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Huge igloo is an unofficial world record

Massive ice dome holds 300 people during Grand Falls Winter Carnival festivities

By Madeleine Leclerc and Jacques-François Levesque

Consider it the latest volley in what has become a friendly international rivalry. A large crowd gathered on Saturday, Feb. 19 to witness the efforts of 40 volunteers to create the world's largest igloo, wrestling the title from a group of American upstarts in Wisconsin.

Volunteers have worked for weeks to create the giant igloo behind the E. & P. Sénéchal Center. The igloo, which boasted an internal diameter of 30 1/2 feet and a height of 17 feet and eight inches should bring the world record back to Grand Falls. An official confirmation should be received within a few weeks from the Guinness organization. The previous record announced in 2010 was 27 feet, two inches by a team in Wisconsin.

Mayor Marcel Deschênes and Mike Allen, Tobique-Mactaquac MP, were invited to take the formal measurements of the igloo.

"We have put many hours of volunteer labour to build the igloo. The team spent about a month and a half, during evenings and weekends, to prepare the

blocks of ice. In all, we can say that it took 14 days to build it with the help of 40 people, compared with two igloos in the past years, which took eight days," said Eric Ouellette, engineer and founder of the project.

"The construction of this third igloo was far more intense because we wanted to set a new record. We've added three more feet in diameter to set the new record. Measurements were 17.8 feet in height and 30.5 feet in inside diameter. It took in excess of 2,500 blocks of ice to build the igloo. At the official opening, 300 people could easily stand inside the igloo," Ouellette said.

"We know that a record can still be beaten, but I hope if this is to happen in the future, that this record remains in Canada and not abroad," Ouellette said.

A Wisconsin team nabbed the world record from Grand Falls in 2010. The previous record was set in 2009 in Grand Falls.

The annual winter carnival also featured moonlight cross-skiing, a giant snowslide, free outdoor skating, rappelling with Grand Falls firefighters, and other events.



It's a long way up!
Mayor Marcel Deschênes climbed a very tall ladder to measure the height of the igloo. Builders were ecstatic that the structure is more than three feet larger than the previous record held by a group in Wisconsin. See page A7 for additional photos. (Photo by Jacques-François Levesque)

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