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New runs from ski mogul

INSIDE EDGE

Lori Knowles

As ski area development goes, this first one's a doozy.

Mike Wiegele, a pioneer of Canadian helicopter skiing, is well on his way to creating his own remote yet oh-so-exclusive ski resort in British Columbia. Its specs sound enticing.

Wiegele's five-star heli-ski lodge near Blue River, B.C., sets the standard for heli-skiing around the world. He started it in 1970 and has expanded the operation to include 4,400 square km of backcountry terrain. There are no ski lifts, no ski trails, no nothing at Blue River ... nothing except untouched powder snow on peaks and in valleys that are serviced exclusively by helicopters.

A week with Wiegele (pronounced WIG-ly) starts around \$7,000 per person, and he gets it — heli-tours are consistently sold out.

But Wiegele says despite his success, his original dream was to create "a tranquil alpine village far from the hectic hurly-burly of ordinary ski resorts." The entrepreneur has drawn up plans for Saddle Mountain, a village and a ski

area near Blue River that will be open to home owners and condo dwellers.

Similar to the private ski areas of Ontario — Osler Bluff, Craigleith, Alpine Ski Club — Saddle Mountain will consist of a collection of private homes and condos at the base of a ski area — but on a much grander scale. The new ski area will include a ski lodge, six lifts, 710 hectares of skia-

ble terrain and 1,370 metres of vertical.

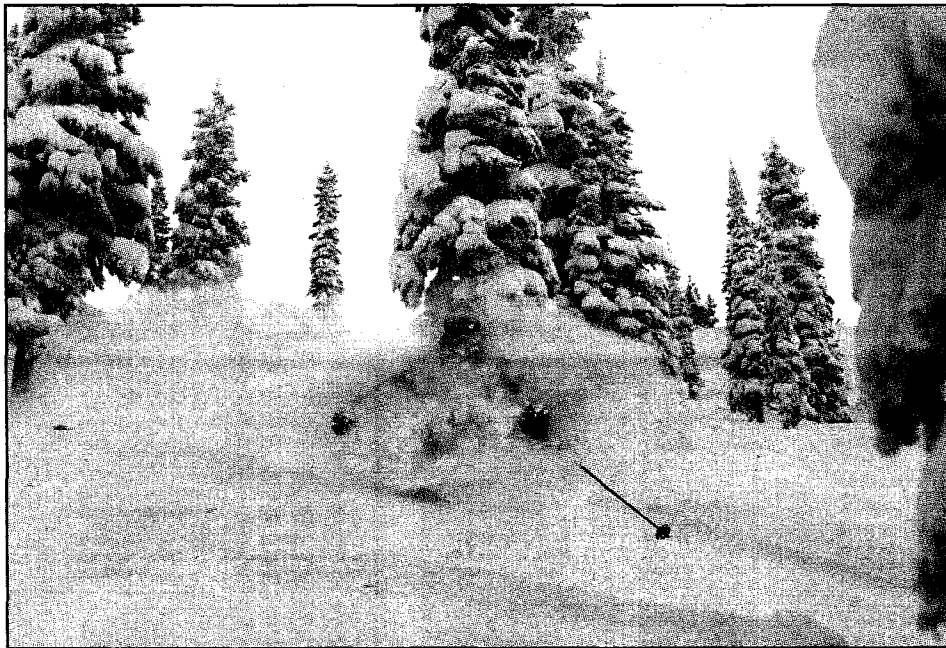
There will be everything from beginner to expert runs, plus gladed terrain and, of course, plenty of powder. The village will also feature a skating rink, some shops and restaurants, a spa, a daycare and a chapel.

Both village and ski area will be in close proximity to Wiegele's heli-ski operations, as well as Wiegele's 8 Peaks Project. (The 8 Peaks is an additional 1,210 hectares of developed peak-to-valley runs and glades that are currently being developed as a refuge for Wiegele's heli-skiers in bad weather when choppers can't fly into the backcountry.)

There's no word on how much it will cost to buy into Wiegele's development, but count on it being a lot. Find out more at wiegele.com.



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JOHN SCHWIRTLICH PHOTO/COURTESY OF MIKE WIEGELE HELICOPTER SKIING
Skiers will be thrilled to learn of Saddle Mountain, the new project by ski pioneer Mike Wiegele.