



# RAQUETTE LAKE NEWS

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## SNOW SCULPTURE: A TRIAL RUN

Over the years, Lori Ellis, associate professor and chair of art and art history, Chuck Heasley, professor of art and art history, and Kathy Kramer, associate professor of art and art history, have brought students majoring in art to Raquette Lake. Traditionally, the students were enrolled in drawing, painting and photography. In 2008, Camp Huntington became a venue for a group of art majors and sculptors.

In the fall of 2006, Vaughn Randall, assistant professor of art and art history, came to Raquette Lake for the first time as part of a new faculty orientation. Approximately five years ago Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Elizabeth Davis-Russell and I discussed the idea of all new faculty coming to Raquette Lake for a two-day orientation. For some, it was the beginning of a long relationship with the Outdoor Education Center; while for others, it was at the very least exposure to SUNY Cortland's Adirondack gem.

Vaughn and I discussed the idea of bringing up a group of students enrolled in his sculpture class during the Winter Session. A date was set and there they were. Their academic focus while they were here was to construct a snow sculpture. It was a preliminary session for creating a sculpture as part of a winter weekend in Cortland. The group departed campus early on Friday morning and arrived just after lunch. They had a great deal to accomplish in an extremely short period of time.

The group was well equipped with cutting tools, plywood forms, saws and snow shovels. Many of the tools, crafted by Vaughn, worked great while others were redesigned. In addition to the tools used to fashion this creation, the group exhibited a tremendous amount of energy and team work. Snow was in short supply because of the rain, so gathering snow became the group's first step. I used the "Mule" on the lake to plow piles of snow. The snow was loaded onto sleds, that are used to transport luggage, and then taken to the construction site outside Fuge Dining Hall.

The plywood forms were put together; then the fun started. Snow was packed into the forms and water was added. The hope being that overnight the water would freeze and in the morning the forms could be removed and the carving would begin. As I said at the beginning

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Snowflake sculptors



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of this piece, this was a training mission for things to come. Once the forms were removed, the sculpting began. It was more of an idea; no formal design was in place. The idea was an eight foot snowflake. As the hours passed, the snowflake began to take shape. At one point I thought it would be an excellent snow tire, but what do I know? During the process, Vaughn concluded some of the techniques would need improvement for the next event.

When it was over, the crew of Tara Evans, Chris Gilligan, Ken Little, Darla McGrath, Jessica Penny, Vaughn and guest, Lloyd Purdy, manager of the Cortland Downtown Partnership, felt a true sense of accomplishment. The sculpture stood outside the Fuge Dining Hall for more than three weeks. Unfortunately, an unseasonably warm day took its toll. The creation remains could be seen via the Web cam attached to outside of the dining hall.

Vaughn and his sculpture students are already scheduled for a weekend in February 2009. I wonder what their creation will be next year!

## THE SEARCH GOES ON

For nearly a year, Barbara Schooley '72 and Suzanne "Suz" Snyder '73, two Arethusa Sorority sisters, have been conducting research on the various works of art housed at Camp Huntington. They have taken digital photographs of each item, noted the artist and researched each piece. Not surprisingly, many of the works were created by world renowned artists that date back to the late 1800's and are quite valuable. The two also spent many hours researching artists, paintings and pictures at the Adirondack Museum.

A number of the works are in poor condition and in need of restoration. Our idea is to have many of the paintings go to campus. The paintings could be refurbished and kept in a more stable environment; otherwise, the works would continue to slowly deteriorate at Raquette Lake. The center would like to see a Raquette Lake collection started that could be housed in the Dowd Fine Arts Gallery.

In addition to all the work that Barb has done with the art pieces, she also has taken on a mystery that has boggled me since my arrival in 2000. I am sure many of you are familiar with Minnie Evert Kirby, the Kirby Camp and her relationship with William West Durant. Barb has spent an incredible number of hours researching the mystery lady. Her research has taken her across the United States and back. For every promising lead, she takes one step forward and two steps back. The quest for Minnie Evert Kirby continues and Barb is getting closer to her "true" identity.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD/CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

More than 120 early childhood/childhood education students participated in programs during the 2008 Winter Session at Raquette Lake. The two groups of education majors began coming to Camp Huntington in the fall of 2000. Over the years, the



Student cutting ice

courses have been coordinated and administered by Andrea Lachance, associate professor of childhood/early childhood education, and Beth Klein, associate professor of childhood/early childhood education. The team of faculty participating in the various outdoor and environmental sessions at Raquette Lake now totals more than 12. Other than physical education, this is the largest student group that comes to Raquette Lake.

For many of these students, this was their first time in the Adirondacks. It was also their first time cross-country skiing, walking across a frozen lake and snowshoeing in the woods. While the students were in camp, they spent a great amount of time photographing the exterior and interior of the historic buildings. Although it seemed like there were always one or two students focused on the deer outside the dining hall window.

The students also were involved in a number of instructional sessions. The Knox Classroom and the Carlson Classroom each served as staging areas. Each student was asked to bring a snack to share, which was housed in the Knox Classroom, also known as "snack central." We discourage snacks in the dorms due to the various animals, such as black bears and squirrels, so "Fort Knox" has been the logical answer for snack storage.

Perhaps one of the most interesting lessons for the students was ice cutting. A century ago, cutting ice on Raquette Lake was one of the better employment opportunities for local residents. The men could live at home and be with their families, unlike when working in a logging camp. The ice was cut and loaded into railway box cars kept at the rail siding. The ice traveled by rail south to Utica and branched off east to Albany or west to Buffalo.

Using a "real" ice saw and ice tongs, the students gained an appreciation of the hard work that went into cutting ice. An ice core was cut, and the students were able to see how the ice had developed over the winter. The ice creates stratifications or layers according to the weather. The students were able to see the difference between good and bad layers of ice.

Another first for many of the students was the sauna. The next question after they found out we had a sauna was, "where is the hot tub?" You know the answer to that one. A new ladder, made by one of our alumni guests, John Carson, was placed in the water for those who ventured into the frigid lake after warming in the sauna. John brought the ladder up for the winter alumni session and left it. It worked better than climbing up on the ice on your hands and knees.

I always look forward to this group. Raquette Lake has served as a catalyst for bringing students and faculty together, accomplishing things here that could never be duplicated on campus.



One of the three education groups



Schooley and Snyder with a painting

## WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Last fall Jack and Rhonda began a campaign to replace the old Grumman canoes at Antlers and Camp Huntington. Many of the canoes are more than 40 years old! We all remember how careful we were with them on the canoe trips and portages. It is time; in fact, it is past time, to replace many of these old war horses. We currently have pledges for 11 canoes. The first canoe was purchased by Marcia K. Carlson, professor emeritus, Recreation, Parks and Leisure Studies, and the second canoe was purchased by the Class of 1959.

If you would like to take advantage of this opportunity to purchase a new canoe, paddles and life jackets, your gift of \$1,000 would be tax deductible. The amount can be paid in full or quarterly through the Cortland College Foundation. Each donor may name the canoe purchased. It could be for a class, a club, friend or friends, a husband and wife, in memory of someone, or even yourself. The name plate will be attached to the bow of the canoe containing the information provided by the donor.

This is a unique way to become part of the Raquette Lake legacy. If you are interested in participating in this opportunity, please contact Jack Sheltmire, director, Center of Environmental and Outdoor Education, at (607) 753-5488, or jack.sheltmire@cortland.edu or Jennifer Janes, director, The Cortland Fund, at (607) 753-5572 or jennifer.janes@cortland.edu.

## THE YEAR OF THE SNOW SNAKE

When Theta Phi sisters and members of the St. Lawrence Environmental

Management Council come to Camp Huntington, there is a heated competition. Last year the focus was "something fishy," but this year it took a slithery turn towards "snow snakes."



Snow snakes and awards

The snow snake theme and competition were announced at the February 2007 meeting. The competitive nature and the creativity of the two groups is something to behold.

Have you ever heard of a snow snake? They are not the little creatures so many of us detest but rather a wooden creation fashioned by man. History states that the origin of snow snakes came from the Native Americans across the northern portions of the eastern and central parts of the United States and from a number of Canadian tribes. I've been told there is a snow snake track built and maintained along the river in Ottawa. It was a game they played to help pass the long winter days.

Snow snakes are handcrafted and come in various lengths. The smaller snakes called "Mud Cats" average about 3 feet in length. Others can reach lengths of 8 to 10 feet. A common design feature of a snow snake is the amount of surface area the snake has in contact with a frozen surface. The colorful projectiles are propelled down the frozen track by hand. By hand mind you! The serpent delivery is very similar to that of bowling. One is looking for a fluid motion that delivers as little friction upon meeting the surface as possible. This sounds easy, but I assure you it is not. My research shows that the longest recorded distance a snow snake has traveled when propelled by hand is two



Snow snake launching

kilometers. Hey folks, that's more than a mile! For some strange reason, our course did not come close to this distance. Our course and snow snake theme were created by Jon Montan, senior planner for St. Lawrence County. I do not recall the exact number of entries we had at the Raquette Lake competition, but I would say more than a dozen. Again, they were of all colors, shapes and sizes. We actually had a "REAL" snow snake entered in the competition which came from Ottawa, Ontario. The

beautiful work of art was given to me as a gift from Diane Church, a member of the St. Lawrence group. It was just beautiful. I remember a Japanese saying from when I was a horticulture major, "Beauty in Simplicity," and this snow snake certainly meets that criteria. At the urging of the group, this international competitor was entered in the competition. It was like a Ferrari racing against a two ton truck. Jon Montan cast this entry the farthest and won the competition. My efforts were fair at best. Like anything, we get better with practice.

St. Lawrence and Theta Phi participated in other traditional games and activities throughout the one day competition. One of my favorites is the annual frozen rutabaga toss. The deer like it too, because they get to eat the chunks of rutabaga left on the ice. I look forward to this great weekend every February.

## LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAM

The first alumni Lifelong Learning Program was offered last fall at Antlers and was a resounding success. Looking ahead, there will be two different weeks this coming fall. Life in the Woods, the program from last fall will be repeated as well as a new program. The new program is being finalized and the agenda will be posted on our Web page by May 1.

Judy Thaler and Wayne Robins, partners in Nature Ed-Ventures, will again be our illustrious leaders for both adventures. They are highly qualified, ensuring consistent quality programming along with sincerity and enthusiasm.



Wagon ride to Great Camp Santanoni

The programs will take place this coming September and October. More information can be found on our Web site, [www.cortland.edu/outdoor](http://www.cortland.edu/outdoor) under upcoming events on the left side of the page, or contact us by phone at 607-753-5485.



Group at Ferd's Bog  
Photograph courtesy of Jim Baird

## PE MAKES THE BEST OF A DIFFICULT SITUATION

As you may know, one of the many requirements for teaching physical education majors is to complete a two week outdoor education practicum at Raquette Lake. What some of you may not know is that a select group of these students elect to participate in both a week-long summer and a week-long winter experience. The combination summer/winter camp was started in 1970.

Kate Becker, interim coordinator of the physical education outdoor experience, and her assistant, Jess Donley, graduate assistant in physical education, did an excellent job coordinating and administering the winter activities for the students this past January. It's a difficult task even when the conditions are good. This year the group experienced all the winter conditions Mother Nature could offer.

Upon the group's arrival, cross-country ski boots were issued and ski instruction began. There was plenty of snow for snowshoeing which was next on the list of activities. From there, it was time to gather snow to make the traditional quincy huts. The huts are snow shelters similar to an igloo. Normally the students sleep in the quincy huts, but in some cases, the rain can actually collapse the roof of the shelters. The rain came. It rained and rained, and then it rained some more. The snow base around camp had become non-existent.



Stove lighting

Kate and the crew were not deterred from their schedule. The group donned their rain gear and headed out to climb up Blue Mountain. The students said it was a challenge, but it was worth the effort. Every member of the group made it to the top. In addition to Blue Mountain, the group also climbed Bald Mountain, Black Bear Mountain and West Mountain. While in camp, the group participated in orienteering with maps and compass. They also volunteered to move all of the camp equipment from the storage area above the Ice House to the newly created space above the new maintenance shop.

The last afternoon in camp, the group participated in Winter Olympics. The events were based on activities they had learned at winter camp. The students were really involved and tested. I must admit, I laughed at how some students approached the challenges. The staff, as well as the students, braved the weather conditions, but they all came through it in excellent fashion. I am already looking forward to next January's group.

## E-NEWS

As an outdoor and environmental education center, we are trying to cut back on some of our paper use. You have an opportunity to help us. If you would prefer to review the Raquette Lake News in an online format, contact us. We fully understand if you prefer to have the newsletter and its amazing pictures in hand. We thank you all for your continued interest and support!



Students orienteering

## CCRA WINTER ESCAPE

Once again, (CCRA) Cortland College Recreation Association members came to Camp Huntington for a winter adventure. The leader of the group was Ben Rowell, who has been a graduate assistant in recreation, parks and leisure studies for the past two years. Upon graduation in May, Ben plans to return to Alaska and become a State Trooper.

While at Camp Huntington, the group participated in a variety of winter activities, including cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, using the sauna and just hanging out. Some of the students were able to take pictures of the resident deer in the area. For some students, this was their first time to Raquette Lake, while others had been here a number of times.

I always look forward to CCRA coming to camp. When I taught in the Recreation, Parks and Leisure Studies Department back in the 1970's, I was the faculty advisor of CCRA for five years. CCRA has been a student organization for more than 35 years. I am sure it will serve recreation majors for many years to come.



CCRA winter retreat

## OUTSTANDING VIEW!

New technology has arrived at Raquette Lake! Two new Web cameras have been installed thanks to Academic Computing Services. One at Antlers, is positioned in the direction of Blue Mountain, the lake and Camp Huntington. The other, at Camp Huntington, is attached to Fuge Dining Hall looking towards the Chalet. It has been fun to check the activity and weather there this winter. The link, located on our Web site, [www.cortland.edu/outdoor](http://www.cortland.edu/outdoor), can be found in the upper right corner of the page.

In an attempt to infuse technology into outdoor education, this May, Antlers will begin a blog. The blog will try to reflect the goings on and include funny stories, guests, weather and wildlife sightings. The blog link will also be located on our main Web page.



**ANTLERS  
VOLUNTEER  
WORK  
WEEKEND  
MAY 16-18**



Are you looking for an opportunity to lend a hand at Antlers? May 16-18 alumni families and friends will be helping Antlers open with a bang! Interested folks can find more information on our Web site under upcoming events or by calling our office. We look forward to hearing from you!

(Pictures courtesy of Donald A. White '53)

## NEW VISIONS CLIMB GOODNOW MOUNTAIN

The environmentally focused group from Onondaga-Cortland-Madison BOCES directed by Tim Sandstrom returned to Camp Huntington in February. Tim has brought this group of highly motivated students to Raquette Lake for more than a decade. In addition to coming to Raquette Lake, the group also uses SUNY Cortland's property at Hoxie Gorge in Cortland for various outdoor activities.

One of the activities the group looks forward to each year is climbing Goodnow Mountain. Goodnow Mountain, a 45 minute drive from Raquette Lake, is located in the Huntington Forest tract of land owned by the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry at Syracuse. The mountain itself reaches a height of 2685 feet and hosts a 60 foot fire tower on the top. The tower provides an excellent view of the surrounding area including the high peaks region. The trail ascends a little over 1000 ft., covers a distance of about two miles and is well marked.

SUNY ESF maintains the trail and also provides interpretative brochures, which outline various points of interest along the climb. Both summer and winter brochures are available at the trailhead in the hikers' registration box.

Goodnow Mountain is an excellent day trip if you are in the Newcomb, Long Lake or Raquette Lake area. The view from the top is breathtaking.

## WINTER ALUMNI SESSION

The attendance at the winter session held at Camp Huntington was one of the highest in years. Many of the participants were returnees, but for some, it



Let the chips fall where they may  
Photograph courtesy of Mary Miller '76

was their first time crossing the ice road. The winter session is far more than just skiing and snowshoeing. It is an opportunity to renew friendships that have grown over the years and a chance to get caught up on what has been happening with everyone and their families. Bev and Joe O'Connor '70 told tales and shared pictures of their daughter's wedding this past summer.

Dick '52 and Sonia deFrances returned once again to renew their bond with this special place. For more than a decade, Dick brought his social studies students from West Lake High School here for a winter experience. In addition to the history associated with the Raquette Lake area and Pine Knot itself, the students participated in a variety of outdoor activities including: cross-country skiing, ice cutting, ice fishing, mountain climbing and snowshoeing. Back then, the groups also camped out in the lean-tos scattered around the lake.

Donna and Don Traver '59 also returned to share stories of their adventure to Antarctica and the Emperor Penguins. Their group traveled from southern Chile to Antarctica on a Russian Ice Breaker. Don said as they neared Antarctica, they were actually breaking through ice nearly twenty feet thick! As they approached land, the ice got the best of them and they were not able to proceed any further. So what does one do in such a case? You guessed it, plan B. They took helicopters to the mainland and



Alumni Winter Session attendees

then hiked miles to see the penguin community. Don took pictures of the adult and juvenile penguins that were just incredible.

Mary and Ed '69 Loesch, retired teachers, now canoe racers, runners and woodworking hobbyists, made a presentation to the camp. Mary carved a wooden Canadian Goose and donated it to the camp. It now resides on the mantle in the Fuge Dining Hall. Ed also is a woodworker, but his works are created on a lathe. In the off season John Carson crafted a wooden ladder to be used at the sauna. The ladder will be used to assist people climbing out of the hole in the ice after their plunge. John also completed some repairs on a bench pulling away from the wall. It's too bad the session didn't last longer, I had a long list of "To Do's."

It was also great to see Angie Whisher '48 and her family back this year. Mark Pearlman '75 was our resident photographer and technology go-to guy. New at this year's session were Mary '76 and Gary Miller. Mary actually ice skated over to Antlers and back, a distance of two miles! Other new attendees were Adam Martinez '01 and Matthew Martin.

The winter session for 2008 was just fantastic! Every year I say it can't get any better but it does. It is like family coming home for the holidays. Health and happiness to all!

## WELCOME RICHARD!

We would like to welcome Richard Fey as our new caretaker at Camp Huntington! Richard hails from Skaneateles, N.Y., and will begin his new venture with us in late April. Richard brings to the center a wealth of experience, knowledge, and love of the outdoors. His education includes an A.A.S. degree from SUNY Morrisville in natural resources conservation and several continuing education seminars.



Richard has been the head custodian for Skaneateles Middle School since the early nineties as well as a caretaker on a private estate. He has worked for a number of small local organizations as a landscaper and/or custodian. Richard also has worked with animals at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo in Syracuse and at a private wildlife preserve. The squirrels and occasional bear should not be a problem for him.

Richard enjoys spending time working with the Boy Scouts as an assistant troop master with his son, Jake. He also has a daughter, Heidi, who is attending Cornell University. Richard will be a true asset to our center! Be sure to take the time to say hello while you are visiting.

## THE NATURE NOOK

Unlike the 2006-2007 winter season, winter came early this year. Raquette Lake was covered completely by ice around November 22. Having the lake covered with ice and the ice being safe to cross are two entirely different things. We welcomed the ice and zero temperatures that created a solid base. The thickness of the ice grew relatively quickly with the cold temperatures. What we



do not like to see is a modest covering of ice, two or three inches thick and then a heavy snow fall.

As you know, snow is full of air and one of nature's best insulators, yet one of our worst enemies when it comes to making ice. A layer of snow prevents the cold from penetrating the ice, therefore, the ice cannot thicken. The snow is constantly plowed off of the ice road removing the insulation. Normally, the thickness of the ice on the ice road will be 10-12 inches thicker than off of the ice road. In addition, the quality of the ice on the ice road will be better.

The main problem we had with the ice this year was not thickness but integrity. As the snow becomes wet and freezes, it becomes slush ice. Slush ice doesn't have the strength to support heavy items like trucks. The imperfections, which are caused by air bubbles in the ice, form layers or stratifications. The layers of ice are similar to tree rings. The ice would have some growth and then a layer of water separating it from the next layer, which make for very poor quality ice and cause the insulation qualities of the snow.

We experienced three major thaws during the winter season.

These periods had both good and bad effects on our winter environment. The good impact caused settling and wetting of snow on the lake. Once it cooled down, the slush, or water in some cases, would freeze and add to the overall thickness of the ice. The bad impact was the warmer temperatures and rain which melted the snow so groups could not ski or snowshoe. It was also a very difficult time for the deer. The rain created a crust on the snow

making it more difficult for deer to forage for food and made travel on the ice very dangerous. If the coyotes catch a deer on the ice, it is all over. I have seen the remains of a number of deer kills this past winter.

It is mid-March as I write this little article for the newsletter and programs have been over for about a week. While there are remnants of winter all around camp, spring is in the air. The sun is melting the snow on the shorelines that have a southern exposure. This is helpful to the deer as they have had a very difficult year due to all the snow we received. I believe one of the best indicators of spring are the birds returning. On March 9, I had starlings at one of the feeders and on March 10, the mourning doves arrived. On March 14, I heard the first flock of Canadian geese fly over Raquette Lake heading north. In my opinion, the bird that best represents spring is not the robin as most believe, but the male red-winged blackbird. A group of 16 arrived on March 16.

Mid-March is a time that very few people experience at Raquette Lake. I feel fortunate to see and experience the spectacular gifts that nature provides.

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