



nordicNEWS

THE NEWSLETTER FOR CROSS COUNTRY SKIERS
IN NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO

December 2009

- Go for the Gold at the 2010 Sleeping Giant Loppet
- Local athletes selected as forerunners for the Olympics
- Major Trillium grant to fund grooming equipment
- 2010 Paralympian Robbi Weldon shares her journey

Cover Photo: Lois Nuttal



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Go Robbi, Go!

Local athlete to compete at 2010 Paralympics

By Janine Chiasson

Last week, over coffee, I listened amazed as a truly dedicated athlete shared glimpses of her life with me. Robbi Weldon has always been athletic – at three years old she whizzed down the slopes of Mt. Baldy. Her natural prowess continued into high school where she played many team sports with distinction – volleyball, basketball, soccer – and continued to play after she was diagnosed with Stargardt’s disease (a genetic form of macular degeneration) at age 15. As her vision progressively worsened, she worried that she might adversely affect her team’s performance and tried other individual pursuits like badminton (her coach made black birdies so she could see them); cross-country running (not her favourite); and power lifting (she set national and world records). In 2002, despite being legally blind, Robbi found Nordic skiing after encouragement from skiing friends at work.

Robbi’s alpine skiing background, combined with her giant aerobic capacity and champion strength, has proven to be a winning combination. After a few years getting her Nordic ski legs under her, Robbi paired up with long time local runner, triathlete and skier, Brian Berry, who’s been her stalwart sighted guide ever since. Before my interview with Robbi, I watched a great VANOC podcast (www.youtube.com/vanocwebteam) that showed the two of them skiing together with cool footage of Robbi shooting in Biathlon – pretty nifty considering she’s blind! I was very intrigued by the guide/skier bond and asked Robbi about that relationship. At once, Robbi expressed her great good fortune at having Brian for her guide these past three years and listed all the pluses: they live in the same community; he’s accommodating, supportive, and competitive; and she trusts him immensely. With amusement, she told me how they got started.

In September of 2006 she and Brian began weekly dryland training – no snow, no skis. When they went off to the Haywood NorAm Cup in Vernon B.C. in November they had never skied together, not even once. They weren’t even sure about the rules for the visually impaired racing class.

It didn’t matter one bit. They won. They raced the next weekend in Canmore and won again. It seems they were noticed, so now, in her early thirties, with two NorAm cups under her belt, Robbi Weldon was invited to join the Canadian Para-Nordic World Cup Team while single-parenting two children, the youngest only 1.5 years old. She and Brian spent the first month of 2007 in Europe and then headed back

to North America for more World Cups and Ski Nationals. I gaped in wonder and asked how in the world she managed all that, plus her job as a therapeutic recreationist at St. Joseph’s hospital. “Carefully,” Robbi said modestly, “and with a lot of help and understanding from my mother, family, friends, and employer.” Of course, Robbi had nothing but good things to say about the support from the local ski community, and her access to fantastic coaching and generous sponsors all along the way.

It’s been three years now for Robbi and Brian on the Para-Nordic World Cup Team. Robbi’s children Alex and Keegan are now five and nine and travel with her whenever possible. As a parent myself, I can only imagine how grueling the World Cup schedule must be and asked Robbi how much longer she’ll do this for. She didn’t hesitate and boldly stated, “Twelve more years.” I asked, why twelve? “Because it takes

ten years to learn proper classic technique,” she replied determinedly.

Too soon, our time was done and I asked Robbi what’s next. She calmly listed a complex travel schedule that included NorAms, World Cups, the Canadian Para-Nordic Championships, and, the Paralympics Winter Games. Tune in to the opening ceremony on March 12, 2010, when Paralympians from all over the world will unite to celebrate the possible and cheer on your home town girl, Robbi Weldon. She’s participating in Para Nordic and Biathlon events and she’s heading for the podium; just wait and see.

For more information about Paralympic sports or Para-Nordic Skiing please visit:

- www.feeltherush.ca
- www.vancouver2010.com/paralympic-games
- www.cccski.com • www.paralympic.ca



Guide Brian Barry leads Paralympic visually impaired athlete Robbin Weldon in a competition



Para Nordic Sport comes to Thunder Bay

By Anne-Marie Fequet, RPT

People with physical challenges experience the same enjoyment and health benefits that skiing offers able-bodied skiers. Disabilities such as visual impairment, neurological conditions causing arm, leg, or trunk paralysis or weakness (such as spinal cord injuries, cerebral palsy, or stroke), and limb amputations may require the use of adapted ski equipment or a guide.

Persons with mobility issues can use a special piece of equipment called a sit-ski. Primarily used by people who use wheelchairs to get around, a sit-ski is a seat mounted on a pair of skis and is propelled using poles. Moderate upper body and arm strength is required to push the sit-ski. The Lake Superior Ski Division (LSSD) has two sit-skis on loan from ParaSport Ontario.

People with arm amputations typically ski with one pole and those with leg amputations use sit-skis or prosthetic limbs with regular skis. People with visual impairments may need to ski with a guide. The guide skis ahead and leads the skier with visual impairment through the trail, communicating to them when to turn, when there are up hills or down hills and when obstacles are coming.

Nordic, or cross country skiing is a form of recreation that can be enjoyed by people of all ages, with or without physical disabilities. If you or someone you know may be interested in trying skiing, if you have questions, or if you are interested in volunteering as a guide, becoming a coach for athletes with a disability, or you would like to start a program at your club you can contact Anne-Marie at outskiing@hotmail.com. You can also contact Thunder Bay Nordic Trails with inquiries about sit-ski availability at the Kamview Nordic Center.

Anne-Marie Fequet, a Registered Physiotherapist, is the LSSD Para-Nordic coordinator working to develop programs within LSSD's member clubs.



Physically disabled persons are still able to enjoy cross country skiing using adaptive equipment and with the help of guides

2011 Special Olympic Winter Games

On January 20th 2011, something special is coming to Kamview Nordic Centre in Thunder Bay. Four hundred athletes and coaches will be in the city to participate in the 2011 Ontario Special Olympic Winter Provincial Games hosted by the Thunder Bay Police Service.

The belief of Special Olympics is that consistent training is essential to the development of sports skills, and that competition among those of equal abilities is the most appropriate means of testing these skills, measuring progress and providing incentives for personal growth.

Provincial Games are held every four years for each of the sport seasons: winter, spring and summer. National summer and winter competitions are also conducted every four years, as are World Winter and World Summer competitions. This competition cycle

ensures that Ontario athletes have an opportunity to compete in either a provincial, national or international event.

The Provincial Winter Games being held here in Thunder Bay consists of six sports: alpine skiing, speed skating, figure skating, curling, Nordic skiing and snowshoeing. They will be held over a four day period at several different venues throughout the city. It is expected that a total of approximately 700 people will travel to Thunder Bay, with an estimated one million dollar economic spin-off.

The Games Organizing Committee feels very fortunate to have been able to partner with Thunder Bay Nordic Trails manager Peter Crooks and the Kamview Nordic Ski Centre for the Nordic skiing and snowshoeing events. The GOC was impressed with the World Class

facility that Kamview has to offer, as well as Peter's wealth of knowledge and passion for the sport. Plans are currently underway to have skiers from the national team on site during the Games to help with the organization of the races, as well as assisting the athletes.

"The opportunity to have members of the national team present to assist the athletes is very exciting for Ontario Special Olympics," said Games Chair JP Levesque. "We feel that this new partnership with Kamview will not only enable us to host a first class event, but it will help to build a strong Nordic program for Special Olympians in Thunder Bay for years to come".

The Provincial Games will take place from January 20th - 23rd 2011. If you would like to help volunteer, please contact Pat Murphy by email at pmurphy@thunderbay.ca

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They're Back! *Nordic Skiing Makes a Successful Return to Thunder Bay's High School Athletics Schedule*

After nearly a decade of dormancy, cross-country skiing at the high school level was brought back to life in 2009. The resurrection of the popular winter sport into our high schools was the direct result of the tireless efforts of Westgate Collegiate teacher-coach Marilyn Ailey, and David Pineau, director of the Superior Secondary Schools Athletics Association (SSSAA).



Gabe Viljakainen of Westgate Collegiate on his way to capturing second place in the SSSAA Senior Boys Championship.

Hammarskjold, Westgate, Churchill, Hillcrest (now Superior), La Verendryre, and St. Ignatius all participated in a breakthrough season. While club skiers from Lappe and Big Thunder found more opportunities to race, the real success of SSSAA skiing can be measured by the large number of new skiers and former Jackrabbits who came out for a fun time and some healthy competition. To ensure everyone had a good time, the SSSAA offered both competitive (long) and fun (short) events for each age category. Over seventy athletes participated in the SSSAA schedule.

In the competitive division at the SSSAA city championships, Jimmy Gunka of Westgate and Lindsey Inkila of Hammarskjold captured the Senior titles. Jeff Budnar of St. Ignatius and Hammarskjold's Moira Haggarty won the Junior races. Midget champions Colin Pendziwol and Erin Hansen were both from Westgate Collegiate. Westgate also captured the Team Championship.

By all accounts, every student-athlete benefited from the dedication of their volunteer teacher-coaches who organized and facilitated both team practices and city-wide jamborees. In addition, our local ski community donated clothing and equipment to the athletes while Kamview Nordic Centre opened its rental facilities and Lappe Nordic Centre provided free trail passes. Of course, the perfectly groomed courses at both centres ensured the success of every event.

This year, the exhibition races are scheduled for January 12th and 14th, while the SSSAA Championships are set for February 3rd.



Jimmy Gunka of Westgate Collegiate on his way to capturing the SSSAA Senior Boys Championship.



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After the conclusion of the SSSAA season, Phil Luckai of Westgate, Jeff Budnar of St. Ignatius, Lindsey Inkila of Hammarskjold, Alanna Hamilton of Churchill and Alison Bortolon of Westgate traveled to the Ontario Championships (OFSAA) in Midland. At OFSAA, all our athletes had great results, with Lindsey Inkila earning a silver medal. Back home, many of the new SSSAA skiers could still be seen on the local trails. The young athletes continued to improve and several took part in the Sleeping Giant Loppett in March.



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Bring on the Snow!

Big Thunder Nordic Ski Club athletes ready for the season

By Adam Kates

While many people are less than ecstatic about the forthcoming winter, Thunder Bay's local cross-country skiers are anxiously anticipating the first significant accumulation of snow.

For a city with a relatively small population, Thunder Bay boasts one of the most vibrant and passionate Nordic skiing communities in the country. The city is home to the Canadian National Team Development Centre (NTDC), the amazingly successful Lakehead University Nordic Thunderwolves, as well as the Big Thunder Nordic Ski Club (named after the no longer operational Big Thunder Nordic Sport Park which hosted the 1995 World Nordic Championships.)

Big Thunder Nordic Ski Club is coming into this season as the third highest ranked club in the country based on its standing at last year's Canadian Championships. Training out of Kamview Nordic Centre, Big Thunder runs

comprehensive programming for racers and recreational skiers alike and accommodates all ages and skill levels in a program that focuses on skill development, inclusion and encouragement.

The club's racing contingent has been working hard in preparation for the upcoming season, which will include various competitions throughout Canada and the United States and will culminate with a trip to the Canadian Championships in Whitehorse, Yukon in March. As in past years, the club will focus on developing local talent and encouraging them to reach the farthest limits of their athletic potential.

The local race calendar is full of chances for local athletes to test themselves throughout the winter. Action starts on Dec. 19/20 with the first Ontario Cup of the year at Lappe Nordic Ski Centre. This race will also act as the qualification event for the Ontario Winter Games, featuring a large proportion of local talent. Big Thunder's athletes are ready, so bring on the snow!

Adam Kates is a former member of the National Ski Team, 2006 Men's National Champion and is currently Head Coach of Big Thunder Nordic Ski Club



Photo Credit: Frank Luckai

Big Thunder athletes Moira Haggarty, Daphne Haggarty & Krista Luckai.



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Families and recreational skiers can take part in the 8 km Mini-Loppet or 20 km event which loops around gorgeous Marie Louise Lake. Serious competitors will be challenged by the 50 km course over the Pickerel Lake and Burma Trails pursuing the \$1000 cash prize for the first male and female finishers. With a medium distance 35 km course, an open 50 km event, and a separate 50 km classic category, everyone can set their own Olympic year goals and ski to a gold medal finish!

For more information and to register, visit sleepinggiantloppet.ca



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Kamview Jackrabbits

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Now add 97 kids ranging from age 3 to 13; twelve energetic leaders, five assistant leaders and a whole bunch of helpers (don't forget the soccer balls, pylons, rubber chickens, tug-o-war rope etc) and you have the Kamview Jackrabbits!

Kamview Jackrabbit participants learn the FUNdamental skills of Nordic Skiing. These kids have various reasons for signing up; some enjoy the games and socialization, some find skiing with Mom or Dad to be that special time of the week, there are even those who wish to be the next Olympic hope for Canada. Whatever their reasons; skiing builds confidence. At the end of the season, the Jackrabbit kids are stronger, healthier and proud of their accomplishments. They feel they can take on the world!

Cross country skiing with your children helps build strong bonds and a healthy family lifestyle. The Jackrabbit program can help by teaching your kids the techniques of skiing efficiently which makes it fun. Especially when they realize they can ski better than you! If you wish to join the Kamview Jackrabbit Ski League, contact the coordinator Dan Duckert at jackrabbitdan@shaw.ca. If you are hesitating, just come out to Kamview on a Saturday Morning from 10:00 - 12:00 and ask anyone if they are having fun.



Photo Credit: Kevin Schlyter
Kamview Jackrabbits fall hike at the Kamview Nordic Centre



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Animal Track

A collection of friendly creatures stand guard along a new 1km trail at Kamview

Every young skier at Kamview Nordic Centre has trekked enthusiastically along the Roadway Ramble, eager to greet the frolicking beaver at Bucky's landing. The painted cutout has been a destination, a meeting point, and a great motivator for the very young.

Thunder Bay Nordic Trails manager Peter Crooks, along with keen Jackrabbit leader, Bob Bradley, wanted to build on that experience. Over the past few years, Kamview has seen the development of several kid-friendly projects, like the quarter pipe hill near the chalet and The Maze where skiers can play a game of chase or go on a scavenger hunt.

This year, Bob has worked closely with local artist, Mike O'Connor of Mike O'Connor Studios to sketch out a series of characters, from a sledding bear, to prickly porcupines, smelly skunks, bell ringing mice, and... well, we wouldn't want to give it all away! The cast of characters were painted onto signboard, cut out, and have been mounted along the trail at regular intervals, to greet young skiers, encourage and inspire.

Animal Track is a rolling one kilometer trail near the chalet in the vicinity of the Maze and Sleepy Hollow. It is marked every one hundred meters with distance posts and will be groomed for classic only for most of the season. It was carefully designed so that the least number of trees would be cut and includes no major hills and a short cut, making it perfect for very young skiers. Nordic Trails Manager, Peter Crooks, worked with Bob to cut the trail, remove stumps and install the posts.

Once the snow falls, Thunder Bay Nordic Trails will hold a grand opening. And although work is almost complete, one of the characters is sitting on a blank sign! What should the sign say? Come up with an idea and submit it at Kamview marked "Animal Track Sign". Enter as many ideas as you wish, and remember to include your name and telephone number. You could win Wednesday night dinner at the Chalet and a cookie card.



Peter Crooks, Manager, Thunder Bay Nordic Trails, Bob Bradley and Mike O'Connor install one of the signs for Animal Track.



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\$150,000 Trillium Grant Awarded for a new Pisten Bully!

Thunder Bay Nordic Trails is thrilled to announce the success of our recent application to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for \$150,000 to be applied toward the purchase of a new Pisten Bully!

"We're absolutely ecstatic," says Paul Higgins, Chair of the TBNT Board of Directors. "This money will go a long way towards securing a new groomer to augment our existing machine, putting us in a better position to provide consistent excellence in grooming at all venues."

Currently, TBNT grooms over 100 km of recreational trails at three different locations in and around Thunder Bay: Kamview Nordic Centre; Sleeping Giant Provincial Park; and Kakabeka Falls Provincial Park. TBNT also works cooperatively with event organizers to ensure unparalleled and nationally recognized grooming standards for competitive events, including Ontario Cups and the Sleeping Giant Loppet.

The reality of maintaining over 100 km of trails at three different locations with one Pisten Bully created logistical challenges for grooming staff and management. The current groomer is based at Kamview and must be "floated" to other locations. While difficult enough at the best of times, this situation becomes more complicated during times of heavy, consistent, on-going snowfalls when trail grooming becomes a round the clock activity in order to keep the trail systems open for skiers. In addition, the current Pisten Bully is beginning to show signs of aging, and the board and staff were faced with reasonable risk of breakdown; a situation that might be critical should it

occur during the Loppet. Having a second Pisten Bully will address all of these issues.

"I want to congratulate Thunder Bay Nordic Trails, their Board, and all volunteers, for their success in acquiring this new equipment," said Bill Mauro, MPP Thunder Bay-Atikokan. "As a government, we are very proud of the work that the Trillium organization does, and to reflect its importance to community-based organizations, we have increased the fund by \$10M."

The Ontario Trillium Foundation is an agency of the Government of Ontario. The Foundation has supported the growth and vitality of communities across the province and continues to strengthen the capacity of the volunteer sector through investments in community-based initiatives. For more information, please visit www.trilliumfoundation.org.

While the Trillium Foundation grant will go a long way towards covering the cost of a new Pisten Bully, TBNT is looking to its membership for an additional \$50,000.

How you can support the new Pisten Bully purchase: If every TBNT member made a minimum \$25 contribution, we would reach our \$50,000 fundraising goal! Donations can be made at Kamview Nordic Centre or on the membership application form. Members can also set up a monthly automatic contribution plan by contacting Kathy at Kamview, 475-7081. Just \$10 a month for one year would cover the contribution for an entire family.

For more information, call Kamview Nordic Centre at 475-7081 or visit nordictrails.tb.on.ca



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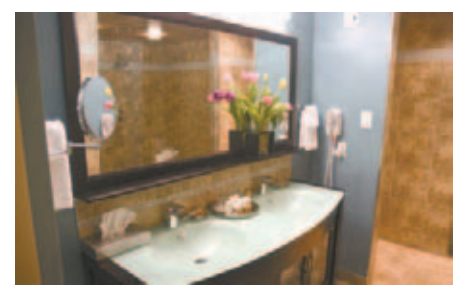
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Nordic 'Wolves are on the Prowl!

By Phil Brown

The leaves change colour, the snow starts to fall, it can mean only one thing - the Lakehead University Nordic Thunderwolves are preparing for yet another season of Ontario University Athletics (OUA) competition. The strength of Thunderwolves Nordic Skiing cannot be understated. LU Nordic is a perennial title contender and has, in recent years, become the dominant university in OUA racing. The men's and women's teams have combined to win an amazing 22 OUA titles, multiple national titles as well as a plethora of individual and relay championships both provincial and national.

Our athletes are not ones to rest on their laurels. We have had representation on several national teams competing for Canada at the World University Games and World Junior Championships. Many current and former

Nordic Thunderwolves athletes have gone on to the National Team Development Centre (NTDC), located right here in Thunder Bay. Several years ago, a partnership called Lakehead XC was formed. It is composed of the Nordic Thunderwolves, Big Thunder Nordic Ski Club and NTDC. Lakehead Athletics recognized that the cross country ski community in Thunder Bay is second to none in North America. The Nordic 'Wolves benefit from the partnership through direct access to the wealth of experience and talent that is found right here in Thunder Bay.

This year's 'Wolves are composed of a mix of familiar faces to the OUA as well as a few new ones. The men's side is led by former OUA all-star Robb Martin, veteran competitors Lachlan Armstrong, Josh Robinson and Owen Grey. The men are supported by freshmen Jimmy Gunka and Greg Kilroy. The women's team is being led by a very

strong returning squad of former OUA all-stars and champions including Brit Bailey, Anna Crawford, Hilary Schrama and Katherine Hall as well as Ellen Ross. The veteran women will be joined by a very strong and decorated freshmen group of Amie Mathews, Kara Jaspers, Daphne Haggarty and Alana Hamilton.

Remember, should you see a Thunderwolves jacket on the trails give them your support!

Phil Brown is the current Lakehead University Nordic Thunderwolves Coach & Manager, with past coaching experience with the Thunder Bay NTDC and the National Paranordic Development Team. Phil is a two time graduate of LU, former OUA skier and OUA Championship medalist, holding degrees in Kinesiology and Forestry. He divides his time between his family, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and the Thunderwolves.

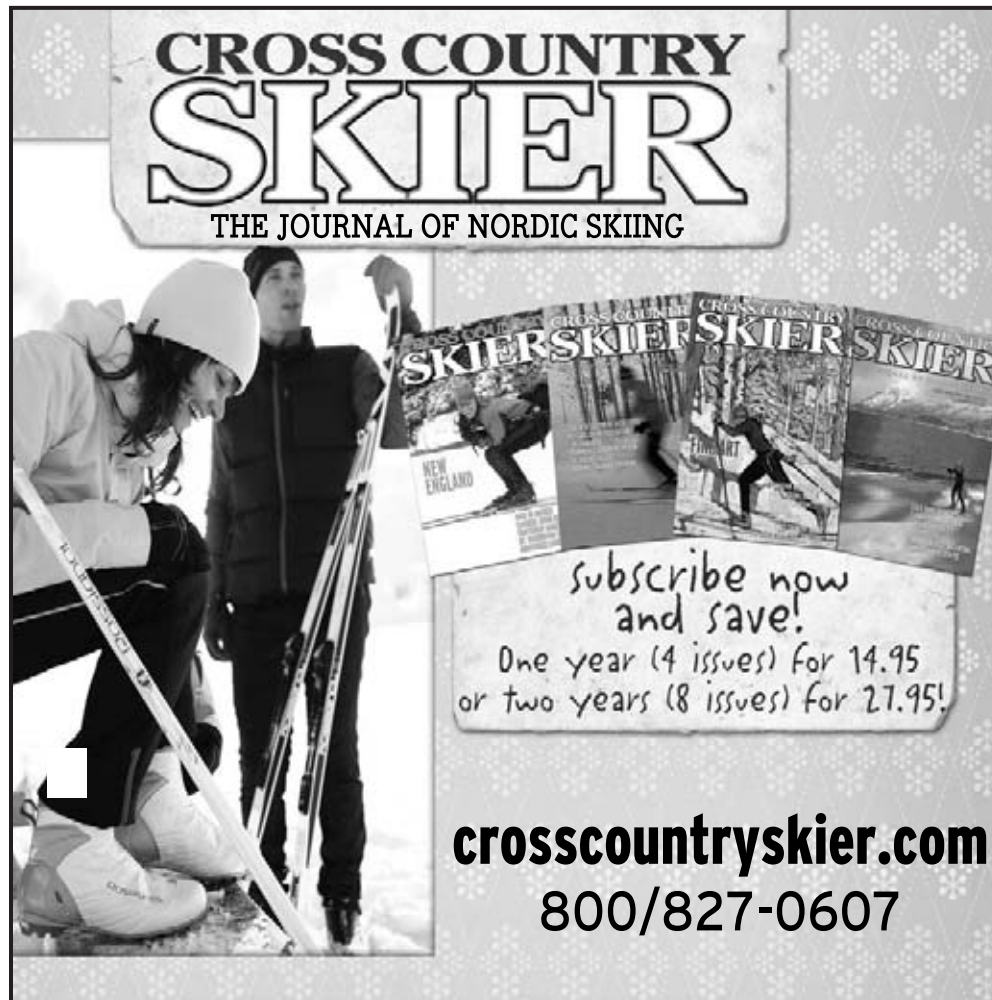


Chris Hamilton of the LU Nordic 'Wolves

Photo Credit: Frank Luckai

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TBNT Manager Peter Crooks off to Olympic Games

Thunder Bay Nordic Trails' manager and head groomer Peter Crooks has been selected to be part of the grooming staff for the 2010 Vancouver Olympics! Peter was able to familiarize himself with the snow conditions and trail system at the Callaghan Valley venue last January when he assisted grooming for the World Cup. Peter brings with him decades of experience grooming trails throughout northwestern Ontario, including the now defunct Big Thunder Ski Park, home of the 1995 World Nordic Championships. He currently leads the TBNT grooming staff which oversees over 100km of trails at three locations;

Kamview Nordic Centre, Sleeping Giant Provincial Park, and Kakabeka Falls Provincial Park. While the quantity of snow last January was more than sufficient for the World Cup competition, Peter's experience and expertise working with limited quantities and poor snow conditions will be a huge asset to the Olympic grooming contingent. While we've always known that we've had the best groomed trails in the country, it's a great opportunity for Peter to work at the Olympic venue, share his expertise and be part of this incredible sporting event. Congratulations Peter!



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Olympic Hopeful Sean Crooks *reaches out to the community of Thunder Bay*

Hello Thunder Bay, greetings from Canmore!

With the 2010 Olympics in Canada there is plenty of preparation going on as athletes prepare to compete on home turf. My training season will soon end and the racing season will start. The training season has provided me the opportunity to further develop my strength for both classic and skate sprint events.

Many of the Teams will be named during the next few weeks as selection competitions are held. Cross Country skiing is one of the sports that is holding selection races in December and I will be racing for a spot on Canada's Olympic Team. It

will be an honour to represent Canada and Thunder Bay, the best ski town in the country.

As I prepare, I am asking for your support. Your contribution towards the expenses I have incurred will help me focus on both the selection races and Olympic events. Contributions greater than \$20.10, will score you a signed 8.5x11" poster.

Please log on to my website, www.seancrooksonline.com for further information.

Thanks Thunder Bay, Sean Crooks

On the trails...

Update on trail work at Kamview Nordic Centre and Sleeping Giant Park

The off-season has been a busy one for Thunder Bay Nordic Trails. Two successful grants have provided funding for the initiation of several projects, creating temporary employment for a few individuals, and improving the quality of trails at both Kamview Nordic Centre and Sleeping Giant Provincial Park.

In the spring, the Sleeping Giant Loppet received a grant from the Ministry of Tourism's Celebrate Ontario program. Funds from this grant were used to enhance the event with upgrades to services at the start/finish area, the purchase of additional components for the timing system, the development of a new website that will allow for live results and more interaction (check it out at sleepinggiantloppet.ca), the construction of additional fencing for spectator control, and the clean up of new growth that had been encroaching on the Pickerel Lake and Burma trails in Sleeping Giant Provincial Park. The clearing of these trails will allow easier access for the Pisten Bully groomer, which will be seen more frequently at the Park in the near future (see Trillium Grant page 9)

Kamview Nordic Centre has benefited from Canada's Economic Action Plan through a grant administered by the National Trail Coalition. The Trail Drainage and Surface Water Management Project is intended to increase the sustainability of the existing trail system and to expand multi-season use of the facility by

reducing standing water and improving drainage. According to Peter Crooks, who is project manager, work is 90% complete. "By next summer," he adds, "all areas that had water and drainage problems will be resolved and the water re-directed to the snow-making reservoir."

Alleviation of the wet trail surface will extend the cross country ski season by allowing grooming equipment increased access in the spring and fall. Proper drainage will expand multi-season use as the trails will be better able to accommodate hiking, running, walking, cycling, trail runs, pole-walking and strollers.

Classic skiers will be thrilled to hear that a new trail has been cut in the Tamarack area. The trail, which is approximately 2.5km in length and accessed off of the west end, is, as Peter puts it, "old style shoulder against the trees classic."

"This new trail will undergo additions and changes over the next couple of years" he adds. "I think that it will be a big hit with all of our Tamarack lovers." The finished product should eventually be about four kilometres.

Thunder Bay Nordic Trails is ready for the snow!! Bring it on, and be sure to check the snow phone for trail availability once the white stuff finally gets here.



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Olympic Forerunners

Local athletes chosen to play a huge role at the 2010 Olympic Games

By Christina Groulx

As I begin my second year with the National Team Development Centre (NTDC) in Thunder Bay, I share the dream of my teammates to one day compete in the Olympics. In reality, our competitive goals have us focusing on 2014 and 2018. With the 2010 games so close and yet so far away, how do we keep our Olympic dream alive? Well, for five NTDC athletes including Michael Somppi, Harry Seaton, Luke Viljakainen, Erin Tribe and myself, we found the answer to that question when we were chosen to forerun at the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games.

A forerunner in cross country skiing is a small group of athletes that have the important job of pre-skiing all race courses for both Cross Country and Nordic Combined events to ensure a fair advantage for the entire field. The more times the snow is skied over, the faster the tracks become, therefore, with the help of forerunners, those athletes in the lead

should not have to waste unnecessary energy plowing the way for their competitors. As a forerunner, this means that we must treat this as a race experience and prepare each day as if this was our most important event.

Being chosen to forerun at the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games could not make us any happier! Whether we make the Olympic Team or not, we are guaranteed a direct involvement with the racers, the race courses and the Olympic experience of a life time. This will be our first real glimpse of our dream – the dream we take with us while we train, race, eat and sleep to motivate and remind ourselves why we do what we do, day in and day out. We love this sport and to be able to share this experience with other likeminded individuals, teammates and friends... it couldn't get much better!

Local athletes Ghislain DeLaplante and Kara Jaspers were also chosen as alternates.



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Cross-Country Skiing in Ontario Parks

Sleeping Giant Provincial Park offers some of the best cross-country skiing in Northwestern Ontario! With 50 kilometres of groomed skate and classic trails to choose from you will want to ski the park regularly this winter.

The park's Marie Louise Lake Campground is the main site for cross-country skiers to start and end their day. Choose from a short two kilometre campground loop, the adjacent Marie Louise Lake Trail (18 km)

or more challenging Pickerel and Burma Lake Trails (29 km). Enjoy exhilarating skis through wind sheltered sections of old growth pine forest then return to the Visitor Centre to warm up with a drink of hot chocolate, Saturday and Sundays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sleeping Giant not only features some of the most picturesque and challenging ski trails, it is also a great place for a relaxed winter overnight get away. Whether it's an outing with the family or a healthy business meeting, choose from five cabins or conference centre facilities to enjoy the park during the winter season. In this natural setting, these facilities provide an ideal base to explore the park's snowshoeing, skiing and winter wildlife viewing opportunities. Nothing beats a sunny day of skiing with friends and family then topping it off with a good meal and relaxing evening in the comfort of a fireplace warmed cabin. For more information on rentals contact the park directly at 807-977-2526.

During March, the park hosts the annual Sleeping Giant Loppet for cross-country skiers, families and racers. Visit <http://www.sleeping-giantloppet.ca/> for more information on this year's March 6, 2010 event.

For a list of other upcoming park events including Giant Digital Photography Workshops visit <http://www.parkreports.com/events/events.php>

Sleeping Giant Provincial Park and the Marie Louise Campground are located one hour east of Thunder Bay via Highways 11/17 and 587.

Kakabeka Falls Provincial Park is one of the best kept skiing secrets in the region. Not only are the trails spectacularly beautiful, they offer terrain that is loved by everyone who gives them a try. The park offers 13 km of trails groomed for both classic and skate skiing. Choose from one of three main routes which vary in length and difficulty between three and 10 kilometres or combine loops and make a full day of it!

Be sure to be there on January 4, 2010 as the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Torch Relay passes through the park. The relay torch will be at the park's highway side viewing pod at 10:30 a.m. Arrive early to get a parking spot or shuttle ride to the park.

Located just 25 minutes from downtown Thunder Bay, Kakabeka's trails are adjacent to one of the largest and most visited waterfalls in Ontario and a must see feature in Northwestern Ontario. Travel west to reach the park along Highway 11/17.

Visit http://www.parkreports.com/ski_report/ski_report.php for up-to-date ski trail conditions within Ontario Parks across the province.

For more information on Ontario Parks visit www.OntarioParks.com

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NTDC Update

By Eric Bailey, NTDC Head Coach

The National Team Development Centre (NTDC), now in its 16th year as Thunder Bay's highest level sports team, is gearing up for an excellent season of racing. The 2009/2010 Team was selected and announced by Cross-Country Canada in May:

2009 / 2010 TEAM ROSTER: NTDC – Thunder Bay

Name	Hometown	Club	Age	Yrs on NTDC
Ghislain De Laplante	Iroquois Falls, ON	Big Thunder Nordic	20	1st
Scott Sullivan	Thunder Bay, ON	Big Thunder Nordic	20	1st
Leif Lennie	Ottawa, ON	Nakkertok	19	1st
Erin Tribe	Barrie, ON	Team Hardwood	20	1st
Chris Hamilton	Thunder Bay, ON	Big Thunder Nordic	20	1st
Michael Somppi	Thunder Bay, ON	Lappe Nordic	21	3rd
Luke Viljakainen	Thunder Bay, ON	Big Thunder Nordic	20	2nd
Christina Groulx	Thunder Bay, ON	Big Thunder Nordic	20	2nd
Harry Seaton	Barrie, ON	Team Hardwood	22	2nd
Eric Bailey (Coach)	Thunder Bay, ON			6
Lisa Patterson (Coach)	Orangeville, ON			2



Training on the Dachstein Glacier

Photo Credit: Eric Bailey

The team has been training very hard all spring, summer, and fall including daily dryland sessions as well as two, month-long glacier training camps in Canmore, AB and the Dachstein Glacier in Austria. The training has been gruelling at times, but has definitely paid off. All the athletes are now in excellent physical condition and are ready to take on the best skiers in Canada and the US, with high hopes for a taste of international competition!

Preparation has been excellent, and as you read this, we will be testing our mettle on the first leg of North America's top

racing circuit, beginning in BC and Alberta prior to Christmas. In January, we will go head to head against the best in the country, vying for a position on Team Canada at the Junior and Under-23 World Ski Championships in Hinterzarten, Germany. Our season will wrap up with the Canadian National Championships in Whitehorse in March.

Visit our website at: www.ntdc-tbay.on.ca. Here you can find full athlete and coach bios, articles from the athletes, race reports, great pictures, and information on how you could become a team or athlete sponsor!



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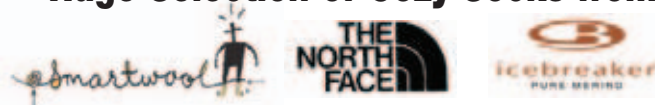


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