

## Sold-out film fest delights

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An image from the film *A Life Ascending*, which won the award for Best Film on Mountain Culture at the 2010 Banff Mountain Film Festival, and was also an audience favourite at the Backcountry Film Festival in Rossland over the weekend.

*Image courtesy of The Banff Centre*

By [Andrew Bennett - Rossland News](#)

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The Backcountry Film Festival last Sunday packed the Miners' Hall with outdoor aficionados who were treated to a number of hilarious and entertaining local shorts — especially Stew Spooner's *Long Skis*, *Deep Powder* — and Ptarmigan Film's award-winning, emotional and insightful *A Life Ascending* about local legend and mountain guide Ruedi Beglinger.

Those in attendance not only loved the outdoors, but had planned ahead; tickets sold out six days before the show.

“As of Saturday, Butch Boutry told me he had about 85 people come by looking for tickets [who couldn’t get them],” said Sheree Sonfield of the Friends of the Rossland Range (FORR), the group that organized the festival.

Sonfield was excited by the films that “each in their own way celebrate the beauty, adventure and entertainment the winter backcountry offers us.”

She was particularly pleased to present “much more local and regional content than last year.”

Spooner’s video is well captured by the opening lines: “In 1992 I purchased a six bedroom house in Rossland for \$27,000. I rented out beds to a dozen of my friends. We skied every day and partied every night.”

Along with Spooner’s brother Cam, this “crew of reckless young Aussie ski bums” captured it all on Hi8 video.

Unfortunately, technical issues at the festival cut out a big section of gnarly cliff drops, so go to Spooner’s blog for the full experience, [kootenayskier.wordpress.com](http://kootenayskier.wordpress.com).

Michele Desjardin’s Pigs in Heaven and Jim Firstbrook’s Adventures Somewhere in the Rossland Range highlight more recent epic days in the hills, starring Keisha the dog bounding through the powder.

Both can be seen Firstbrook’s YouTube channel, [www.youtube.com/user/jimfirstbrook](http://www.youtube.com/user/jimfirstbrook).

Dave Heath’s Schuss, a photographic homage to the early days of skiing shot this time last year, can also be seen online at [vimeo.com/10737539](http://vimeo.com/10737539).

Another excellent short was Joel Warden and Tate Evans’ Cross Country Snowboarding.

“Skiers don’t like snowboarders,” they reason, “so therefore, cross country skiers don’t like cross country snowboarders.”

The spoof is well worth three minutes on YouTube.

Along the same lines, Extreme Tobogganing featured a group of hardcore girls led by Beglinger’s daughters as they pioneer new horizons for an old sport.

The audience was sent home with deeper thoughts, however, after the hour-long feature of A Life Ascending. The film traversed the life of Beglinger, from the highs and lows of family life in a remote cabin to the rigors of guiding in dangerous terrain, the pain of loss, the triumph of success, and the mystery of connections with nature far beyond our rational understanding.

A big part of the festival was to raise awareness of FORR’s activities — such as their recent submission of a tenure proposal for the local hills and cabins to the provincial government — and to raise money to help these initiatives along.

“This is one of the few opportunities for FORR to reinforce to everyone in the community the

importance of the recreation tenure application,” Sonfield said, “based on a long and invaluable community consultation process.”

Jenny Coleshill gave a brief presentation on the wildlife tracking program she recently instituted, described in detail in last week’s edition of the Rossland News.

“We are so appreciative of the people who came to the board members [after the films] and wanted to help with tracking wildlife, or streamkeepers, or all these other ideas,” Sonfield said.

Sonfield was very thankful for the help FORR has received.

“So many people have come together to do this. It’s such a community wide effort.”

“We love having the hall as a venue,” she said, “and we can’t thank the sponsors too much. Without the sponsors, we could not offer such an affordable event to families.”

For more information on FORR and its programs, visit: [www.rosslandrange.org](http://www.rosslandrange.org).

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