

The Significance of the Lake Louise Loppet to Alberta Skiers and the Community Benefit to Lake Louise:

The significance of the Lake Louise Loppet is not simply the holding of a race on one day of the year. It is not simply a race attracting families, grandparents and children as well as National Ski Team members and former (or future) Olympians, or that it is the oldest in Western Canada.

It is also about improving and popularising the sport of cross country skiing in Alberta and creating a legacy of a Community Benefit for Lake Louise with improved XC ski trails:

1/ Popularising cross country skiing at Lake Louise for over 30 years. Lake Louise is located in the "snow-belt" close to the Continental Divide. There is usually 1 metre of snow-pack and the area has the longest cross country skiing season in Alberta, from early November until April each year.

Traditionally, the opening weekend of the Nordic ski season is November 11, when hundreds of eager skiers take advantage of the good snow on the closed highways and occasionally the Fairview Trail.

2/ Cutting of recreational ski trails in 1979 (Telemark Loop) and 1982 (Fairview Trail) by Banff National Park staff with the assistance and guidance of Calgary Ski Club volunteers.

These trails were designed to minimise tree cutting by exploiting open clearings and summer swamps and stream channels. As a result, today, the recreational skier can rejoice in a very pretty ski trail system, which alternates between a "tunnel of trees" and natural, wide-open vistas of the mountains while enjoying hills and roller-coasters, twists and turns on the trails.

3/ Continuous improvement over the years with selected trail widening, especially on hills and bends, has improved safety while retaining the character of relatively narrow and more intimate National Park trails. Knowledgeable Calgary Ski Club volunteers have done this with the approval of National Park staff.

This work makes for safer skiing throughout the season as well as for more effective manual and machine grooming of the ski trails. This work involves some widening of potentially dangerous hills and bends, eliminating bad side-hill on parts of the trails, removing some stumps and overhanging branches and building some corduroy bridging.

The objective is to create trails that are enjoyable and safe for beginner skiers all season long, especially in periods of low snow-pack, and not just at loppet time in early March.

4/ The work of Calgary Ski Club volunteers has provided a major benefit to the Lake Louise Community in creating and developing the XC ski trails with National Parks approval.

We estimate that this work has provided \$185,000 in benefits to Lake Louise as follows:

- a. Autumn deadfall moving and winter snow shovelling at 50 volunteer days/year over 15 years.
- b. Chainsaw, pruning saw, pick & shovel work at 40 volunteer days/year over the past 5 years.
- c. During pick & shovel work, identified ash at the base of mounds of well-rotted tree stumps. These were collected for Radiocarbon age dating by the University of Calgary.
- d. Attendance at 12 annual conferences of Cross Country Ski Areas Assoc. to learn more about ski area operation, risk management, track setting and marketing of XC skiing.
- e. Visiting & skiing 75 XC ski areas in Western Canada and Western USA to observe and document by photographs their facilities, services, trails, signage and advertising.
- f. Presenting comprehensive reports in 2007 to the National Parks Superintendents & managers on "Enhancing the Visitor Experience" for XC Skiing in Banff, Lake Louise, Yoho, Kootenay Parks.
- g. Organizing Travel Alberta Familiarization Tours for travel writers and others to visit XC ski trails, areas, hotels and lodges in the Lake Louise, Yoho and Kananaskis areas in 2008 and 2009. This is to help publicize XC skiing in Alberta's snow-belt at Lake Louise.
- h. Since 2002, the Calgary Ski Club has worked towards hosting the annual conference of Cross Country Ski Areas Assoc. at Lake Louise. This would showcase the Lake Louise area to the 100 – 150 convention visitors and 5 or so writers & magazine publishers for XC skiing in attendance.

It would also offer a “technology transfer” in the best practices in ski area management, trail design & construction, tracksetting equipment, marketing and ski programs for all ages.

We anticipate local businesses to benefit from increased visitors attracted by the improved XC ski trails.

5/ Because of the experience of key loppet volunteers over 20 or more years, we have been asked to advise both National Parks and local businesses as follows:

- a. Recommended types of tracksetting equipment to purchase to better pack, groom and trackset the Lake Louise trails - Lake Louise Rec. Board (1992), Chateau Lake Louise (1996), and National Parks (2003).
- b. Presented a Tracksetting & Grooming Course, together with Risk Management for XC ski area operations derived from Cross Country Ski Areas Assoc. educational workshops, to National Parks management, staff and volunteers in Jan. 2004 & planned Feb. 2008.
- c. Based on 30 years experience at Lake Louise, and education from attendance at many Cross Country Ski Areas Assoc. annual meetings, we prepared two reports at the request of the Parks Superintendent:
 - Cross Country Skiing Opportunities in the Louise, Yoho, Kootenay and Banff National Parks. This included opportunities from climate change and pine beetle problems, Tourism and marketing opportunities based on attendance at CCSAA meetings in Tahoe, Aspen, etc.
 - A Proposal for Trail development, A Winter Nature Trail, A new Teaching Area & Kid's Playground Area at Lake Louise based on new standards for XC ski area design and playground areas from Cross Country BC/Cross Country Canada.
 - Based on skier visits data obtained from Cross Country Ski Areas Assoc. and other sources, these XC ski trail developments should fall within the 10,000 winter visits per month (50,000 per season) set in the Banff Bow Valley Study of 1996.

6/ This volunteer work on the XC ski trails at Lake Louise by the Calgary Ski Club continues a proud history of pioneering and developing skiing in the Banff-Lake Louise areas, which started in the 1930's with the development of skiing at Mt. Norquay, at Temple Lodge and at Sunshine, which owe a lot to the trips and later ski trains organised by the Calgary Ski Club.

In central Calgary, the club has track set and operated XC skiing on Shaganappi Golf Course since 1993. The club has presented plans to Calgary Parks & Recreation for snow-making, lighting and use of the proposed new golf course clubhouse for skiers in winter.

7/ "Profits" made from the Lake Louise Loppet have been reinvested in the sport of skiing in the community. These profits are due to the many loyal sponsors and participants.

Through the club's skiing outreach programs and the deployment of the club's tracksetting equipment, the Calgary Ski Club is delivering these profits into the hands of the nordic skiing community at large:

- On golf courses and school yards in Calgary, where classic and ski-skating tracks as well as multi-lane teaching grids are helping people of all ages to learn to ski and to improve their technique.
- By providing equipment for the Alberta Winter Games in 1996 at Blairmore, 2002 at Medicine Hat and various events at Canmore Nordic Centre including the Centennial World Cup in 2005 and the Alberta World Cup in 2008.

Clearly the Lake Louise Loppet is a vital link in Alberta skiing, past, present and future. It has also provided a major benefit to the community of Lake Louise.

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