



## The Greatest Adventure on Snow!

Canadian Birkie E-News:  
December 2015



### Birkie 28



Happy Winter Solstice tonight! With the moon more than a half-full now and a full moon anticipated for the 25<sup>th</sup>, what a great week to plan a night ski on a local trail, with friends and family – moon howling optional!

We celebrate having enough snow in and around Edmonton to enjoy some good skiing. The Birkie trails from Waskehegan to Islet are tracked (Dec. 18<sup>th</sup>) with enough fresh snow on them (19<sup>th</sup>) to cover the ground dug up when track setting; great for skiing if you don't mind risking a scratch or two on your skis. Sadly, if you can't risk this, much of the best classic skiing in Northern and Central Alberta is still a bit of a drive; at places like Pigeon Lake, Drayton Valley and Red Deer. If we don't get more snow here, consider planning a day trip here and there to places like this, for the great skiing and, maybe more important, to feed your soul out in the woods on a beautiful winter day. Capilano Park and local grass-based parks and golf courses offer the best skiing if you don't have rock skis or time to drive out of town. Skate skiing is generally better most places because it just involves packing and rolling and doesn't depend on cutting a track through a shallow snowpack. So perhaps this is the winter to look at giving skate skiing a try if you haven't. It's just another ski dance. It's all good!

### Waves are the Wave of the Future for Birkie Classic Long Starts

People love the energy of the long course Birkie start. Belting out Oh Canada, the sharp retort of the starter's pistol, the hoots and hollers as skiers begin their journey to the finish line, and then, almost silence, as the dominant sound becomes the many skis swishing along down the tracks.



The downside of a single start for the 55 km events and a single start for the 31 km half an hour later is the bottleneaking that sometimes occurs in the first third of the course; from km 4 to 22, we only have two twin tracks. It can be frustrating for faster 31 km skiers trying to get by slower 55 km skiers and sometimes a bit frightening for slower touring skiers being overtaken by people moving considerably faster.

The other two Birkies in the world and most large marathon ski events avoid this issue through the use of start waves. We're happy to announce that this year's Canadian Birkie will feature three start waves, with a mix of skiers from the 55 km Torskeklubben Birkie With Pack, 55 km Spencer Environmental Birkie Lite and the 31 km Beaver Hills Tour in each wave. Bib colours and number sequences will differ by event, as always and skiers' times and results will be event-specific.

There will be three start waves; 9:00 am, 9:15, and 9:30; based on skier speed instead of event selection. This will facilitate skiers being able to ski at a comfortable pace for each with minimal if any bottlenecks on the courses.

If you are registered in or considering registering in the 55 km Torskeklubben With Pack, the 55 km Spencer Environmental Birkie Lite or the 31 km Beaver Hills Tour, please read [how to select your start wave for this Birkie](#).

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### **Birkie Skate Event: A New Adventure**



In the 2015 post-Birkie survey, Birkie skiers were asked what if any other event they'd like to see offered at the Birkie. Sixty percent of respondents said they'd like to see a Skate event. The board responded and is offering a skate event this year. Given the huge amount of time and energy that has gone into planning for this event, including selecting an awesome course, it's been somewhat disheartening for the volunteers not to see more skiers registering in the event to date. The board will consider registration numbers at the January 20<sup>th</sup> cut-off and determine whether the event will run (minimum of about 50 skiers desired) or if registrants will be asked to switch to another Birkie event. If you are considering registering in the 40 km Skate, please do so by January 20<sup>th</sup>. If you know skiers who might enjoy this challenging but fun event, please encourage them to register by that date. As noted above, there are lots of local opportunities to train skate skiing, even where classic is not quite as good yet. This year's theme is 'The Greatest Adventure on Snow', so help us save the skate and enjoy the adventure of doing something new at the Birkie. [Register](#).

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## Birkie Learn to Loppet

The snow has definitely been a little slow coming this year, but the good news is that it's here now, the trail ratings are improving, and there's more than enough of the white stuff for you to be confident that Birkie Learn to Loppet (L2L) is a go this winter. The first day is January 9th. This program has helped many hundreds of skiers over the years develop the skills and fitness needed to successfully ski a Birkie event and it often fills up, so don't miss your chance to participate. [For more info or to register.](#)

## Bike 'n Ski Award



The Canadian Birkebeiner and MS Society of Canada – Alberta & Northwest Territories Division continue to team up for the Bike 'n Ski Award, encouraging and supporting skiers and cyclists to stay fit year round. If you cycled the 2015 Johnson MS Bike Tour – Leduc to Camrose and are interested in skiing a long course event at the 2016 Canadian Birkebeiner, call the Birkebeiner office at 780-430-7153 to receive \$10 off of your registration in this year's Birkie.

Registered already for the 2016 Canadian Birkebeiner and interested in the 2016 Johnson MS Bike Tour? Call the MS Society office at 780-463-1190 to receive \$10 off your registration.

For 2016, in addition to including the **MS Leduc-Camrose Road Bike Tour**, we are adding the **MS Hinton Mountain Bike Tour**. So if you ski the 2016 Birkie - 31 km or 55 km Classic (with or without pack) or the new 40 km Skate event and then do either of the noted MS rides in 2016, you qualify to receive your Bike n' Ski Award. The award includes ceramic mug and inclusion on the Bike 'n Ski Award Recipient List kept on the Canadian Birkie [website](#).

## Venue News

All of our indoor Birkie events (Volunteer Evening, Opening Ceremonies, Nordic Fair and Vikings' Feast) will be held in the Agora Room in the Strathcona County [Community Centre](#).

## Millenium Place Passes

Strathcona County is again generously contributing free passes to skiers who stop by their booth at the Nordic Fair. The passes entitle the holder to free admission to the [Millenium Place](#) on Birkie Day (Saturday), to shower, steam, hot tub, sauna and otherwise relax and rejuvenate those tired muscles.

## Hot Chocolate Sundays

Our famous Hot Chocolate Sundays will run every Sunday the four

Sundays leading up to Birkie, from January 17 to February 7, from 12 – 4 pm. Come out for a ski at Cooking Lake-Blackfoot and stop in at the Waskehegan Staging Area shelter for a cup of cocoa and a cookie or two.

## Volunteer – Give From Your Heart



Volunteers at the finish line

Want to be a part of something BIG? It takes approximately 550 volunteers to plan, organize and run the Birkie each year. There are many different positions, but some areas where we need the most volunteers are:

**Food/Aid Station:** sign up as an individual or group and help skiers as you provide refreshments and encouragement to them

**Ski Patrol:** people are stationed or ski along parts of the courses to marshal skiers and support anyone in need of assistance

**Shuttle drivers:** Get volunteers to and from their stations, drive skiers to the finish area who aren't able to finish their ski event

**Festival Tent:** Refreshment service for hungry skiers after the event

**Timing and Finish Line:** tasks might include collecting timing chips and assisting skiers at the finish line or running results to the Awards volunteers

If you or anyone you know would like more information on these or other volunteer positions, please see our website and [sign up to volunteer](#).

We love our volunteers! As a volunteer, you'll receive a special Birkie gift and a Volunteer Orientation and Appreciation evening with food, entertainment and draw prizes. Our volunteers have fun, meet new people and become part of our big, happy Birkie family!

## Frank Key: Volunteer Leadership Award



Frank Key's award presentation by Acting Assistant Deputy Minister Steve Donelon

This fall, Frank Key, the chief groomer out at the Cooking Lake/Blackfoot PRA won a prestigious award based on his exceptional efforts and work on the Birkie trails. Frank is often known to be out grooming until the wee small hours of the morning so us skiers can go out and enjoy beautiful tracks in Birkieland during training and for Birkie day. In recognition of this work, Alberta Parks presented Frank with its prestigious Volunteer Leadership Award.

This award was only presented to Alberta Parks staff who put in substantial extra, volunteer hours well above the requirements of their jobs. Interestingly, this award was only given to an Alberta Parks staff person for the second time in history; the first time was when the award went to Ed Whitelock, the previous head groomer out at Cooking Lake/Blackfoot PRA. It was particularly thoughtful of Alberta Parks to recognize Frank at both the Alberta Parks

Volunteer Awards Banquet in Wetaskiwin in October, and then again, with an audience of over 350 Parks colleagues, at the Alberta Parks Conference in Canmore earlier this month.

**All the Best of the Season** The Canadian Birkie Board, Loppet Committee, and Nicole and I here in the office, all wish you much peace and joy over this special season. We hope you make some great memories with family, friends, and your skis. See you on the trails!

Glenda Hanna  
General Manager



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