

Do kids still play outside?

Last week, editor John McGhie sent me out to track down a few pictures to be used in the newspaper.

"Ted, get out there and find some kid pictures," he said, "There should be a bunch of kids playing street hockey or something."

Out I ventured, trusty Nikon in hand, with the safety off, set on high speed continuous mode, ready to nail a Pulitzer prize-winning photo of a street hockey game, or even bag an equally gripping shot of some kids being kids, preferably playing in the snow.

The first problem was apparent the moment I stepped outside. No snow.

I had hoped there might have been a dusting on the favourite tobogganing hills in Acton (it was simply too mild in Georgetown). We veteran sledders know that a light dusting of snow on a grass hill makes the sled go like a bat outta hell once it packs and turns to ice.

No shots of kids screamin' down a hill on their GT Racers (do they still call them that?) with the white powder flying up in their little red faces, a look of sheer terror etched into their furrowed brows, as they accelerate to speeds surpassing Mach I on their sleds.

Plain and simple, no snow, no sledding shots. Strike one against the shoot.

On to look for a street hockey game.

I guess things have changed since I was a kid. I came to a very disturbing conclusion as I scouted both Acton and Georgetown for a street hockey game.

I can live with the fact there was no snow, but I was a bit bothered there were no kids outside. Strike two.

Now my search wasn't entirely fruitless, and I did find a photo to use (I AM a professional, ya know) but when I got back to the office, I sat and had a chat with McGhie.

"John, when you were a kid," I asked, "What would you be doing on a day like today?"

Ted Brown



"I'd be outside from about 8 a.m. until dark," said McGhie, "I'd probably be playing road hockey or something like that all day."

I agreed— when I was a kid, I spent most of my time outside, doing something. But today's youths don't seem to be doing that.

Perhaps it's the proliferation of computers and video games, and the fact there is so much available on TV, or maybe today's young people aren't quite as active as we were some 20, 30 or even 40 years ago.

Whatever the case, there were no kids outside in either town that 6 C day— I checked every playground, every school yard and all the arenas in both towns.

And with school being out, and the weather so unseasonably warm right now, that made it even more unbelievable.

No kids outside— not a one.

As a result of my observations, I've decided to give it some conscious personal thought, and try to get outside more myself— inhale that fresh (snow-less) air and feel alive once more.

I'll even make it something of a New Year's Resolution (in spite of the fact I don't usually make 'em.)

And I intend to start right away.

Yup, as soon as I check my e-mail.

Right after I watch my favourite TV program.

(Ted Brown can be reached at tbrown@independentfreepress.com)

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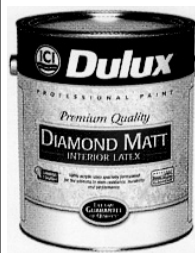
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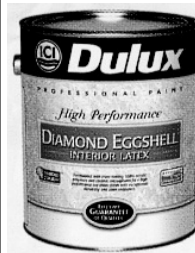


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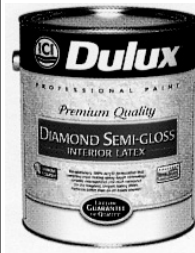
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