



2008 "IKHEPHU SKI PUPS" CAMPAIGN

"Ikhephu" means "Snow" in Xhosa

Introduction:

Rhodes and Barkly East are the nearest villages to the Tiffindell Ski Resort. This creates a number of opportunities for the local community. The increase in tourism has already improved the quality of life in the area by creating jobs. The unique opportunity however is for children to experience the fascination of snow and get involved in the exciting sport of skiing.

The "Ikhephu Ski Pups Campaign" has been initiated to make this opportunity a reality for children in the surrounding areas.

The idea is to expose local rural children to snow and that the sport of skiing will have a positive impact on the community.

Skiing is an extreme sports activity. It teaches children many life skills, it broadens their horizons, encourages their interest in an active outdoor lifestyle.



Background

Barkly East is a remote area near the Ukhahlamba World Heritage Area in the Eastern Cape. A 65km winding gravel road leads to Rhodes village, in the foothills of the Southern Drakensberg. From Rhodes it is a 25km steep single track mountain pass to Tiffindell Resort, 2765m above sea level, on the slopes of Ben Mc. Dhui peak. Bordering on Lesotho it is the highest settlement in the Eastern Cape and is a 9 hour drive away from Johannesburg.

It is a stock farming area, with few farm homesteads spread far apart. The area and roads are often inaccessible due to extreme weather conditions; it is remote and harsh mountainous terrain, but breathtakingly beautiful.

Tiffindell Resort is a small alpine resort which focuses on snow sports tourism. It has a beginner ski slope of 50 meters, and two main slopes of +/- 400m served by two lifts.



A small number of enthusiastic parents undertake the daunting task of transporting groups of children in 4 wheel drive vehicles over treacherous mountain passes: a one hour trip from Rhodes, two hours from Barkly East.

Campaign Goals

- To get more children onto snow at Tiffindell Resort and to advance them to a level where they can enjoy the sport.
- To accept all applicants, without having to turn anyone away.
- To build relations between the Ski Resort and the local community.
- To have a successful ongoing campaign that is community driven and independent from external funding.



IMPLEMENTATION

Campaign Organising Committee:

Head Co-ordinator:	Dr. Christina Olivier
Deputy Co-ordinator:	Mariaan Henning
Snow Sports Co-ordinators:	Alex Heath Janco Krivan
Tiffindell Resort Partner:	Maarten den Heyer
Secretary:	Dr. Christina Olivier
Finance:	Belinda Fourie
Transport Co-ordinators:	Elizabeth Malleson Sulette Cloete

Number of Voluntary Workers and Contributors

Parents and teachers who transported children:	14
Ski Instructors:	7
Snow Sports Co-ordinators at Tiffindell Ski Resort:	2
School Teachers:	7

Partners

Snow Sports South Africa
Tiffindell Ski Resort
First Ascent Ski clothing
Barkly East High School
Rhodes Christian School
Rhodes Public School
Alex Heath: National Ski Coach
Farm Schools
Local Businesses
Local Farmers



The key to this project was to involve local schools. Three schools namely Barkly East High School, Rhodes Public School and Rhodes Christian School were identified and included in the campaign. The selected schools covered all sectors of the community and helped to organise overall administration and logistics of transportation. The resort provided equipment, tuition and free access to the slopes.



Participation

- Number of Participants: 19
- Children aged between 6 -11 years.
- Numbers were limited due to the availability of transport and facilities.
- Participation was on a voluntary basis.
- Interested children registered at the schools.
- All participants had to reside in the Barkly East/ Rhodes District.
- Participating children came from all sectors of the local community.

Places were allocated on the following basis:

1. Children had to be keen to take part in the campaign!
2. Kids had to have an adventurous spirit!
3. Children whose parents could help with transport and could accompany the children to the resort.

All children received a list of items that they had to bring on the ski trip. It was compulsory for parents to accompany their children on their first trip. This gave parents a better understanding of the snow and mountain conditions and helped to ensure their children were properly prepared and equipped.

All children were issued with ski suits, bright yellow t-shirts, gloves and beanies.

Practice Sessions and Transportation

Number of trips: 30
5-6 children per trip.
Approximately 150 practice sessions during the campaign.
Transportation for the Ikhephu Ski Pups Campaign 2008 amounted to over 3500 km in distance travelled.

The Transport co-ordinators worked out a transportation schedule at the beginning of the campaign in conjunction with parents, teachers and the Tiffindell Resort Manager.



Transportation of children over mountain passes to the ski resort is a grueling four hour return trip from Barkly East, a 2 hour return trip from Rhodes, in 4wheel drive vehicles.

Drivers received compensation for the cost of petrol.

Drivers were allowed to ski for free at the Tiffindell Ski Resort.

Participants were transported from Barkly East and Rhodes to the resort for practice on Sunday, Tuesday and Friday afternoons, every week over a 10 week period.

All planned sessions were subject to daily weather conditions, some trips had to be cancelled due to dangerous road conditions. On occasions the resort was too full to have sessions. Each child attended one practice session per week. Groups were arranged according to ability and age.

A typical session:

Leave school at 12h00.

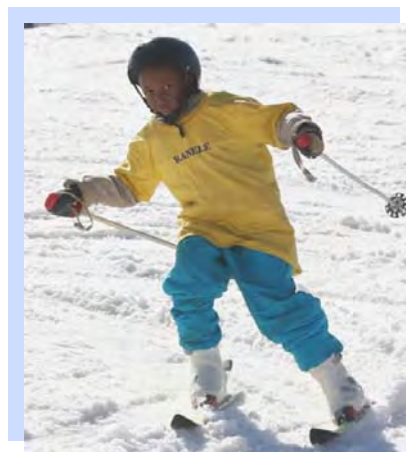
Travel to resort.

On the slope at 14h15

2 – 3 hour sessions.

Arrive back home at 19h00.

Daily Sessions were not always easy. At times sessions took place before school tests and sometimes sessions were affected by harsh weather conditions.



End of campaign Competition

A competition was staged at the end of the "Ikhephu Ski Pups Campaign", a small but festive occasion. An eagerly anticipated highlight of the campaign and it attracted parents, teachers, helpers, supporters and sponsors.

All participants received a certificate and a small prize.

Olympic Skier Alex Heath handed out the prizes to the winners. (Photo right)

Winners received certificates, and were also later recognized at their respective school's annual awards ceremonies.

The event ended with a spontaneous snowball fight.



Outcome

Snow Sports South Africa has delegated Alex Heath, SA Triple Olympic Skier and now National Coach, to assist with the campaign. His international success and popularity has made him a local hero and role model. His involvement lifted the campaign to a higher level and contributed enormously to the success of the campaign.

The interaction between the National Federation (Snow Sports South Africa), the local ski clubs, schools and the Resort has improved relationships and has provided a better understanding. Snow Sports South Africa was happy to assist with advice, funding, equipment, training and clothing.

The 2008 campaign promoted the awareness of the sport and has spurred an increased interest amongst the school children in the area.

Three local schools namely Barkly East High School, Rhodes Public School and Rhodes Christian School incorporated skiing as a school sport.

The local ski club has gained 19 new members.

Participating children acquired life skills and important values such as tolerance, fair play, a sense of responsibility and commitment etc.

The campaign was covered by the local media and featured on National TV during July 2008.



The 2008 "Ikhephu Ski Pups Campaign" was a huge success and executed in the spirit of the "FIS Snow Kidz" programme. Under careful consideration of local conditions and circumstances the campaign was to a large extent planned, financed and implemented by the local community. This extent of community involvement made it such a success and a meaningful contribution to the growth and popularisation of the ski sport in South Africa.