



# OUTCROPS

*The Alpine Club of Canada  
Thunder Bay Section*

*Fall 2009*

## ***General Mountaineering Camp 2009***

So much of what I like about the ACC is embodied in its annual General Mountaineering Camp (GMC). The club has a lot of traditions and a proud history with lots of colourful characters and all-round fun people. This was well represented by the cross-section of folks staffing and attending this year's camp.

Opportunities to grow and gain experience as an outdoor leader within the Club are virtually limitless for those willing to put some time and energy into seeking them out. Last year, I applied for and was lucky enough to attend the TNF/ACC Summer Leadership Course. Generously sponsored by The North Face and heavily subsidized by the ACC, the course is intended to develop amateur leaders for prominent leadership roles within the Club. I had initially intended to use the course to prepare myself for our Section camp last year, but was also fortunate enough to garner a spot as an amateur leader for a

week at this year's GMC. After much internal debate and apprehension (and of course a blessing from Jenn, taking off in the midst of our wedding planning for a couple of weeks!), I found myself signed up for Week 6 at the Trident-Neptune camp in the northern Selkirks, BC.

As a volunteer trip leader, I could not imagine a more challenging role for myself than volunteering at the GMC. Despite more than a few successful summer road trips mountaineering in the Rockies, having made it through the TNF course, helping to run a successful joint summer mountaineering camp for the Section last summer, and leading countless Section trips, I still felt that I could use even more skills development and experience for leading in the alpine realm.

I was more than a little apprehensive when I showed up for breakfast on fly-in day, but was quickly set at ease (and pleasantly surprised) to see some familiar faces there – my instructors from the TNF course, Cyril and Helen were guiding the same week along

with Jeremy Mackenzie, who I had also met the year before. Zac Robinson was also up for Camp Manager that week, as he had been the year before. It was also a great opportunity to get to meet Dave Dornian, also on as an amateur leader and recognized volunteer who has contributed much to the ACC over the years. The remaining camp staff (Catherine - Coordinator, Grant and Lorie - the Cooks) I met as the day progressed, and everyone was absolutely awesome and welcoming to the "apprentice", one of a couple of nicknames I got stuck with that week.

After a short but crazy weather event (that's another story...let's just say it cost us a lot of beer and dry tents were in short supply for a day or so), we got down to the business of climbing as much as possible and doing our best to wear out the lucky participants. It's humbling to realize that the folks you help to climb peaks throughout the week may very well be on their sole vacation for the year, and in many cases this may be a trip of a lifetime for them. For this they've chosen the ACC, so

the pressure is definitely on to do your best as a volunteer to ensure they have a great trip.

And they did! Fortunately for us, the weather cooperated for the most part, even if things could have been a tad cooler earlier in the week. Out of six climbing days, we only got rained out once, and I think everyone got in as many peaks as they could handle in a week. The area offered a nice variety of mountaineering objectives, most of which could be achieved in a reasonably short day. Everything from classic glacier slogs, to more technical rock, ice and snow peaks was readily accessible from camp, many within an hour's approach to the glacier or ridge.

Writing this a few weeks after, my memories are less about the actual climbs, and more about the incredible people, as they often are after a big trip. The camp participants ranged in age from about 17 to 73, and came from every background imaginable. This really came out in the evenings, when it is a GMC tradition to have someone from each trip recount a tale or two about the day's events. Merely telling a story was not enough for most though – we were treated to all manner of spontaneously written songs, poems and creative writing.

Later in the week, I started to feel more confident about my leadership while helping Cyril lead a small group on an ascent of Trident, the second-highest peak in the area. Though I'd had a relatively minor role on much of the ascent, it was reassuring to hear Cyril voice many of the thoughts I'd had throughout the day regarding route-finding choices and group management decisions. I'd learned tons from all of the other guides and leaders that week, and it was nice to begin feeling like I was on the right track with some of my leadership skills.

Though this took place near the end of the week, the highlight of the week for me occurred much earlier. Cyril and I had led a group up Porpoise Peak, perhaps the most popular objective for the week. As we congratulated everyone upon our return to camp,



Jerry, one of the guests, remarked that he'd had an especially great day, as it had been his first-ever mountain climb. It was very cool to have helped him with that achievement.

Volunteering alongside some incredibly competent and professional guides only served to strengthen my own skills, and I'm eternally grateful for their willingness to support amateur leaders within the ACC.

I can't wait to go back to the GMC.

- *Nick Buda*

## ***Summer at the Bluffs***

This spring started off with rain almost every Tuesday this year but the summer has turned out much better. Tuesday night climbing at the Bluffs has seen a lot of variety this summer as I have tried to set up areas and climbs that are not often climbed, like Gardner's Wall. The attendance has been great this summer and has included, over the course of the summer, 5 new members signing up in the parking lot before we hiked in. I have heard that a few more will be signing up in September. For those of you who are advancing in your skills and want to become more than just a beginner, just ask on Tuesday nights and we will be glad to help you with any skills that you would like to work on. To practise setting up an anchor, arrive between 4:30 and 4:45 in the parking lot to help carry gear in and practise your own set ups with supervision. If you want to practise your rappelling let me know and we can set up a rappel station as well. There are always those who miss out on the intermediate/advanced climbs because they feel that they are not experienced enough or do not have the right gear. Tuesday nights are the best place to learn all the required skills and to learn what gear you should have or need to purchase to move up to the next level and join the club on the intermediate/advanced climbs. The fall is the best time to get out and climb --- the days are cool and bugs are gone so come out to the Tuesday night climbs to have some fun and meet some of your fellow club members new and old.

*-Andrew Dubinsky*



Get out October 10th and 11th on our Section's Palisade head Trip, some of the most spectacular climbing in the area! You must have your own gear and be self-sufficient - see the Events Schedule for details.

## *Note from the Section Chair*

Wow - it's September and summer is finally here. Nice that we are finally getting our July weather - I hope the rockhounds among us are all getting out lots on the rock and sending those nagging projects!

This past summer has been an especially busy one for me, and I, along with the executive, are very appreciative of the extra help we've had from our trip leaders this spring and summer. It feels good to be a part of the club with so many motivated people helping out in so many different ways. You all deserve a congratulations for a job well done, and I certainly look forward to seeing you all out this fall.

I'm pleased to announce that Andrew Dubinsky has joined our Executive in the role of Equipment Manager - perhaps one of the most challenging positions within the Section. In the short time Andrew has been doing the job, he's taken lots of great ideas and put them in action, and thanks to him we now have a rigorous inspection program in place and some very well maintained club gear. In addition, we'll benefit from his experience and insight at the Section's Executive level. As if this weren't enough, Andrew has been running our Section's Tuesday Night climbing event as well! I'm excited to see Andrew get more involved with the Club, and would like to welcome him aboard and extend a big thanks to him for his hard work and efforts to date.

I'd like to end by reminding everyone to come out to our AGM later this month (see Events Schedule) and check out what's going on with the Section's inner workings and long-range plans for bigger events next year. And don't forget, the more involved you get, the more you get out of the Club - so don't be shy. Talk to a trip leader and find out how you can help things run - you'd be surprised how even the smallest contributions go a long way and make a big difference to our members. You definitely get out of your membership what you put into it!

I hope to see all of you out this fall, and I'm already looking forward to meeting the usual influx of new members we have each year as the students return. Climb safe and enjoy the fall climbing - winter will be here before you know it!

- Nick Buda



### **Go Green! Sign up for Paperless Outcrops!**

We encourage all section members to sign up for a new web user account, or if you are already registered, update your profile to read this newsletter online. As an environmentally conscious section, we want to reduce the amount of paper we consume and eventually throw away, along with the resources required to mail your copy. So, choose a paperless newsletter. Visit [www.acctbay.ca](http://www.acctbay.ca) to change your profile.

-Wes Bender, Web Director

**ACC a Valhalla Corporate Club Member****- Frank Pianka**

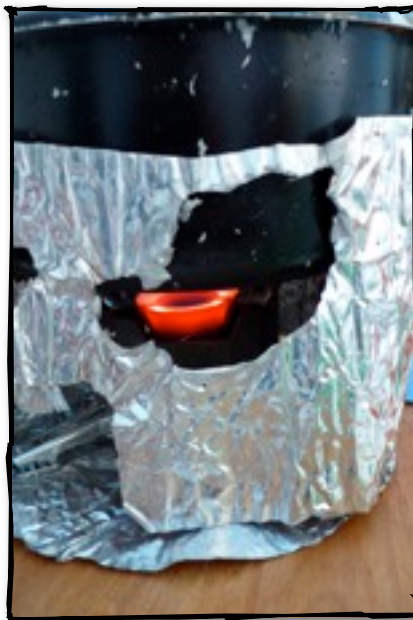
Here's another way that your membership pays! Since we use the Valhalla Inn to accommodate our Banff Film Fest hostess, we decided to get a corporate membership for our club that gives us a number of discounts when we run something there. Any members that want to use the card for general dining can pick it up from me before heading over. Presented when you get the bill, it essentially allows one person in the group to eat free. e.g. if there are only two of you, the bill is half of what you'd normally pay, drinks excluded. If there are four of you, the bill is reduced by 25%. Let's make good use of it

**Recipe File: Cashew Rice Curry**

Combine 1 tsp salt and 3 tsp curry powder into separate container  
 2c quick rice  
 1/2 c instant dry milk  
 1/2 cashew pieces  
 3/4 c Havarti or Jack cheese, grated

At camp:

Mix salt and curry powder with a little water to form a past. Add 4 cups of water, mix well, mix well and bring to a boil. Stir in rice, cover and simmer gently until soft. Blend in dry milk, then add nuts and cheese. Serve when cheese has melted.

**Editor's Corner:**

Thanks to everyone for their contributions to this issue of Outcrops. As you've seen I've added in a new column: *the recipe file*. I love back country cooking and like you, am always looking for a light and easy recipe. If you've got a great food recipe to share I'd love to try it! Also, consider getting your photos, stories, favourite climbing memories into the next issue of Outcrops! Email me by November 15, 2009.

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### ***\$20 Brain Bucket Bucks Back for Thunder Bay Section Members \$20***

If you are a Thunder Bay section member starting to accumulate gear but you have been putting off the purchase of a climbing helmet, here's an offer you just can't refuse! Purchase a new climbing helmet of your choice from the Wilderness Supply Store and get twenty bucks back from us with a pat on the head for making such a smart investment. This offer is to encourage members to get a brain bucket and to use it! To qualify you must:

- Be a paid up member of the Thunder Bay section of the ACC at the time of purchase. (Named on our mailing list.)
- Be buying a helmet for your own personal use. (One per membership, whether single or family)
- Make your purchase before November 30, 2009 and ask to sign the ACC "Bucks Back" list at the store.
- Be able to show your proof of purchase receipt.
- Cheques will be mailed out before Christmas. Climb Safe!

## ***Project Peregrine***

This season we scored 30 chicks at 12 nest sites for a total of 438 peregrine falcons youngsters banded during the 14 years of Project Peregrine. (For some reason, I felt a little slower on the approach hikes this year and it wasn't until a week after our last banding trip that I learned I was carrying around some extra weight in the form of a kidney stone. It must have been a studious stone because after about five days of agony in the hospital...it passed.) Brian Ratcliff (aka Birdman Brian), Rod Swatton and I visited both familiar and new sites locally and along the Pukaskwa coast and we enjoyed perfect weather except for one rainy, foggy day on Arrow Lake which provided some mood for the first video we've ever shot of us rapping into a nest site and scooping the chicks. The new gear really worked well, too. We've started using the Petzl ID for rappel/ascent and it works like a charm. A little expensive for the average cragger, it had become a pretty standard piece of kit for "RATs" (Rope Access Technicians) worldwide. I trained a team of explosives experts from a Winnipeg engineering company interested in our techniques so they could apply them to the task of loading drilled holes with explosives – all part of the road work going on in the Marathon area during the summer. The sizeable honourarium they offered me for the training was donated to the club to offset the cost of the wilderness first aid training our volunteer leaders undertook in the spring. It was great fun and a win/win situation for all of us.

- Frank Pianka



## ***Canadian Rockies on a Budget***

Your ice climbing adventures don't always have to take place in the Thunder Bay region. With some planning and a little cash you can take your show on the road! In my experience, here is how to plan a fun, yet inexpensive trip to the Canadian Rockies. First off, if you have a fuel efficient vehicle, you can make your trip more affordable by driving instead of flying and renting a car. Hundreds of dollars can be saved by driving; however, you will lose out on some time as the drive from Thunder Bay to the Rockies is between 22 and 26 hours, depending on how heavy your foot is! All wheel drive is preferable but not a necessity if you are a cautious driver. We had a rear wheel drive pimp mobile on our last trip and we managed to keep it on the road while experiencing some real bad driving conditions on the parkway.

Once in the Rockies you will need to buy a Banff National Park Pass in order to enter the park. If your trip is less than 7 days, you should buy 7 days worth of daily passes. A daily entry pass will cost \$9.80 per person. Otherwise, if you are planning a longer trip I recommend buying an annual pass, which is good in any National Park in Canada and

will run you \$67.70 per person. If you have more than 2 people in 1 vehicle then the savings start. Purchase a group pass for \$136.40.

Now that you are in the park and tired from the long drive, it's time to find a place to crash. However, before you can do that you need to get some groceries. You will save a pile of cash by cooking yourself vs. going out to eat! When you drive into Canmore, stop at Sobeys to get all the food you will need for your stay. I found this to be the most convenient and inexpensive place to shop. One thing to remember is to purchase the right food for where you are staying. If you are staying at hostels, like we did, then you will want to make sure what amenities it has. I found that some don't have electricity so microwavable food was not a good idea. Having stayed in the Banff area twice, I can't recommend the Castle Mountain Hostel enough. It is beautiful place with all the amenities (stove, fridge, eating area, lounge, showers, indoor toilets, etc), with spacious dormitories and great hospitality. Tony runs this hostel and he is a very nice guy. However, he likes to chat so gather some stories before you go.

If you plan to climb the Stanley Headwall, it is only a

twenty minute drive from the hostel. Also, if the routes that you are planning on climbing have long approaches with deep snow, the Castle Mountain Hostel offers snowshoes to their guests to use at no cost. From the Castle Mountain Hostel it is around a one and a half hour drive to the Icefields Parkway, but after all you have climbed in Orient Bay you should be used to the length of drive anyway.

Another very cool hostel, up the Icefields Parkway, is the Rampart Creek Hostel. This hostel has very few amenities so be prepared not to shower, as there are no showers, and rough it a bit using the outdoor biffy. However it does have a full kitchen with water for drinking and washing dishes. Also there is electric LED lighting, but no electricity for laptops or charging batteries, so be prepared. This is a very rustic place but still has great character. The sauna burnt down recently so that was the only downside on my last visit. This is also a great hostel because you are only minutes from some of the areas classic climbs; such as Polar Circus and Weeping Wall, to name a few.

While in the Rockies, if you need gear, there are 2 shops to look for. Mountain Magic in Banff and Vertical Addiction in

Canmore are great stores with reasonable prices and helpful staff.

One thing that you should not miss while in Banff would be a soak in the Banff Hot Springs. I can't recommend this enough. Here is what you do... Once you are in the pool you go to where a jet is located, if it is taken, you wait. Then, crouching with just your nose above water, stare at the person who is sitting at the jet. This works very well since they will get freaked out and vacate the jet in very little time. Sometimes it is a waiting game and you have to really work at it. Once you get the jet, DO NOT MOVE AWAY. Sometimes even sharing the jet with your friend makes the jet vulnerable to theft by a crafty pool veteran. As for other things to do in the area, well I guess there is skiing. Sounds like a waste of a perfectly good ice climbing day to me! To each their own! I suppose.

All said and done my last trip to Banff cost around \$700 for 11 days. So get yourself a guidebook and start planning. You will be hard pressed to find better ice anywhere in the world. Being a hardened Northwestern Ontario climber you will find the routes easier in the Rockies, than the grading suggests, mostly because of the amount of traffic they see. As well, you will come home with a greater appreciation for the 1 hour MAX approaches we have here. You will realize that we have it pretty good here in Thunder Bay. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions about logistics and I will try to help out as best I can.

Wes Bender



**Did you know the Section has a park pass available for members to borrow on their trips? Inquire with Frank for details 577-7950.**



**Here are the top three websites to go to prior and during your trip:**

[www.gravsports-ice.com](http://www.gravsports-ice.com) - forum for the latest conditions and beta

[www.acmg.ca/mcr](http://www.acmg.ca/mcr) - mountain conditions reports, posted by guides, read by everyone - you can even have updates emailed to you!

[www.avalanche.ca/](http://www.avalanche.ca/) - probably the most important - avi conditions for the area! And not a substitute for proper avalanche training.