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Resort Municipality Initiative

2018 - 2019 Report from the Fernie Nordic Society

This report covers the Winter Trail Maintenance program funded under the City of Fernie Resort Development Strategy in the amount of \$18,000.

Overview

For the third year in a row the Fernie Nordic Society has experienced an increase in membership making the 2018-2019 season our highest membership to date.

The Society acquired its own snowcat groomer in October 2018 to manage the winter trail grooming at the Elk Valley Nordic Centre. The trails at the Fernie Golf Course were groomed regularly during the season. A generator was added to the warming hut to make the area more attractive for rental and more flexible for events. Additional drainage work was done at the Nordic Centre to prevent erosion of the trails and allow the grooming of trails earlier and later in the season. The program of trail ambassadors at the Nordic Centre was continued every weekend to welcome skiers during the season.

The support provided by the City of Fernie and the Resort Municipality Initiative is very important to the Fernie Nordic Society and its activities. More local and visiting skiers enjoy the local winter sports opportunities.

The next sections of this report summarize the events and other activities hosted by the FNS, the statistics for the Society, and the amenities maintained by the Society.

Section 1: Overview of Activities

The regularly scheduled events such as the Pumpkin Hunt, Toonie and Little Critter races, Full Moon Ski and Socials, and Community Fun race were a success again this season. Additionally the Society hosted a the Teck Kootenay Cup series event again this year during the January 5-6 weekend. The nordic challenge Snow-To-Ice event during Griz Days and the Fernie Birkie race continue to grow and draw locals and visitors alike out onto the trails.

Two qualified ski coaches gave individual and group ski lessons to adults again this year. Together the coaches offered 47 lessons to both residents and visiting adult skiers in addition to a free weekly guided ski dedicated to women.

Section 2: Budget Status

The next table provides a status of funds spent during the financial year starting on June 1st. The main expenditures are the costs related to the trails maintenance at the Fernie Golf Course and at the Nordic Centre. Other costs include the rental of portapotties, parking lot maintenance, daily preparation of stadium area and some of the initial maintenance of the snowcat groomer.

12 Dec 2018	\$ 1,050	Grooming at Fernie Golf Course (Dec 2018)
21 Dec 2018	\$ 389	Additional signage at Nordic Centre
02 Jan 2019	\$ 4,931	Maintenance of Snowcat groomer
30 Jan 2019	\$ 630	Stadium preparation at Nordic Centre
12 Feb 2019	\$ 360	Stadium preparation at Nordic Centre
14 Feb 2019	\$ 435	Clearing parking lot Nordic Centre
28 Feb 2019	\$ 2,649	Grooming at Nordic Centre – fuel expenses for season
06 Mar 2019	\$ 686	Clearing parking lot Nordic Centre
25 Mar 2019	\$ 2,100	Grooming at Fernie Golf Course (Jan-Mar 2019)
20 Mar 2019	\$ 1,008	Stadium preparation at Nordic Centre
21 Mar 2019	\$ 3,400	Portapotty rentals & service at Golf Course and Nordic Centre
22 Mar 2019	\$ 290	Clearing parking lot Nordic Centre
TOTAL:		\$ 18,000

Other expenditures not included here, but paid by the club, are the customary expenses as in previous years: rental of secure storage for snowmobiles at both Golf Course and Nordic Centre and the maintenance of three snowmobiles with the associated grooming attachments. The amount spent in providing trail grooming, clearing of parking lots, rental of portapotties and snowmobile related costs is estimated at \$27,994 for this year.

The cost of the purchase of the Bombardier BR-400 groomer by the Fernie Nordic Society in October 2018 was partially offset by a successful fundraiser campaign. Several club members, local benefactors and businesses contributed to this success. The quality of the trail grooming improved noticeably as the various comments in our survey show.

Section 3: FNS Statistics and Program Delivery Summary

The current 2018-2019 season is a record year for the number of trail passes sold and the number of members supporting the club. Visitors purchased 860 trail passes from the kiosks, online or from ambassadors at the Nordic Centre. Most of these passes (85%) were sold to skiers from outside the Elk Valley region: half of the skiers are from Alberta (50%). Others are from other provinces (18%), from other parts of BC (10%), from Montana, Colorado, Minnesota, UK, Scotland, New Zealand, Australia (7%) and from Fernie and area (15%).

Season	Trail Passes	Memberships
2018-2019	860	985
2017-2018	655	848
2016-2017	510	715

Nordic ski information is available at several local hotels and ski rental outlets for visitors.

The club membership is currently at 985 with 79% from BC, 20% from Alberta and 1% from other provinces.

The lessons in our Skill Development Program were very popular again this year. A total of 89 children aged 3 to 14 were enrolled in the lessons on Saturday mornings at the Nordic Centre or on Tuesday afternoons at the golf course. The racing team includes 14 skiers aged 9 to 16 under the supervision of two volunteer coaches and it is in its fifth season. These racers participated in all eight races of the Teck Kootenay Cup series to win the Cup again this year.

All the activities of the Fernie Nordic Society are organized and run by volunteers. Activities are scheduled so that events would happen throughout the season from late October, through the Holidays period and until spring.

Our website www.fernienordic.com received 15 inquiries this year from visitors to the website. Other inquiries are coming through searches at Google where the Elk Valley Nordic Centre has a presence. The Tourism Fernie's website is also linking visitors to our website. Our volunteers have answered several phone calls as well. Many of these messages were about equipment rentals by visitors to Fernie. They were directed to the three local shops who offer daily rentals of skis, boots and poles.

Trail Usage

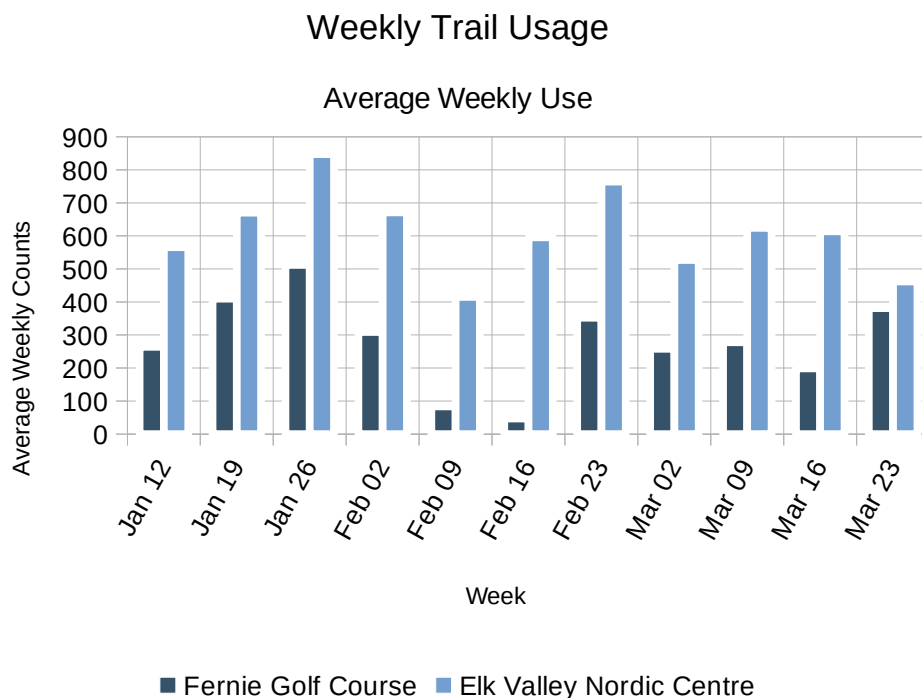
Local and visiting skiers have purchased a record number of trail passes this year. The trails of the Golf Course were open from the third week of December until March 18. The trails of the Nordic Centre opened in the last week of November and are still open in late March.

Trail counters were installed at both locations. Each counter was in place for 10 weeks starting on January 6. The weekly averages shown here had the counts from ski lessons and special events removed to leave a more representative figure.

The current season saw an increase in activity at the Nordic Centre over the previous season. These are the average weekly counts for both locations

	Fernie Golf & Country Club	Elk Valley Nordic Centre
2018-2019	310	676
2017-2018	355	375
2016-2017	235	789

This chart shows the weekly figures over the ten week period. The figures are lower in February during the very cold weather period.



The Fernie High School and the Isabella Dicken Elementary School both offer nordic skiing as a physical activity to their students. Several groups of students have used the trails of the Fernie Golf Course during the season.

Events and Activities

The calendar of events and activities is planned early in the fall and these events are published in the local Fernie Fix, The Free Press online and print publications, and on Tourism Fernie's website as well as on its regular posters placed locally. All events are planned and run by volunteer club members. They are all open to club members, non-members and visitors alike.

Event	Details	Attendance
Pumpkin Hunt	This is an annual event aimed at kids aged 9 and younger. Pumpkins were hidden in the staging area and bushes at the Nordic Centre. This is the first opportunity for many families to visit the Nordic Centre.	This event is open to the public at large and the majority of the 360 participants are local children with their parents. The fourth edition of this popular event was held on Oct 20, 2018
Full Moon Skis	Monthly evening casual ski event for adult skiers with apres snacks at the Nordic Centre.	Between 10 and 23 adult participants at each of four events. These evening events were well attended by locals and visitors alike.

Fernie Birkie	A 50 km long distance nordic ski event held in conjunction with the Fernie Alpine Resort. The event is aimed at both adult and youth skiers.	This is the second time this event is held in Fernie on March 10, 2019. 31 local and 2 visiting skiers from Ontario entered and completed the course successfully. About a dozen people watched this event, including a family from Ontario.
Toonie Races	Monthly evening fun ski race for adult skiers. Three events were held at the Nordic Centre. The focus was on fun competitiveness for just a \$2 entry fee.	Between 2 and 8 participants at each of 3 events
Griz Days Snow-to-Ice challenge	Participants choose to snowshoe, fat bike or ski to each of four locations on local trails and bring back a selfie as proof of each completed challenge.	21 participants completed the full challenge over the 3 day event and several more attempted it. Participants were local enthusiasts as well as weekend visitors.
Kootenay Cup races	This event is part of the Kootenay Cup series and it was the third time it was held in Fernie. Volunteers organized it and took care of the race timing on Jan 5 & 6, 2019.	A total of 107 racers participated in the races and 25 were from Kimberley and Montana. About 30 spectators also attended each day.
Little Critter Races	Late afternoon event for skiers under 12 held monthly. Three events were held at the Nordic Centre	Between 3 and 8 participants at each of 3 events
Community Fun Race	Fun competitive event open to anyone – club members and non-members. Free of charge to enter. All ages can participate in 4 laps of a short course. This year was the 7 th edition of the annual event.	27 participants took part as relay team members or as solo skiers. Another category was for very young skiers. Two skiers were visitors to Fernie. About 25 spectators were on hand during the event.

Surveys, media coverage and user feedback

An online survey was prepared and it resulted in 114 responses from skiers from the Fernie area but also from out of town. The link to the survey was sent by email to club members. The survey was also promoted through social media. Some of the results from the entries include:

- ◆ Full-time resident 82%, Second Home 14%, Renter 1% and Visitor 3%
- ◆ Visiting skiers also stopped at many local restaurants, shops and businesses (3 entries)
- ◆ Most improved service was Trail Grooming 68% of entries

The club membership numbers show that 79% of members are full time residents of the Elk Valley area. The survey collected many suggestions about the operation of the club activities. It also included many comments. The full survey results and comments are included in the attached documents.

Media coverage this season included several articles in The Free Press and Black Press Media. One article from the provincial Cross Country BC organization. And several posts appeared in the online news sites of Fernie.com and E-Know.ca:

- ◆ The Free Press 27Oct2018 Fernie Pumpkin Hunt sells out
- ◆ Fernie.com 19Dec2018 Fernie Nordic Racers in Rossland
- ◆ Fernie.com Dec2018 Teck Kootenay Cup
- ◆ E-Know 7Jan2019 Fernie hosts Teck Kootenay Cup with enthusiasm and spirit
- ◆ The Free Press/Black Press 11Jan2019 Fernie hosts Kootenay Cup cross country skiing races
- ◆ The Free Press 26Feb2019 Community Fun Race
- ◆ CrossCountryBC Nelson Nordic Ski Club Hosts Successful 2019 Teck Kootenay Cup Series Finale

A few of the comments collected during the survey:

The local events are a wonderful addition to the nordic club. The Kootenay Cup was fantastic from the standpoint that it enabled many locals to "race" in a familiar and welcoming environment.

Loved all the event[s] - such a great community

Both [events] I attended were great!

Full Moon Skate – fun and social. Community Fun Race was a great course! Kootenay Cup Race – course was too short, great lunch and sense of community. Snow to Ice Cream – fun event.

Thank you for making the trails great to ski on this season. Much Appreciated! We downhill hill ski during the day so its nice to have them groomed before or after downhill skiing.

Thank you so much for maintaining the trails at the Nordic Centre so well. We are lucky to have such a beautiful Nordic Centre!

All good! Grateful for you passionate and hard working guys and gals!

Expand more trails at the Nordic Centre - what is there is fantastic but more trails would be great!

The golf course is fantastic. Thank you to the Nordic Society and the golf course team

The trail ambassador program at the Nordic Centre is in its third season. It runs during the day from Friday afternoon through Sunday afternoon all winter and the Holidays week. It has proven useful to visitors who come to inquire about the trails, to purchase a trail pass and also to ask about other attractions in Fernie.

Section 4: Amenities

Trail Networks

The Fernie Nordic Society has taken the responsibility of grooming the nordic trails at the Golf Course and at the Elk Valley Nordic Centre. The Golf Course has winter trails of 8 km in length. The trails of the Nordic Centre are about 11 km long and they include a connector trail to the Fernie Alpine Resort. There is a short beginner loop near the warming hut for use during children's lessons.

Warming Hut

The hut was completed two years ago. It has some interior lighting powered by a battery for evening events at the Nordic Centre. A generator is now available this year at the hut. This has

been extremely useful during our special events. The hut and its surrounding area is available for rental to groups for events year around. Volunteers are at the warming hut as trail ambassadors from Friday afternoon to Sunday during the winter season. Having volunteers at the hut promotes the sale of trail passes to visitors.

Trailhead kiosks

Each of four kiosks has a large scale map showing the trail network. It has additional information about purchasing a trail pass, ski etiquette on the trails and a locked cash box. One kiosk is located next to the clubhouse of the Fernie Golf & Country Club. Two kiosks are at the Nordic Centre at the entrances of the ski trails. The fourth kiosk is located along the connector trail between the Fernie Alpine Resort and the Nordic Centre.

Portapotties

These temporary facilities were set up at both the Golf Course and the Nordic Centre. They are maintained by a local vendor.

Interpretive Signage

Five large interpretive signs at the Nordic Centre were erected along the trails during the autumn of 2016. Each one follows the theme 'Legacies' about the immediate area and its past history.

Directional Signage

Additional signs have been installed this winter along the trails to show route directions and hazards. The connector trail to the Fernie Alpine Resort is well marked.

Snowmobile Storage

The club now keeps one secure storage container at the Golf Course and two more at the Nordic Centre. The snowmobiles and grooming attachments are stored on site so that our volunteer groomers can easily do some trail grooming several times a week at each location.

Section 5: Photos



Left: The recently acquired BR-400 groomer



Right: Installation of generator at the warming hut



Left: Ski lesson on Saturday morning



Right: Racer at Teck Kootenay Cup event



Left: Another racer at Teck Kootenay Cup event



Right: Winners on podium



Left and Right: Racers at Teck Kootenay Cup event





Top and Bottom: Community Fun Race event
Right: One team at the Community Fun Race event



Left: Participants in the Fernie Birkie
Right: Several of the participants in the Fernie Birkie

Summary

Nordic ski has become a much more popular winter sport in recent years. It is an activity that is well suited for both beginners and advanced skiers. This is well supported this year by the increase in membership numbers, in sales of trail passes and in the number of skiers using the trails during the winter. Most of the increase of club memberships came from residents and owners of a second home in Fernie. The many activities scheduled during the winter attract several visitors to Fernie although most participants are local skiers. As the program is renewed each year, it will become better known outside the Elk Valley. The low cost of the programs offered is well appreciated by the participants.

The Society continues to involve other local groups: some trail maintenance and drainage work was done in cooperation with the Fernie Trail Alliance to plan and the Stagleap Running Co is using our trail network for a summer race event. Tourism Fernie continues to be very active in making the activities offered by the Society more visible online and locally.

This report was prepared on March 29, 2019 by Matthieu Corriveau, director-treasurer of the Fernie Nordic Society.