

CHAINSAWS ON ICE



With a slice from her chainsaw, Sonja Butte begins carving an ice block at Art in the Park 2007, as part of a promotion for the High on Ice Sculpting Competition set for January 17-20, 2008.



A tribute to the Northern Lights, one of professional ice sculptor, Peter Vogelaar's ice sculptures for the High on Ice Winter Festival 2007. (Photos courtesy of the Fort St. John Community Arts Council files).

Ice carving workshop to slide into F.S.J.

CHANDRA WONG
F.S.J. COMMUNITY ARTS COUNCIL

FORT ST. JOHN — With a resonant chink of the ice pick, a piece of ice falls off the large block of ice sitting on the palette in front of local artist, Sonja Butte. She then picks up her electric chainsaw to further flesh out the form of her ice sculpture.

Sonja usually works with paint, but ice has become one of her winter favourites.

"Ice sculpting is a creative outlet that you don't always get to do. I'm not really a big fan of freezing in the winter, but it's so unique, and you usually get to do it once or twice a year."

While using a chainsaw, ice pick and chisel to coax an ice block into a work of art, may seem intimidating to some, Sonja enjoys the challenge of working with frozen water. She says she looks forward to the planning needed to carve an ice sculpture.

"You're limited by your imagination really," she said, "There are certain properties of the ice that you have to keep in mind but it really is quite amazing stuff."

How the ice reacts to temperature changes is a major consideration. With below zero temperatures, ice blocks can be welded together using a clothes iron or heated sheet of metal. Too cold and there's the

chance the ice will crack.

If the temperature rises to zero and above, the sculptor has to work faster before the ice melts away. But work too fast and the wrong piece may be carved off.

"With warmer temperatures, it's almost like the ice is rotting. When you try to peel off a little bit you get crystal chunks that fall off instead," said Sonja.

Sonja has been developing her ice carving skills over the last few years. Each winter she gets back into form by taking part in the Ice Sculpting workshop hosted mid-November by the Fort St. John Community Arts Council.

The day-long workshop is taught

by Peter Vogelaar, professional ice sculptor and former-Fort St. John resident. The workshop features a slideshow of Peter's work to inspire creativity. Peter also demonstrates proper techniques and tools used to carve ice. Participants are able to test out their new skills on a block of ice. This year's workshop takes place on November 17, 2007.

But the workshop is just the warm-up for Sonja. From January 17-20, 2008, Fort St. John will be flooded with professional carvers competing in the High on Ice Sculpting Competition. This season's competition features two amateur categories – beginner and intermediate.

Sonja enjoys working side by side

with the professional carvers. She's received many hints and suggestions that have helped improve her work as she aims for that winning sculpture.

"The pros will tell you to make your sculpture as interesting and unique to you as you can.

"If you can carve your sculpture in a way that is surprising, and makes people think or evokes some kind of an emotion, it has a better chance of earning winner status."

For more information or to register for the Ice Sculpting Workshop with Peter Vogelaar on November 17, contact the Fort St. John Community Arts Council (787-2781 or fsjarts@telus.net).

Expert carvers sign for High on Ice

FORT ST. JOHN - The City of Fort St. John in conjunction with the Fort St. John Community Arts Council is excited to announce that world-renowned ice carving pair, Junichi Nakamura of Japan, and partner Takashi Ito of Victoria have officially registered to compete at Fort St. John's 2008 High On Ice Festival.

The High on Ice Festival has become one of the premier winter events in Northeast BC. Set for Jan. 17-

20, the High on Ice Festival will showcase ice sculptors from around the globe as well as amateur snow and ice carving, an ice fishing derby, snow golf, sleigh rides, toboggan races, curling bonspiels and many other events that celebrate and embrace winter.

This year's professional ice carving competition features over \$15,000 in prizes, and 10 teams of international sculptors are expected to compete to out-do each other amidst the

theme, "Celebrating Canada in the North".

Event organizers are thrilled that Nakamura and Ito have officially registered to attend the High On Ice Festival, which is the only National Ice Carving Association (NICA) sanctioned event in BC.

Nakamura has an impressive collection of first place NICA awards from major events like Ottawa's Winterlude and Lake Louise's Ice Magic events and Ito, in addition to his impressive ice carving abilities, is a celebrated chef at The Empress Hotel in Victoria.

Meanwhile, plans are in the works for a workshop for all those would-be local ice sculptors.

The Ice Sculpting Workshop is an opportunity for local winter enthusiasts to try their hand at carving ice into intricate works of art. Participants will work with Peter Vogelaar, award-winning ice, snow and sand carver, and former resident of Fort St. John.

The workshop takes place on Saturday, Nov. 17 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Registration is \$20. To register or for more information contact the Fort St. John Community Arts Council 787-2781 or fsjarts@telus.net.

For more details on the festival and registration, visit Fort St. John's website at www.fortstjohn.ca/hoi.html.

- Contributed

January 17, 18, 19, & 20

Fort St. John's

High on Ice

festival

Notice To Food Vendors

Organizations interested in a fundraising opportunity selling food to the public from our outdoor ice cafe during the carnival are encouraged to send a letter of interest by December 14, 2007 to:

City of Fort St. John
Community Services Department
9505 - 100 Street
Fort St. John, BC V1J 4N4
Fax: 250-785-7653

Unique
Fundraising
Opportunity
located in an
outdoor ice cafe!



FORT ST. JOHN

The Energetic City

CONTACT

785-4592 or recprogrammer@fortstjohn.ca

