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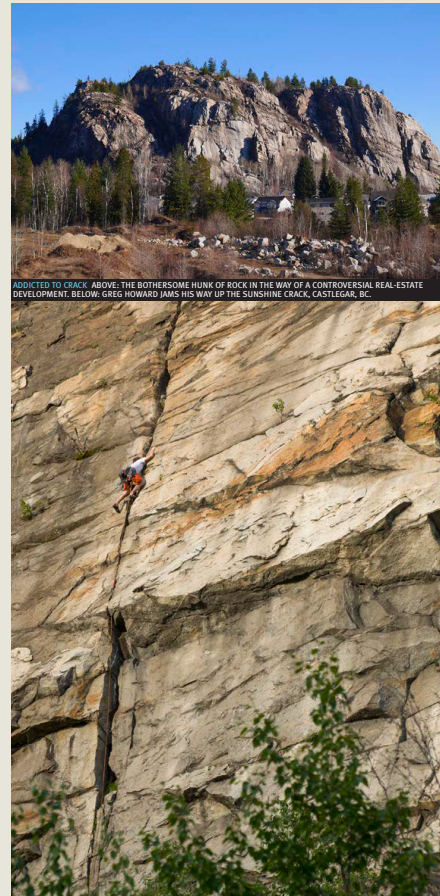
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## Frontside



ADDICTED TO CRACK. ABOVE: THE BOTHERSOME HUNK OF ROCK IN THE WAY OF A CONTROVERSIAL REAL-ESTATE DEVELOPMENT. BELOW: GREG HOWARD JAMS HIS WAY UP THE SUNSHINE CRACK, CASTLEGAR, B.C.

# A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

FOR HALF A CENTURY, CASTLEGAR, BRITISH COLUMBIA'S KINNAIRD BLUFFS HAVE BEEN TERRA FIRMA FOR THE KOOTENAY CLIMBING SCENE. BUT THE BLUFFS ARE ON THE BLOCK. CAN THEY BE SAVED? LOCAL ADVOCATES ARE BETTING \$57,000 THEY CAN.

BY VINCE HEMPSALL

IT'S A HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT chunk of rock, and West Kootenay residents are on a mission to save it. Kinnaird Bluffs, the white- and ruby-coloured granite cliffs towering over Castlegar, British Columbia's Emerald Green subdivision, have been a playground for rock climbers for half a century, and now they're for sale.

The bluffs have always been located on private property, but their various owners over the years turned a blind eye to their recreational use. Then, in the 1990s, a development company purchased the land to make it part of a larger subdivision. Because of the steepness, though, they couldn't build any houses.

In 2014, the 17-acre plot was auctioned off for back taxes and a resident in nearby Nelson purchased them with the intent to flip the property for its assessed value of \$57,000. In an online advertisement, she alluded to the potential of harvesting the "granite gravel/rock." That spurred local rock climbers to action; they began a fundraising campaign and made plans to create a public space where people could hike and climb in perpetuity.

Nelsonite Craig Stowell was instrumental in registering The Association of West Kootenay Rock Climbers as a non-profit society that would hold title on the land. "The good news is the owner has accepted our offer," he says. "Castlegar city councillors seem amenable to the idea of creating a public space. Now we have to raise the funds." At publication date, the group had secured \$30,000 from individual donations and applied for grants via the Columbia Basin Trust, Mountain Equipment Co-op and the Alpine Club of Canada. You can donate at [www.access-society.ca](http://www.access-society.ca)

Photos, top to bottom: Vince Hemptall, Steven Ogilvie