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Wolseley Winter Wonderland volunteers aim to improve river trail experience

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MJHL club boasts three of the league's Top 10 scorers

SPORTS PAGE 15



Photo by Katlyn Streilein

Outdoor enthusiasts explore the Assiniboine River trail on an set of ice bikes. The bikes are part of a new product line-up by Ice Cycles — Canada's first ice bike company. Winnipeg's Spark Rentals, the group behind Ice Cycles, is offering the bikes for rent by the hour at St. James' Bourkevale Community Centre and at pop-up locations around the city.

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Ice bikes arrive in Winnipeg

BY KATLYN STREILEIN
STAFF REPORTER

ST. JAMES-ASSINIBOIA

Icy surfaces and bicycles are typically a recipe for a bad time — until now.

Winnipeg's Spark Rentals is behind Ice Cycles, Canada's first ice bike company. The colourful, stable frames are designed for cruising across frozen rivers, lakes, or ponds. Outdoor enthusiasts had the chance to test drive the bikes on the Assiniboine River trail below Bourkevale Community Centre on Jan. 8.

"You don't need to know how to ride them," Sinan Leyek, co-founder of Spark Rentals, said during the launch event. "They're very intuitive. It's not like ice skates or skiing ... Ice bikes, you can just sit down and pedal away."

The bikes come in three models: The classic bike has a skate at the front and a tire at the rear, as well as a long seat that can support two riders; the fat tire bike has two skis at the front and one thick tire at the rear; and the tandem bike, which accommodates two riders on its side-by-side two-bike frame, is supported at the front by a set of skis.

Leyek said the Ice Cycles are ideal for tourists or newcomers unfamiliar with Canadian winters. Leyek came up with the idea for the Ice Cycles while travelling in northern China. There, he spotted a similar type of bike.

Fast-forward six years, Leyek decided the pandemic was



Photo by Katlyn Streilein

Ice Cycles co-founder Nick Meyer aims to offer the ice bikes to schools and residences for older adults.

the right time to put his idea in motion.

The Ice Cycles are available for rent at the Bourkevale Community Centre's Assiniboine River trail on the weekends for the rest of the winter. The rental company partnered with volunteers who maintain this three-kilometre stretch of ice

with a snowblower and sweeper.

It costs \$20 per hour to rent the classic bike and fat tire bike, and \$40 per hour for the tandem bike, when reservations are made online 24 hours in advance. For walk-ups, the price goes up \$5 per rental.

Spark Rentals hosted a pop-up rental on The Forks river trail by Bonnycastle Park and has plans to offer the rentals on a flexible basis in the upcoming months.

"Essentially, we're mobile," Nick Meyer, Ice Cycles co-founder, said. "We're going to be all over the city this winter — wherever we can be."

Ice Cycles enters the picture at a time when more and more people are taking to the outdoors, especially the rivers, for entertainment and exercise. Steven Maxted, the owner of Type Eh Bikes Inc., decided to share his love of outdoor adventure with a broader audience when the pandemic began — just as Leyek and Meyer did with Ice Cycles.

Founded in 2020, Type Eh Bikes Inc. rents kick-sleds, snowshoes, fat bikes in the winter, and a suite of outdoor equipment in the warmer months. Maxted's kick-sleds are popular in Nordic countries, where folks use them for transport and recreation.

"The whole idea is to break down the barriers to get outside and be active," Maxted said at the launch event.

Up-to-date information on how to rent the Ice Cycles is available on the Spark Rentals website. To learn more about Type Eh Bikes Inc., visit, www.typeehbikes.com

Mobile ski library makes winter sport accessible

BY CODY SELLAR
STAFF REPORTER

WINNIPEG

When winter weighs upon a city month after month, year after year, as it does here, some people tire of tea and warm blankets (or rather, of only tea and warm blankets and the like), and they look for ways to have fun outdoors.

The Winnipeg Trails Association has launched a new program to help make winter activities accessible for all with their new "mobile ski library."

The mobile ski library will travel to various parks around the city, lugging around a haul of donated winter sports equipment that people can use while the library is set up.

There are skis, ski poles, snowshoes, kick sleds and wheel blades, which attach to the smaller front wheels of a wheelchair to allow them to move atop the snow.

The library co-organizer Kenneth Castillo has a particular affinity for the kick sleds.

"Oh, they're so cool," he said. "I guarantee if you try them — if you go on a kick sled — you'll feel like a little kid again, and you'll have that big smile on your face."

For those unfamiliar, a kick sled looks like

a mix between a chair on skis and a dog sled. In fact, the sleds, which Castillo said were made in Finland and Sweden, can be converted into dog sleds with a harness.

"We have dog harnesses, too," Castillo said.

Castillo said he's proud to work on the project.

"It makes me feel good. It makes me feel like I'm doing something positive for the community," he said. "I remember, for me, growing up, it was hard to get to places ... my family, we always took the bus. And bus services, if you're going really far, could be a hassle, especially in winter."

That's why the project is travelling to various parks and locations around town. Castillo said he also thinks having outdoor activities available is good for people's mental health.

The mobile ski library has also partnered with various non-profits to put on pop-up events. It will provide equipment for IRCOM to put on ski nights for newcomers, both youth and adult, and also to The Link: Youth and Family Supports (formerly Macdonald Youth Services) for an evening of snowy fun.

It has also joined up with Waterways Recreation, which is for the first time deviating from its canoeing programs, to put on skiing events for Indigenous youth, women and

two-spirit people.

The organizer from Waterways Recreation, Caralynn Nault, said this sort of Indigenous-only programming is important because it creates "a safe and comfortable space."

"To know that you're welcome and your cultural identity is recognized and celebrated and welcomed in a space, because unfortunately we're still living in a very colonized society with systemic racism and all the issues that come along with that," she said. "It's definitely important to be able to combat that in whatever ways we can."

The Indigenous programming will also move from park to park to make it as widely available as possible.

Nault, who had herself strapped on skis for the first time in a while, said she hopes to provide a fun and community-driven experience.

"I hope that people generally enjoy themselves. Hopefully they have a few laughs and stuff and have all the benefits of spending time outside and getting your body moving," she said.

Nault said she expected 10 people to register for the first women's and two-spirit ski night, but 25 people rushed to sign up. People who wish to register for this night or the Indigenous youth ski night can email her



Photo by Cody Sellar

Caralynn Nault from Waterways Recreation will be running ski nights for Indigenous women, youth and two-spirit people.

at caralynn@waterwayscanada.com. The events not in partnership with non-profits do not require registration.

The event calendar is posted at www.winterpeg.org