

**Birkebeiner Ski Festival salutes the Red Bibs**

On February 10<sup>th</sup> this year Cooking Lake Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area will open its trails to approximately 2000 cross country skiers. This will be the 20<sup>th</sup> year of the Canadian Birkebeiner Ski Festival.

Taking part in the event will be six celebrated “Red Bib” skiers. These men, identified by the special red background behind their number, have skied every Birkebeiner since the first epic event in 1985 from Devon to Fort Edmonton. Some have skied the 55 km event with a 5.5 kg pack representing the infant prince rescued 800 years ago.

These skiers are very special to the Birkebeiner Society and to cross country skiing in Canada. The Red Bib skiers are: Andrew Lamb, Red Deer; Phil Dunn, Onoway; Gerald Streefkerk, Stony Plain; Paul Zimmermann, Georg Kriegel, and Klaus Huckfeldt, of Edmonton.

Phil Dunn will be skiing on wooden skis in commemoration of the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Birkebeiner legend. Phil says his greatest satisfaction is passing on his love of this sport to his “Jackrabbits” – his students over the years of teaching at Onoway School. He must have taught them well because Onoway School takes the awards almost every year.

When you meet a Red Bib on the Birkie trail, remember that these champions will each have completed 1100 kilometres of Birkebeiner skiing over 20 years – a remarkable feat for anyone.

- 30 -

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