

Crazy Canucks

By Scott Pemberton, Operations Manager for the Morgan Arboretum

For many years, the sport of skiing was utterly dominated by European countries at the international competitive level and the Canadian ski program was of little significance. Then in the 1970's, out of nowhere, Dave Irwin, Ken Read, Dave Murray and Steve Podborsky "The Crazy Canucks" catapulted our country's skiing to the top, speeding and often crashing their way to fame. Not only were these Canadian kids fast but they were fearless, they had personality, they had style and they attacked the slopes with a recklessness that left the skiing world stunned and all of Canada feeling proud.

I loved reading about "The Crazy Canucks" because I always felt it so perfectly defined the Canadian spirit. Throughout the winter months we regularly brave extreme cold, slippery sidewalks, precarious drives through blizzards and mountains of snow just to complete our normal daily routines. Many people across the world would, and surely do, call us crazy for doing that and I think Canadians across the country all rather enjoy that feeling.

In this article I wanted to write about one of the winter hazards that gets a little less attention and one that being a "tough as nails winter Canadian" does little to correct, Seasonal Affective Disorder. At its base, Seasonal Affective Disorder or SAD is a kind of depression associated with a specific time of the year. For most people who experience SAD it begins in the fall and lasts throughout the winter. While the scientific community is not in complete agreement about the causes for SAD in winter, the shorter days and lack of access to sunlight are commonly thought to be major instigators. Surely, being more often shut indoors, dealing with extreme cold and challenging weather contributes to the circumstances of one's mental health as well.

As February cedes to March, and March in turn becomes April, winter can start to feel long. Anyone who may be dealing with the effects of Seasonal Affective Disorder is encouraged to seek help from a professional. Counselling and professional psychology can always help while studies have shown that light therapy, physical activity, time outdoors, exercise,



Our Snowshoe Trail Photo: Andrée Devost

healthy eating and good sleeping patterns can help. Like balancing a healthy ecosystem, finding the keys to mental health can be complex but putting the pieces in place one by one is the right way to start.

Luckily this article isn't all sadness, doom and gloom, the Arboretum has some exciting news. The town of Baie-D'Urfé has announced that all Baie-D'Urfé citizens can now get one third of their Morgan Arboretum annual membership refunded by the town up to a maximum of thirty dollars (\$30)! This progressive and forward looking decision by the town of Baie-D'Urfé not only cements the town's commitment to preserving nature and our environment but also the commitment this town has to its citizens. By offering this refund the town is recognizing the importance that access to physical activity and natural spaces has on the physical and mental health of its citizens.

The Morgan Arboretum is a forest reserve on the island of Montreal dedicated to the conservation of nature. Open to the public all year long, the Arboretum offers skiing, snowshoeing and walking trails in winter, twenty plus kilometres of walking trails in spring, summer and fall, and an ever increasing list of [workshops](#) for the young and old looking to get in touch with nature.