

The Snowflakes Aligned in a Perfect Storm

This past season was a turning point for the 100 Mile Nordics with our new Ski S’Kool program marking the culmination of a few years of planning. We knew we needed new younger families in our aging club so thanks to a number of well written grants, which included supporting letters from the Elementary schools in our area, and vision on the part of our executive, the snowflakes aligned in a perfect storm to give us our best season in years.

We had recently completed a number of new beginner level ski and snowshoe trails, purchased new flooring in the Lodge, built a new Equipment shed, and purchased both a wider Ginzu Groomer and a used Alpina snowmobile. In addition, we had also purchased adult ski and snowshoe rental equipment, the first rentals ever for the Nordics. The final purchase was the kids' equipment for Ski S’Kool.

A couple of our Exec had attended CCBC’s AGM workshop in the spring of 2016 and were inspired by other clubs initiatives. We also invited someone from CCBC to do a presentation about Ski S’Kool to our club, and were much inspired by the Cariboo Ski Touring Club in Quesnel for their well-organized program.

In the fall of 2016 we trained a number of new coaches. With a BCSP grant we hired a Ski S’Kool coordinator who had previously been a Skill Development coach. She was able to meet with the schools and convince the PAC’s to pay for the bussing as we really wanted Ski S’Kool to happen at our Nordics centre to help promote our club. We decided to include every grade 3 student in the area, as well as a few grade 2’s and 4’s from the smaller schools. Each child received 2, 1.5 hr lessons.

We didn’t want to charge the kids this first season, as we recognized there are a lot of low income families in the area, and the schools are always struggling with funding, so the coaches volunteered their time. We had older members who used to be coaches come forward to coach when they saw how much fun everyone was having, as well as one member who volunteered his time to take photos. We realised that in order to get the Ski S’Kool kids to want to keep skiing, we needed the parents to be involved so we gave each family a free family ski and **rental pass**.

We discovered how useful Facebook was for promoting our club, and every week saw a lot of positive posts and pics. The local newspaper was very supportive; as long as we sent them high quality photos and articles, they published them. A school outside of our catchment area heard about what was going on, and brought their entire school to our facility for a Fun Day. The popular Ladies Ski and High Tea event saw more young women than ever before.

We really knew we were on to something when we hosted an extremely successful Family Day event. Thanks to a new young member who secured a Family Day grant, and with the loan of equipment from the high school, we offered the community free rentals and passes for the day, and were astounded by the numbers of new young families attending. It was an incredible day! Finally, to top off the season, we were nominated for, and received the Chamber of Commerce business excellence award in the Tourism/Recreation category.

This next season we plan to expand the program by training more coaches, offering three lessons per child, and are hopeful we’ll see more kids enrolled in Skill Development. Ultimately, our goal is to grow Skill Development, get our racing program back up and running, and eventually train

officials and start hosting races again. We are promoting cross country skiing as a Fun, affordable, outdoor Family sport, and our motto is, "We do Winter!"

By Barb Matfin, 100 Mile Nordic Ski Society