

Club History

On November 25, 1957 the Nordic, Alpine, and Backcountry skiers in Prince George formed the Sons of Norway Ski Club. The Hickory Wing Ski Club was formed on January 16, 1959 to serve the interests of the nordic and alpine skiers. The Sons of Norway Ski Club remained the backcountry and tour skiing group. Many years of growth and skiing followed with both Alpine and Nordic skiers using Tabor and Purden alpine ski areas. Cross country skiers also used the many skiing trails and roads on and around Tabor Mountain as well as some trails at Okanagan Helicopters on Otway Road. One of the main privileges of membership was to get into the ski swap one hour earlier than the general public.

The Hickory Wing Ski Club was very active, hosting the Canadian National Championships (seniors) in 1966 (Chief of Competition--John Pettersen), 1971 (Chief of Competition--John Pettersen), and 1973 (Chief of Competition--John Pettersen) at the Tabor Mountain Trails. The 1981 Championships (Chief of Competition--Rolf Pettersen) were also scheduled for Tabor but poor snow conditions led to moving the races to McBride and a co-operative effort with the Yellowhead Ski Club.

The Otway Road Cross Country Ski Centre opened for the 1984-85 season, boasting 1.5km of lit trails and 2-3 km of unlit trails, a two-story cabin, and a biathlon range. Karen Petersen moved her cabin onto the site to become the first security person and caretaker in residence. Over the years, as skiing became more popular in Prince George, (the total membership of the Hickory Wing Ski Club was approximately 250 people) it became obvious that Alpine and Nordic skiers would best be served by two clubs. On June 18, 1987 the Nordic skiers formed the Caledonia Nordic Ski Club. In 1987, The Canada Cup Hill (named in commemoration of the Club hosting a Canada Cup race that year) was added to the lit trail system. The 1989-90 season saw 500 club members, including 150 jack rabbits, 40 Junior Racers, 30 Masters skiers, and 6 CANSI instructors. The ski school had about 30 students. The Club purchased their first Piston Bully in 1990. The Canadian Junior National Championships were held at Otway in 1991 (Chief of Competition was Mike Reid).

In 1991-1992, the membership passed 1000 for the first time. The Polar Bear Luge Club used the area adjacent to "Karen's Hill", and the Caledonia Marathon used the Tabor Trails for the last time. In 1992-93, the cabin crew started working at Otway and came to be affectionately known as the "Otway Police". Peter Reinhart has been a club employee from the beginning. The 1993 Caledonia Marathon was the first to be held at Otway.

1994 saw Cross Country BC establish a Provincial Training Centre in Prince George with Dave Wood as the first coach. The Masters camp started as a two day camp but later became a one day Adult Ski Camp. During the 1994-95 ski season there were more than 20 CANSI instructors registered in the club, teaching many of the 1095 members. The Club was a founding member of the Regional Multi-Sport Network Centre (which became Pacific Sport Northern Regional Centre in 1999). Natural Gas was brought to the cabin and the wood heaters were replaced.



The lighting system was expanded during 1995-1997 under Mel Dery's leadership. The Club connected to the Greenway Trails, allowing skiing, walking, and cycling between Otway, UNBC and Forests for the World. In 1997, a second groomer (Pisten Bully PB170) was purchased second hand. In 1997, the club had approximately 1200 members and celebrated 40 years of organized nordic skiing in Prince George and 10 years as the Caledonia Nordic Ski Club. The club joined the information age with a website.

In 1998-1999 Jim Burbee led the club in purchasing a woodlot, with the intention that the woodlot would help to provide a steady annual income in the years to come. Mel Dery upgraded the old lighting system by removing the overhead wiring.

In 2000 Jim Weed, Tony Heinzman, Rudi Kamstra, Clayton and Len Storey built a new machine shed for the grooming equipment. At this time the club's membership reached 1175, including 180 jackrabbits, 25 CANSI instructors, 15 biathletes, 20 Junior Racers and 200 ski school students. The Club hosted the Western Canadian Championships in 2000 with over 280 participants, introducing organized Sprints to BC (Chief of Competition was Chris Hawkins).

The Club hosted the Western Canadian Championships again in 2002 with over 300 participants (Chief of Competition was Chris Hawkins).

In 2003 Cal Benson convinced the Club Executive, Cross Country BC and Cross Country Canada that Prince George was a good location for the 2005 Ski Nationals (Canadian Cross Country Ski Championships). In 2004 the Club Executive decided that a new lodge would be an appropriate legacy. A Building Committee determined that the ideal lodge would have ski rental facilities, a lounge/cafeteria, indoor washrooms, timing room, change rooms and a first aid room. The total addition to the existing lodge became a two storey building totalling 3328 sq. ft plus 8 ft wide deck on two sides. Tim Roots, Cal Tant, Gillian Recknell, Jim Weed, Jeff Bennett and Keith King, amongst others, made significant contributions to the building committee during design and construction.

The City of Prince George was very supportive of the project from the beginning. Through this support, the community gained confidence in the project and the first organizations to provide funding for the project were the four Rotary Clubs of Prince George (Downtown, Yellowhead, Caledonia, and Nechako). The Softwood Industry Community Economic Adjustment Incentive (SICEAI) was also a major funding partner. Numerous businesses throughout the city contributed time and/or materials. Ground was broken on October 18th, 2004 by contractors H.Groot Construction (Harry Groot) and Amstar Developments (Al Smit).

Time was of the essence since the building was required for Ski Nationals that were scheduled to begin February 27, 2005. Rotary Nordic Lodge was completed in the middle of February and the building was granted an occupancy permit for the Ski Nationals. A new well was drilled in the fall of 2005.

Cal Benson and Steve Wagar were Co-Chairs of the 2005 Ski Nationals and Chris Hawkins was Chief of Competition. It had been a good snow year until mid January when it began to rain. Less than 5 cm of snow fell from mid January to the start of the Ski Nationals. The City of Prince George provided 34-20 tonne truckloads of snow delivered from Bear Lake to ensure the race could be held



in Prince George. The race was successful and the club was able to pull off four of the five races. Warm winds and rain during the night of March 4 caused cancellation of the final race on Sunday. Not to let this deter the entertainment for the 361 registered participants, Chief of Course Bruce Bennett led the organization of a Slush Cup event.

GREENWAY SOCIETY

In 1991-92, the first survey of club members was undertaken. Over 140 families responded to the 36 questions asked. Topics in the survey ranged from preferred types of skiing, needs for a larger cabin, prioritization and future vision for the club (looking past the year 2000). At that time, the development of UNBC on Cranbrook Hill was underway, so members were asked about a trail link from Otway to UNBC. The response was an overwhelming 84% in favour. In 1993, the club took the lead role in establishing the Cranbrook Hill Greenway concept. 1994-96 saw the establishment of the Cranbrook Hill Greenway Society and the finalization of a route from Otway to UNBC. Members of the ski club were very instrumental in the route selection so that the best options for skiing were recognized. During the years of 1996-99, the actual development of the Greenway occurred with a large financial contribution from FRBC. In 2000, a loppet was held from UNBC to Otway with over 200 participants.

