

# CMMH

THE JOURNAL OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST SKIING

🍁 WINTER 2011/12



A TALE OF TWO CONTINENTS | GIRL POW(D)ER | MILLIONS OF FEET; MILLIONS OF MEMORIES | FILM SCHOOL



**DEVELOPED,  
TESTED *and*  
APPROVED**

**on location at  
the Monashee Lodge**



# CMH: WHO WE ARE

**I OVERHEARD A CURIOUS CONVERSATION** at dinner last winter between two guests meeting for the first time. “What do you do for a living?” asked the first. Thinking for a moment, the other guest slowly put his wine glass down and softly answered, “You’re asking the wrong question. You really should ask, ‘Who am I?’” There was an awkward pause. “OK then, who are you?” After another sip of wine, he replied, “I’m a skier. I’ve earned a living at a few different things, but deep down, I’ve always been a skier.”

Oddly enough, it made sense. Because there is a bond, a connection, a common denominator—call it what you will—among those of us who share this passion for skiing. We are proud to say we are skiers first. What we do for a living is simply a logistical detail.

Skiing is, always has been, and always will be, an adventure in lifestyle. The experiences we have, the people we have them with, and the memories we create—be they on the glaciers, in the trees, in the lodge, around a bonfire at night, or standing at the landing looking out at the top of the world—these are the suns around which our universe revolves.

At CMH we came from humble beginnings. A guide, a group of skiers, a hut high in the mountains, a cook and hut-keeper—that is our history and our shared experience. Over time, huts have become lodges, cooks turned into chefs and hut-keepers evolved into extraordinarily welcoming hosts. There’s an Austrian word that captures this spirit: *Hüttenzauber*, which, in English simply means “Hut Magic.” With that guiding notion, plus a good dose of humility, we awake each day eager to recapture the magic.

This journal is but a small piece of our story, which in a larger dimension is the story of our guests and our staff, and the thousands of memorable interactions which make a season at CMH what it is. As another glorious chapter looms before us, we hope you enjoy our celebration of moments past, and moments yet to come.

As a tribe we get to share a magical feeling: floating, weightless, blessed with speed and the benefit of gravity, flying with only a surface of untracked snow ahead of us, surrounded by beauty. In this sense, skiing is not recreation. It is re-creation.

We can be whomever we choose. And for us, “skier” sounds just about right.

David Barry, CEO

## CMH The Journal of the World’s Greatest Skiing Winter 2011/12

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### CMH YEARBOOK

Pictures and people from a fantastic winter at CMH.



# A TALE OF TWO CONTINENTS

**This page:** Leading the way in the Gothics.  
**Inset:** Hans Gmoser, CMH Founder



At CMH, a combination of European traditions, Canadian realities and guides from around the globe have created a unique culture of safety and expertise.

**Topher Donahue** discovers how an international crew came to speak the universal language of powder.





**“BE A LITTLE MORE CANADIAN, EH?”** says one mountain guide to another—meaning, “Take it easy, you’re not lining up for the Aiguille du Midi.”

It’s nice to know that Canadian guides even have a reputation—a few decades ago, they wouldn’t have—and nicer still that, among other things, it is a reputation for playing it cool. In reality, though, in the 46 years that have passed since CMH invented Heli-Skiing, mountain guiding has become one of the modern economy’s most internationally friendly professions. Guides from all over the world treat each other with mutual respect and understanding, and routinely work on each others’ most precious turf, but it wasn’t always that way.

When the Chamonix guides began regulating the profession in 1821, their idea was to protect the turf for local guides so that guides from other countries and regions in France could not just roll into town and lead their guests up Mont Blanc, Europe’s highest peak, or across the icy splendors of the Mer de Glace. Other European countries followed suit, and as late as 1960, many still required foreign guides to hire a local guide to go along on any commercial mountain adventures. All that changed in 1965 when guides from Switzerland,

Austria, Italy and France started the International Federation of Mountain Guides Association (IFMGA).

The purpose of the IFMGA was part standardization of training, part lobbying power, and, as the IFMGA puts it, “to arrange closer comradeship and the exchange of ideas amongst the mountain guides of all nations.” In the Alps, where it is not uncommon for a climb or ski tour to begin in one country and end in another, guides needed to be able to cross borders easily and have confidence in fellow guides regardless of their nationality.

In Canada, however, a different engine was revving. The profession of Heli-Skiing was just cutting its teeth, and its founders, Hans Gmoser and Leo Grillmair, needed help. The interior British Columbia mountain ranges that gave birth to Heli-Skiing were more vast, remote and snowier than anything in Europe, and Heli-Skiing was quickly becoming bigger than Hans and Leo could manage on their own. While the guides on the other side of the Atlantic were just learning the merits of sharing their turf, Hans and Leo had more turf than they could handle—even with a helicopter for assistance.

Emigrating from Austria to escape the ravages of post-war Austria, the two young men knew there were plenty of European ►

“The interior British Columbia mountain ranges that gave birth to Heli-Skiing were more vast, remote and snowier than anything in Europe, and Heli-Skiing was quickly becoming bigger than Hans and Leo could manage on their own.”



**This spread:** Loading skis, lunch in the sun, face shots. Just another day for the CMH guides and their gloves.



mountain guides with the skills to join their team. They began recruiting guides from Switzerland and Austria to lead skiers out the door of the helicopter and through the snowy wonderland of the Columbia Mountains. Their effort built not only what we know as CMH Heli-Skiing, but also brought North America into the fold of the IFMGA. As the first president of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides, Hans helped Canada to become the first non-European country to join the IFMGA.

“Hans Gmoser should have won the Nobel Peace Prize.”

Today, mountain guiding is one of the world’s most internationally versatile professions, and it is not uncommon for mountain guides to work in three or four different countries over the course of a year. IFMGA guides can, and do, guide almost anywhere the standard is recognized.

With a staff of 110 guides representing eight different countries, CMH Heli-Skiing is the single largest employer of mountain guides in the world, and as such, it is the ultimate melting pot for the profession. For mountain guides, who traditionally work alone or perhaps with one other colleague, immersion into the fast-paced, communication-intensive, teamwork world of CMH Heli-Skiing is a chance to share experiences and techniques from all over the world.

**IN THE EARLY DAYS OF HELI-SKIING**, European guides were recruited because they had a similar basic training level. Today, guides train in multiple countries and all learn similar skills, so the biggest differences in guiding technique are often more personal, and the cultural differences now just add to the flavour and spirit of the profession more than as a hierarchy based on nationality.

An early CMH guide once famously stuck up his nose and told a girl who asked for help with cleaning the Bugaboos Lodge, “I am not a servant, I am a Swiss mountain guide.” These days, guides tend to be a little more humble, and the jokes are more often on them. An old favourite at CMH is “What’s the difference between a mountain guide and a pizza? A pizza can feed a family of four.” (But never let it be said that our guides are not versatile. Another joke still goes, “How do you know there is a mountain guide at the bar? Don’t worry, he’ll tell you.”)

With 11 areas and average size guide teams of four or five, there are 40 to 50 guides working at any one time. The background and culture of the teams is literally all over the map, and in such a tight work environment, the opportunities are rife for both professional development and gut-busting humour.

The diversity of experience that is represented at each morning’s guide meeting is astounding. Sitting around the table at the Gothics you might find Fridjon Thorleifsson, a handsome 36-year-old ski







“In the end, it’s not so much about nationality as it is about personality—and familiarity with the mountains.”

guide from Iceland. English is his fourth out of six languages, but you’d never guess it based on his fluency. Although an experienced guide in difficult conditions, having guided ski tours across Greenland and Heli-Skied in Iceland, Fridjon represents the new school of mountain adventurers who possess world-class training and take decision-making seriously, but don’t take themselves too seriously.

Even for rookie guides who generally have an earlier group’s tracks in front of them, Heli-Ski guiding in interior British Columbia’s deep snows and deeper forests takes some getting used to. Fridjon describes part of the adjustment from European terrain to CMH Heli-Skiing terrain: “In the beginning of my time here in Canada I had to adjust to guiding in the trees. I had to look at terrain with a new eye and figure out how to give the best possible line to the guests, though it didn’t take too long for the trees to become the thing I love most about skiing in Canada.”

Sitting at the guide table in the Bugaboos you might find Lilla Molnar, a charming woman with a quick smile that belies her inner drive and serious approach to mountain adventure. Born in Toronto to Hungarian parents, Lilla is a full alpine guide with a resume that includes the first ascent of a granite spire in Pakistan, Europe’s legendary Haute Route, and enough Heli-Ski laps in the Bugaboos to know the place better than her living room in Canmore.

With much mirth, Lilla recalls guiding on Mt. Blanc, and watching two climbers approach. She was playing a little game with herself, trying to guess the nationality of the other climbers on the mountain, when two guys walked up speaking Hungarian. One said to the other, in what they presumed was their own private language, “Hey look, it’s a female mountain guide.”

Lilla nonchalantly shot back in kind, “Yeah, and what are the chances of her speaking Hungarian?” The two climbers almost caught their tongues on their crampons.

**WHILE EUROPE HAS HAD A DIRECT** and significant effect on CMH Heli-Ski guiding, the vast majority of Heli-Ski guides are now Canadian. Erich Unterberger, the Manager of Guiding Operations at CMH, explains the transition to the mostly Canadian work force CMH has today. “It used to be that the European guides all had ski instruction or racing background, and the Canadian guides came from more of a mountaineering background. Now the Canadian guides are really good skiers too. It makes the job a lot easier if you don’t have to think about the skiing and can focus on the rest of the job.”

Erich is a strong proponent of keeping the international element in guiding even if the foreign guides are no longer essential to fill the ranks. He describes skiing in La Grave, France recently and being, “blown away with the level they take freeriding there.” After a storm, tracks appear on every square metre of snow, in terrain where only technical climbers would normally venture. Learning in that environment gives European guides a different way of looking at the mountain, Erich notes in awe. “There were tracks everywhere, over crevasses, along crevasses, into crevasses. That would never fly here.”

While North American ski guides tend to give the crevasses a bit

more breathing room, they too have brought the freeride mentality into their home mountains. “In the old days,” continues Erich, “the European guides always had the more aggressive line selection, but now it’s different. Now I think the young Canadian guides have the most aggressive line selection. The combination of both is important—it sort of keeps each other in check.”

In the end, it’s not so much about nationality as it is about personality—and familiarity with the mountains. At CMH, that includes people like Peter “PA” Arbic, who knows the Columbia Mountains well enough that he has lead-guided in six different CMH areas during a single season. Or guides like Dave Cochrane, the Manager of the Bugaboos who commits every ounce of his prodigious energy to the satisfaction of his guests, every day, every winter, and has done so for decades. For young guides, such longevity speaks of a level of skill and passion that they can only hope to emulate. The late Thierry Cardon comes to mind, who was just as enthusiastic about the mountains at age 60 as he was at 20.

But one thing is far more important than all the collaboration between guides of different nationalities over the last 46 years at CMH: People from all over the world come to CMH and set aside cultural differences to share a fantastic experience together, and invariably leave as friends. As Erich Unterberger says, and CMH skiers from any country would agree: “Hans Gmoser should have won the Nobel Peace Prize.” 🍁



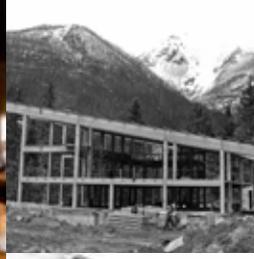
The ATOMIC logo, featuring a red triangle with a white stylized 'A' inside, followed by the word 'ATOMIC' in white capital letters on a red background.

# SAGE CATTABRIGA ALOSA

APRIL 19, 2011. SAGE CATTABRIGA ALOSA,  
IN HIS ELEMENT WITH THE NEW ATOMIC BLOG,  
THE ATOMIC FFG16 TEAM BINDING, THE NEW  
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A stylized white signature of Sage Cattabriga Alosa.



Canada's original lodge goddess:  
Lizzie von Rummel.



# CHILLIN' IN THE LODGE, '65

**GERMAN-SPEAKERS HAVE A FANCY WORD FOR IT:** *Gemütlichkeit*, meaning cozy, comfortable and convivial. Until Canadians invent a more all-encompassing term, it's as good a word as any to describe the essential CMH lodge experience. At upper left is one of the earliest surviving photographs from the super-rustic Bugaboo sawmill camp where CMH was born in 1965. There's Hans Gmoser, dabbling at the zither. In red is Brooks Dodge, the New Hampshire Olympic racer and extreme skiing pioneer who organized the world's first Heli-Skiing week. (They scored bluebird skies and perfect powder, incidentally.)

Gmoser, of course, was adamant about maintaining the communal nature of the lodge ambience. Even when accommodations improved, he famously banned TVs, telephones and lightbulbs over 40 watts in guest rooms, lest skiers be tempted to remain separate from the effervescent action in the common areas. A relaxed, family-style approach to dining is one of the key components, though it was not something Gmoser grew up with back in socially rigid Austria. In that nation's alpine huts it was customary for small groups to keep to themselves; fraternizing between social classes simply wasn't done.

In Canada, however, the woman who would change that was named Elizabeth von Rummel. The daughter of a German baron, she was familiar with aristocratic ways, though she learned a hard lesson about social mobility when the Great War wiped out the family fortune. By then she was working in the Rockies as the quintessential backcountry lodge hostess. Upon their chance meeting, she hired Hans Gmoser as a guide and hut-tender. Lizzie, as everyone knew her, would become his mentor, and it was she who inspired the legacy of cheerful democracy by decreeing that, in her lodge, everyone from the richest international visitor to the humblest local hiker would dine together as equals. That tradition proudly endures—as *gemütlich* now as it was a half-century ago. 🍁





**FINALLY, THE CAR IS PACKED AND I'M ABOUT TO HIT THE ROAD** for Revelstoke for four days of Heli-Skiing—my first ever—in the legendary snow of the Selkirks and Monashees Ranges. My husband leans in for a goodbye kiss. “Ski well,” are his parting words. “Keep a centred mobile stance. Make sure you keep your hands up and your hips up, so you don’t get stuck in that low position.” Then he actually squats down in the kitchen, as if to demonstrate the perfect posture.

Wow. Not even out the door and I’m already keenly aware of the irrefutable male/female dichotomy. Honestly, would a wife ever say something like that to her husband as he’s poised for the ski trip of a lifetime, even if he could stand a few pointers? I somehow doubt it. Still, I’m not about to make waves. The fact that I’m going on my first solo adventure in years is enough to make me realize I’ll need to man up even if it turns out that Heli-Skiing is not a certified bastion of the gentlemen’s club. But one thing’s for sure. Whether it’s because women are generally more likely to doubt their ability to keep pace in perfect powder, or less inclined to cook up exotic group bonding trips to remote mountain lodges, or too preoccupied on the domestic front to find the time to indulge in a week of unadulterated snow-play, I’m fairly certain that the boys have had a disproportionate share of the Heli-Skiing fun.

Meanwhile, silly as it sounds, I’m obsessing about one particular conundrum as I hit the road (when I’m not worrying if I’m headed in the right direction, whether I ski well enough to keep up, or what my game-plan will be if I get a flat tire). Who am I going to go to the bathroom with if there are no other women out there, and no bathrooms?

Yes, it’s true. It is different for girls.

Fortunately, 24 hours later, Liliane Lambert gives a different kind of pep talk to our assembled ski group split 8:3 along gender lines. Lambert is one of CMH’s 11 female guides, a fully certified ACMG ski guide who has just returned to work after the birth of her second child. (Clearly, domestic fronts can survive having a Heli-Skier at the helm.) Every single run, in a sing-song Quebecois accent, Lambert wraps up her instructions with a simple message: “Okay. Have fun.” Like a vodka shot on the way into dinner (another tension-easing trick that is about to become part of the week’s routine), Lambert’s verbal tic is a pink-flag reminder to keep things in perspective. For all the technical information and lactic acid our brains and limbs are processing, the point of this exercise is simple. We’re here to have fun.

Hey, I can do that.

That delightful realization becomes crystal clear just 30 minutes (and as many collective whoops) into the day: yin or yang, Heli-Skiing is about the most fun you can have standing up. Which begs the question, why aren’t more women taking part? ▶

# Girl

There are 15,000 square kilometres of skiing out there. Is that enough room for both yin and yang? **Lisa Richardson** investigates.

# POWDER



EP



“Last season some 988 women took the powder plunge, an increase of over 1100% since the mid-1980s”

**IN TRUTH**, female participation in mountain sports has progressed light-years since that wacky 1959 magazine ad that I keep pinned up in my office: It reads, cruelly: “Men are better than women! Indoors, women are useful—even pleasant. On a mountain they are something of a drag. So don’t go hauling them up a cliff just to show off your Drummond climbing sweater.” Yikes. But even 25 years after that pinnacle of chauvinism, only 78 women had joined CMH for Heli-Skiing trips, amounting to a tiny 3% of the overall clientele.

Fortunately, the gender balance has swung considerably over the last 25 years, according to Marty von Neudegg, CMH’s Director of Sales and Marketing. Last season, some 988 women took the powder plunge, an increase of over 1100% since the mid-1980s.

Yet the overall participation of women in Heli-Skiing has hit a powder ceiling, holding steady throughout the past decade at 18-20% of CMH skiers. “There is no reason that we should not have a much higher number of women who can enjoy this sport,” says von Neudegg. “They have the time, money and, without any doubt, the skill to do it. We just need to convince them—or perhaps more accurately, they need to convince themselves.”

Well, here is my chance to see whether Heli-Skiing’s vertical-bagging, lodge-bonding, powder-orgy environment is as much fun for women. As one male Heli-Ski veteran tells me over dinner, Heli-Skiing is an elite activity. There are a lot of bragging rights that come with taking a trip like this. The cachet risks being diluted if word gets out that this is an adventure you could share with your daughter. Or your wife.

Surely he jests, I think. So I ask a woman who knows the scene

intimately. Joanie Keefer, a massage therapist (and wife of CMH guide Brian Keefer), has been with CMH on and off since the late 1980s while raising her kids. Keefer knows that even the most invincible-appearing male skiers do have a tender side. “Oh yeah,” she nods. “Once they’re on the table, they totally melt.” She does acknowledge, though, that many CMH guests work in high-pressure careers, and the uber-competitive energy of an all-male group can feel a bit like work. It needn’t be so, she says. “I really believe that many men wish they could take things a bit slower. Honestly, I think 90% of the guys I treat would prefer to go easier.” And guess what, she points out, bringing women into the equation—even as few as one—will positively affect the energy of a group.

And no, a shift in pace doesn’t mean the skiing experience is diluted. Not according to Michael C. Smith, who knows a thing or two about coming first. Smith is a Canadian two-time Commonwealth Games gold medallist in decathlon who spent a decade ranked in the top ten in the world. Weighing in at more than 300 pounds with his ski gear, he looks the part of a super-athlete who could easily be the biggest antler-clashing alpha dude you’ve ever met.

But he’s not. Out on the slopes Smith is so gracious, so relaxed, that I feel obliged to grill him over dinner. “You’ve won gold medals. So I know you’re competitive. Why aren’t you out there trying to be number one on every run?”

Smith tells me it’s his sixth Heli-Skiing trip, and maybe he used to be a bit like that. “But I’ve learned from experience that there’s plenty of vertical and powder to be had,” he says. “If you go alpha for all five days, it becomes more of a battle of endurance. I’m going to want to

# TEND AND BEFRIEND

Why women are so darned nice out there



**ELLEN SLAUGHTER, CMH'S "PIED PIPER OF WOMEN'S HELI-SKIING"** and host of the Bodacious in the Bugaboos women's-only summer trips, says, "One of the reasons I am so keen on women's Heli-Skiing is because of the very special and often long-lasting friendships that women make on these trips." She believes that women are natural connectors, and when a group of women come together in special mountain places away from the noise of their busy lives, something magical happens.

Recent scientific research conducted at UCLA suggests that it's not just the estrogen-fest that triggers such memorable experiences. The study found that when confronted with stress, instead of experiencing a hormonal cascade that triggers a fight or flight response as a man would, the sudden release of oxytocin in women is more likely to inspire a "tend and befriend" reaction.

In challenging situations women will seek out social contact, especially with other women, and will urge each other on, which may explain why women's only clinics and programs have proven so successful at helping female skiers push through their perceived limits.

Want to trade glass ceilings for powder face-shots? Book your spot for this season's Chicks in the Chopper women's-only Heli-Ski week, at CMH Gothics, March 29 - April 3, 2012. 🍷



catch some air but not so much that the legs won't hold up for the duration."

Smith has skied with some burly crews, and though he does like skiing with a strong group, "it is pretty special when you get to ski with some proficient women. The dynamic shifts and I enjoy the variety, especially when it's accompanied by tons of laughs."

Meanwhile, I'm starting to notice, a woman in a Heli-Skiing operation stands out, especially if you're flying solo. Says von Neudegg, "Men come alone a lot. Women are generally reluctant to do so. As you can imagine, a woman alone in a lodge mostly full of men gets a lot of 'care and attention,' so it usually works out very nicely for them. There are women who come solo every year and have a really wonderful time. They do not feel intimidated, and they easily fit into the skiing groups. Many men love having women in the group. It makes for a different dynamic—one that can be easily focused on having fun and less on competing with each other."

I typically spend most of my ski days chasing after a partner who is stronger, faster, and usually willing to give me about 30 seconds to catch my breath. I'm finding this group to be similarly accommodating. I'm having a blast, high-fiving with a former Olympian, joking with a Dutch airline pilot who is motivating his teenage daughter to ace her final exams with the promise of a Heli-Ski trip, wrestling the chocolate snack-bag away from another guy, because "I'm a girl and I need it more," or leaving a group of men in my powder dust.

One woman who understands the female perspective is Ellen Slaughter, host of several CMH Summer women's only programs including Bodacious in the Bugaboos, Slaughter travels everywhere with a suitcase full of wigs, fake cigarettes, and a clear mission to knock flat any of the hurdles that keep women out of the mountains.

Slaughter speculates that many women forego opportunities like Heli-Skiing because they're waiting for someone to give them permission to indulge themselves. "We like to think we're indispensable," she says. Women sometimes trip themselves up believing that no one could get by if they went away for a week, while men don't seem to have that hold-back. Indeed, the first time Slaughter went Heli-Skiing, she was co-hosting a trip to the Bobbie Burns Lodge just after Boxing Day, 2005. Every one of the 37 men invited on the trip responded in the affirmative, immediately. "On the spot. During the Christmas holidays. Straight away. No question. I even asked some of them outright, do you need to check with anyone and get back to me?"

Slaughter was one of only three women on that trip. "I had never Heli-Skied. I had never powder skied before. I arrived late. I forgot my transceiver and had to sprint back from the heli-pad to the lodge with everyone waiting for me. I was so freaked out. It was kind of do-or-die. And I just had to do it." But in the end, the experience was amazing. So amazing that Slaughter has since become such a huge advocate that Steve Chambers, CMH's Revelstoke Area Manager, calls her the "pied piper of women's Heli-Skiing."

"It's really such an incredible experience," she says. "It's so empowering. The thrill of the chopper. The beauty is just spectacular. I really like the physical challenge. Plus, the feeling of being completely in the present is quite special. You have to think about your skiing, bundling your skis together, there's a bunch of stuff requiring your attention, so I'm not thinking about my family, my work, any of the things that normally keep my brain so busy. I'm totally focused on what I'm doing."

By week's end I know exactly what she's talking about. It boils down to obeying Liliane Lambert's overriding instruction: Have fun. Not even the odd moment of penis envy as you scout for a pee-tree can detract from the fact that fun is a gender-neutral zone.

Ladies, this is the 21st century. It's time to woman up. Trust me, the trip of a lifetime awaits. ❄️



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# SNOW

**IT'S NOT EXACTLY THE WORLD'S MOST ROMANTIC IMAGE:** a rugged mountain guide, alone, setting out to tackle the challenges of the harsh Canadian mountains in deepest winter... by hunching over his laptop computer.

But for 37-year CMH veteran Jon “Colani” Bezzola, a computer and an Internet connection have become the most important items in his toolbox. It’s an unlikely fate for a guy who earned his guide stripes the old-fashioned way in the Engadine region of Switzerland, back when learning to read snow by eye and feel—not to mention learning to speak five languages—was the closest thing you would get to database management. As CMH’s Mountain Safety Manager, however, Bezzola spends most of the winter flitting across the 15,000 square kilometre expanse of tenures surrounding CMH’s 11 lodges—and his trusty laptop is never far from hand.

“CMH first started compiling snow-related data electronically about 20 years back,” Bezzola recalls. “At first it was a very primitive old MS-DOS system, but by 1994 we hooked up with a young guide from Alta, Utah, Roger Atkins, who had been working on a computerized method of tracking snow conditions over time.” Hans Gmoser managed to talk Atkins into coming to CMH to guide, and together with Bezzola and others, they refined a proprietary system called SnowBase that, much evolved, is still in place.

At its core, SnowBase consists of daily snowfall, weather and condition reports from manual recordings at survey plots in all 11 areas, as well as random field tests. CMH’s own reporting is further augmented by a region-wide information-sharing program of the Canadian Avalanche Association called InfoEx, in which other professionals such as B.C. Highways, backcountry lodges and cat-skiing operations render their own condition reports. From this mass of information, Bezzola and his fellow guides face the ongoing task of digesting its meaning in regards to choosing safe places to ski.

Raw numerical data is only a small part. Human assessment and decision-making remain an essential component. One of the most important enhancements of SnowBase, says Bezzola, is a slope-by-slope photographic record of every named run in the CMH universe, frequently updated in the field using digital cameras. During conference calls just before dinner, and then at the morning guides’ meetings, Bezzola and the guides review the day’s proposed skiing targets specifically in light of the historic and prevailing conditions. “We ask questions like, What type of terrain has been skied over the last two or three days, and was there anything unusual? Did you see any avalanches? What about sluffing? All of these things are noted directly on the photographs, with particular attention to areas of concern.” Another key feature of the process is that at each area, one guide is designated as the daily snow safety evaluator. Rather than

guide guests, his or her job is to roam the tenure, make and record stability tests, and ensure that whatever calls were made by Bezzola and the other guides, on-site observation must be able to back them up. And even then, there’s one more vital protocol. “Say we give the go-ahead in the morning; it doesn’t mean things are green and totally without risk. If just one of five guides says ‘I don’t think we should be here,’ it’s off. Everyone has a veto.”

Meanwhile, ordinary skiers usually have just one question for the laptop guru. Have snowfall amounts changed much in your 37 years? “I don’t think so,” he says, “apart from minor year-to-year differences. Sure, maybe temperatures themselves are more prone to fluctuation than they were 20 years back. But as for raw snowfall? Not so much. I never saw it deeper at my place in the Columbia Valley than we had last winter.” ❄️

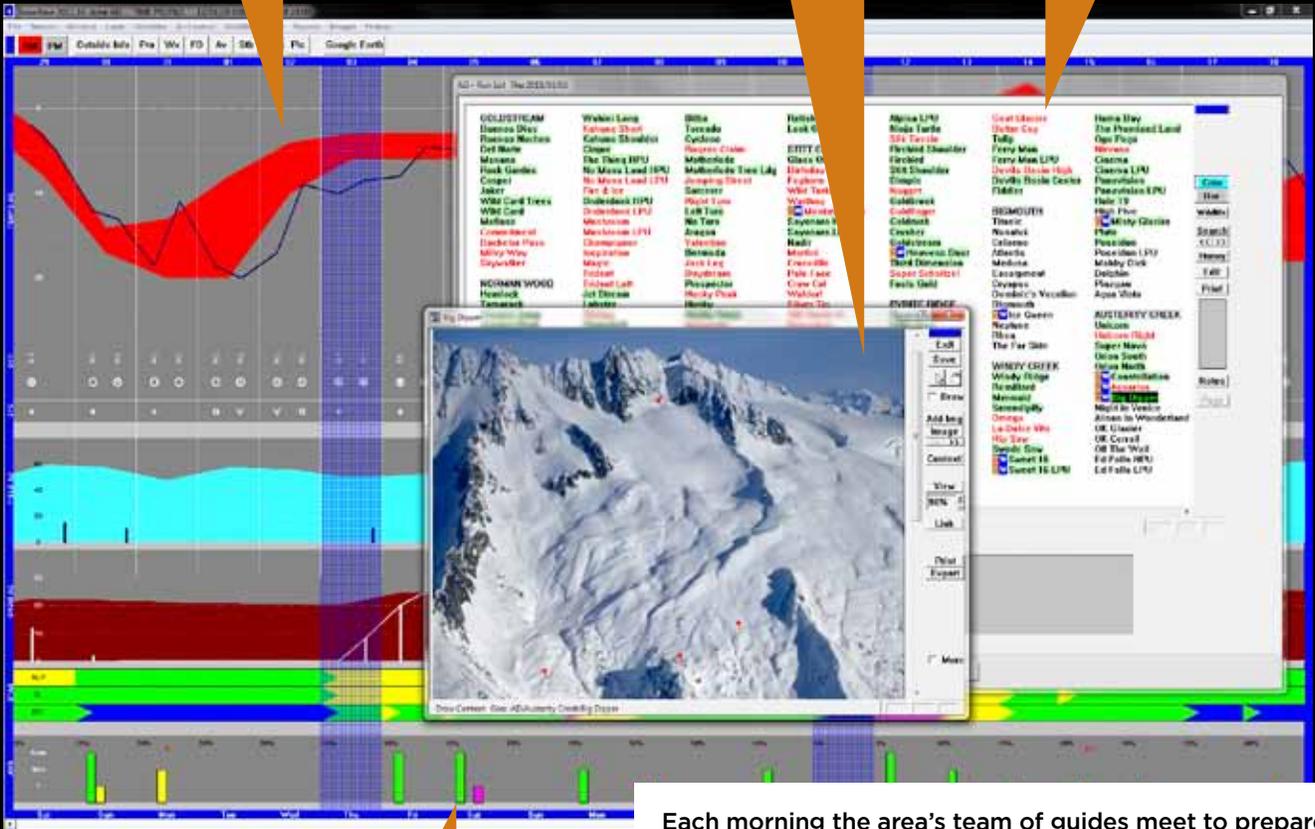


# TECH

Daily min and max temperature as measured in the areas. Temperature change has a big impact on snow stability and snow quality.

Photographs of the runs including flags showing pickups and landings help make sure everyone is talking about the same areas.

The run list. Every day the guide teams go through the run list and decide where they will ski that day. Runs that have been marked red cannot be skied that day.



Historical data shows the last time the run was skied.

Each morning the area's team of guides meet to prepare that day's run list. The factors used to decide where we will ski include various sources such as the season profile (which includes many pieces of snowpack data), and a review of each run photo to select the safest and best lines available given that day's current conditions.



Andy Epstein on his way past 15 million feet.

**YOU CAN BE FORGIVEN** if you get the impression that Jack Johnson and his ski pals seem blasé about celebrating a major milestone. They're not. Gathered in the 112 Restaurant at the Regent Hotel late in January after an epic powder day, the veteran CMH Revelstoke skiers from Park City, Utah are simply too busy high-fiving one another as they review the day's video on their laptops to even rush to their dinner, much less celebrate their patriarch's milestone.

By dessert, however, they've calmed down enough for guide Todd Guyn to grab the champagne, an electric blue Arc'teryx Neos AR ski suit and a certificate of achievement. "It's my pleasure," he announces, "to award Jack Johnson these mementoes on the occasion of his seven millionth vertical foot skied with CMH. Jack has been a..." But someone interrupts, "Yeah, yeah, Jack's awesome. Come on, he knows the drill by now. Just pour the champagne." Cue the old man jokes. High-five some more.

It's an unusually low-key permutation of the million-foot ceremony, a staple of CMH since 1971, where the boisterous celebrations traditionally range from mock-formal to downright raunchy. But for Johnson, who turns 70 this coming season, the achievement remains as sweet as when he snagged his first million-foot award back in 1982. "A blue HCC powder suit," he recalls. "And somehow I got in the brochure that year. I still keep that picture behind my desk. It was a great suit, too."



# MILLIONS OF FEET; MILLIONS OF MEMORIES



The exact moment the odometer turns over? When the photo opportunity is just right.

Johnson clearly understands the sweep of time, and the enduring passion of powder skiing. In all, he's made 56 visits to CMH since he first skied the Monashees in 1977 with a buddy named Jim Dalton. "Even though we didn't ski together for a lot of years, we just happened to hit six million on the same day, on the same run. But as far as this goes, what excites me most is that this is my 35th straight year. It's part of my life, obviously."

Clearly, many others agree. CMH deals out some 300 million-foot awards per season, and around 4,000 skiers own at least one suit, the ultimate conversation-starter wherever it's worn. Only a few dozen have ten or more. Typically, skiers reach the million mark in anywhere from eight to ten visits. Although the award began as a blazer, it quickly morphed into the far more useful ski suit. Depending on the era, brands have included HCC, Far West, Ditrani, Bogner, Marmot and now Arc'teryx.

Having extra suits is never a bad idea for Jack Johnson, who owns a resort development consultancy in Park City and hits the snow 100

days a season. The key to his longevity, and his ability to keep up with ex-racer pals 25 years his junior (they're known to CMH guides as the Park City Dream Team), is staying in shape. "Any good intermediate can Heli-Ski," he says, "but you waste your money if you're not in condition."

Johnson's daily appointments with the elliptical trainer and the yoga mat are the key to his longevity. So too, he admits, is the new equipment. "I skied the first five million on 210s. If it weren't for fat skis, I probably wouldn't make it. Technically I've never skied as well as I do right now, which makes no sense."

That said, it seems unlikely that Johnson will ever eclipse the reigning champion of CMH vertical: Todd Leibowitz, with a mind-boggling 21 million. He's being chased by friendly rival Andy Epstein, with 15. Late last season Epstein was the guy who cracked up the guides when he mock-boasted, after Leibowitz had departed for the summer, that it was he who was in fact the world leader... "among active skiers." ❄️



# MAGIC CARPET RIDE

The Bell 212 is the world's most tested helicopter with over 850 units worldwide. Operators love them, especially in harsh environments. The reason? Ruggedness, reliability and safety. Developed with the Canadian military for service in the Arctic, the aircraft's heart is its twin Pratt & Whitney turbo engines which generate well over 1,800 horsepower, thanks to the addition of a \$300,000 high-performance upgrade. Should one fail, an extreme rarity, the remaining engine can easily power the aircraft.

A helicopter is rarely alone. On the ground it's in the capable hands of an engineer, whose many support tasks include a daily two hours of top-to-bottom inspection. It's a preventative system based on a strict schedule, involving changing parts on site, reviewing operating systems, and keeping the helicopter in like-new shape for our skiers.

The modern ski basket is a far cry from the jury-rigged car ski rack that served the purpose when Heli-Skiing began. However, after three upgrades by CMH and Alpine's sister company, Aerotech, the ceiling has been reached. Baskets simply can't get any bigger. So, fat-ski designers, consider yourself warned.



In the age of satellite navigation, many skiers wonder, why don't helicopters have a high-tech solution to landing in zero visibility? Well, aeronautical engineers have yet to crack that nut. Meanwhile, the best solution is still to have a highly skilled pilot who knows mountain weather and is intimately familiar with the CMH terrain he flies over every day.



For a mere \$2-3 million (used), you can buy your own Bell 212.



Aviator shades: the key to staying cool.



Bell 407 with cineflex camera mounted



Helicopter pilots can get their license after 100 hours of experience, but starting CMH pilots usually have 5,000 or more, including specialized mountain flight training. Famous for keeping their cool under any conditions, pilots get plenty of practise dealing with risk—many spend their summers battling forest fires or helicopter logging.



# FILM

# SCHOOL



What happens when the Warren Miller Film Crew and the product development team from K2 Skis met up during Week 13 at CMH Monashees? Double the fun of course. Steven Threndyle reports.

#### TO SAY THAT K2 PRO SKIER TYLER CECCANTI

is “stoked” about filming a segment at CMH Monashees for Warren Miller’s upcoming movie hardly does justice to that overused cliché. Ceccanti, whose solid, brick outhouse physique comes from working for his dad’s construction company in the off-season, is vibrating with energy as he describes the epic, non-stop descent he just made down the Monashees’ famed Red Baron run.

Like duelling dogfighters, Ceccanti and fellow K2 skier Andy Mahre soar down the mountainside in tandem, launching from one snow mushroom to the next, floating briefly through space, and then touching down in explosions of powder. Ceccanti, grinning ear-to-ear, exclaims, “We stomped it. Cleaned it out. Everything came together. Best snow, ever. Best run ever. If that doesn’t make the film, I don’t know what the hell will...”

Aside perhaps from surfing in glassy, turquoise waves, no outdoor activity is as well matched to action movie-making as deep powder skiing. And no film company understands the medium better than Warren Miller Entertainment (WME), whose annual flicks have, for over six decades, been an autumn tradition wherever skiers are itching for the snow to start falling. What’s more, Ceccanti and Mahre are merely continuing a long tradition of making ski movies at CMH.

“CMH’s founder, Hans Gmoser, always took a movie camera on his early explorations of the Bugaboos and Cariboos,” notes CMH Marketing Guy, Mark Piquette, the man who helped WME set up this seven-day film shoot. “He would then edit the footage into movies that he’d show while on the road that would captivate audiences and, often enough, make them sign up right on the spot. It was a very effective marketing tool.” But others, too, saw the potential of the ultimate ski film set. During the mid-70s, legendary California filmmaker Dick Barrymore came to CMH to film numerous segments for his movies, which at the time competed against Warren Miller’s in the annual competition to win the hearts (and wallets) of skiers around the world.

First explored by longtime CMH guide Sepp Renner (one of his daughters, Natalie, guides for CMH, and the other, Sara, was an Olympic medallist on Canada’s Nordic ski team), the Monashees have always been known to cognoscenti as offering arguably the most radical slopes in the CMH empire. The motto of the Monashees might best be summed up by its most famous run: Steep and Deep. Thigh-burning descents of up to 1,500 vertical metres snake through massive stands of cedar, hemlock and western red cedar. It is, by any standard, the definition of gnarly terrain. The first time they skied it together, Gmoser simply told Renner, “You’re nuts.” ▶



Then there's the snowfall. Storms forming over the BC interior are known for settling in the mountains for days on end. Plus, as any adventure skier will tell you, "It's always deeper in the trees," and the Monashees demonstrates that like nowhere else.

To turn the screws on the adventure meter even tighter (not to mention the DIN setting on the bindings), guides and clients have in recent times sought out an even greater challenge, the controlled chaos of charging down bulbous knobs of snow that are lovingly referred to as "pillow lines." In the summer, many of the Monashee runs are actually massive avalanche paths studded with gigantic boulders. As winter storms pound the range, layers of snow collect on top and actually magnify the size of the underlying rocks with each passing storm—bulging up like a soufflé rising out of its pan.

So, spectacular terrain is a given. But ski filming demands favourable light, which means decent weather. Bozeman, Montana-based producer Chris Patterson has been shooting for 19 years with WME and has pretty much seen it all when it comes to depressing greybird skies, not to mention questionable snow conditions. The first three days of the Monashees shoot are somewhat challenging due to fog, wind, and storms—but the good news is that it has dumped over a metre of blower powder in two days. And while some of the guests and the pros are a bit discouraged, Patterson is not. "I love shooting in British Columbia because there are very few down days compared to places like Chile and Alaska. I have always wanted to check out CMH Monashees and it has lived up to its billing. Everywhere we look there is a ridiculous shot that we can work with."

“Everywhere we look there is a ridiculous shot that we can work with.”

For the first two days, Mahre and Ceccanti concentrate on skiing what they call “mini-golf” lines, which are short, test-piece runs where the skiers might perform two or three turns before hucking themselves off a terrain feature and landing—or crashing—a corked 720 or a laid-out backflip. Similar to filming an action sequence Hollywood, a lot of preparation must take place for just a few seconds of action. As Ceccanti says, “You have to be really, really patient, and then be ready to perform at your best once the cameras are set up and rolling. It can take a couple of hours to film one run.”

Later in the week, the clouds lift and Mahre and Ceccanti are able to ski long, uninterrupted pitches. This is where it gets complicated. For the big shots Patterson supervises three recording devices, including two Super 16 film cameras, an Arriflex SR2 High Speed and an Aaton XTR Prod that are set up on-slope. But the real wow-factor piece of gear is the Cineflex V14 HD digital video bolted to the underside of a Bell 407, a set-up that is ideally suited for capturing the dynamic tracking shots that separate Warren Miller films from the hordes of young imitators. “The Cineflex really came into its own during the filming of the Planet Earth documentary several years ago,” notes Patterson. “A specially trained videographer in the rear seat of the helicopter controls the lens by looking at two digital monitors ▶





# YOUR PERFECT SKI.



**IF YOU VISIT CMH MONASHEES**, chances are good that someone will wheel out an old-fashioned 16mm projector to screen *A Bit of Madness*, a 1983 Dick Barrymore film. Three things are immediately apparent. One, the snow is extremely deep. Two, the terrain was as hairball then as it is now. And three, those skis look ridiculously skinny.

That was all about to change, however, as CMH became ground zero for a new generation of powder tools, a role it continues to play. First dismissed as “cheater” skis by the macho “Manashee” tribe, wide-riders like the Miller Soft and Atomic Powder Plus found early favour with some guests. Noting speedy progress in their powder technique, CMH founder Hans Gmoser eventually became a champion of fat ski development.

But big boards didn’t catch fire among elite skiers until the late Shane McConkey, son of former CMH Cariboos guide Jim McConkey, started tinkering with them in the mid-90s. McConkey envisioned skis that would allow him to achieve high speed, then swing them sideways to “slarve” (slide and carve) his turns. In one film he even donned a pair of water skis to test the concept.

The result was the boldly experimental Volant Spatula, the first ski with “rocker,” also called “reverse camber.” The Spatula further mimicked water-ski design by being wider under foot than in the tip and tail. Alas, because they were stainless-steel Volants, they were brutally heavy.

When Volant ran into financial difficulties, K2 wasted no time poaching the charismatic McConkey to enhance its powder ski collection. Their first offering was the Pontoon, a much lighter ski made

of wood and triaxially braided fibreglass, featuring an absolutely massive shovel combined with extreme rocker profile.

In 2010, K2 and CMH embarked on an ambitious testing program that put over a dozen pairs of new Pontoon prototypes under the boots of guests and guides at Monashee Lodge. Aaron Ambuske, K2 Vice President of Global Product Development, says, “We wanted to bring both the guides and clients up to speed on the newest widths and technologies, and get their feedback.” The fruit of that collaboration is the Pon2oon, the Pontoon’s noteworthy successor, which debuts this fall. “It’s lighter, has a wider sweet spot, and overall offers a broader level of appeal than the previous model,” Ambuske says. “This will enable Heli-Skiers to stay out longer, handle variable conditions more easily, and have more fun.” Amen to that.

Last season, K2 returned to the Monashees with some 15 new prototypes made with customary white topsheets, lest the graphics influence testers’ preferences. After each day’s skiing, there was a rigorous interview process and a detailed recording of impressions. “These were more high performance oriented than the Pon2oon,” Ambuske notes. “We took the feedback we got at CMH and then continued on to refine the variables.” Ski design remains a long-term process; these as-yet unnamed skis won’t be on shop racks until the 2012/2013 season.

One thing is certain: though the upper limits of ski width have likely been reached, efforts to refine ski shape according to rider preference will undoubtedly carry on. Fortunately, the CMH laboratories are always open. ♦



**This page:** Working in the kitchen is “almost” as fun as skiing.

**Opposite page:** Big mountains, pillow lines, helicopters and a Yeti. Week 13 had it all.



and a computer. The camera itself features a special gyroscopic device which eliminates vibration and movement to present a clear, unblemished image.”

On the snow, the analogue film cameras are either mounted in a predetermined position or Patterson will actually ski alongside the skiers and use a panning technique to record the action. “The Arriflex shoots at 150 frames per second and allows us to capture those dreamy slow-motion sequences that look so great when they’re enlarged on the big screen.”

This is Andy Mahre’s second visit to a CMH lodge in as many years. In 2010, he filmed a segment for Warren Miller’s *Wintervention* at nearby CMH Gothics along with famed freestyler Jonny Mosley. Mahre, of course, is the son of legendary US Ski Team member Steve Mahre, and the nephew of Steve’s twin, Phil, who both medalled in giant slalom at the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo. Andy’s fame is every bit as great among the new generation of freeskiers, though he readily admits, “Dad and I don’t really talk about my ski career much. I don’t think he likes the fact that I get hurt so often—the medical bills add up, and I don’t think any parent likes to see his kid in pain.”

Indeed, the inclusion of Andy Mahre provides the perfect bridge between baby boomers who grew up idolizing the Mahre brothers and their kids who know Andy through his segments with upstart film companies like Nimbus Independent and Matchstick Productions. As CMH’s Piquette says, “We were looking for a way to expose our brand to an entire generation that had not likely ever seen us, given that, except for 2010, the last time we appeared in a Warren Miller movie was the mid-1980’s.”

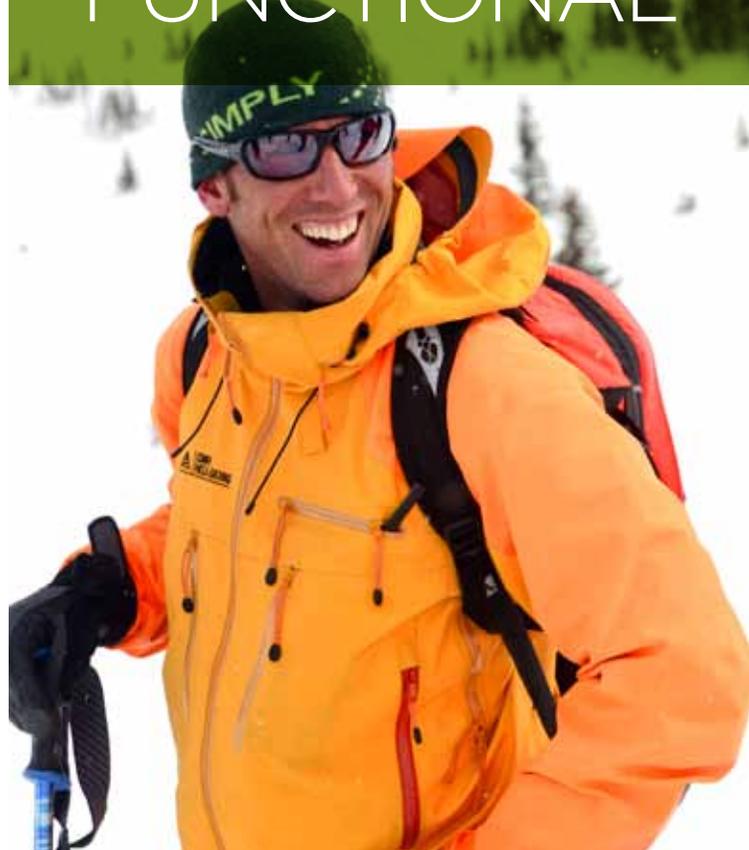
“And while we recognize that younger skiers and snowboarders watch a lot of DVDs and follow on social media, we know that skiers are very tribal. For over sixty years, skiers have been getting stoked for the upcoming season by attending Warren Miller movies. This year, we’re hoping to show more action, more skiing, and create some real excitement. Because we own our own helicopters, we can devote the kind of time and money that are required to make a quality segment.”

At one point, CMH has no less than four helicopters in the air at once: two for the film crew, one for the regular clients, and another (ironically, with former James Bond stunt double John Eaves on board) for a private group. As Piquette says, “It’s logistically challenging—I like to call it a choreographed dance—to ensure that the filmmakers and athletes are getting everything that they need without interrupting the experience of our paying guests.”

Of course, it wouldn’t be a Warren Miller movie without a touch of slapstick comedy. Watch for some mad, old-school freestyle tricks being thrown down by everyone’s favourite hairy mountain ape, the Yeti. Patterson rented the costume from a Hollywood prop shop and brought it along as an improvisational tool. “I’m not sure whether we’ll use the footage of the Yeti or not, it sort of depends upon how good the skiing footage is,” says Patterson. “But it’s nice to have a backup in case foul weather screws us up.”

One way or another, however, WME always gets the goods. Keep your eyes peeled this fall for the new film, ... *Like There’s No Tomorrow*, featuring a kick-ass celluloid superstar: CMH Heli-Skiing. ❄️

# FLASHY YET FUNCTIONAL



**THAT’S RIGHT, NEON IS BACK, BABY.** And those guides aren’t just fashion plates, they happen to be at the forefront of skiwear design, thanks to the ongoing collaboration between CMH and Arc’teryx, an outdoor gear and clothing firm based in North Vancouver, BC. A few seasons back, CMH convened a summit meeting between its mountain guides and the Arc’teryx design team. Their mission: re-design the guide uniforms from the ground up.

“It’s great for us to have such a big pool of hardcore users who are out a hundred days a season in this amazing testing ground,” says Design Manager Carl Moriarty.

The result is the Neos AR line of jackets and bib pants, where the genius is all in the details. Featuring the latest version of Gore-Tex®, the jacket an extra-tall collar with an internal draw cord that seals out spindrift when the helicopter is taking off or landing, plus a helmet-compatible hood which can be easily rolled up inside the collar when not in use. A convenient chest pocket holds a VHS radio and allows a cord to be internally routed to a microphone clip on the collar. Four zippered external pockets provide plenty of storage, while underarm zippers help expel body heat. An internal powder skirt is made of a stretchy, grippy elasticized fabric that keeps it in place while bending over, while pre-curved foam kneepads offer warmth and protection.

There’s just one problem: ordinary consumers can’t buy the garments in the ultra-visible colour now known fondly as CMH Orange. They’ll just have to find their neon fix elsewhere. ❄️





# a view with a room

Nobody ever said that Canadians don't know how to build a cabin. But when cabins are too small, and the snow so deep it would collapse the roof, something sturdier is required. Here's how CMH's iconic lodges came to be.



The Cariboo Lodge

**“ALL HANS SAID WAS, ‘GIVE ME A LODGE,’”** says now-retired architect Philippe Delesalle of the day that Canadian mountain accommodation changed forever. Delesalle was a young lion when he first met Gmoser in 1952 as employees of the Sunshine Village ski area in Banff. They became fast friends, the mountains their bond; Delesalle was on the teams which Gmoser led on his famous expeditions to Mt. Logan and, later, the Icefields Traverse from Lake Louise to Jasper.

By 1968, though, Delesalle was a practicing architect about to define the iconic CMH lodge style, his signature work. Gmoser, he recalls, trusted him absolutely. “He didn’t say ‘Give me an Austrian lodge, or a Swiss lodge.’ He knew that I would come up with a purely Canadian design, one that was appropriate for this incredible setting.” Delesalle did just that, using local timber and stone and a set of unwavering principles geared precisely to the demands of the Heli-Skiing program: they were to be south-facing, with a dining room on the top floor, panoramic windows and a central entrance

at snow level. But it’s the seemingly counter-intuitive flat roof profile that is Delesalle’s cleverest decision. “When we worked at Sunshine we were so fed up shovelling snow off the shed rooves,” he says. His solution was to build an ultra-strong double roof with broad eaves, and a slight front-to-back slope so that any creeping snowpack would fall harmlessly to the rear of the lodge. Delesalle’s first iteration was the Bugaboo Lodge which, four renovations later, still follows his original precepts.

Newcomers are still amazed when they encounter such comfort and solidity so deep in a forbidding wilderness. And as far as imitation goes, consider Delesalle flattered. These days you will see many of his design hallmarks copied in backcountry lodges across the mountain west, many of which would probably still be fussing over A-frame rooves had the CMH style not set the endemic standard. Delesalle is understandably proud. “I’m a happy man,” he says. “I’m 82 now and I never made money in architecture. It was always a work of love.” Amen to that. ▶



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1,000 possible skiing options.  
11 uniquely Canadian locations.  
1 important question...  
Where to stay?

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## 1 Adamants

Travel 350 kilometres west of Banff and you'll find Adamant Lodge situated at the confluence of four major alpine valleys. It's named for the surrounding diamond-hard peaks, a sub-range of the Selkirks, where we do all our Adamants-based Heli-Skiing

The Selkirks are famed for long glaciers, deep valleys, and rugged vistas. Classic tree skiing and huge, open glacier terrain await Adamants skiers. The challenging access to these mountains ensures that our abundant terrain remains untouched by all but CMH guides and guests.



### DETAILS

**Capacity :** 44 guests

**Mountain Ranges :** Selkirks

**Notable Runs :** Concentrator, Silkroad, Sweet 16

**Base Elevation :** 955m

**Skiing Elevation :** 900m - 3100m

**Skiing Terrain :** 1073sq. km - 199 runs

**Average Snowfall @1800m :** 1800cm

### FACILITIES:

15 single and 16 double/twin rooms, all with private bath, bar-lounge area, dining room, games room, shops, climbing wall, exercise equipment, massage, whirlpool (outdoor) and sauna

## 2 Bobbie Burns

Bobbie Burns offers some of the finest Heli-Skiing anywhere, with access to both the Purcell and Selkirk Mountains. The area hosts a rich selection of runs, both in the trees and in high, glaciated terrain. Skiing here is fast and challenging, suitable only for physically fit, well-experienced skiers who enjoy a faster pace.

Our 33 guests are divided into a maximum of 3 groups of 11 skiers each, allowing us to fly further afield for more time on the slopes. The area's valleys enfold several micro-climates, allowing us to find good skiing in virtually all conditions.



### DETAILS

**Capacity :** 33 guests

**Mountain Ranges :** Purcells & Selkirks

**Notable Runs :** Snow Ocean, Little Sister, Killer Whale

**Base Elevation :** 1370m

**Skiing Elevation :** 1370m - 3050m

**Skiing Terrain :** 1053sq. km - 224 runs

**Average Snowfall @1800m :** 1500cm

### FACILITIES:

12 single and 13 double/twin rooms, all with private bath, bar-lounge area, dining room games room, shops, climbing wall, exercise equipment, massage, whirlpool (outdoor) and sauna

## 3 Bugaboos

Historic significance and modern comforts come together in the Bugaboos. Under Hans Gmoser, CMH began Heli-Ski operations there in 1965, and it remains our most established area.

Characterized by mighty granite spires, the Bugaboo Mountains offer immense variety in terrain, with plentiful ski runs both above and below tree line. Despite the draw of these world-renowned mountains, Bugaboo Lodge remains the sole base for skiing among these majestic peaks and glaciers.



### DETAILS

**Capacity :** 44 guests

**Mountain Ranges :** Purcells

**Notable Runs :** Cannonbarrell, Kingsbury Pearl, Macarthy

**Base Elevation :** 1490m

**Skiing Elevation :** 945m - 3050m

**Skiing Terrain :** 1017sq. km - 206 runs

**Average Snowfall @1800m :** 1200cm

### FACILITIES:

20 single and 15 double/twin rooms, all with private bath, bar-lounge area, dining room, games room, shops, climbing wall, exercise equipment, massage, rooftop whirlpool and sauna

## 4 Cariboods

Cariboo Lodge is the finest mountain lodge in the Cariboo Range. The Cariboo Mountains beg to be skied, offering both extensive alpine runs and phenomenal tree skiing. The numerous safe and obvious drop-offs and pickups for the helicopter offer our guests access to a wide range of runs. Consistently high levels of snowfall in the North Thompson Valley ensure the Cariboods enjoy prime Heli-Skiing conditions until very late in the season.



### DETAILS

**Capacity :** 44 guests

**Mountain Ranges :** Cariboods

**Notable Runs :** Moustache, Crazy Horse, Going Home

**Base Elevation :** 1100m

**Skiing Elevation :** 1100m - 3000m

**Skiing Terrain :** 1489sq. km - 382 runs

**Average Snowfall @1800m :** 1400cm

### FACILITIES:

12 single and 16 double/twin rooms, all with private bath, bar-lounge area, dining room, games room, shops, climbing wall, exercise equipment, massage, whirlpool (outdoor) and sauna

## 5 Galena

Galena is best known for ultra-deep powder and varied, challenging tree skiing. All our Galena skiing is done in the Badshot Range of the Selkirks, offering abundant snow and rugged beauty.

The lodge's modular architecture is trimmed in logs and painted an earth brown. Simple but comfortable bedrooms at the ground level attach to a three-storey living area and kitchen. Three major valleys converge close to the lodge, providing access to skiable areas in most types of weather.



### DETAILS

**Capacity :** 44 guests

**Mountain Ranges :** Selkirks

**Notable Runs :** Mega Bubba, Hanging Gardens, Freefall

**Base Elevation :** 1050m

**Skiing Elevation :** 1000m - 3100m

**Skiing Terrain :** 1080sq. km - 167 runs

**Average Snowfall @1800m :** 1800cm

### FACILITIES:

20 single and 13 double/twin rooms, all with private bath, bar-lounge area, dining room, games room, shop, exercise equipment, massage, whirlpool and sauna

## 6 Gothics

As one of CMH's larger areas, Gothic skiers enjoy a rich selection of runs, with excellent tree skiing and spectacular alpine runs and open glaciers. Several microclimates give skiers numerous options no matter the weather, avalanche stability or snow conditions. Our core of experienced guides and pilots strive to make each day as fun and safe as possible.

At the end of a big day of skiing the fun carries over to the lodge where you can socialize with your new ski friends and our amazing staff. A week in the Gothics always makes for a memorable holiday experience; just ask one of our many loyal Gothic guests, they'll be happy to tell you!



### DETAILS

**Capacity :** 33 guests

**Mountain Ranges :** Selkirks & Monashees

**Notable Runs :** Run of the Century, Endless Journey, Boulder Peak

**Base Elevation :** 700m

**Skiing Elevation :** 1000m - 2800m

**Skiing Terrain :** 1923sq. km - 171 runs

**Average Snowfall @1800m :** 1800cm

### FACILITIES:

36 single with shared bath and 12 double/twin rooms with private bath, bar-lounge area, dining room, games room, shops, climbing wall, exercise equipment, massage, steam room, whirlpool (outdoor) and wood-fired sauna



## 7 Kootenay

CMH Kootenay is all about Heli-Skiing. With two mountain ranges and endless valleys of perfectly spaced trees and open bowls, it's a skier's paradise. We are blessed with abundant snowfall and have so much terrain, we never run out of fresh slopes to ride.

Kootenay offers flexible trip dates and convenient travel options, ideal for strong skiers Heli-Skiing for the first time or for those with limited time off. Our guides are experts at choosing terrain, and while we usually stay out all day, taking a break is always an option.

Guests stay in the Tenderfoot Lodge in downtown Nakusp, on the shores of Arrow Lake, south of Revelstoke. The lodge is owned and operated by CMH. We access our ski areas from several staging points, using vans to transport guests to the helicopters.

Hard-core skiers and riders should consider our Small Group Heli-Skiing program.



## 8 McBride

McBride, CMH's largest area, is located in the northern Cariboo. With the combined features of forests and glaciers, McBride offers a magnificent range of skiing opportunities.

With only one private group of up to 10 skiers, McBride offers the mobility and flexibility needed to find the snow and terrain best suited to the group.

Accommodations in McBride are at the North Country Lodge, where CMH leases a private facility. All our rooms and amenities are contained in an enclosed structure exclusive to CMH guests.



## 9 Monashees

The mature and naturally well-spaced forests lining the Monashee range are responsible for its reputation among CMH guests as a tree skiers' paradise. Along with some of the best tree skiing on earth, the Monashees is also admired for its long, consistently steep-pitched runs.

The Monashees offers perhaps the most challenging skiing of any of our areas, and is suitable only for experienced CMH Heli-Skiers who normally ski in the fastest group in other CMH areas.



### DETAILS

**Capacity :** 45 guests

**Mountain Ranges :** Selkirks & Monashees

**Notable Runs :** Pleasure Centre, Powder One, Empress

**Base Elevation :** 460m

**Skiing Elevation :** 1060m - 2880m

**Skiing Terrain :** 1155sq. km - 230 runs

**Average Snowfall @1800m :** 1800cm

### DETAILS

**Capacity :** 10 guests

**Mountain Ranges :** Cariboo

**Notable Runs :** Apollo, Gaz Me Up, Gonzo

**Base Elevation :** 735m

**Skiing Elevation :** 1100m - 3000m

**Skiing Terrain :** 1617sq. km - 219 runs

**Average Snowfall @1800m :** 1400cm

### DETAILS

**Capacity :** 48 guests

**Mountain Ranges :** Selkirks & Monashees

**Notable Runs :** Steep and Deep, Elevator, Bonanza, Bavaria

**Base Elevation :** 580m

**Skiing Elevation :** 580m - 3140m

**Skiing Terrain :** 1712sq. km - 275 runs

**Average Snowfall @1800m :** 2000cm

### FACILITIES:

Double/twin rooms, all with private baths, bar-lounge area, restaurant, shops, massage, natural hot springs facilities located nearby

### FACILITIES:

10 rooms, all with private baths, bar-lounge area, dining room, shops, exercise room with climbing wall, massage, whirlpool, steam room and sauna

### FACILITIES:

26 rooms with 2 queen beds and 15 rooms with 1 queen bed, all with private baths, bar-lounge area, dining room, games room, shops, climbing wall, exercise equipment, massage, rooftop whirlpool and sauna

## 10 Revelstoke

With access to both the Monashees and the Selkirks, Revelstoke is defined by deep snow, big, open alpine and glacier terrain, and tree skiing equal to the best of any other CMH area. Its great size and quick accessibility by vans and helicopters allow us to find good skiing even in inclement weather.

Revelstoke differs from other CMH lodges in that accommodations are at the Regent Hotel, set in one of British Columbia's hottest new winter destinations. In 2008, the newly expanded Revelstoke Mountain Resort opened — this once small-town ski area is now a world-class mountain resort, boasting over 5,500 vertical feet of skiing and an historical annual snowfall of 40 - 60 feet (that's 1200 - 1800 cm). CMH guests are guaranteed skiing, even on those rare days when the helicopter cannot fly.



### DETAILS

**Capacity :** 48 guests

**Mountain Ranges :** Selkirks & Monashees

**Notable Runs :** High Roller, Copeland, Crawford

**Base Elevation :** 470m

**Skiing Elevation :** 900m - 3000m

**Skiing Terrain :** 1597sq. km - 310 runs

**Average Snowfall @1800m :** 1800cm

### FACILITIES:

Double, twin and single rooms, all with private bath, bar-lounge area, dining room, shop, exercise equipment, massage, whirlpool (outdoor)

## 11 Valemount

Valemount guests ski in the vast Cariboo Mountains, enjoying the range's variety of terrain, from long, steep tree runs to wide-open glaciers. The lodge, set in a valley just beyond the town of Valemount, is designed specifically for private groups of up to 10.

The lodge's private groups enjoy the use of their own helicopter and two guides, allowing for a high degree of flexibility. Valemount guides are experienced instructors, making this area ideal for Heli-Skiing old-timers and first-timers alike.



### DETAILS

**Capacity :** 10 guests

**Mountain Ranges :** Cariboo

**Notable Runs :** Grand Illusion, Pressure Drop, Moustache

**Base Elevation :** 825m

**Skiing Elevation :** 1000m - 3150m

**Skiing Terrain :** 1498sq. km - 382 runs

**Average Snowfall @1800m :** 1400cm

### FACILITIES:

10 double, twin and single rooms, all with private bath, bar-lounge area, dining room, shops, climbing wall, exercise equipment, massage, pool & ping pong table, whirlpool (outdoor) and sauna





# THE FOOD CHAIN

**NEXT TIME YOU VISIT CMH, ASK TO TOUR THE WALK-IN REFRIGERATOR.** You think you had a complicated travel itinerary? Imagine how all that fine food—from cape gooseberries to baby arugula to fresh salmon fillets—got there in the first place, and in such prime condition.

The responsibility for filling that larder belongs to Rick Carswell, a 21-year CMH veteran who began as a lodge chef but has been Food and Beverage Manager for the past 10 seasons. “It’s a complex job,” Carswell understates. “We run a crew of 40 chefs and pastry chefs, 24 kitchen assistants and 24 bartenders, and each season we go through about \$2.5 million in food and \$2 million in liquor.”

Sourcing that food is a massive job in itself, not to mention the daunting task of trucking—and occasionally, flying—pristine produce through the Canadian winter and into the remote Columbias. Freshness and quality are obviously critical, but so are matters of ethics and sustainability, and never more than for a food dear to Carswell’s heart, Pacific salmon. “I grew up in Comox, B.C.,” says Carswell, “and I saw first-hand how overfishing decimated the industry in my home town.” On top of that, he had a life-changing encounter in the mid-90s with famed Canadian environmentalist David Suzuki, who told Carswell flat-out: “If the entire world wants to eat salmon, it has to be farmed. Period.”

Trouble is, salmon farms often pose their own share of negative environmental effects, which is why Carswell is so delighted to have found a Tofino, B.C. outfit called Creative Salmon Ltd. that is setting new standards for sustainability. “First, they grow Pacific chinook salmon (also known as king) instead of the Atlantic variety used by many farms. They have a low-density operation, with movable pens to avoid polluting the seafloor, no antibiotics, multiple broodstocks, and they upgrade genetics annually. Plus it’s owned and managed by

the Tla-O-Qui-Aht First Nation.” Carswell typically makes a salmon order on Monday, then the four- to five-kilogram fresh fish are flown to Calgary, and on Saturday they are helicoptered into the lodges. “It’s more expensive than most, but it’s a beautiful fish.”

As for beef, CMH buys from another company with exceptional farming methods, Prairie Heritage Producers Inc., a network of 17 family-owned ranches in B.C. and Alberta whose prime cuts find their way into five-star restaurants from Zurich to Hong Kong. Their Heritage Angus Beef starts with herds blessed by state-of-the-art genetics (initially developed in New Zealand, of all places), and unlike most other ranches, the bulls, cows and calves all roam the same natural pastures together. “Beef producers once made a big deal out of grain-fed beef,” says Carswell, “but the current wisdom is that grass-fed is definitely the best way to go, with no added drugs or hormones. These are undoubtedly the most natural, and therefore sustainable, beef operations on the continent.”

Finding the best of the best is not always about shopping. Sometimes quality products introduce themselves thanks to food-producing CMH guests. Pedro “Perico” Gomez Baeza is a passionate Heli-Skier whose family estate in Andalucia, Spain produces premium olive oil from ancient trees once tended by an order of nuns. Each harvest season, he ships a container-load of LA Organic olive oil, specially bottled for CMH, that reaches our Banff warehouse just before the snow flies.

Then there are our privately sourced wines from a BC industry that emerged around the same time as Heli-Skiing. Try a Chardonnay or Pinot Grigio from Blue Mountain Vineyards—superb wines not available on the open market. Credit head winemaker and frequent CMH guest Ian Mavety, a true artist both in the cellar and on the slopes. 🍁

“You think you had a complicated travel itinerary? Imagine how all that fine food—from cape gooseberries to baby arugula to fresh salmon fillets—got there in the first place, and in such prime condition.”





**This page:** One of the potential hazards at CMH... the heli-belly



## 2 brothers. 30 years. 1 passion.

Hi. I'm Bob Shay and my brother is Russ Shay. Surefoot is our story—two brothers who grew up with a relentless passion for skiing. When we opened our first Surefoot store in a closet-sized space in Park City in 1982, our main objective was to offer customers a boot that would provide both comfort and performance for all skiers. When almost instantly customers flooded in, we knew that we were on to something. We continued to open more stores throughout North America and then into Europe, becoming the first ski boot shop to cross the international borders.

Surefoot succeeds because the product we came up with—the Surefoot Custom ski boot—fulfilled all of our wildest ambitions. On the outside, an ability-specific shell is selected to best match each skier's skill level and intensity. Inside, the skier's foot and lower leg are enveloped in a state-of-the-art liner. This firm, yet forgiving liner assures an optimal fit every time you put your boots on. Complementing the liner and the shell is the foundation of the perfect fit—the Surefoot Orthotic.

These elements combine to offer unrivaled fit characteristics that produce a level of comfort and performance unmatched by any other ski boot.

Each year we strive to make our product better and this winter will be no exception. Last year's introduction of the Surefoot Contoura X1 Liner proved that comfort and performance no longer have to be mutually exclusive parts of a ski boot. This liner successfully eliminated the break-in period that brings discomfort to so many skiers. But true to Surefoot's standards, we have continued to progress and make considerable advancements with our product. This is evident with the Surefoot Contoura X2 Liner, the latest model of our liner which has significant improvements that are designed to further increase the comfort, performance, and appearance of our Surefoot ski boot. In addition to the new liner, this year we have the largest selection of shells we have ever had from various manufacturers which only gives our skiers greater options for a more customized fit.

While the size and scope of the company have changed incredibly through the years, we have stayed true to our core philosophy and have remained committed to our craft. It's a passion that we share with the hundreds of highly trained boot specialists who work alongside Russ and me in our stores. Which is exactly where you can find us every day during the ski season. Unless it snows. Of course, you'll probably be out there too.

We hope to see you in a CMH Lodge someday soon.



Bob & Russ Shay : Founders of Surefoot



# CMH YEARBOOK





## Dani Loewenstein

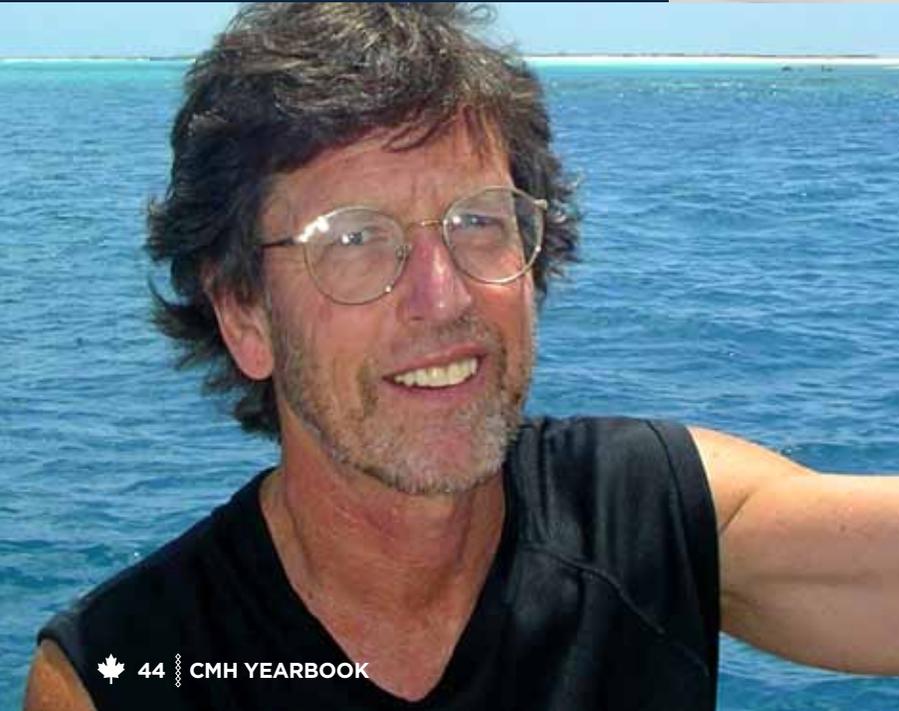
**Guide**

From humble skiing roots come a humble man, South Africa-born, Toronto-raised Dani, whose professional ski life began as an instructor on the vertically challenged escarpments of Collingwood, Ontario. “I always had a feeling I’d wind up in the mountains,” he says, and once he got his first taste of big-mountain skiing, he was hooked. Still, despite five years of guiding and teaching novice Heli-Skiers in the best of the best, he doesn’t forget less glamorous times. “I try hard not to be a snob. I still love to ski anywhere, and I still love to teach.” Meanwhile, he awaits winter by climbing and surfing.

## André Cartier \$

**Financial Controller**

Born in Québec, André came west with an accounting degree, a love of skiing and the improbable belief that he could somehow combine the two. *Voilà*: miracles do come true. Cartier found bean-counter heaven in Banff, where, he says, “CMH is the best place I have ever worked. I get to talk skiing all day, which is the only way I know of to make accounting fun.” He also gets his kicks as a competitive triathlete, mountain biker and aspiring guitarist. And even though, unlike the guides, his office is an office, Cartier gets plenty of days on snow... chasing his two ski-racing kids.

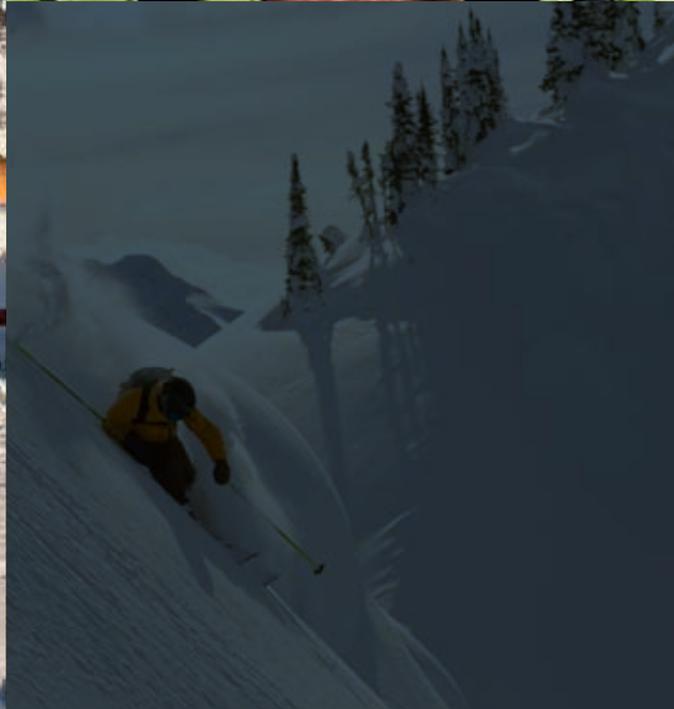


## Dr. Jeff Boyd

**Chief Medical Officer**

A mountain guide and emergency physician, Jeff is our resident expert in the ever-evolving field of alpine rescue. An interest in the effect of environmental stresses on humans began when he was a medical student in his native Australia, and his latest research continues that tradition. “There’s a lot of evidence that people who are caught out with hypothermia are written off too soon in Canada,” he says. “Many are potential survivors, but it requires advanced re-warming techniques.” Off snow, Jeff has a passion for sailing. He spent much of the northern summer back in Oz offshore racing in the IRC class.





## Chris Mink Navigation Manager

“Somebody always loses their way, that’s a given,” says Chris. “But by working with the areas and being creative about getting guests to where they have to go—that’s my job.” Last season posed its share of challenges, like the day when avalanches closed roads and seven CMH buses got trapped in Golden. Fortunately, though, Chris is an expert at Plan B. “A propane truck flipped on the highway up near McBride, and it wound up burning for several days. So we decided to do a heli exchange over the wreck and on to Prince George. That was exciting.”



## Erin Fiddick Guest Services Coordinator, Revelstoke

The daughter of an RCMP officer, Erin grew up in various locations across BC, though it was martial arts, not skiing, that commanded her sporting focus. Her fighting skills eventually led her eastward, to a training stint with the legendary Hart Brothers School of Wrestling and the brink of a professional career. The call of the wild proved too strong, however. Erin returned to the west, where she met and married CMH guide Fridjon Thorleifsson. As for skiing, says Erin, “I’m not a super hotshot and I missed skiing opportunities because I didn’t want to hold anyone back. But this season I’m poised and ready.”

## Andrea Lustenberger Lodge Manager, Monashees

With a father, Peter, who was a longtime ski shop manager at various CMH lodges, Andrea grew up in Invermere, BC surrounded by the skiing lifestyle. She raced in all disciplines at Panorama as well as with the ski team at the University of British Columbia, where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree. But despite her dad’s trade, she was slow to follow his tracks. “It was only when I got older that people I respected kept telling me that CMH has the best skiing in the world,” she says. “That’s why I came here, and that’s why I stay.”



