



For Immediate Release

COVID19 forces Birkie cancellation; skiers switched to virtual event

Edmonton, January 27, 2021 - The Canadian Birkebeiner Society decided last night to postpone the in-person 2021 Canadian Birkie ski events to February 2022 due to COVID-19 restrictions. Participants will have their in-person registration carried-forward at no cost to the in-person Canadian Birkie Ski Festival taking place February 11-13, 2022. They will also receive a free entry to the 2021 Virtual Canadian Birkie taking place February 12-21, 2021.

“This is so hard for the skiers and the volunteers. We have worked at planning a safe event since early fall, with thousands of hours invested in designing a Birkie that would be possible with outdoor sports gatherings of up to 100 people,” said Birkie president Dave Cooper. “Sadly, it seems the continuing COVID-19 situation and health regulations will not allow this limit to be in place by the time the Birkie starts on February 12.” Cooper added.

The 2021 Birkie was going to be held on two sites in the Cooking Lake - Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area just east of Edmonton. It would have featured individually-spaced starts over a looped trail system with only three distances; 55, 31 and 13 kilometres. With registrant numbers capped at 640 divided over four days, the 2021 Canadian Birkie was sold out within one month.

The Virtual Canadian Birkie attracts participants from Canada and around the world. For example, Franco Landro, a Worldloppet Master, will be skiing the Virtual Birkie in the Italian region of Piedmont. Reese Bendiksen, the 2020 female winner of the Canadian Birkie 55 km with pack, will be skiing the Virtual Canadian Birkie near her home in Svolvær, Norway.

Canadian Birkebeiner Society

7240 – 82 Avenue, Edmonton, AB, Canada, T6B 0G1 | Ph: (780) 430-7153 | ski@canadianbirkie.com | canadianbirkie.com

For more details about the Virtual Canadian Birkie, please visit <https://canadianbirkie.com/virtual-birkie/> and follow us on social media ([Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook](#)).

Media Contacts, Canadian Birkebeiner Society:

Dave Cooper, President: 780-298-2856 c | davecooper555@gmail.com

Delianne Meenhorst, Marketing Director: 587-986-7832 c | dmeenhorst@yahoo.com

Marion Hinteregger, Birkie Coordinator: 780-686-0506 c | coordinator@canadianbirkie.com

Pictures are available on request via: coordinator@canadianbirkie.com

About the Canadian Birkebeiner Society: Since 1985, the Canadian Birkebeiner Society has organized Canada's largest classic, cross-country ski festival held on the second weekend of February. As well, the non-profit society aims to involve participants of all ages in cross-country skiing, promoting an active and healthy winter lifestyle.

In addition to the Canadian Birkie Ski Festival, the Canadian Birkebeiner Society organizes ski training and other ski events to allow people to enjoy cross-country skiing in a friendly and fun atmosphere.

The Canadian Birkie Ski Festival allows participants to relive the Birkebeiner legend of how two Birkebeiner warriors rescued the future Norwegian Crown Prince by skiing him to safety in the middle of winter. In the longest race of the Canadian Birkie, skiers still carry a 5.5-kilogram weight that symbolizes the Crown Prince Haakon Haakonsson.

In 2021 the Canadian Birkebeiner Society modified the Canadian Birkie to meet AHS protocols and guidelines. As a result, the Canadian Birkie could only offer 640 skiers a spot in the main in-person event and launched the first ever [Virtual Canadian Birkie](#).