

Experiencing the Haig Glacier

By Jimmy Gunka
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On August 3rd the NDC Thunder Bay team travelled to Canmore, Alberta for the annual Canmore training camp. The camp included 2 weeks of dry land training in and around Canmore taking us to places like Kananaskis Park, and Highwood pass. In addition to all the awesome training that we get to do down on dry land we also get to go up to the Haig Glacier for 1 week with 6 days of skiing!

Most of my teammates have been up to the Glacier on a number of occasions but for me and a couple of others it was our first time up. As being a rookie to heading up I wasn't too sure of what I would need. So I decided to turn to my teammate Michael Somppi for some advice on what is mandatory to bring. So a couple of huge packed bags later I was finally prepared for almost anything (the only thing I forgot were ear plugs which turn out to be pretty helpful).

On August 9th the day after my 19th birthday we departed from the Peter Lougheed Provincial Park and started our trek up to the Haig Glacier, which is usually a 2.5 to 3.5 hour hike depending on your pace. Usually this is a pretty straightforward run and hike from what I have heard. Unfortunately I was running with mostly rookies to the trail who haven't done it before. With all our senses of direction and a map pointing us to the left, that is where we went. Unfortunately, it was the wrong way and we ended up at the Alberta/BC border - not where we should be. So we re-traced our steps and got to the Turbine Pass junction where we decided to turn left. We looked for another trail for about 30 minutes that lead in the other direction up to the Glacier. We couldn't find it and I was getting a little worried. I half expected Chris Hamilton coming down to save us and I almost went Survivor man on the whole situation. After looking around some more we finally found the right trail and ended up at the Glacier in 4 hours.

Once at the Haig my mind was blown away by how sweet it was up there. I was so pumped to be able to ski during the summer months for the first time in my life. On the schedule we had a lot of skiing so that we could work on the transition from roller skiing to skiing and back to roller skiing. Basically, the aim of the camp was to be able to duplicate what we do on snow and bring it on to the roller skis. When we got to skiing it was just awesome, our coach



Eric said that it was some of the best skiing he has ever seen at that time of year on the Haig. It was great weather for the first few days of skiing where we got to get used to the long things on our feet. It actually is a big difference and the first time on them I was pretty sketchy.



Then came day 4. When we woke up at 6:45 a.m. we were greeted with rain, fog, and darkness. This definitely wasn't the best thing to see considering that on the plan was between 2.5 to 4 hours of skiing. On the hike up to skiing we were welcomed with snow... yay. Once we got skiing it was crazy! It was nice and slow and a lot of offset took place. We also experienced many different thicknesses of fog - on one of the farthest corners on the trail I looked around and could not see anyone considering that on a clear day you can see everyone on the 6km loop. Even with these conditions we took it upon us as an opportunity to learn how to ski in these conditions. This was one of the major things that I realized: you get to experience so many different

conditions throughout the day every day, some of which we don't get much of in Thunder Bay. This is only an advantage to us because you race at least once in all of them.

The last couple days were just like the first few with great weather and conditions, which we all welcomed with open arms. With the last day of skiing upon us Mother Nature gave us a beautiful day; it was absolutely superb. From the moment we woke up we had sunshine with no sign of a cloud in sight. On that day some of the team had up to a 4-hour ski and I was lucky to be one of them. After a team picture at 3 hours some of the guys decided to go tarps off (shirts off) for the last hour of skiing. It was a wonderful way for me to finish my first Haig camp and for the team as a whole who completed 6 great days of skiing!

I'm going to end off with some quick tips so you will be ready if it's going to be your first time up to the Haig:

1. Prepare to play a lot of Frisbee golf. Choose the orange discs...they propelled me to many second and third places.
2. Be ready to experience a smell like no other when passing by the Storburns while they are in "burning mode".
3. Be prepared for great cooking and meal preparation 3 times daily thanks to Jody and Haakon!
4. Wonderful grooming once again thanks to Jody and Haakon.
5. Bring your dessert making skills if you ever travel with Eric.
6. Don't forget earplugs!
7. Sign up for chores first and try to avoid the breakfast/lunch dishes as well as dinner dishes. The best is sweeping or helping with dinner preparation!

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