



## AAC Publications

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### **Rethel Mountain, Rethel Headwall, new routes**

Canada, British Columbia

The El Niño weather pattern created very unusual conditions in western Canada during the 2014–15 winter season. Powder skiing did not happen and the lower-elevation waterfalls all fell down. Even the stalwart classics that usually remain climbable all winter were reduced to nothing.

Following my nose higher than usual, I discovered atypical perfect winter-climbing conditions on the prominent north-northeast-facing alpine wall of Rethel Mountain (7,060'). This wall is located just above Wedgemount Lake, immediately north of the Blackcomb ski resort. The über-prolific cragsman Robin Barley climbed the main rock buttress lines several decades ago, in summer conditions, but I seriously doubt there has been much or any traffic since. I'm not sure of a previous name for this cliff besides the Wedgemount Lake Bluffs, so I've proposed the Rethel Headwall. It's a Canadian tradition, and it always sounds cooler when it's a *headwall*.

On March 3 and 4, 2015, Tony Richardson and Kye Petersen joined me for back-to-back first ascents up two of the nicest-looking and least cornice-threatened lines. Both involve 140m of vertical gain from the base of the wall to the rim and involve all the joys of winter climbing: steep ice, thin ice, sn'ice, névé, snow mushrooms, drytooling sections, and frozen turf. They aren't "hard" routes, but folks gunning for repeat ascents will want solid skills and a headspace for slightly bold climbing. Both routes maxed out around WI4+ and M5+, with the plus added to denote the seriousness for the leader: Intolerant Tearin' (140m, M5+), No Cupcakes (140m, WI4+).

The rock on the Rethel is relatively good but compact alpine granite, so can be hard to protect. If the right conditions arise, these lines should be high on the list for any coastal ice climber—they are definitely jewels and it couldn't be a more scenic spot.

– Jason Kruk, Canada

## Images



ony Richardson climbing the second pitch of No Cupcakes (140m, WI4+).



The "Rethel Headwall," a north-facing wall on Mt. Rethel, showing No Cupcakes (140m, WI4+) on the left and Intolerant Tearin' (140m, M5+) on the right.

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