Youth Avalanche Education Program

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The mountains of BC and western Alberta offer world-class winter recreation opportunities. However, many popular destinations involve uncontrolled avalanche terrain. Improved equipment and an increase in the amount of “extreme” imagery are just two of the reasons why younger people are getting into avalanche terrain at an earlier age. A recent survey of 319 high schools students in Revelstoke, Golden and Calgary revealed that 20% of the respondents had ventured outside ski area boundaries and 27% said they snowmobiled in the backcountry.

We are concerned that many of these students may not be aware of the risks inherent with travelling in avalanche terrain. For the past two winter seasons, we have gone into elementary and high school classrooms to talk to students about avalanche safety. Through this experience we have developed effective teaching tools, lesson plans and materials for various age groups. We hope to reduce the occurrence of avalanche-related incidents among school students through effective education. This paper describes the programs that the Canadian Avalanche Centre (CAC) ran in the 2007-2008 school year.