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Reaching new heights at Festiglace

By Marie LeBlanc on February 17, 2014

Posted in Arts & Entertainment, Downtown, Environment, Sports



Massive ice tower attracts many curious onlookers and climbers of all kinds.

Do you want to get high? It's legal this weekend at Festiglace de Saint-Boniface from February 15th to 17th. This is your chance to take the challenge to climb to the top and reach your true potential.

Held during the same time as Festival du Voyageur, passers-by cannot help but stop and look at this magnificent waterfall of ice protruding into the sky with people climbing it.

Twenty-one climbers, 17 men and 4 women, braved the cold in The North Face Difficulty Competition, a technical climb for efficiency; and The Mountain Equipment Co-op Speed Competition on Saturday February 15th from 11 am to 4 pm.

On Sunday, February 16 there was an Alpine Tournament for teams ready to face their fears. Sponsored by The Gates on Roblin, instructor Grant Meekins, an ACMG certified guide from Yamnuska is offering two ice climbing clinics on Monday, February 17.

Saturday's Club event competitions had two official judges and a time keeper. Based on timed and counted points, the objective of the Difficulty Competition was to climb the route with the least amount of points in ten minutes or less. With an ice tool (axe) in each hand, a safety harness, crampons, helmets and an obstacle free swinging log to start off the challenge, what was there to worry about?

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PHOTO OF THE DAY



On the bandwagon: a sign of the times at a local donut shop. No word yet on official bagels or perogies. PHOTO by Greg Petzold

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By Trevor Smith on December 18, 2015

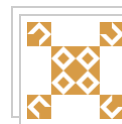
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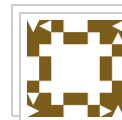
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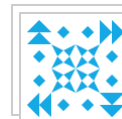
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Time starts as soon as both feet leave the ground.

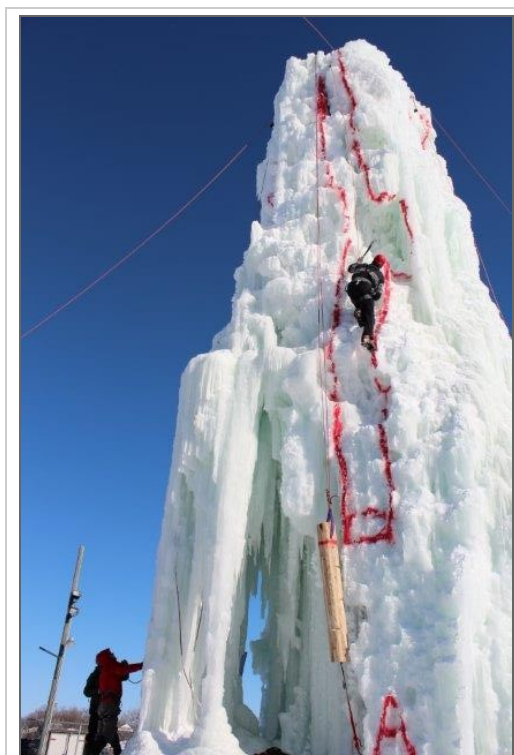
The weighted stroke of the ice tool (1 point), weighted hooking of the ice (1 point), use of both hands on one ice tool (1 point), hooking one ice tool on one another (3 points), slipping of the crampons while climbing up the mountain of ice (3 points), weighted stroke of the ice tool or placement of crampons outside of the designated route of red lines (5 points), if you fall you get the extra added grief of gaining 10 points, however on the upside when you fall your life does not flash before your eyes knowing you are suspended with ropes, and you can resume your climb if you wish. Time starts when the second foot leaves the ground and finishes when the hand of the contestant / climber rings the bell. This seemed like a Pavlov move where there was a prize waiting for you after climbing through the maze of challenges.

The only difference between the Difficulty and Speed competition was that there were no points taken off on the Speed competition. You can hack away at the ice and break the rules from the first competition as long as you can get up the ice as fast as possible like a polar bear is chasing you and your life depends on it.

Sunday from 10 am to 11:30 am, amateurs took on the challenge try their hand at ice climbing.

From 11:30am to 3pm on Sunday, the six station Alpine Tournament (with dubious rules) was a fun expedition. Partnered in teams of two, they experienced the thrill and challenges of mountain climbing. Points were awarded for best costume and original team name.

Decisions were to be made on what to bring on the expedition, as you trek across the great white expanse; trusting that your partner tied your gear down. What happens when you come across a crevasse in your exhausting journey and you



Climbers can scale all sides of the ice mountain.

have realized you have lost all of your gear? This event takes you to new heights and understanding of mountain climbing expeditions.

According to Paul Hrynkow, a climber of Club d'escalade de Saint-Boniface (CESB), the Ice Climbing Tower in Winnipeg is the tallest structure of its kind in North America and in the Western Hemisphere. Fellow ice climber, Yvon Deschambault claimed that it was 60 feet, (20 meters) tall. The North side is vertical with a slight decline and the other two sides have a slight inclination to them.



Once at the top, ring that bell!

How is this Tower built you may ask? The Ice Climbing Tower is built from scratch by members of CESB, using three upright telephone poles, and a wooden structure below. Using a pipe that goes to the top, water is sprayed, beginning with the lower section, raising the sprayer once each layer is formed. The water flows continuously for 2 to 3 weeks.

Hrynkow said they have had people from around the world and have been featured on the Los Angeles Times. Personally he has been climbing for ten years and has climbed the summit in Nepal, and The Rockies. One of the climbers, Dean Carriere, has climbed the seven tallest summits of the seven continents, including Mount Everest.

There is a tipi with food, hot chocolate and coffee, bales of hay to sit on and a nice warm fire. After the icy climb, climbers can warm up in the warming shack where the equipment is stored.



The warming shack where ice climbing tools and snacks can be had.

Saturday and Sunday people participates in The Great Axe Throw (a fundraiser for the Nepalese Education Fund). The North Face had a table displaying their prizes for the winners of the competitions. The food was provided by The Gates of Roblin.

Club d'escalade de St. Boniface www.cesb.net are the St. Boniface section of the Alpine Club of Canada.

Take your curiosity to new heights and explore the wonders, challenges and new friendships you make as you begin to trust the force of nature and your fellow teammates, who is pulling your strings ... or should I say rope.

All photos by Marie LeBlanc.

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About Marie LeBlanc

Marie is an artist, poet, photographer, with a background in alternative health and Bachelor of Arts in Human Geography and Sociology (Advanced Major). She advocates and has been active in many committees to create awareness for people with various disabilities. She was awarded the Mental Health Volunteer Hero of the year in 2012 and has helped coordinate mental health walks. Marie believes creative expression through art and entertainment is healing for your body,mind and soul. She is extremely inventive, creative and resourceful.Other Interests include the environment, culture and just about anything due to her curious nature. She enjoys and has learned a lot through her experience writing and taking pictures for the community news commons.

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