHP (Ultra High-Speed Paraglider), allows an alpine skier to gain high speeds on the slopes — with a little soaring in the mix. His latest ski-wing was fabricated by sewing the two ends of a paragliding wing together, which is then secured to a custom-designed harness with a series of lines.

The most recent test run of his invention on the Girose Glacier in La Grave, France, this past spring carried him off the snow for distances of up to 50 metres, thanks, in part, to ideal weather conditions: wide-open powder terrain and calm conditions, but a headwind upslope will also do.

Spriceniaks explains this is an evolving design in progress. This particular ski-wing was created to demonstrate the concept and its possibilities to the world. His ultimate vision is a body suit that would integrate the wings, like a bird, without the lines and where advanced skiing skills would be required—not simply the act of touching down on your skis once in a while.



Photo: Dylan Taylor

EDITED BY TARA CUNNINGHAM

How does it feel when Spriceniaks flies? "It feels incredible when I'm flying with it. It's so fast. It's like a dream."

The Kootenays' Upcoming Eco-ski Retreat

"Well, one idea is to 'ave a zipline 'cross the riva!" Spoken like a true Aussie who can't believe his good fortune at finding 160 acres of wild paradise for sale outside of Trout Lake. But before you start worrying this is another story of land-rape and pillaging, you should know that Chris Carter, a Canadian resident now for 12 years, and his Alberta-born wife, Chantelle, are about to test your devotion to eco-tourism with their new hydro-powered eco-ski retreat: The Ancient Realm.

When they bought this land, they decided to share their wilderness wealth with anyone willing to work for it. A zipline is one thing, but try holding a ski pole after the 300 vertical-metre rope tow brings you out of the valley bottom. Other unconventional accoutrements at The Ancient Realm include choosing to spend the

night high up in a tree house, or down low, snuggled into an igloo. Meals are fresh goodies from the surrounding old-growth forest. And what about that zipline? It's just an idea for now, but there aren't many other ways to get over the Lardeau River.

Chris and Chantelle, along with their children, Ewan, 6, and Mackenzie, 8, are currently living in Revelstoke, but will move permanently to their new home by fall 2008, with plans to open in winter 2009.

—Heather Lea

Nelson's Whitewater Ski Resort Sold

When the rushing current of locally owned Kootenay ski hills continues to be pulled into the eddy of resort development, folks sometimes find themselves conflicted and with strong opinions. They weigh the potentially positive powers of increased investment against what they know and love—a locally run ski hill committed to a community atmosphere and passionate about their work, a family venture that cares.

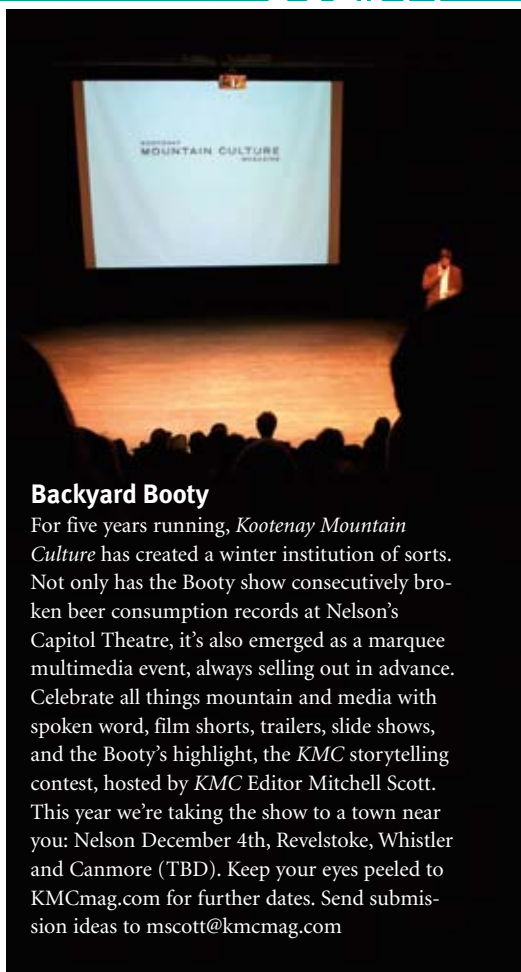
After 25 years at the helm of Nelson's Whitewater Winter Resort, locals Mike and Shelley Adams sold the popular mountain mainstay in September, prompting a mix of regional reaction. Three investors from Alberta-based company Knee Deep Development have assumed the reigns and are publicly acknowledging Whitewater's unique culture and trying to allay fears there will be drastic changes. Brian Rhodes, previously of Southern Alberta's Castle Mountain Resort, will be Whitewater's new general manager.

Comments abound in online discussion rooms around this sale. Some are looking forward to the inevitability of change, including updated technology and infrastructure, and terrain expansion. Others are concerned about a myriad of things: lost backside lines, rising real estate prices, increased lift prices, a drop in food quality and overcrowding.

There is common ground, however. The new owners are all avid skiers, having skied Whitewater for years. At press time Knee Deep had no immediate plans to expand the resort's lift infrastructure within the next two years.

Backyard Booty

For five years running, *Kootenay Mountain Culture* has created a winter institution of sorts. Not only has the Booty show consecutively broken beer consumption records at Nelson's Capitol Theatre, it's also emerged as a marquee multimedia event, always selling out in advance. Celebrate all things mountain and media with spoken word, film shorts, trailers, slide shows, and the Booty's highlight, the *KMC* storytelling contest, hosted by *KMC* Editor Mitchell Scott. This year we're taking the show to a town near you: Nelson December 4th, Revelstoke, Whistler and Canmore (TBD). Keep your eyes peeled to *KMCMag.com* for further dates. Send submission ideas to miscott@kmcmag.com



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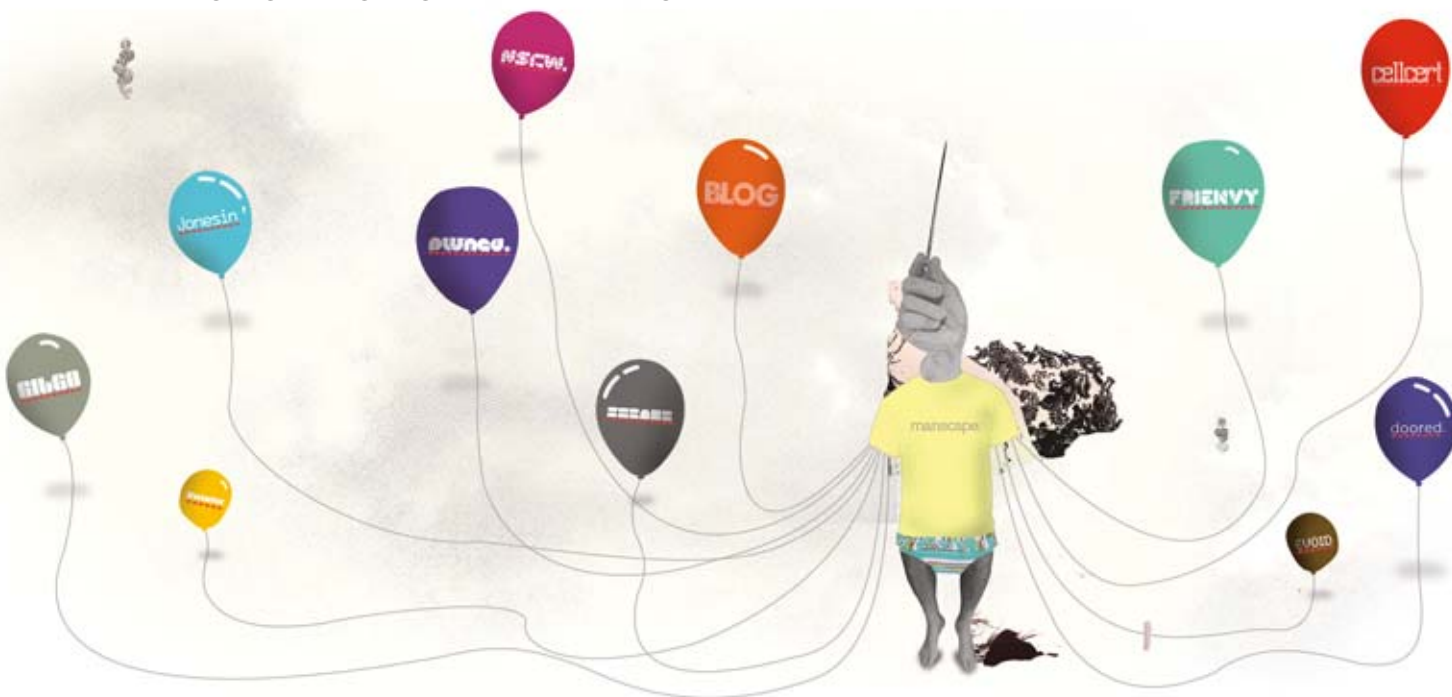
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Makingupwords

Encouraging Language to New Heights

By Mitchell Scott Illustration by Tyler Kealey



CHILDREN ARE ESPECIALLY GOOD at making up words. The younger the kid, the better the creation. Because they have not yet been indoctrinated by the restrictions of the dictionary and are unfocused enough to explore said word bible through adult-oriented Scrabble games, a child (under nine years, for argument's sake) is free to conjure, dismantle, rejoin or altogether invent words to their liking. And for a reveller of colloquialisms—I once lost a huge word score during a Scrabble battle because “ganja” wasn't in the dictionary—I quite enjoy a child's word inventions.

Ask yourself the question: how did words get started in the first place? New words form right before our very eyes, simply through the act of collective acceptance. A word creation is experimented with, and people pawn it off as a non-word. It's repeated again and again, until a million or so get their paws on it (take “Google,” for example, or should that be “google”), and next thing you know, the word jurors in some wood-panelled-to-the-rafters Oxford University backroom put it in their latest edition. New Scrabble ammo for the masses, just like that.

But it's the kids that come up with the real beauties. I am particularly fond of a couple my five year old has materialized. “Rememorize” is darling. To memorize something whilst in the act of remembering it—and a word currently swirling in the non-word world—just “google” it. While perhaps it's not original to my kid, it's sheer brilliance, if you ask me. “Overbundant” is another beauty. I don't need to explain that one; it's so obviously perfect. I'm sure you know some, too. Perhaps you've even created a few new words of your own.

As adults, it seems our creative juices wane somewhat. We come with real gems like “agritourism” or “soul patch.” It's of no surprise: we've been beaten down by proper definitions, by little red squiggly lines popping up underneath words you'd like to write but delete

for fear of appearing dyslexic or worse, plain old stupid. However, we still like to bend the rules a bit. We take words like “shred” and “rip” and “rail” and give them new meanings. Whoever thought a sunset descent through three feet of fresh snow could be “wicked.” For my grandfather, such adjectives were reserved for all things spawned from the Devil himself.

I recently came up with a new word definition myself, but it's not an original stunner like my kid's; I'm too adult for that level of creative muse. No, just a new application to an existing word, one you see in the pages of this magazine quite often. It's one I'd like to experiment with by introducing here, to see if it might stick. That is, if this new, proposed word usage can survive that hidden dictionary court of the English language. The rebel in me, however, would say it doesn't have to.

Here it is: take the noun “mountain” and use it as a verb. “What did you do today?” You mountain biked and hiked. Maybe you ski toured and lounged on some sun-washed peak. Maybe it was kayaking and then fly-fishing in your favourite alpine lake. “I went mountaining,” you say, insouciant of that squiggly red line and irreverent that the extra “ing” wouldn't be allowed in Scrabble. “Would you like to mountain with me tomorrow?”

There's something about it I distinctly enjoy. It avoids the specifics of an action and illuminates the wholeness of the experience. When you're mountain biking, you're not just mountain biking. When you're kayaking, you're not just kayaking. There are other elements: conversation, observation, travel, adrenalin, interaction, experience. As mountain people, the semantics of any proposal actually bring us a little closer together. If you're into it, give it a shot. Go “mountain” and describe it as such. You never know, one day it may actually make sense—to everybody.

