



Welcome to High on Ice 2012

Community shines at winter festival

BRIANNE ZWAMBAG
Staff Writer

With a hot chocolate toast, High on Ice is officially open for fun for the 2012 season of events.

A crowd of on-lookers laughed and applauded as Mayor Lori Ackerman welcomed local residents and people who have travelled from far and wide to take in a variety of events showcasing Fort St. John's unique winter outlook.

Senator Richard Neufeld and Fort St.

John Community Arts Council spokesperson Lisa Bush also stood up to usher in this year's festivities and thank the city staff and community volunteers who worked countless hours to make this event a reality.

The international carving teams from Russia, Canada and the United States were also introduced and it was hinted that their creations, to be unveiled on Sunday, will truly be a "Force of Nature".

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the ice slides for some squealing fun. This year, three slides have been polished to a slippery shine for rides ranging from fast and straight to windy and scenic.

City councillors even took to the slides for a "slide off", and all came out winners as it was hard to determine who really made it to the bottom first.

High on Ice 2012 runs from now until Sunday and include family-friendly activities in Centennial Park, a hockey tournament on Charlie Lake and many more sporting activities.

Million dollar mistake

Province admits cuts to arts funding lacked foresight

BRIANNE ZWAMBAG
Staff Writer

From forgotten art workshops to struggling cultural groups, communities in the Peace may see a return of services and activities provided by not-for-profit groups after the Provincial Government announced the reinstatement of community gaming grants.

The announcement comes just a day after Finance Minister Kevin Falcon publicly stated that the B.C. Liberals erred in the deep cuts they made to arts funding when the global downturn hit.

"In retrospect, it was a mistake at how aggressively we did that," Falcon said during a speech at a Vancouver Board of Trade Luncheon.

Falcon also noted that he believes that the sector is a big economic driver that should be supported and that the Liberals plan to atone for the cuts.

Lisa Bush, spokesperson for the Fort St.

John Arts Council, pointed out that the government knew that arts and culture was a big economic driver even before the funding cuts were made in 2009.

"The thing that just didn't make sense is that the province knows for a fact that investment in arts and culture has returns. Even the financial returns are significant when they invest in arts and culture activities," said Bush. "For every dollar they invest, they get at least a \$1.06. So, that's a six per cent return on investment for arts activity in the province."

Bush said that figure comes from a study commissioned by the provincial government in 2007. The \$1.06 is a minimum return, and Bush said the study found that some activities garnered returns of over \$1.30.

The recognition that the cuts to arts funding was a mistake has pushed the provincial government to remove harsh restrictions on eligibility for funding and increase the total amount

of community gaming grants available to \$135 million.

Premier Christy Clark said that the changes are aimed at ensuring non-profit organizations have support for the work they do and are a result of a public engagement process completed over the past year.

"Through an open public engagement process, we heard from more than 1700 British Columbians about what we can do to improve our gaming system," said Clark. "We listened and we're taking action. Community gaming grants will be made available to more groups so they can focus on doing what they do best – delivering essential services to B.C. families."

The report generated from the review on how to improve the governance and funding formula for community gaming grants included 16 options for consideration.

•SEE ARTS ON A3



Ice slides will be back

BRIANNE ZWAMBAG
Staff Writer

The future of the popular ice slides at the High on Ice Festival in January was temporarily in question at the most recent city council meeting after a recommendation to decline funding them was put forward to an opposed council.

In the recommendation, the City Manager said that it was not a matter of whether or not they thought the slides were a good idea. The reason for the recommendation was the continually rising costs of the event and the fact that the city believes that sponsorship could easily be obtained for this item because of its popularity.

"I am completely and utterly against this recommendation," said Councillor Larry Evans. "These slides have been our trademark. Everyone really enjoys these and looks forward to them."

Evans pointed out that if

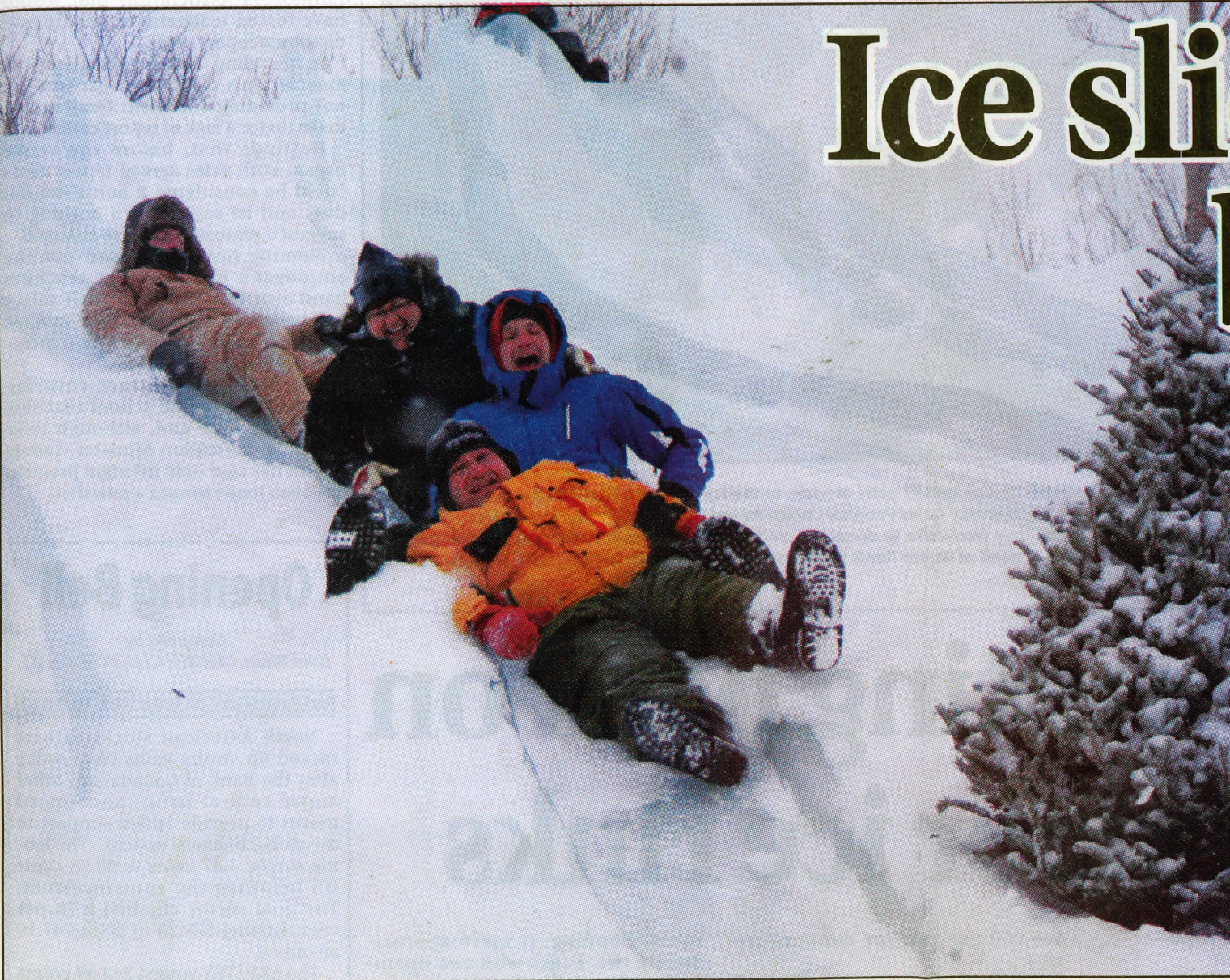
this is an issue of how tax dollars are being spent, he personally does not see the issue because this is something that benefits every resident and every taxpayer in Fort St. John. He said that these slides are built for them and enjoyed by them, and that they would be sorely missed if they were gone.

Councillor Dan Davies shared that sentiment, expressing that because of the popularity of the slides, he feels that they should find room to sponsor them.

In line with the recommendation, Councillor Trevor Bolin expressed that the slides are needed but the City may be taking the right approach with the idea of encouraging sponsorship.

"There has to be somewhere that it stops. I'm behind doing this, but I think there are good opportunities for sponsorship," said Bolin.

•SEE SLIDES ON A3



ALEISHA HENDRY FILE PHOTO

City Councillors Dan Davies, Trevor Bolin, Lori Ackerman and Larry Evans took a turn on the ice slides in Centennial Park during the High On Ice festival back in January. After much discussion at the Nov. 28 city council meeting, council decided that they would encourage the Fort St. John Community Arts Council to find sponsors for the 2012 ice slides, and if a sponsor cannot be found, the city would cover the cost.

Ice slides a huge draw for local families and children

•CONT. FROM A1

The concern over the sponsorship dollars comes from the increasing costs that the city faces as it continues to provide the bulk of the funding for this annual event.

The city has already agreed to an overall increase of \$3,000 for the 2012 Ice and Snow events, with their total contribution amounting to \$112,200.

The proposed sponsorship of the slides represents another \$12,100 contribution from the city to build four slides of approximately 50 ft length each. This is up from last year's budget of \$10,575 for five slides, which is said to be because of increased labour costs due to the difficulties they face in getting volunteers to commit to more than short periods of time. If sponsored, the city's total contribution would go up to \$124,200.

In an effort to work with the city in being able to make this contribution, councilors questioned whether they could cut other things from the festival and include the sponsorship costs in to the amount already budgeted for.

Suggestions included reducing the number of slides or cutting out other, less popular items from the festival.

"If we have to cut something else from High on Ice to have these, let's do it. This is something for the children and families of FSJ and it's too valuable to just let it go," said Lantz.

Hunter pointed out that the point of the recommendation was not to let the idea go, but rather to encourage local businesses to become involved as sponsors and take on the financial cost of building the slides.

Bolin said that if the slides are just for the festival, local sponsorship should be looked at. But if the City decides to sponsor them, they should look at taking the project on themselves and ensuring that they are around all winter for families and children to enjoy.

"We need to separate the two because there is too much emotion around the slides," said Bolin.

Bolin said he felt that there would be a lot of businesses willing to sponsor a slide for the \$3,000 it would cost and that it is something that should be explored.

Hunter also pointed out that it fits with one of the goals that Council identified for the Ice and Snow event over the past two years, which is that

the Arts Council begin to develop their own sponsorship program in order to leverage the municipal funds directed to the event. Specifically, council has requested that the Arts Council solicit sponsorships to cover the cost of commissioned works and related carver expenses.

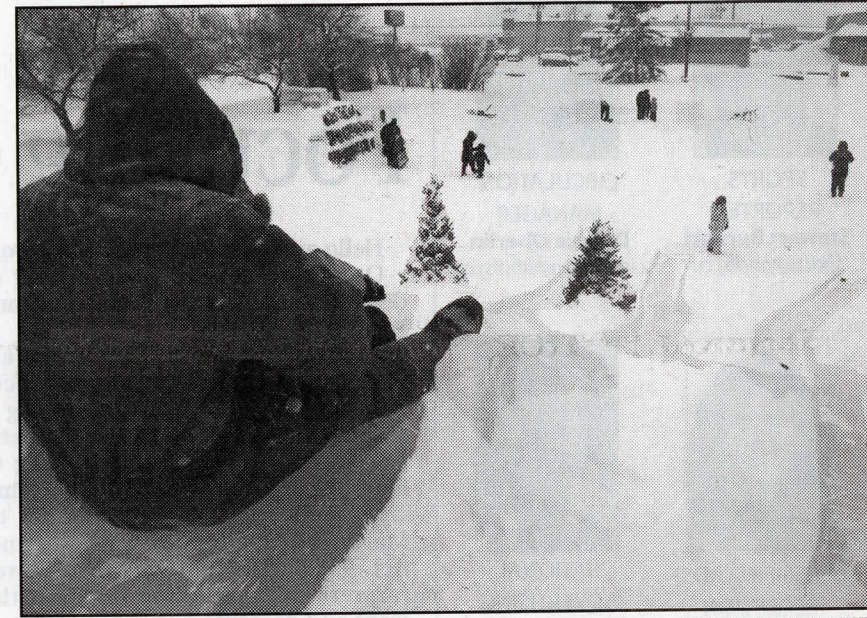
In 2011, the Arts Council created an attractive sponsorship program that was met with enthusiastic response from local businesses, bringing in both financial and in-kind donations.

The premise behind the recommendation is that the enthusiasm from the community to support this event would provide adequate sponsorship to commission the slides.

Councillor Bruce Christensen thought sponsorship was a good route to go, but that the city should not withdraw support just yet.

"As a back-up, we need to be there. Those slides need to happen," said Christensen. "They have increased activity at the event and will continue to do so."

Recognizing the importance of the slides, council passed new motion that balanced the two ideas and guaranteed that the slides would return to the



ALEISHA HENDRY FILE PHOTO

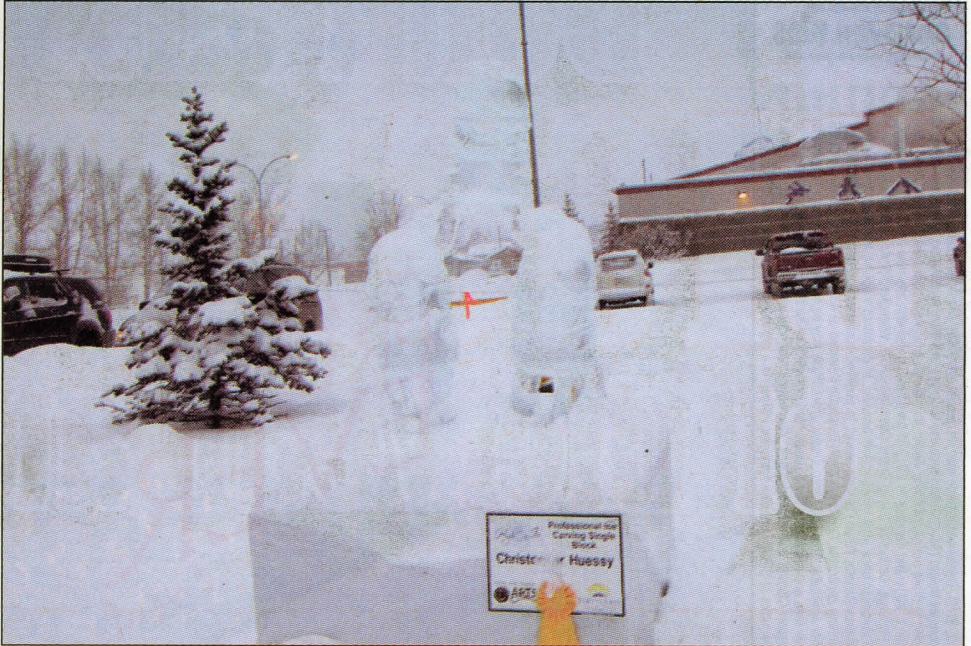
The ice slides bring many residents out to the High On Ice festival.

festival this year.

The city has declined sponsoring the slides at this point, but has agreed to work with the Arts Council to help find sponsorship in the community to

commission these slides. If appropriate sponsorship cannot be secured by December 15, then the city has agreed to step forward with the sponsorship dollars.

High on Ice Festival Set for 2012



File Photo

Fort St. John will once again see amazing carvings in ice like this one from 2011 at the 2012 High on Ice Festival set for January 12 to 15, 2012.

FORT ST. JOHN - Fort St. John's premiere winter event, the High on Ice Winter Festival, is set for January 12 - 15, 2012. The featured event - the professional ice carving competition - brings in carvers from around the world to compete in British Columbia's only sanctioned ice carving event.

This year's competition theme, Force of Nature, will surely inspire some icy masterpieces.

In addition to the professional competition, some of the other highlights include an amateur ice carving competition, a snow sculpting event, sleigh rides, curling bonspiel, snowmobile group ride, ice fishing derby, pond hockey challenge, live entertainment, and the very popular ice slides will be back for another year.

"Fort St John's High on Ice festival has become an opportunity for the community to celebrate our winter season" said Mayor Lori Ackerman. The 2012 event schedule is full of activities both indoors and out. The ice carvings by the professionals differ every year and never cease to amaze us. This is something you do not want to miss!"

High on Ice is a joint venture between the City of Fort St. John, Fort St. John Community Arts Council, and many other community groups and volunteers.

For a full schedule of events, visit www.fortstjohn.com



City Fund Ice Slides at High on Ice Festival

STAFF WRITER

The issue of the ice slides was back at council on Dec. 12, and seeing as no sponsors had been found to support the popular fixture of the High on Ice Festival, council voted to provide the funding to ensure their appearance this year.

One of the questions that was posed by Councillor Bruce Christensen was why the expensive blocks of ice were being used for these and whether or not local ice could be used. Evans explained that finding local ice is difficult because very few people are even willing to harvest it and the cost ends up being similar because of that.

Ackerman said that city council and the Arts Council will need to sit down and have a discussion around these to ensure that it does not put undue financial stress on either organization in the future.

WINTER IN IMAGES



32902

TO OUR
CUSTOMERS

Taxi monopoly busted

BRIANNE ZWAMBAG
Staff Writer

Free enterprise is alive and well in Fort St. John as the Ministry of Transportation approved Bernard Thompson's request for a taxi license, ending the monopoly that joint companies Teco Taxi and Fort St. John Cabs have held in the city for many years.

The news made its way to Bernard Thompson on Jan. 10 through a letter from the Ministry that approved him for one license to operate one taxi in the city.

"I'm going to take this license and try to provide a good service and expand if I'm able in the future," said Thompson.

The next step for Thompson is to pick up his license and get going on the logistics of starting up a new business including obtaining insurance, preparing a vehicle and hiring staff including drivers and dispatchers.

He is currently trying to decide whether to outfit his current vehicle with a meter and update it to the standards required or to purchase a new vehicle to retrofit as a taxi.

"I'm going to try to have it up and running in a month, but I can't guarantee that."

•SEE TAXI ON A5

COOL AS ICE



BRIANNE ZWAMBAG PHOTO

Despite the cold wind and the numbness in their fingers, crews and community members are hard at work in Centennial Park to prepare the site for Fort St. John's annual High on Ice Festival happening January 12-15. Festivities get underway this evening with opening ceremonies and a meet and greet with the professional carvers beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, January 12

Opening Ceremonies	6:30-7:30pm
Crystal Cup Pond Hockey Challenge	5-9pm
Theatre Presentation of <i>Annie</i>	7pm

Friday, January 13

Professional Single Block Competition	1-3pm
Crystal Cup Pond Hockey Challenge	5-9pm
Professional Ice Carving Teams Begin	6-10pm
Mukluk Independent Plumbing True Value Hardware Bonspiel Begins	6pm
Theatre Presentation of <i>Annie</i>	7pm
Comedy Night at the Lido	8pm

Saturday, January 14

Professional Ice Carving Continues	8am-10pm
Amateur/Intermediate/Mayor/Media Ice Carving	9am-4pm
Crystal Cup Pond Hockey Challenge	9am-9pm
Ice Fishing Derby	9am-Dusk
Bonspiel Continues	10am-6pm
Toboggan Races	11am-3pm
Horse-drawn Sleigh Rides	11am-3pm
Childrens's Activities in the Park	1-4pm
Curling Club Community Dinner & Dance	6:30pm
Free Family Skate	7-8pm
Ice Jam at JD Fitzgerald's Pub	7pm
Theatre Presentation of <i>Annie</i>	7pm
Comedy Night at the Lido	8pm

Sunday, January 15

Professional Ice Carving Completion	8am-2pm
Snow Sculpting Competition	9am-3pm
Ice Fishing Derby	9am-3pm
Crystal Cup Pond Hockey Challenge	9am-4pm
Toboggan Races	11am-3pm
Horse-drawn Sleigh Rides	11am-3pm
Free Family Skate	11am-12pm
Childrens's Activities in the Park	1-4pm
Ice & Snow Sculpture Judging	2-4pm
Awards Ceremony	4pm
Fire & Ice Celebration	5pm

High On Ice Festival

www.fortstjohn.ca/hoi
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Use your smartphone to connect to our website for detailed event information.

Events times are subject to change and may be cancelled due to weather.

JAN 13, 2012

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Ice carvers persevere in frigid weather

•CONT. FROM A1

In the professional multi-block competition, in which competitors are given 12 blocks of ice to work with, winners emerged with silver medals in both the abstract and realistic categories.

In the realistic category, Dean Murray and Chris Foltz of the United States took first place with their sculpture titled "Calming the Fire" with a score of 89.4.

In the abstract category, Ilya Filimontsev from Russia took first place with his sculpture titled "Melodies of the Wind". This was Filimontsev's seventh year competing at the festival and he hopes to be back again.

"I like ice carving and I really like Fort St. John. They're very nice people and it's my favorite place in Canada, and I was in many places in Canada," said Filimontsev. "For me, art is good when working in big sizes. And ice is a very difficult material - it's like glass. It's delicate and difficult, and I like difficult work."

His first place finish is particularly impressive as he was without a teammate in the multi-block competition because the second competitor from Russia was unable to get his visa in time to come for High on Ice.

Filimontsev was also awarded the prestigious Carver's Choice Award by his competitors for his work in both the single-block and multi-block competition.

The People's Choice Award, as chosen by people wandering the park to take in the festivities, was awarded to Carl Schlichting and Peter Vogelaar of Canada for their sculpture "The Higgs Boson."

In total, the festival awarded over \$15,000 in prizes for the professional competition.

Also on display in the park are the sculptures created in the Mayor's and Media challenges that took place over the weekend.

For the Mayor's Challenge, Fort St. John, Taylor and Chetwynd went head-to-head in a competition of wits and warm gear.

"Despite the cold it was good. Had it have been warmer, we probably would have done a better job because the cold was certainly a motivating factor in trying to get it done quickly," said Dan Davies, Fort St. John City Councillor and competitor.

The District of Taylor won the Mayor's challenge with a depiction of a small town being overtaken by a gigantic wave. No competitors were on hand to receive

the award on Sunday and they were not able to be reached for comment.

"Well done to Taylor. They had a pretty good team out and I have to give them kudos for coming well prepared," said Davies.

Davies was referring to the experienced team who thought enough to bring a windshield to protect them from the wind while they carved.

"Well done to Taylor for using our idea and winning with it," joked Davies. "I thought Chetwynd did really, really good as well. But next year is our 10th year and I think it's time Fort St. John wins."

Davies also issued a challenge hoping that more local communities such as Dawson Creek, Pouce Coupe and Hudson's Hope may come out to compete as well.

In the media challenge, Alaska Highway News took on the Northeast News and Moose FM to come out victorious with a realistic owl posing with outstretched wings.

"Clearly, the judges have good taste in newspapers," laughed Aleisha Hendry, Assistant Editor at Alaska Highway News and team leader for AHN in the media competition.

Schick said she is pleased with how the event went this year and hopes the community keeps turning out to support it over the next few weeks.

"We can't control the weather but we can control bringing our own families down here," said Schick. "Our community is about family and it's about playing hard and working hard. And I don't know any other community in our region that has ice slides, so I'm really happy that we have those and the opportunity to enjoy them."

Next year's event will hopefully draw out more crowds and maybe grow some to include new competitions, such as a corporate challenge, said Schick. However, Schick said the event will again focus on the international carvers that the community is able to attract because of the unmatched hospitality.

"These carvers come back to our community because of the hospitality and because of the way they're treated by the coordinators of the event and the community as a whole."

Schick said that if there is a lot of ice leftover, a workshop may be held in February to give community members a chance to try their hand at carving. More information will become available closer to the date should that happen.





Northeast NEWS

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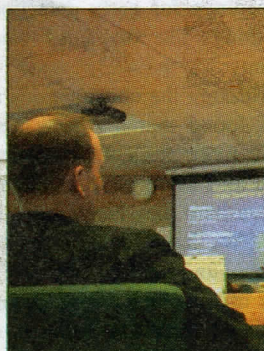
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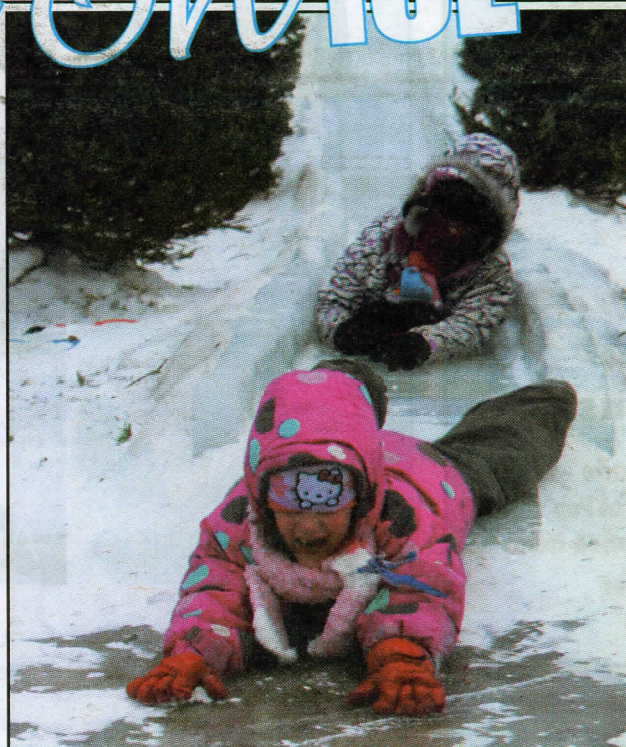
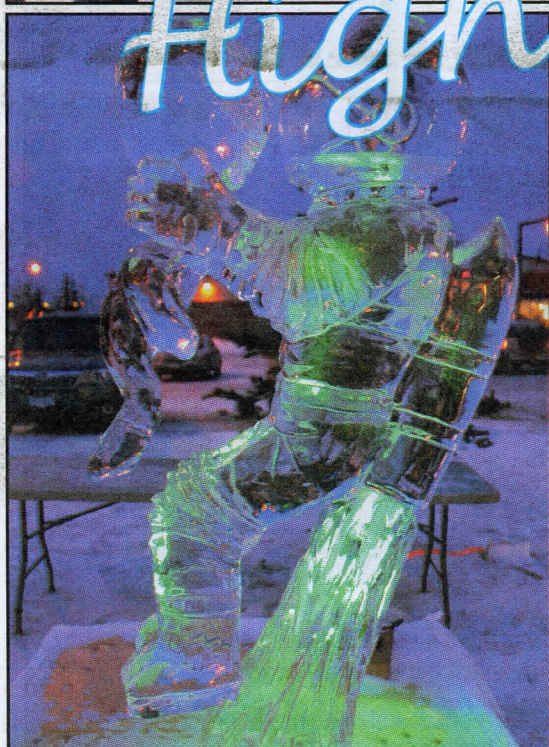
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Scan Me



High On ICE



Kyla Corpuz photos

Clockwise: Despite the cold temperatures and gusting winds, the City of Taylor carved the winning ice sculpture in the Mayor Challenge on Jan. 14; Children took advantage of the ice slides at Centennial Park during High On Ice; Dean Murray, from the U.S., carved this astronaut holding an alien - it placed first in the

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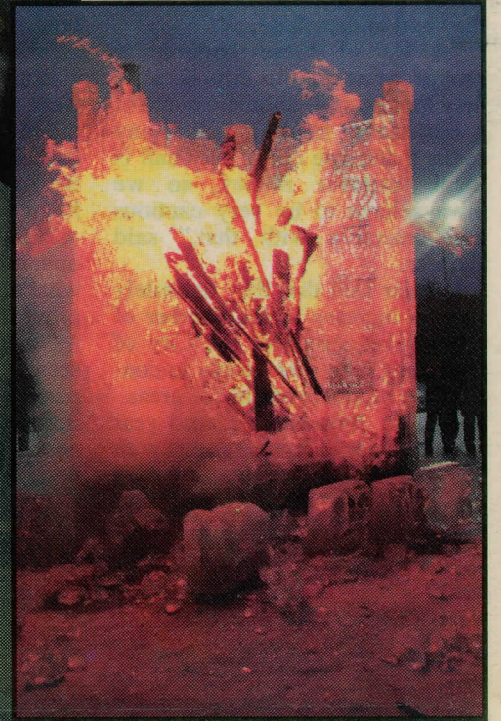


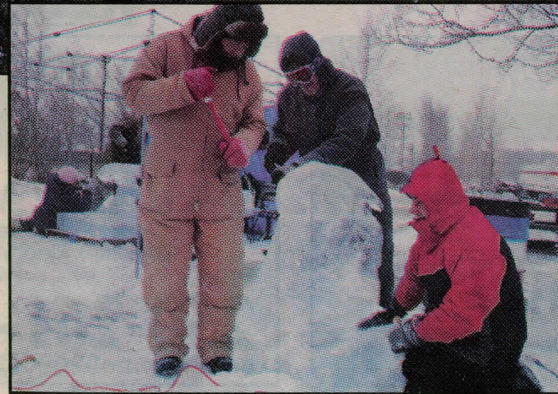
Mother Nature proved she has a sense of humour when, after weeks of balmy January weather, she decided to start winter with a vengeance during the 2012 High On Ice festival. See more photos on page 16.

Aleisha Hendry Photo

HIGH ON ICE 2012

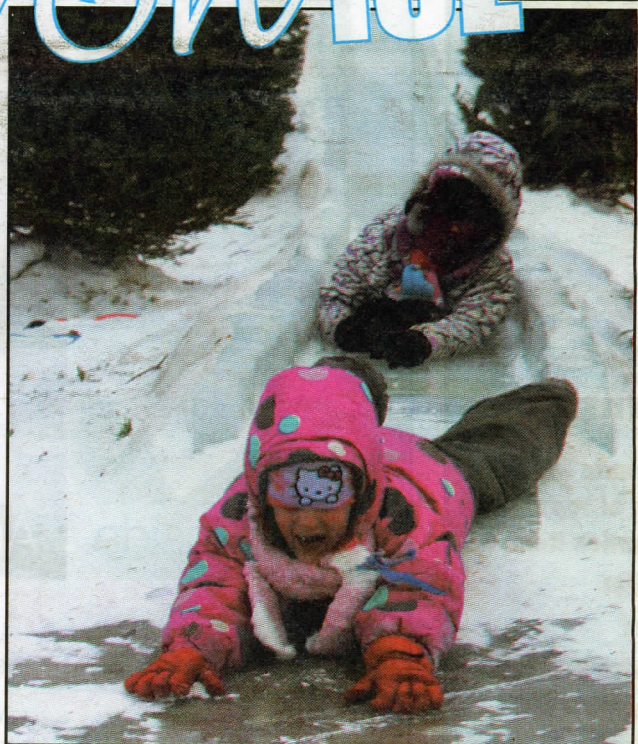
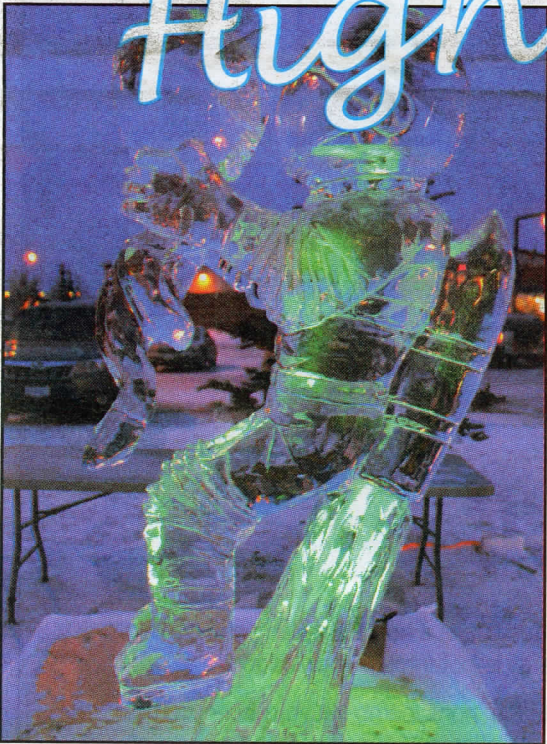
Aleisha Hendry Photos







High On ICE



Kyla Corpuz photos

Clockwise: Despite the cold temperatures and gusting winds, the City of Taylor carved the winning ice sculpture in the Mayor Challenge on Jan. 14; Children took advantage of the ice slides at Centennial Park during High On Ice; Dean Murray, from the U.S., carved this astronaut holding an alien, it placed first in the Professional Ice Carving Single Block category.



FILE PHOTO

You've seen seasoned carvers turn a block of ice in to a winter wonderland, now it's your turn. High on Ice Festival organizers are putting the leftover ice from this year's event to good use by hosting a community carving workshop this weekend.

Carving a creative niche

BRIANNE ZWAMBAG
Staff Writer

If you've ever wondered what it feels like to hammer a chisel in to a block of ice, this weekend's Ice Carving Workshop should do wonders for your curiosity.

Presented by the Fort St. John Arts Council and the City of Fort St. John, the workshop is taking the leftover ice from this year's High on Ice Festival and putting it to good use by fostering creativity in the community.

"People come to the park and walk around and see the professionals and are wowed by their pieces, but no one really ever has had the chance to chip away at ice and get the feel of what it's like to carve or be an artist with the medium of ice," said Jocelyn Schick, High on Ice Event

Coordinator. "So we thought we'd give the community an opportunity to jump in and feel it and carve it."

Schick said she thinks the city is going to really enjoy the opportunity.

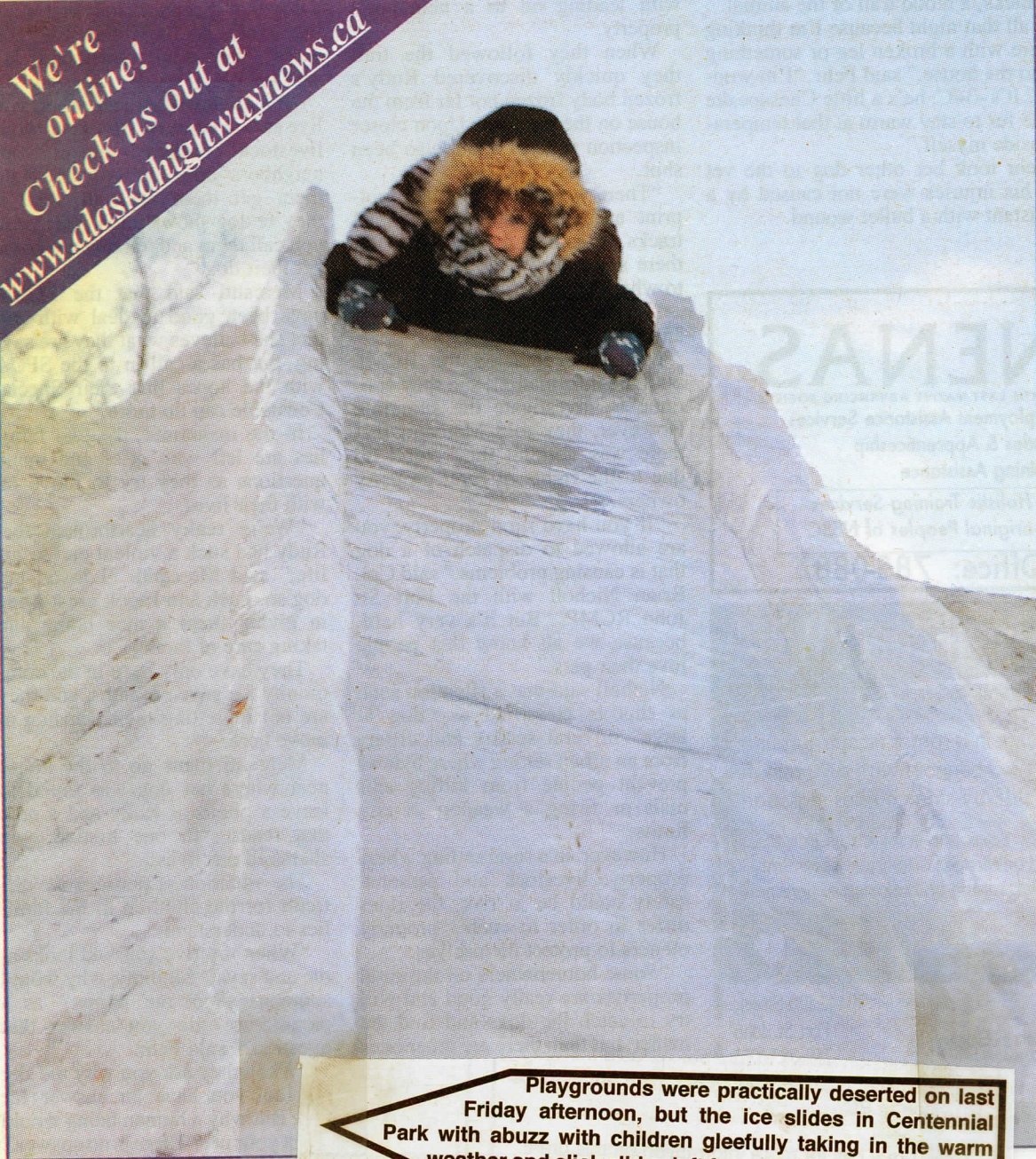
"It's really an exciting and addictive thing. You're creative this piece of art with frozen water and when you actually get to feel it, it's amazing."

For \$25, the workshop will supply participants with everything they need including tools, stencils, markers, ice, safety gear, instructors, lunch and worktables.

Schick's invitation said that it's not just for individuals, but also a great Saturday afternoon activity for a whole family.

The event takes place on Sat., Feb. 11 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Centennial Park. For more information or to register, call 250-793-0272.

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Playgrounds were practically deserted on last Friday afternoon, but the ice slides in Centennial Park with abuzz with children gleefully taking in the warm weather and slick slides left from the High on Ice festival.

Brianne Zwambag Photo

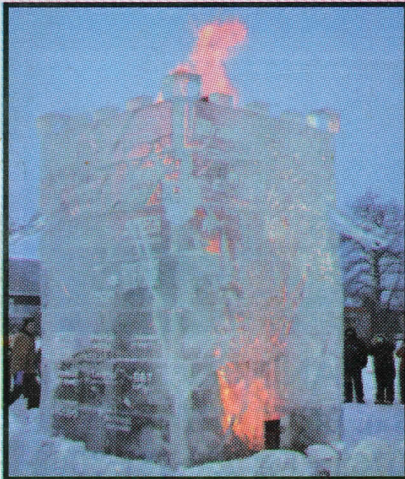
PROVINCI

ICY VALENTINES



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Angela Loftus and Jocelyn Schick with her daughter have their valentines for that someone special. Made out of ice, the Valentines were a special treat for each of the participants of the ice carving workshop in Centennial Park on Feb. 11.





Welcome to
High on Ice
2012

Community shines at winter festival

JAN 13, 2012

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Staff Writer

With a hot chocolate toast, High on Ice is officially open for fun for the 2012 season of events.

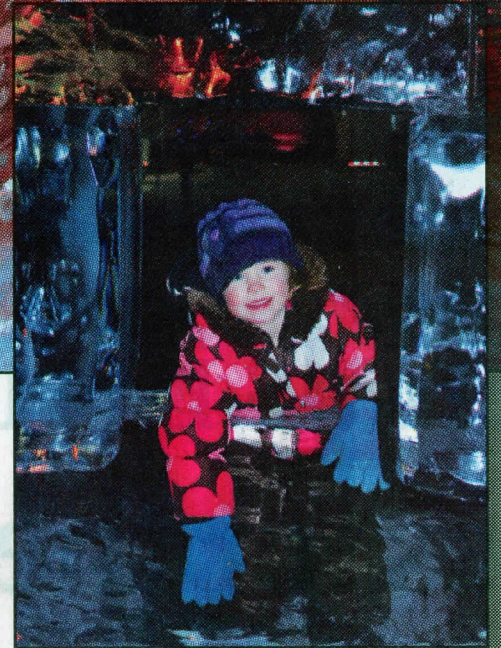
A crowd of on-lookers laughed and applauded as Mayor Lori Ackerman welcomed local residents and people who have travelled from far and wide to take in a variety of events showcasing Fort St. John's unique winter outlook.

Senator Richard Neufeld and Fort St.

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the ice slides for some squealing fun. This year, three slides have been polished to a slippery shine for rides ranging from fast and straight to windy and scenic.

City councillors even took to the slides for a "slide off", and all came out winners as it was hard to determine who really made it to the bottom first.

High on Ice 2012 runs from now until Sunday and include family-friendly activities in Centennial Park, a hockey tournament on Charlie Lake and many more sporting activities.



AHN FILE PHOTO

Last year there was an abundance of snow, as well as frigid temperatures for the High On Ice winter festival. This year unseasonable warmth has led to the cancellation of several events due to the lack of snow.

Is there snow hope?

BRIANNE ZWAMBAG
Staff Writer

JAN 5, 2012

Event organizers for the upcoming High on Ice Festival are praying for winter to hit fast and hard.

The High on Ice Festival is set to run from January 12-15 this year. The annual event features professional and amateur ice carving competitions and events for everyone in the community.

This year's theme, Force of Nature, is expected to inspire some icy masterpieces.

"The carvers said 'Wow, your city really thinks we have great skills because it's almost impossible to create wind'. But they've played around with it and animals and people and history are a force of nature, too... They definitely opened their eyes and hearts to the pieces they may be able to make," said Jocelyn Schick, owner of Bizzybody Events.

This year, there will be six professional teams from Russia, Canada and the U.S.A. competing for the ice carving champion title.

There will also be eight single block competitors, two amateur teams, three Mayor's teams and a media competition with a still unknown number of teams.

"There are four communities in Canada that have a National Ice Carvers Association competition. And having us be one of those four elite communities that have the honor to meet and experience professional carvers is outstanding," said Schick.

New to the festival this year is a unique opportunity for people

attending the event to try their hand with a chisel.

"People come to the park and walk around and see the professionals and are wowed by their pieces, but no one really ever has had the chance to chip away at ice and get the feel of what it's like to carve or be an artist with the medium of ice," said Schick. "So we thought we'd give the community an opportunity to jump in an feel it and carve it."

The event will feature a large ice wall this year with a selection of hand and power tools to allow people to carve their name in ice. If the weather cooperates, the wall will remain in the park until it melts.

"It's really an exciting and addictive thing. You're creative this piece of art with frozen water and when you actually get to feel it, it's amazing."

There are also many community events planned for the festival, some of which are in question due to the lack of snow and warm temperatures as of late.

"What's changed this year is that our weather is completely opposite. We were battling with -45 weather last year and now we're battling with plus temperatures. So that is changing a lot of things," said Serena Warkentine, Recreation Programmer for the City of Fort St. John.

As of yesterday, only the snow sculpting had been cancelled. However, events such as the toboggan races and sleigh rides are in danger if no more snow falls before the festival due to safety concerns.

"The snow carving has been can-

celled due to weather because we have no snow. I mean, we have dirty snow but that's not going to make for very nice carving," said Warkentine.

"And if we do get three feet of snow before then, which is possible up here, snow sculpting will be back on," said Schick.

Events happening on ice surfaces, such as ice fishing, have been confirmed to be going ahead.

"We've actually confirmed that the lakes are fine and that they are frozen enough that it won't be an issue. We're just recommending people not to drive on the lakes," said Warkentine. "One of the big things that has been added is the Crystal Cup Pond Hockey Challenge."

Warkentine said that family favorites such as the ice slides and other children's activities will be back this year as well. Also, all indoor events including the curling bonspiel and the free family skates will go ahead as planned and not be affected by the temperatures.

"High on Ice is such a great event because it falls right after Christmas and everybody is going back to work and you still have the winter blues and it's still another three to four months before spring is coming. But [the festival] is just a really great way to embrace the wintertime in a Northern area and also to see something really unique," said Warkentine.

"Wintertime is long and cold in our community," said Schick. "Seeing the parents' smiles because their kids are ecstatic and enlightened about winter festivals, that's what winter in Fort St. John is all about."