

Take  
me to  
Waskesiu



Against the odds, this national park lake retreat has

By Jim Sutherland Photography Kamil Bialous



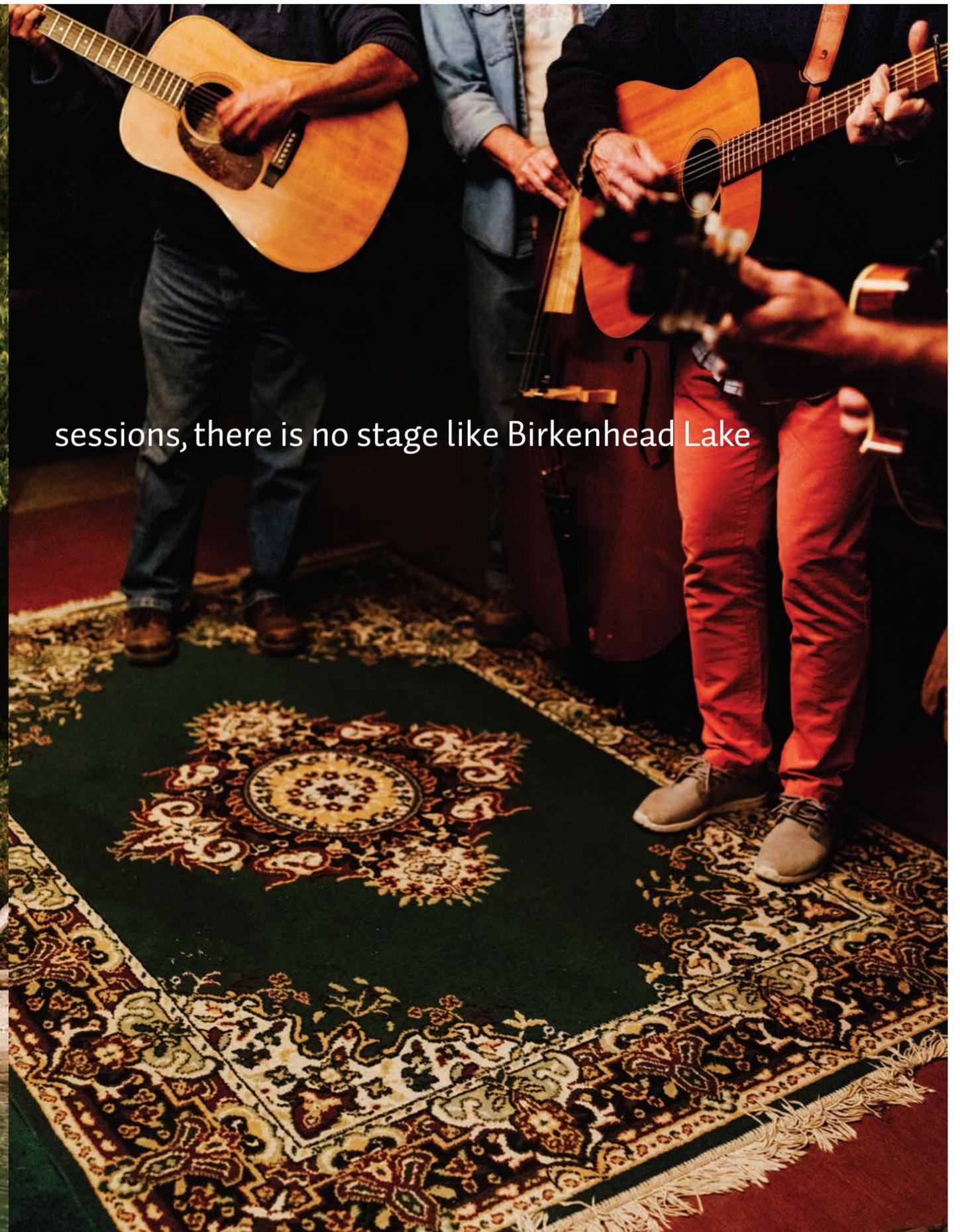
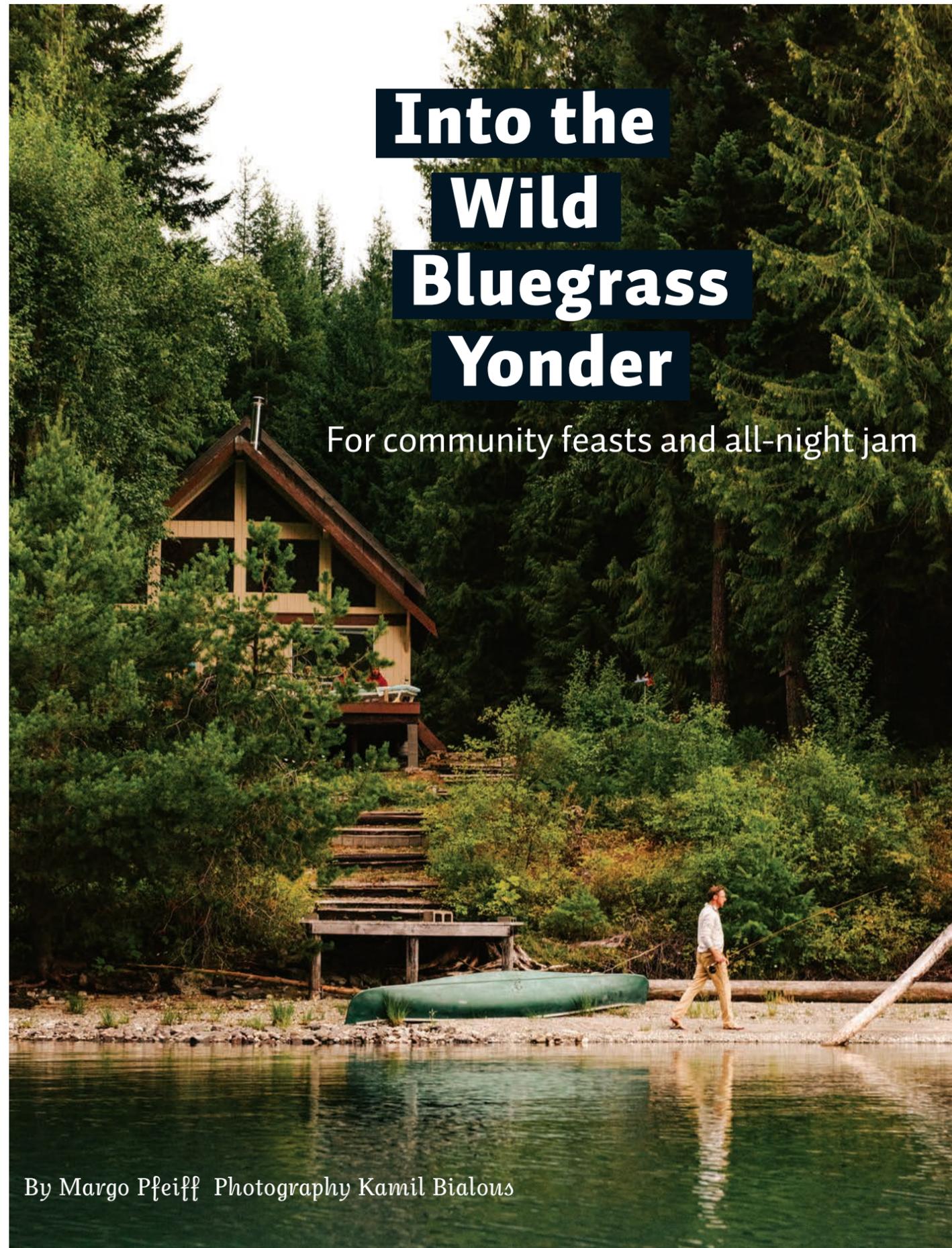
survived, with the help of some political bigwigs

# Into the Wild Bluegrass Yonder

For community feasts and all-night jam

sessions, there is no stage like Birkenhead Lake

By Margo Pfeiff Photography Kamil Bialous



# ON THE POWER OF TRADITION

by Stephen Marche

Once every summer, I climb Ha Ling Peak. The mountain looms over my mother's place in Canmore, Alta., and climbing it is a ritual. The Rocky Mountains are too harsh for anything that might be called a cabin or a cottage elsewhere in the country, and nature is not so soft there that you may bask in it. But the purifying truth of the wilderness is closer—more difficult and more intimate. You just have to walk up to it.

The path from the house to the mountain takes you past the turquoise Grassi Lakes, which are knotted against glorious limestone climbing-walls in the pass from town. I always pause at the pictograph in the pass, an icon left there by an unknown people unknown thousands of years ago: a man holding up an ochre circle. The real work of the nearly 8,000-foot climb starts soon after. The trail on the backside of the mountain is a well-maintained but steep and unforgiving series of switchbacks, followed by a few hundred metres of scramble. The air thins as the mountain rises, and with it the difficulty thickens.

For decades, Ha Ling Peak was known as Chinaman's Peak. In 1998, the name was changed, for the obvious reasons. Ha Ling Peak is a much better name, not just because it's less offensive but also because it is the name of a man with a story. In 1896, the friends of a 28-year-old Chinese-Canadian cook named Ha Ling bet him 50 bucks that he couldn't climb the mountain that now bears his name in the span of 10 hours. He did it in five and planted a flag at the top for proof. The guys who bet him didn't believe his story and couldn't see the flag, so the next day they all climbed the mountain together and found the flag right where Ha Ling had planted it. Soon, the editors of the *Medicine Hat News* heard about the feat and suggested Ha Ling Peak as the name. Nineteenth-century Canadians changed it, out of habit, to the slur. They didn't know or want to know who Ha Ling was. They knew what a Chinaman was.

Ten hours is about as long it takes me to climb the mountain. Five would be a stretch, for sure. But, the climb is worth it. The view from the top is glorious: on the north side, the town; to the south, Goat Range Provincial Park.

The scale of geologic time makes the preoccupations of daily business seem like what they are: mere busyness. The glory of the mountains is that, the more you stand in them, the less human differences in time or in culture matter. Canada is not without the crimes that have consumed the history of other nations, but the land is our redemption. They took Ha Ling's climb away from him twice, first because they couldn't believe it and second because they wouldn't call the mountain by his name. But the climb was his climb, still, and everybody knew it, and eventually they gave it back to him. The way to move forward is to do just like Ha Ling did: keep going up, and plant a flag when you get there. Anyone who can climb that mountain belongs to that mountain. I belong to Ha Ling, and he belongs to me. The name for our connection is "Canada," I suppose, but our real connection is the climb.

Nature is not there to comfort us. History is not there to fill us with pride. Both truths are obvious at Ha Ling's mountain, with the strenuousness of the hike and the tortured history of the name. But the climb gives the view from my mother's place meaning, which is why it's worth returning to again and again. Climbing the mountain changes the view from home. You know what you are looking at from down below only after you have been to the top.

*Stephen Marche writes for Esquire and The Guardian. He is the author of The Unmade Bed, about the modern dynamic between men and women, edited by his wife.*



That  
magic sparkle

Only in  
CANADA  
★

photo by  
KAMIL  
BIALOUS

This photo—from Powell Lake, B.C.—makes me remember why we go to the cottage. We go to be kids, to spend time outside and on the water, to get away—from the adult things that we have to do. The photos that to me define cottaging are those that represent visceral experiences—how does it feel to ride on a boat through the coastal ocean or to jump into a warm lake in the sun? How do you photograph the smell of a summer afternoon—really? This photo represents nostalgia. At least for me.