



## Atop the Telkwa Alps by Morgan Hite ([morganjh@bulkley.net](mailto:morganjh@bulkley.net))

I remember someone in the last ten years proposing that the hills rising to the east of Tyhee Lake be renamed the “Telkwa Alps.” I don’t think it stuck, but as romantic ideas go it was exceptional. Instead, these high points up at the end of Hislop Road generally go by the name of Tyee Mountain (note ‘Tyee:’ spelled without an ‘h’.) But I still like the idea of the “Telkwa Alps.”

Atop Tyee Mountain there’s a lake, McDowell Lake, and all around it are groomed cross-country ski trails. These trails continue out into the forest on all sides, and to the northeast they descend some 150 vertical metres off the highlands to a trailhead near the Banner Mountain Lodge on Babine Lake Rd.

As with many trails in the centre of the Bulkley Valley (Malkow Lookout is another important example that comes to mind), it is generous private landowners who provide parking space and allow the public to visit. In the case of Tyee Mountain, much of the trail network is on crown land, but its heart is on land owned by Ian Bissonette and Heather Sosnowski. They maintain the trails, post signboards with maps and do winter tracksetting, as well as hosting the website at [tyeemountaintrails.com](http://tyeemountaintrails.com). Small parts of the network also cross land owned by three of their neighbors. Please bear the hospitality of these people in mind when you go up to ski or snowshoe.

Although most of the crown land atop Tyee Mountain has been designated a provincial Recreation Site, access is still a work in progress. At present there are three options. There is a parking lot at the corner of Van Horn Road, just before the end of Hislop Road. This was built by one of the landowners, so please don’t leave trash, block the road or leave vehicles here overnight. About 300 metres up Hislop, there is a paybox (\$4/person, \$1/dog: this helps cover the cost of grooming) and the beginning of the Little Onion trail. Portions of this trail may be a bit steep for beginners.

Option two is parking just off Babine Lake Road (turn off for Banner Mountain Lodge, and then park at the first fork in the road), and ski in on the Trapline East or Trapline West trails. Note that at times these routes are active traplines, traps are set, and you should use caution with dogs.

A third option is to give Heather and Ian a call (phone number on the website) and get invited up. In this case you can follow their (4WD only) driveway all the way to the lake.

Trails around McDowell Lake are groomed most often, and other trails if they are used enough. In total, there are about 30 km of trails, with difficulty ranging from beginner to advanced. Snowshoers are welcome, although they should steer clear of the groomed trails. No snowmobiles, please.

In the summer, you can mountain bike these trails! The maintainers are looking for volunteers to help cut brush back, so if you’re keen, check out their website and give ‘em a call!