



THE VICTORIA STAR

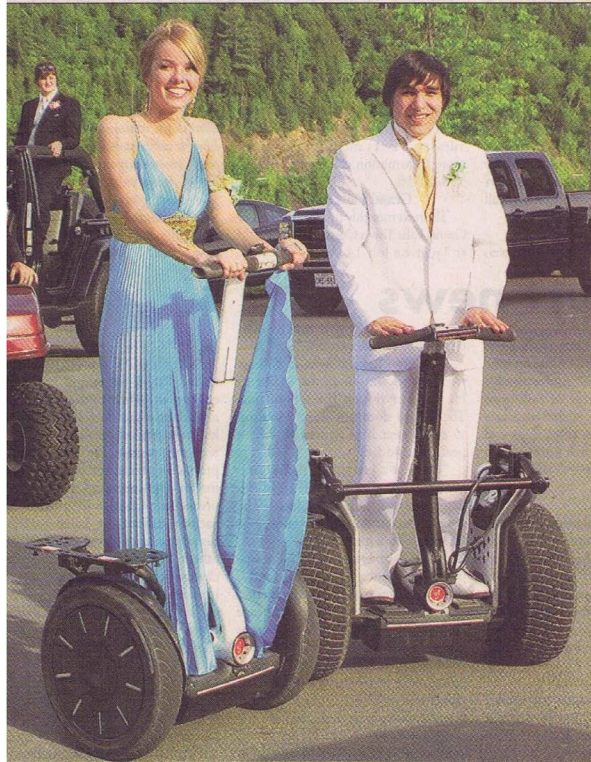


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Serving The Upper St. John Valley

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Segway duo
Corey Nicholas and his date Heather Grant had a pair of unique vehicles in the SVHS Prom Parade on June 13. They drove electric-powered Segways, single-person vehicles that have their own gyroscope stems so that grads and city folks don't have mishaps. See more SVHS photos on page 13. Photos by Robert LaFrance for the Victoria Star.

Zip lines coming to Grand Falls in 2010

By Madeleine Leclerc
Move over igloos, something cooler is coming to town. Eric Ouellette, civil engineer and Guinness World record igloo builder, is now in the process of bringing zip lines to the Grand Falls gorge. ZIP ZAG will offer locals and visitors alike the opportunity to literally fly over the falls and gorge by means of zip lines.

"Zip lines were devised to explore the Amazon jungle in South America. Scientists would put on a safety harness and pulley and zippered from tree to tree allowing them to travel great distances in a short period of time," stated Ouellette in a recent interview with The Victoria Star.

"Travelling by zip lines also minimized the impact of humans on many delicate ecosystems. Zip lines over the past 10 years have been gaining popularity in the tourism industry and steadily creeping north and all over the world," he added.

Phase 1 of Ouellette's project, proposed for the summer of 2010, will see the installation of two dual-racing zip rides crossing the gorge, departing near the Ron Turcotte bridge abutment. The second line will depart from the south bank of the Saint John River, cross over the falls and land at the Malabean Tourist Centre. "Two guests will complete the traverse together, racing to the finish," he added.

The cables returning to the Malabean centre would also have great historical significance since they would overlap the area walked by Van Morin in 1844 when he crossed over the falls on a tightrope.

Phase 2 of the project would see additional zip lines incorporated into the mile-long gorge taking visitors on an amazing adrenaline-rushed experience.

"While Phase one would be focused on the thrill of the ride and guest amusement, the second phase would focus on gorge exploration. Guests would travel in small groups of eight, accompanied by two trained guides. At each stopping point in the forest canopy, guests alight on a platform where their guides would provide information about forest and gorge ecology before continuing on to the next platform and scenic vantage point," stated Ouellette.

"The tour would include views and exploration of the gorge from vantage points not previously possible and provide opportunities for guests to experience the feeling of flight as they ride the cables at speeds up to 60 km/h. Total tour time would range between two and three hours," he said.

Since the fall of 2008, Ouellette has been in communication with S.T.E.P.S. Inc. (www.stepscorp.com) from Michigan. "S.T.E.P.S. Inc. is a leader in the design and development of canopy tours, adventure parks, and challenge courses. Since 2005, they have been a leader in the installation of canopy tours in North America, with 12 canopy tours in the United States and one near the Long Point Bay World Biosphere in St. Williams, Ontario," Ouellette stated.

PLEASE SEE -----> Zip lines, A3

Zip lines <----- A1

Hidden gem

Mike Smith, STEPS Inc. director of canopy tour and challenge course installation and program development services, was on hand recently in Grand Falls to do his first site visit and determine the feasibility of the project.

"From a design standpoint and a guest perspective, the gorge presents everything you could ask for in a world-class canopy tour: dramatic topography, break-taking views, and interesting ecology and natural history," stated Smith.

"The beauty of the gorge is immediately apparent and rivals many of the most celebrated wilderness areas in North America. Having traveled the world conducting site feasibility studies and consulting on zip line and canopy tour installations, I was shocked to find

this hidden gem. The opportunity present in the gorge to bring people into a wild place is outstanding," he added.

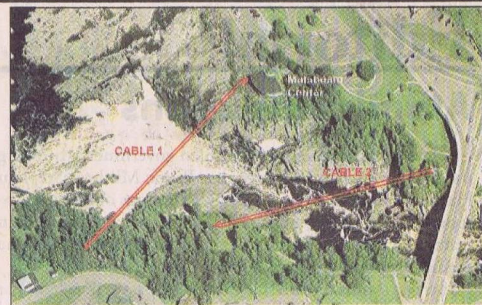
The zip lines and canopy tour will be engineered and built to the highest standards, drawing from those established by the Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) and the recent regulations adopted by the TSSA in Ontario.

"The zip line ride will be designed for guests of good to moderate health, ages 10 and older, weighing between 70 and 250 lbs.; the canopy tour is not recommended for children under the age of 10 years. Guests should be capable of walking .5 kilometer with some stairs," stated Ouellette.

ZIP ZAG could also be open outside the normal tourist season and incorporate early spring and winter zip line fun. "Visitors would experience a variety of

visually stunning settings ranging from wild rushing currents in the spring, deep rock cliffs in the summer, amazing foliage in the fall and giant icicle formations in the winter. Night zipping could also be incorporated for phase 1 with the current lighting infrastructure in place," he said.

With the project approval already received from town officials, Ouellette is looking forward to working with them and local businesses on making sure this project materializes for all of the positive impacts he believes it will have on the community. Ouellette also encourages locals to visit the Malabean Centre and fill out the short market survey currently in place inside the building. They can also fill out the survey online and keep up to date on project status and developments by visiting the website at www.zipzag.ca.



This photo shows where the two zip lines would be located above the Ron Turcotte bridge. (Submitted photo)



Zip lines in 2010

Visitors and residents will have the chance to literally fly over the falls and gorge by means of two zip lines next summer. The project is the brainchild of local engineer Eric Ouellette. Phase 1 of the project will see the installation of two dual-racing zip rides across the gorge, departing near the Ron Turcotte bridge abutment. The second line will depart from the south bank of the Saint John River, cross over the falls and land at the Malabean tourist centre. Left to right: Vicky Durepos-Landry, program coordinator with the Town of Grand Falls Tourism and Marketing Department; Eric Ouellette, Mike Smith, STEPS Inc. director of canopy tour and challenge course installation and program development services; and François Picard, manager of Enterprise Grand Falls Region. (Mark Rickard photo)