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# Asessippi LIFE

MARCH 2012

VOL. 1 ISSUE 3

FREE TAKE ONE



## Pole benders

Ski Manitoba hosted the Manitoba Cup at the Asessippi Ski Area & Resort on Saturday, Feb. 4, with both male and female skiers competing in Giant Slalom on the Roller Coaster run. George Forsyth of the Asessippi Ski Area & Resort captured some excellent photos of the event, including these two shots of Louis Lacoursiere (top) and R.J. Cook (left). The Manitoba Alpine Provincial Championships are slated for Asessippi on the weekend of March 16, 17 and 18.

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# Five ways to save money on equipment

☐ Check out these five money-saving tips to make your hard-earned dollar go further

Isn't it time you saved more of your hard earned money when you go downhill skiing? You know the slopes, now you just have to learn the ropes. The key is to avoid the normal flow so you can save money and ski more often.

Expert skiing requires an increase in mileage on the slopes, so if you want to ski every weekend or every other weekend, it's to your advantage to get the most out of your skiing dollar.

### Buy last year's skis

If at all possible, buy your ski equipment and clothes in the fall or spring. The best months in the autumn are October and November, while the best months in the spring are March and April. Never buy in mid-season!

Some of the gear that didn't sell in the winter or spring is returned to the shelves in the fall. Although you may not always get the best selection, you will definitely get a good discount. Perhaps even as low as the wholesale price. They need to clear this stock out to make room for the new equipment and clothes.

In terms of skis, most ski shops will have a few pair of high-end skis left over from the previous year, but you need to get to the ski shop in late October or early November before they're sold out. Forget the demos, go for last year's skis, which are brand new.

In addition, forget about sporting goods stores, since they only deal with middle of the road recreational skis.

For expert skiing, you need an all-terrain ski or the closest thing to it. Remember, most ski shops only have a limited number of these skis on hand at any given time.

### Clothing selection

In terms of clothing, buy ski jackets and pants in neutral colors like red, black, and blue. These colors will stand the test of time. Although they are not the fanciest, you don't need to be fancy to ski in the expert zones.

Besides, colorful clothes are usually more expensive and tend to be trendy. You know, avant-garde one year, and pushed to the back of the closet the next year. You don't want to blow your ski budget on new jackets and pants every year, just to fit

in. In addition, buy good quality. This will ensure that you get a longer life out of your jacket, pants, and gloves. This means you save big time over the long haul.

Consider buying your clothes, like your skis and boots, in the spring or fall, not during the ski season when the prices are at their highest.

### Replace yearly

A rule of thumb that some expert skiers follow is to replace one item of clothing or equipment each year. If you purchased good quality gear in the first place, you may find that this simple rule will

work for you as well. The idea is to get the longest life possible from your clothes and equipment and to wear everything out before you replace it. You also don't normally need to be two or three deep in anything.

As an aspiring expert skier, you want to free up as much of your hard earned dollar as possible to pay for lift tickets, which means more mileage on the slopes.

### Ski during the week

If you can get away, there is money to be saved by skiing during the week, Monday to Friday. The weekday rates for lift tickets are reduced at many ski resorts. You can

also opt for a half-day ticket, which affords an additional savings. This may be the way to go if you are out just for the day, and want to practice a new technique or tactic from one of the ski lessons for a couple of hours.

In addition, during the week the crowds are down and lift lines are almost non-existent. This means a lot more runs and mileage for the price of your lift ticket, when compared to weekend skiing. Besides, when you are out skiing moguls and tougher terrain, sometimes you don't want an audience, especially if you are experimenting with a new technique or maneuver.



Money saved on equipment can allow families to get out on the slopes more often

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# Children raising funds to reunite families

☐ *Philippine workers in Russell will get help to bring their children over to Canada*

By GREG NESBITT  
Asessippi Life

Rheanne Gray of Russell is extremely proud of her kids and well she should be.

Ayla (12) and Van (7) Hamilton began a campaign last summer to raise funds to fly the children of several Philippine employees who work at the Russell Inn Hotel and Conference Centre in Russell to reunite with their mothers in Russell. Currently, there are 21 employees from the Philippines on the payroll working in various departments in the company. Since the arrival of more employees from the Philippines, there are now 17 children who would like to reunite with their parents in Canada.

"Kids Helping Kids" started on Mother's Day, and was entirely the idea of her two children, said Gray, who is the marketing director at the Inn.

"On Mother's Day, I was having a cry about my co-workers being away from their children," she recalled. "My kids went away, had a talk, and came back determined to raise enough money to pay the air fare for the children of Sara Tacaldo, Roi Cabrera, Katherine Samson and Eme Olarte to fly from Philippines to here."

### Kids take charge

Ayla and Van wrote a letter explaining what they were trying to do, handed it out at school, went door to door to some homes in Russell delivering their letter to attempt to raise funds. They also challenged their school mates to do what they could to help these families reunite.

The letter read:

"We are trying to get all the kids in our area to help some other kids get here (which will eventually be home) to their Mommies and Daddy. To most children, Moms and Dads are the most



Ayla and Van Hamilton are the masterminds behind the idea

special people in their lives. Know how hard it is to go to camp or ever leave your Mom to go to school some days? Imagine leaving your mom or dad for over a year and not knowing when you will see them again.

We have three moms and one dad who came to Russell, MB to try to make a better life for them and their families. To do this, they had to leave their family behind. Plus it costs lots of money to get the paper work done and it takes a long time after that, they have to have money for plane tickets. We would like to help raise money for their children's plane tickets. If you would be willing to give a donation, it will help people who will become your friends and neighbors for years to come. We have nine children to raise money for, and you can just imagine how grateful they'll be to be reunited with their family. Thank you for helping make this possible. Donations can be made out to Living Legacy. Please write Kids Helping Kids on the memo of your cheque. Cheques can be dropped off at the front desk of the Russell Inn.

P.S.: We encourage and challenge all kids to come up with a way of fundraising on their own. Please let us know

what you do as we are journaling the whole thing."

On the second page of the letter they put pictures of the employees and their children and drew an airplane with hearts trailing over to the parent on the other side of the page.

The youth of Russell picked up the challenge. From lemonade stands to garage sales, the funds started to role in. Some children have stopped at the Hamilton house and left little baggies and styrofoam cups full of change.

### \$9,000 raised to date

Ayla said to date they have raised approximately \$9,000. The first child to come over will be Shaina, the nine-year-old daughter of Sara Tacaldo. Shaina's mom, who works at Subway, has had most of the paperwork done (which can take anywhere from eight months to a year to complete), but was lacking the money to bring her daughter over to join her in Canada. Her husband died in the Philippines last year, and her daughter has been living with relatives.

"I am proud of the kids and when they do stuff like this it makes their she-wolf of a mother feel guilty for all the times I ride their little



Sara Tacaldo, above, and her daughter Shaina, right

'hinnies' about picking up their laundry or not practicing their piano," said Gray.

Gray said the fundraising is continuing. Some upcoming events include a Russell youth group preparing a lunch consisting of tradi-

tional Philippino food on Sunday, Feb. 26, the Major Pratt School Grade 7 class holding a joint birthday party with donations to Kids Helping Kids instead of buying gifts, and a party at Silver Beach this summer.




The Hamilton children hope to raise enough funds to bring over the other 16 children to reunite with the mothers in the coming years.

Gray said a journal is being kept of all the kids and adults who are helping out to give to the Philippino-Canadian children when they arrive so they know how much the people cared about them.

If you would like to assist the Hamiltons in their quest to reunite these families, you can send a cheque made out to "Living Legacy", and either mail or drop it off at the Russell Inns Ltd., Box 578, Russell, MB, R0J 1W0.

Tax deductible receipts will be issued for all donations.



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 July 2 - Wines of Napa Valley  
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### Dashing through the snow

Russell area residents Margaret (handling the lines) and Wilbert Nernberg, with their team of horses Snicker and Beamer, are avid enthusiasts who enjoy sledding the old-fashioned way. The Nernbergs were also among the participants who enjoyed the views of the Birdtail Valley, while participating in the Birtle Agricultural Society's poker derby in December.

*Photo by Darrell Nesbitt/Asessippi Life*

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## Tim Hortons introduces extra large cup

Tim Hortons introduced a brand new extra large cup in late January offering lovers across Canada a premium quality, extra large coffee at a value price.

To accommodate the brand new cup, the names of the other hot cup sizes have shifted: the original small is

now extra small, the medium is now small and so forth. The change in names of the hot cup sizes will apply to all hot beverages - guests will still receive the same amount of coffee for the same price, only the name of the size has changed.

"We tested the names of

the new hot cup sizes with our guests and the response has been overwhelmingly positive. Our guests also told us that they love our small eight-ounce cup, so we will continue to offer that size," said Dave McKay, Director of Brand Marketing for Beverages, Tim Hortons. "By shift-

ing the sizes, we're able to provide coffee lovers with a full range of five size options: from extra small, all the way up to the new extra large."

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# Olympic champion taking a year off

▣ Russell's Jon Montgomery in Calgary focusing on development of new skeleton sled

By **ROBIN WARK**  
for *Asessippi Life*

You won't find former Russell resident Jon Montgomery, the 2010 Olympic gold medalist, whipping down icy tracks in World Cup skeleton competition this season.

The son of Joan and Eldon Montgomery is taking a year off of competition. However, he may be busier than ever. Concerned about not having equipment as good as that of the multi-million dollar German FES program, Montgomery is working with Standen's, located in his home base of Calgary, to create a sled that will help him defend his gold medal at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia.

"This is my only window of opportunity to focus on the advancement of my equipment before we begin to earn Olympic qualifiers next season," Montgomery wrote in an email interview. "My goal is to have these details sorted before that time so I can concentrate my efforts on fine tuning things instead of trying to figure them out."

In addition to concentrating on the development of new equipment, Montgomery works hard at his physical training. Although not competing, he is getting in plenty of runs as well. Montgomery, who is married to skeleton national teammate Darla Deschamps-Montgomery, said that he gets in as many in one day training in Calgary as he would during a week on the skeleton circuit.

Montgomery is also part of the effort to find a new main sponsor for the Canadian skeleton and bobsleigh team. A 20-year partnership with Visa will soon end. Montgomery has been part of a billboard campaign to find a new backer.

"As far as our need to find a sponsor, it's going to be the difference between there being bobsleigh and skeleton in



Jon Montgomery has never forgotten his roots in Russell

Canada in a few years time, and there not being bobsleigh and skeleton in Canada... at least in the way we know it today."

### Russell roots

Montgomery became a national hero after claiming the gold medal at the Whistler Sliding Centre in 2010. It was not only his performance on the track, but also his personality, patriotism and, perhaps for female viewers, his boyish good looks that endeared him to Canadian. And, oh yeah, there was that nationally televised walk through Whistler drinking a pitcher of beer that was handed to him from the crowd.

While Montgomery is certainly known nationally and in many parts of the world, he is quick to point to his upbringing as a key part of his success and as a part of who

he is. He believes people are products of their environment.

"Luckily for me, I grew up in an amazing environment," he wrote. "The vibrancy of the community and the people who make it up are woven into the very fabric of who I am. From getting 'bag-skated' for misbehaving and playing hockey with no heart, to being celebrated and welcomed home like heroes for playing hockey like the fine young men we were and believing in ourselves as a team ... Those are the experiences that define our formative years and give us direction when we move out into the great wide world to find our own way in life."

### Community support

Montgomery appreciates all of the support he has received from Russell and area.

Daymon Guillas, manager of Russell Inns, recalls well the excitement in the community when Montgomery won the gold medal: "Pride, deep heartfelt pride for him and of ourselves and our community," Guillas wrote in an email interview. He also noted that there was positive disbelief.

"Can you believe what he has done? He's from our little town, he wanted to find a sport that he could make it to the Olympics in and he went and did it," Guillas wrote.

It was during a tour of a Calgary sliding facility with his parents that Montgomery, who has worked as an auctioneer and car salesman, first thought about giving skeleton a try. He then worked his way up the ranks to Olympic gold. Throughout his success, Montgomery has maintained the personality and values that many have long admired. Guillas, one of the committee members who helped organized Montgomery's homecoming, described him as "humble, approachable, no arrogance at all and very appreciative."

Russell, the surrounding area and the province showed

its appreciation for Montgomery with a homecoming event and parade. The parade, organized by a committee led by tireless chairman Perry Bulbuck, drew an estimated 7,500 people. Guillas recalls one teenager looking in shock at the crowd and saying "Is this my town?"

"The community has never (in recent memory, including many old timers) had such an event," Guillas wrote. "It was a glorious event. The whole community was involved in making it happen, the meetings, the planning, the quick sidewalk enquiries from people wanting details/sharing the planning excitement."

### Olympic focused

While Montgomery is living in the present, he is also focused on Sochi. He is very happy that he will have his wife with him as he prepares for the event.

"Having a fellow team mate as a wife is awesome," Montgomery wrote. "I don't have to explain to her what happened at the office today as she was there and she gets it. There is also a great deal of support because we share

goals, goals that are somewhat selfish in nature and we understand that."

In the 2010-2011 season, Montgomery once again showed his mastery of the Whistler track by winning an event there. Unfortunately, the rest of the campaign was somewhat disappointing as he placed ninth in the standings.

Montgomery believes improved equipment will help him push for another Olympic medal. While he is fully believes in what he is doing, he noted it is not easy to miss the season.

"I love competing. That's why I got involved in the sport and have been at for 10 years now," he wrote. "That said, I always want to go into competition knowing that I've done everything in my power to put myself and my country in the best possible position for success. If I have to take a step back, and not compete, so that I can take two steps forward when it matters most, I'll gladly make that sacrifice with a smile on my face."

*Robin Wark is a freelance writer who lives in Sooke, BC.*



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Thomasina Charney sits inside the yurt that she and her husband Mark have available for rent at Rossman Lake

## Rosburn couple juggle full-time jobs with two business ventures

□ *Rossman Yurts and Lakegirl Cleaning fill a void in area*

By JESSICA MARSHALL  
for Asessippi Life

The world moves fast these days. Keeping up with the everyday demands of life is hard enough. Now add two businesses, three kids, and one more full time job to the mix. That is what Thomasina Charney has done.

"Thank God for BlackBerry," she says with a smile. On what is supposed to be her day off, Thomasina has come to meet me inside what I have pleasantly been introduced to as a yurt. This warm and inviting room, along with her equally warm and inviting smile, is my introduction to both.

In 2004, Thomasina, along with her husband Mark and three children, moved to Rossman Lake. Presented with a beautiful and tranquil area, Thomasina had bigger plans for their property than just the family home. "I always knew since we moved here that I wanted to do something, I just didn't know what," she explained.

### Cabin alternative

After doing some research on cabins and other ideas for the land, Thomasina came across yurts as a cabin alternative and fell in love with the idea of offering something a bit unconventional. "Yurt itself offers so much," she said. "Anyone can build a cabin, but the yurt offers something different."

In 2009 the Charneys began building their yurt. Suitable for anyone looking for a fresh approach to spending time surrounded by nature, the yurt was well received by its visitors. Among other things, the yurt offers a wood stove, which keeps its guests toasty warm, a big comfy bed,



The Charneys are considering building a second yurt

and a large skylight to gaze at the many stars this country setting provides. For those wishing to venture out and explore, there are numerous summer and winter activities to keep visitors busy. After a full day, visitors can relax in the yurt's outdoor hot tub over looking Rossman Lake. Through a lot of good word of mouth, the yurt has gradually become so popular that the Charneys found themselves completely booked up during the summer months, with sporadic business in the winter. The next step, Thomasina says, is building a second yurt.

### Cleaning business

In order to help pay for the startup costs of the yurt, Thomasina started her own cleaning business, which is aptly dubbed "Lakegirl Cleaning". The company has gradually grown since its conception and now covers a 100-mile radius. Due to her

ter Miner and Thomasina works in Shoal Lake as a Community Development Officer, working to bring tourism and business to the area. From time to time Thomasina admits they have reached out to friends and neighbors for a hand, which only lends to the already evident sense of community that this family plays an active role in.

With all that she has going on, Thomasina still manages to make time for her most important job, being a mother to her three children, ages 11, 8 and 5. Thomasina, Mark, and their children - and let's not forget their two St. Bernards - somehow still manage to make it work.

"People think I'm crazy, but for me it isn't work," enthused Charney, "it's my passion."

Although her days are full, and at times hectic, Charney isn't complaining. She even manages to squeeze in a day off once in a while. Well, kind of.

For information on Rossman yurts please visit [www.rossmanyurts.com](http://www.rossmanyurts.com) and for information on Lakegirl Cleaning service please visit [www.lakegirlcleaning.com](http://www.lakegirlcleaning.com).

Jessica Marshall is a freelance writer/photographer who lives in Elphinstone.



## Russell Multiplex gets half million

The province is providing an additional \$500,000 to support the completion of construction of the new recreation multiplex in Russell.

"The community has been waiting for the completion of this project and this investment will ensure it will soon be ready," said Local Government Minister Ron Lemieux at an announcement in the community in late January. "Once it opens, this new centre will continue to offer a place for the people of Russell and surrounding area to come together and be active."

The multiplex will include a year-round, NHL-sized ice surface, a fitness centre with an indoor walking track, a multi-purpose room, and commercial and office space.

### Municipalities appreciate support

"We certainly appreciate this vote of confidence from the province in our community and in our project," said Chris Radford, mayor of Russell. "This funding is going to go a long way to improving the lives and wellness of people in our community and in getting this project completed."

The project is scheduled to be completed some time this summer.

"It's tough for small communities to improve recreation facilities and keep them operating," said Robert Muir, reeve of the Rural Municipality of Russell. "This will help keep people interested in living here and keep our community growing."

The minister noted the province previously provided more than \$2 million for the project.

The additional provincial funding for the project will come from the Municipal Recreation Fund component of the Building Manitoba Fund. The Municipal Recreation Fund provides funding support to municipalities outside of Winnipeg to undertake projects that include construction or enhancements to municipal recreation facilities such as recreation centres, community halls, parks, libraries, arenas and pools.

## Our mistake

In the February issue of Asessippi Life, we profiled area members of the Parkland Rangers of the Manitoba AAA Midget Hockey League.

We inadvertently missed Lathan McKinney, a 15-year-old rookie defenceman from Roblin. McKinney played a total of 32 games this season, recording two assists.



Lathan McKinney

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# The importance of getting back up

❑ *Writer overcomes her fear of skiing and discovers winter fun at Asessippi*

By **MARCIE HARRISON**  
*Asessippi Life*

I remember the first time I tried downhill skiing. It was back in 1980. I was 15 and very apprehensive. Cautious by nature, the idea of strapping two long appendages to my feet and throwing my fate into the hands of gravity seemed counter-intuitive. And it didn't help that, like most awkward teens, I felt the world was watching my every move, from my painfully slow descent down the bunny hill to my equally embarrassing return to the top, floundering and flailing like a fish out of water as I held on to the tow rope.

After several trips in both directions, I called it quits. And on the bus ride home, surrounded by schoolmates who bore a striking resemblance to the 'Crazy Canucks', I decided that my first attempt at skiing would also be my last.

So you can imagine my trepidation when I recently received an invitation to join my boss and coworkers at Asessippi Ski Area & Resort for a day of winter fun. First off, winter and fun don't even belong in the same sentence. If I could control the forces of nature, the world would be in a constant state of summer. And I think I've made it clear how I feel about skiing.

However, the passage of time has eased my apprehension and allowed me to cultivate the talent of enjoying activities that I'm not particularly good at. It has also somewhat reduced my fear of standing out like a sore thumb. Somewhat.

In a moment of temporary courage, I made up my mind to embrace the opportunity and signed up for a group ski lesson. I wasn't quite sure how to answer when the friendly staff member at the check-in desk asked if this was my first time skiing. "I tried it once in high school," I admitted, fighting back a wave of fear, not for my safety, but for my dignity.

"You'll be fine," she reassured me with a smile, handing me a lift pass to attach to my jacket, along with tickets for ski rental and a lesson.

I made my way through the busy lobby and down the stairs, where I was given the necessary equipment and sev-



Writer Marcie Harrison, centre, gets comfortable on her skis under the watchful eyes of instructor Traudy Scharnagl

eral encouraging smiles. As I pulled on my ski boots, I worried how on earth I was going to manoeuvre in the stiff footwear without doing a face-plant and glanced around to see who was watching. Thankfully, I discovered that experienced skiers and boarders are just like real people, busy doing their own thing with no need to intimidate a newbie.

I clomped my way outside, grabbed my numbered set of skis from rack three, just where I was told they would

be, and proceeded to the assigned meeting spot. It wasn't long before I met my instructor, Traudy Scharnagl, and the rest of my group, nine-year-old Andrea from Yorkton, SK. Yes, that's right.

### Magic carpet ride

After a quick ride on the magic carpet, which resembles the moving walkways in airports, I found myself once again on a bunny hill. Following a quick demonstra-

tion, I stepped into my skis. And then came the most important lesson of all - how to fall and get back up again. "You do that really well," encouraged Traudy, perhaps sensing that the ability to get back on my feet again would end up being my greatest asset.

We made a couple of trips down the bunny hill, practicing our turns and stops, and I was fully prepared to stay there for the remainder of

the hour. However, it wasn't long before Traudy helped us make our way to the handle tow and a slightly steeper hill. I was surprised to discover that the less-than-positive memories of my first encounter with the apparatus were being overshadowed by a sense of adventure and fun!

It wasn't long before we progressed to the chair lift and my first "green" run, with Traudy leading the way, demonstrating how to keep

our skis parallel. As I slowly zig-zagged down the hill, I felt such a feeling of accomplishment and was so glad that I gave skiing a second try. Then it happened. My ski tips crossed and down I went, making an effort to fall sideways, just as Traudy had instructed. I flipped over onto my belly, rotated my legs, and hoisted myself up, just as I had practiced. When I made it to the bottom of the hill, Traudy once again applauded my ability to get back on my feet.

It was a skill I called upon several times that afternoon, not just on the slopes, but even while waiting in line for the chair lift. My skis seemed to inch forward of their own accord, causing me to topple over...again. Amidst a sea of motionless, perfectly balanced skiers, I stuck out like a sore thumb as I flipped onto my front side and hauled myself up. Some things just never change!

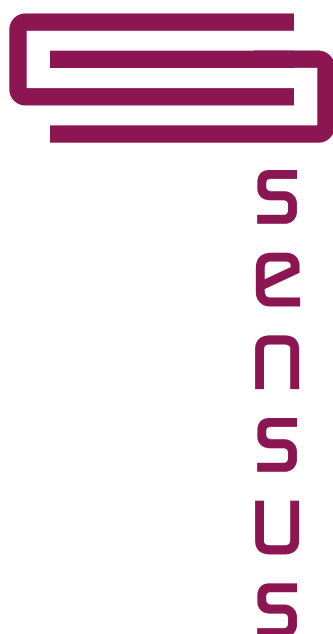
But I'm pleased to say that my ride home from Asessippi was a vast improvement from the bus ride of long ago. Not only did I discover that there is fun to be had in the winter, I came away with a sense of accomplishment and hope. I may not have mastered the sport of skiing yet, but I believe that someday I might. And if not, I will just keep working on my forte, getting back on my feet.

*Marcie Harrison is a staff writer with Nesbitt Publishing Ltd. in Shoal Lake.*

“Then came the most important lesson of all - how to fall and get back up again. “You do that really well,” encouraged Traudy, perhaps sensing that the ability to get back on my feet again would end up being my greatest asset.”

There were only two of us in the group, making it difficult to blend in, which was my original plan.

At this point I considered calling it quits. However, Traudy's gentle approach and attention to every little detail set me at ease. She went through everything step by step, from how to carry my skis to digging in with the toes of my boots while walking the slight incline to the bottom of the bunny hill. De-



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# Oh, what a feeling...

□ *Apprehensive writer finds snow tubing a whole lot of fun*

By **DARRELL NESBITT**  
*Asessippi Life*

Laughter is the sun that drives winter from the human face, and while winter may be cold, it also serves up warm memories.

Both of those were found at the Asessippi Ski Hill and Resort on Sunday, Jan. 29. With fellowship abounding, winter fun was celebrated at Community Day sponsored by Asessippi and Crossroads This Week.

Settling my backside down into a rubber tube this time around was unforgettable much like the river tubing experience in the summer of 2010, but definitely in a positive manner.

The groomed snow tubing park at Asessippi Ski Area & Resort, casts adventure in a fun exciting manner, much like the ski runs that serve as a web of motion and a kaleidoscope of colour.

Among the crazes of outdoor winter fun offered at the resort northwest of Russell, the snow tubing park brings smiles to the young and young-at-heart. This fun-packed family experience doesn't take much effort, as a tow rope brings tubers to the top of the runs and then guests sit back and enjoy the ride.

Having said that, I did have a few butterflies in my stomach while standing on the upper level of the hill before the initial run, as youth with no worries in the world whizzed past by me. As the small children settled down



Writer Darrell Nesbitt had a blast at the Asessippi Ski Hill and Resort gliding down the groomed snow tubing runs

into the tubes - some quietly requesting a wee push to get started on the slippery surface - a sense of excitement filled the air, much like delicate snowflakes that become stronger as they stick together.

Once I got enough courage up, I settled in for a downward spiral. Slowly, but surely I pulled myself to the centre of the run, and

blasted down the course. Sliding, spinning and coming to a halt I had three words in mind "What a rush!"

Flying down one of the three groomed runs, I felt like that piglet zipping along the zip line in a favorite television commercial. From top to bottom it was a thrill ride, with flakes of snow churned up by the plastic bottom of

one's own personal tube, or others gliding by, make the outing that more delightful.

Noted as one of the Parkland region's loveliest summer destinations, Asessippi is also just that in the winter. It truly is Parkland's most exciting and culturally diverse venues, with adrenaline adventures welcoming one and all.

## Ski Cross tour hits Asessippi March 17, 18

It's been called NASCAR on skis.

And winter sport's answer to a roller derby.

However you describe it, you can't claim ski cross - or skier-X, as it's also known - is boring.

The Canadian Sport Chek Ski Cross Tour will make a stop at the Asessippi Ski Area & Resort on Saturday and Sunday, March 17 and 18.

The Sport Chek tour is designed to introduce the sport of ski cross to skiers across the country while helping competitive ski cross athletes develop into the next generation of champions. Events are open to skiers of different age groups, from under 11 years to an open category.

### Olympic medal sport

The electrifying, action-packed and adrenaline-fuelled sport made its Olympic debut as a medal sport at the 2010 Winter Games in Vancouver-Whistler.

Prior to the Olympics, ski cross had already established itself as a hugely popular TV sport, with footage of spectacular passes, jumps and crashes showing up on highlight reels all over the globe.

And with Canada's Ashleigh McIvor winning a historic first gold medal in the women's event, plus teammate Chris Del Bosco authoring one of the stories of the Games in going for gold but crashing out in the men's final, the sport has experienced an explosion in popularity.

Ski cross courses have both naturally occurring terrain and artificial features including big-air jumps, "tabletop" jumps (where the take-off point is at a similar level to the landing spot), rollers (rounded and/or wavy terrain) and high-banked turns.

But what sets ski cross apart from other sports, including alpine skiing, is the fact that there's more than one skier racing down the course. Four to six racers go head to head, at the same time, with the aim of finishing first.

Other than in the initial qualification round, it's not a time trial.

The unique combination of technically-challenging terrain and head to head racing make ski cross a thrilling spectator sport. Contact between racers is frowned upon, but the sport's format mean thrills and spills are all but guaranteed.



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# RMNP proposes allowing ski hill in park

□ However, feasibility study by U.S. firm questions financial viability of Agassiz

By GREG NESBITT  
Asessippi Life

Parks Canada (PC) held public consultations in Neepawa, McCreary and Russell recently on a proposed amendment to the 2007 Riding Mountain National Park Management Plan.

If approved, the amendment will allow Parks Canada to consider proposals for the re-opening of a ski hill operation and possible multi-season recreational activities at the Mount Agassiz Ski Area (MASA), located on the east side of Riding Mountain National Park (RMNP).

However, a recent comprehensive feasibility study on the financial viability of skiing in the RMNP does not paint a rosy picture for proponents of the facility or any potential investors. All three scenarios for using the site show substantial losses on yearly operations, with no servicing of the multi-million dollar investment required to carry out the changes required.

MASA has a long history of providing downhill skiing within the East Escarpment area of Riding Mountain National Park of Canada (RMNPC).

The site was first utilized in the late 1950s by local skiers hiking up the McKinnon Creek drainage to access the vertical drop and snowfall that the area offered. In 1958, the Canada National Parks Act (in subsection 36(1) of the current version of the Canada National Parks Act), approximately 142 hectares were leased to a private operator for the development of the ski area. In 1961, MASA opened with a few ski runs accompanied by the installation of a rope tow and the construction of a base lodge.

During the 1970s, commensurate with the rapid growth of the ski industry, MASA added more ski trails, two T-Bar lifts, snowmaking and expanded the day lodge. The

most significant expansion occurred in 1979 when the double chairlift and ski trails were developed on the north side of McKinnon Creek in preparation for hosting the Canada Winter Games in conjunction with the town of McCreary.

The ski facility operated successfully for many years, providing economic benefits to many small neighbouring communities in the area and especially the town of McCreary, with "Alpine Archie" standing as the community mascot.

However, in the early 1990s the ski area began to witness an erosion of the market due to inattention to customer service and operational/safety concerns. This eventually resulted in the operator filing for bankruptcy in 1995 and again in 2000. Following the closure of the ski area in 2000, a local group (Agassiz Ski Hill Committee 2000) was formed to reestablish the ski area operation as a profitable business enterprise that would provide recreation and economic benefits to surrounding communities. Despite strong interest in reopening the ski area, the local group was unable to carry out its mission due to financing and legal issues.

In 2007, the RMNP Management Plan introduced a new "Strategic Goal" and "Actions" for MASA which precluded the continuation of alpine skiing at the site and included the removal of the ski hill infrastructure as a first priority. While the plan was subsequently tabled by Parliament in November of 2007, the "no new lease" clause in the management plan garnered substantial negative reaction from community leaders and stakeholders. The strong reaction from interested parties and the emergence of new information regarding the potential operation of the site as a multi-season venture rather than simply a ski hill,

prompted Parks Canada to re-examine this matter through the conduct of a feasibility study. SE Group was retained in May 2011 to perform the work.

As part of the analysis of determining the feasibility for the reintroduction of the MASA operation within RMNP, SE Group prepared three notional operating models that represent different levels of investment, visitation and organizational structure.

The scenarios are presented as a basis for assessing the feasibility of any potential future operation at MASA, and not actual proposed development concepts endorsed by Parks Canada.

### Community ski hill

Projected cost \$1 million,  
Annual loss \$99,000

The concept of the Community Ski Hill option is to reopen and operate MASA in the most economical way possible. Essentially, MASA would be recreated as a small, local, community ski hill, and developed and operated for the local community. As such, it would not include many amenities that would attract distant guests. This scenario is envisioned as containing the following components:

- One T-Bar would be installed on the original side, in the same alignment as the existing T-Bars.

- The western side would not be re-opened, and vegetation would be allowed to grow back.

- Snowmaking would be installed, but would be limited to two top-to-bottom routes. The rest of the trails would be natural snow. Additional water sources would not be developed, only water easily available in McKinnon Creek would be used.

- Skier support facilities would be minimal and temporary in nature (yurts or similar structure). Food service would also be minimal, possi-

bly with no cooking facilities onsite.

No other improvements would be completed to the facility, other than those necessary for this basic operation.

Other winter activities, such as Nordic skiing and snowshoeing, could be accommodated in this scenario, although no specific facilities are envisioned.

Summer activities from the multi-season recreation program would be limited to hiking and cross country mountain biking on existing trails. The lack of a chairlift would preclude many summer activities. No services would be provided, but the area would be open for summer use. Summer operations would not generate revenue.

It is envisioned that the operation of the facility in this scenario would be similar to the ski clubs and community ski hills that exist throughout Canada and the US. Due to capital requirements and limitations in visitation, the area would only survive by receiving financial support in the form of "free" capital (no debt service on invested capital) and ongoing operational subsidies. A portion of the services would need to be operated by a community ski club and volunteer time.

For the Community Ski Hill option, first year revenue is anticipated an approximately \$146,000 offset by roughly \$238,000 in operating expenses for a marginal operating loss of approximately \$95,000 or 65 percent. The addition of the previously mentioned capital maintenance reserve increases the annual loss to approximately \$99,000. The key observation for this option is that unless the facility is capitalized/operated at a level which will allow it to compete within the regional skier market, there is simply not sufficient anticipated visitation from within the immediate surrounding communities to support a viable opera-

tion. Over the 10-year period modeled, operation of the Community Ski Hill scenario would accrue a cumulative loss of approximately \$1.0 M. Similar to the preceding discussion regarding capital origination, the model does not include any assumptions as to how this rolling deficit would be satisfied.

### Restore ski hill

Projected cost \$12 million  
Loss each year \$921,000

This option would restore MASA to its previous operational state. All facilities would be rebuilt or refurbished to re-create the operation as it existed prior to 2000. No upgrades would be made to the base area or the ski facilities. An exception would be that the two T-Bars could be replaced with a single high-capacity, high-speed retractable T-Bar.

- Installation of a single high-capacity, high-speed retractable T-Bar.

- The chairlift would be rebuilt, using any parts that

can be reused if possible - possibly tower foundations and the chairs.

- The snowmaking system would be rebuilt, using modern technology but remaining a manual, low-end system. A snowmaking water storage would be developed, to respond to the recent changes to McKinnon Creek and the lack of an existing diversion structure. For this scenario, a storage facility of around eight million gallons is envisioned.

- The base lodge would be rebuilt in place, possibly using some components of the foundation and salvageable structural elements. Prior to reconstruction the previous base lodge structure and the contaminated soil underneath the structure would be removed.

- Minimal grading on the runs would be proposed, to improve some of the flat areas where continuous skiing is challenging.

See "Cost" on page 10



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# Cost of a 'competitive' ski hill would be \$22 million

In terms of additional winter activities, no specific facilities are envisioned for this scenario. This would not preclude the use of the area in some manner by Nordic skiers and snowshoers.

All summer activities identified in the Multi-Season Recreation Program may be implemented as part of this scenario, subject to the result of park wide directions on new recreational activities.

Due to capital requirements and limitations in visitation, the area would only survive by receiving financial support in the form of "free" capital (no debt service on invested capital) and ongoing operational subsidies.

Similar to the Community Ski Hill option, this scenario would also attract only minimal regional visitation. Again, there are other operating ski areas in the region that offer better services and overall experience than was offered by the historic MASA operation prior to closing. It is reasonable to expect that there would be some regional visitation, based on the quality and extent of the terrain and the re-opening of the full facility. Interest in the facility could likely follow patterns of interest and visitation that were demonstrated prior to 2000.

Under the Restoration Option, winter revenues are approximately \$568,000 matched by \$743,000 in operating expenses. With the capital maintenance reserve and debt service included, the option is anticipated to operate at a loss of roughly \$779,000 per year. The requisite maintenance capital and debt service combine to add a substantial burden to the financial performance of the option.

The summer activities provide similar results - yielding roughly \$248,000 in summer revenue and \$286,000 in operating expenses for a marginal operating loss of \$51,000. Similar to the winter operations, the additions of capital maintenance and debt service increase the loss of the summer operations to roughly \$142,000. Combined, the winter and summer operations result in a net loss of approximately \$921,000 per year.

Over the 10 year period modeled, operation of the restoration scenario would accrue cumulative winter and summer losses of approximately \$7.7 M and \$1.2 M, respectively with a combined total 10 year loss of \$9.0 M. Similar to the preceding discussion regarding capital origination, the model does not include any assumptions as to how this rolling deficit would be satisfied.

## Competitive ski hill

Projected cost \$22 million  
Loss each year \$933,000

In this scenario, MASA is upgraded from its previous state to be a more attractive and competitive destination. The facilities would be up-

## from page 9

graded from the historic operation, and would address identified issues. Upgrades would be guided by the goal of creating an area that complies with current design criteria and provides a high-quality recreation experience.

- Two new lifts would be installed, in the place of the existing chairlift and the T-Bars.

- The proposed aerial chairlift on the East side would allow for ski-under so that skiers would not have to ride a rope tow to the ski to the bottom of the lift.

- A new carpet lift would be installed for beginner teaching terrain.

- New ski trails would be built to provide additional skiing options and address the deficiency of intermediate and advanced level trails.

- Ski trail grading would improve the skiability of the existing trails.

- A more efficient, more productive snowmaking system would be installed to in-

crease the quantity and quality of snow produced. The water delivery system would be developed and upgraded to provide enough water to guarantee opening dates and snow depths. A snowmaking water storage sized at around 16 million gallons is envisioned for this scenario.

- A new base lodge would be built, meeting all skier service requirements, and incorporating architectural elements of RMNP, with a visitor and interpretive center. This lodge and the MASA area would become a new portal to the National Park, with year-round access and use.

- A new drop-off area would be built as well as a new connector road from the base lodge to the parking area. The parking area could ultimately be expanded to handle additional demand.

A tubing facility would be constructed to meet the demand for non-skiing winter recreation, with a dedicated lift and five tubing lanes. Additionally, trails would be constructed and maintained

to connect to the existing RMNP network. These trails, including a multi-use trail, could be maintained in the winter specifically for Nordic skiing and snowshoeing.

All notional summer activities identified in the Multi-Season Recreation Program may be implemented as part of this scenario.

The Competitive option addresses the shortcomings and deficiencies of the existing/historic ski hill, and responds to current ski area design criteria.

Initially, the operating margin on the Competitive Option is the most promising in terms of potential viability - operating at a positive margin of approximately \$293,000. However, the burden of capital maintenance and debt service pushes this operation to an annual loss of roughly \$791,000 for the winter operations. The summer activities provide similar results - yielding roughly \$248,000 in summer revenue and \$286,000 in operating expenses for a marginal operating loss of \$51,000. Similar to the winter

operations, the additions of capital maintenance and debt service increase the operational net loss to roughly \$141,000. Combined, the winter and summer operations result in a net loss of approximately \$933,000 per year. Over the 10 year period modeled, operation of the Competitive scenario would accrue cumulative winter and summer losses of approximately \$7.5 M and \$1.2 M, respectively with a combined total 10 year loss of \$8.7

M. Combined, the winter and summer visitation levels necessary to support a financially viable operation are viewed as unacceptably unrealistic. RMNP is a beautiful national park, but very remote from any large concentrations of people. The surrounding population cannot support the facility, either in summer or winter.

To view the full study go to the RMNP website at [www.pc.gc.ca](http://www.pc.gc.ca).

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## Still more to come this season!

**Saturday, February 18**

Asessippi & Xtreme Adrenaline presents...  
Rail Wars and Big Air, located in Central Park

**Sunday, February 19**

Resort is open late until 8:00 pm  
Dummy Downhill at 7:00 pm on Jack Rabbit  
Fireworks display approximately 8:20 pm  
just after Squirrel Chair closes.

**Monday, February 20**

Face painting from noon until 3:00 pm  
Kids movies in the Sugar Shacks all afternoon.

**Saturday, March 3**

Coca-Cola Family Day  
with lots of great give-a-ways.

**Thursday, March 15**

Super Pass Sale begins, start using your  
2012/13 pass the day you buy it and ski the  
rest of this season for free!

**March 16 to 18**

Manitoba Alpine Provincials, come out and  
cheer these young athletes on! Located on  
Roller Coaster, all other runs will be open to  
public.

**Saturday, March 17**

Two events will happen on this day.  
Slope Style located in Central Park  
Ski Cross located on Billis Way

**Saturday, March 24**

Super Pass Holders Annual BBQ  
Plus Free the Children benefit concert.  
Over the Hill Classic  
hosted by the Asessippi Ski Club

**Saturday, March 31**

Banff Ice Big Air, it's the last free style event  
of the season and it is BIG! Excellent prizes.  
Sponsored by Banff Ice & the Switchboard.

**Sunday, April 1**

Asessippi Annual Slush Cup and last day of  
the season. Even if you don't want to brave  
the icy waters come out dressed in your best  
retro ski outfit or any style you like. Just a fun  
way to end the season. Resort closes at 4:30.

All details are posted online or  
call the resort for more information.

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# A few recollections of the Asessippi country

The following article, written by James A. Johnston, was originally published in *Manitoba Pageant*, a Manitoba Historical Society publication in the issue of Winter 1972, Volume 17, Number 3.

In the early 1870s, my grandfather, James Johnston, and his family were living at a small place called Billings Bridge Village, which is today a suburb of Ottawa, ON. In 1879 he accepted an appointment with the Indian Affairs Branch and went to Crow Stand, Fort Pelly, North West Territories, as a farm instructor. On the trip west he was accompanied by his two sons, Robert and Adam, and a daughter, Margaret. They travelled by rail to St. Paul and then came over the Pembina Trail with wagons, Red River Carts, horses, and oxen. From Winnipeg they went northwest over the Carlton Trail (which father always called the Dawson Trail), and then by the Pelly Trail to Fort Pelly.

They left Winnipeg in July 1879 with one wagon, three Red River Carts, two horses and four oxen. Since grandfather was going to Crow Stand on a government assignment, the Dominion authorities in Winnipeg supplied him with enough salt pork and groceries for the trip. During the 32 days it took to go from Winnipeg to Crow Stand, their diet consisted entirely of salt pork and flapjacks. They had trouble crossing small streams which were in flood and it took them a whole day to get across the Little Saskatchewan (Minnedosa) River; all the supplies being ferried over on a raft made of the four wagon wheels, the horses and oxens swimming across.

When they arrived at Crow Stand they made a small shack of logs and packed prairie grass on the roof poles to keep out the rain. Their food for the balance of the year was brought in a month after their arrival, and it consisted of 52 sacks of flour, 13 barrels of pork (each weighing 200 pounds), three chests of tea (each weighing 50 pounds), three barrels of granulated sugar, 100 pounds of baking powder, four barrels of dried apples, and bags of raisins, currents, and boxes of rice and dried, pressed vegetables.

There were over two thousand Crees in the vicinity of Crow Stand, the three chiefs being "Caty" (Presbyterian), "Keys" (Church of England), and "Keetchako" (Roman Catholic). The Indian school was taught by a halfbreed named "Cub" Mackay. Most of the Indians refused to do farm work, and they hunted for game only when forced to do so by hunger. The Indian women did most of the farm work as well as their traditional native tasks. They threshed the grain with flails



A summer time view of the meandering Shell River from the top of the ski hill 'mound'

and cleaned turnips and other vegetables for stews, in which sometimes even entrails and rawhide were mixed.

### Food a concern

As the buffalo were disappearing rapidly at this time, food was a constant concern of the Indians, and even the little Indian lads, six to 10 years of age helped in an ingenious way to provide their families with food. They would whittle dozens of willow branches as thin as lead pencils, sharpening one end of each, then plant them firmly in the ground in the rabbit runs, with the points slanting in the direction from which the rabbits generally ran. Then the youngsters would go into the bush barking like dogs and chasing the rabbits along the runs. They rarely came back empty-handed, sometimes getting as many as a dozen rabbits in each drive.

After four years at Crow Stand, Fort Pelly, the teaching assignment petered out and my grandfather and his three children moved to Boggy Creek (north of Roblin). Here they were joined by my grandmother and the rest of the family, there being 10 children in all. They built their log home at the point where the Pelly Trail crossed Boggy Creek, a tributary of the Upper Assiniboine. My grandfather was known throughout the district as "Boggy" Johnston, and his home was called the "Boggy Creek Stopping House." Here travellers could secure overnight accommodation and meals long before the days of rural hotels and motels. At this time the C.P.R. had reached Moosomin and supplies were picked up from this point, the overland trip usually took two weeks, two trips being made each year.

My grandfather sawed the

beams and flooring for his home by using a saw pit. The logs to be sawn were laid on a frame over the pit and with one man above and another below to pull the saw up and down on a carefully marked chalk line, some very good planks were laboriously hewn from logs which had been felled on Riding Mountain or sometimes as far north as Duck Mountain.

My father, Robert Bruce, born in 1854, married Harriet Amelia Simmons, widow of Alexander Reid, in 1885, and there were nine children of this union, as well as one child by Harriet Amelia's former marriage. Father took up a homestead three miles south of Binscarth and later moved into Binscarth where he operated a flour, feed, and bakery business. My father's brother, Andrew, who was a carpenter, built the store and bakery which were attached to our home.

### Grist mill, store

Uncle Andrew lived at Asessippi, a small hamlet situated in the valley where the Pelly Trail crossed Shell River. The Shell River was dammed at Asessippi and Mr. Henry Gill operated a grist mill there and ran a general store as well. When the railroad bypassed Asessippi, almost all the inhabitants, including uncle Andrew, moved to the new town site of Roblin. These first citizens of Roblin lived in tents to start with, and after they had obtained permanent lots by auction, the auctioneer being T.C. Norris, later Premier of Manitoba, they built their homes, many of log construction and a few of milled siding.

When I was a boy I remember going with my father by wagon and team to Russell where two of my aunts were living. Our next stop was at the Brooks Stopping House, about 12 miles north of Rus-

sell. This was a very interesting place, particularly for a small boy, for Mrs. Brooks was an expert taxidermist, and one room of her home was filled with mounted specimens. There were literally scores of them, from the

great whooping crane to the smallest of finches. Just a few years ago, sometime in the 1960s, I seem to recall, a granddaughter of Mrs. Brooks told me that this fine collection had gone to a museum in the United States. What a loss to Manitoba and Canada. Mr. Brooks had come west from Georgetown, ON in 1881, and in the following year he met Mrs. Brooks and their four children at Moosomin. From this point they made the journey to their homestead by ox teams, but at the Asessippi hill the descent was so hazardous and steep that the wagons were slowly lowered down by block and tackle.

As a young lad I remember seeing Pauline Johnson, the Mohawk Princess, in Bin-

scarth. She had come to give one of her recitals. This would be about 1900, and at the time I was working in Dr. Lanigan's drug store, where the tickets for Miss Johnson's concert were being sold. She once told Ernest Thompson Seton, "My aim, my job, my pride is to sing the glories of my own people." And this brings to mind the fact that Ernest Thompson Seton, while employed as a naturalist with the Government of Manitoba, made a nature tour of the Asessippi area, and in his autobiography he mentions staying at the Boggy Creek Stopping House and meeting my grandfather, to whom he applies his well known local name "Boggy" Johnston.



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