



Above: Kyle Easby schralping the schnarb. COLIN FIELD PHOTO. Inset: The enigmatic Enn Poldmaa. GLEN HARRIS PHOTO.

ONTARIO BACKCOUNTRY?

By Ester O' Neill

Lots of people would say the term “Ontario Backcountry” is an oxymoron. And sure, there are definitely some debatable points for and against that argument.

But let it be resolved that Bellevue Valley Lodge just outside of Sault Ste. Marie, qualifies as genuine Ontario Backcountry. And here's why.

The first reason that comes to mind is Enn Poldmaa. The enigmatic Enn. The guy who has been clearing 2,000 acres of skiable terrain since 1984. The guy who built a large B&B – it sleeps up to 15 – with the wood he cleared from that land. A 60-year-old with crow's feet that suggest a lifetime of laughter. The guy who has created an experience like no other (many have helped and could be named here, but Enn has spearheaded the effort).

The second reason would be the hardwood-filled Algoma Highlands in his

backyard. Lake Superior is just downwind and generates consistent lake-effect snowsqualls, piling over three metres of snow annually on Enn's ski touring paradise. Nearly 20 backcountry runs with big vertical drops are blessed with

backcountry skiing, the sauna completes the experience. Enn couldn't be a proud Estonian without building a sauna to top all saunas; this thing would melt the wax off your skis and cure your day's lactic acid buildup at the same time. Jumping



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names like Shaky Jake, Big Music and the 50-degree Pyramid of Denial. All the runs are a short ski-tour away from the back door of Bellevue Valley Lodge and the keen skier can get up to 4500 metres of vertical a day.

And thirdly, while technically not proving Bellevue Valley Lodge is genuine

through the ice on Enn's fishpond is the final kicker to a perfect day of, yes, I'll say it, “Ontario Backcountry.”

Let the haters hate. I'm saving my energy for Enn's place. ■

DIY
bellevuevalleylodge.ca