



## Toonie races return for 2015

### Whistler Nordics holding weekly social races until early March

Vince Shuley / Whistler Question

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Whistler Nordics host a Toonie race at Whistler Olympic Park. Photo by Submitted

The Whistler Nordics kicked off their 2015 Toonie races last month, now having hosted three of the eight races held between January and March.

The Toonies were on hiatus last year after attendance and sponsorship became difficult to keep consistent, but efforts by the club to reinvigorate the weekly social race seems to be working.

“We tried last year a little bit and had some success,” said Brent Murdoch, the president of Whistler Nordics. “But I think (this season) we made a much more concerted effort to come out and invest in our programs accordingly so as many families, masters and recreational skiers can enjoy them as well.”

Around 40 racers attended last Thursday (Jan. 29) for the event at Lost Lake, followed by a cheese and chocolate fondue night at Nicklaus North.

"I think it's gone well, it's the same usual suspects as most Toonie races go," Murdoch said. "What's nice is that the sponsors are very enthusiastic once again. The racing through Lost Lake, given the way conditions are, was lots of fun. I think what's great is that we're really focusing less on the racing and more on the socializing after the race. We're trying to build (numbers) back up again like we had in years passed."

Racers require a Whistler Nordics club membership (\$45, with a \$5 discount for WORCA members) and registration is just \$2. People looking to try a Toonie can buy a one-off membership for \$5.

Reducing the cost of trying the sport has been a successful tactic by Whistler Olympic Park (WOP), which has been offering trail access, rentals and après all for \$5 each on Wednesday nights. Murdoch is hoping to convert some of those skiers to become regular participants at Thursday night Toonies and grow both the race participation and the Whistler Nordics membership base.

"In a perfect world we'd have every night in the Callaghan open with lights and making money," said Murdoch. "Wednesday night participation is much higher this year; it could be from lack of snow in other places, but I think some of the Lower Mainland people are driving up to participate. We've tried to encourage WOP to do Toonie races on that Wednesday night to work with the captive skiers they've got up there. They've got a lot on the go, but I understand (on Feb. 25) they'll host a recreational race."

The Whistler Nordics are also organizing the second installment in the Teck Coast Cup series, being held at WOP on Saturday, Feb. 14. The event will be classic technique with interval starts and all ages are welcome. The last Coast Cup, hosted by Pemberton's Spud Valley Nordics, drew over 300 participants from the Sea to Sky, Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island including many children.

The Toonie on Thursday (Feb. 5) will be back at Lost Lake, sponsored by Alpine Cafe, Rainbow Electric and Ryders Eyewear.

For more information on races and membership head to [www.whistlemordics.com](http://www.whistlemordics.com).

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