



Wostawea Cross-Country Ski Club Annual General Meeting

Centre Communautaire Ste-Anne, 715 Priestman Street, Fredericton
7:00 pm, April 10, 2024

MINUTES (DRAFT)

Members Present:

Executive

Nathalie Comeau (President), Ian Burgess (Treasurer & Registrar), Lise Bleau (Member Engagement Lead), Barb Ramsay (Communications Lead), Pierre Boucher (Youth Programs Lead), Nicki Violette (Secretary), Ron Smith (Safe Sports & Volunteer Lead), Mary Murdoch (Outreach Lead), David Cameron (Trails Lead), Eric Luiker (Vice-President)

Regrets: Don Wright (Past President)

Members at Large

John Ball, Jean-Claude Arcand, Floriane Place-Verghnes-Wood, Kristie Heard, Anna Healy, David Palmer, Michel Poirier, Brigitte L'Heureux, Jeff Hoyt, Donat Theriault, Fran Robinson, Toon Pronk, Shelley Pronk, Liz Smith

1. Welcoming Remarks – Nathalie Comeau

- Nathalie welcomed everyone to the meeting. She explained that leads' reports would be kept brief to allow time to discuss other items and encouraged everyone to read the full report available on the website.
- ***Ron Smith motioned to approve the agenda, Donat Theriault seconded. All in favour. Motion carried.***

2. Review of Minutes from Last Annual General Meeting (April 19, 2023)

- ***Pierre Boucher motioned to approve the minutes. Barb Ramsay seconded. All in favour. Motion carried.***

3. Highlights from Leads' Reports

- **President's Report** – Nathalie Comeau
 - Nathalie expressed how proud she is of all the volunteers for making a great season happen despite the lack of snow. A lot was accomplished in a short season. She then explained that two contributions she hopes to make as club president are capacity building (more coaches, trained coaches and people to train the coaches, volunteers, access to equipment), and to determine a way to maintain club spirit and make things work despite climate change/ winters with less snow.

- **Nordiq Canada Ski Playground Visit** – Nathalie Comeau
 - Nordiq Canada visited on Feb. 24 for a small event and the official opening of the ski playground. They brought equipment, and Jackrabbits, adults and some MCAF participants attended. The visit was a positive experience for everyone. Wostawea was one of 5 or 6 clubs visited.
 - It was asked how Nordiq Canada felt about the event. They thought it was great, with better snow conditions than their first event. They were still figuring out volunteer training. They had hoped for more visitors in the afternoon to try skiing, but lack of snow downtown and no media coverage (CBC did not attend) were challenges.
 - Shelley commented that the kids loved this event.
 - Nordiq Canada should be sharing this story soon.
 - Pierre suggested connecting with other news outlets (e.g. Global TV) for better coverage.

- **Ski Team Report** – Anna Healy
 - Anna expressed appreciation for the volunteers who contribute to the Club's success. She highlighted two key themes for the Ski Team this year: defining success and intentionally fostering it both individually and collectively. Team members recognized success as a journey, appreciating the effort behind organizing races, even on repetitive courses. She suggested exploring options like stockpiling snow to ensure events like the Maritime Cup can happen despite low snowfall.
 - Maintaining year-round momentum remains a priority, with coaches emphasizing adaptability and resilience. Athletes learned to listen to their bodies, advocate for themselves, and be intentional in their training. The focus has been on developing not just strong skiers, but well-rounded individuals capable of navigating both success and challenges.
 - Nationals and Competitions:

- The team traveled out of the province for the second year, competing in multiple Quebec events and earning points at Nationals.
 - Four athletes attended Nationals, with one placing 11th in the aggregate (out of 80–100 participants per category)
 - The U12 group participated with both Jackrabbits and the Ski Team, attending several events outside Fredericton and dominating NB Cups.
 - Some U14 athletes competed in their first Easterns.
 - Super Camp: Taking place this summer, with participants from NB, PEI, NS & NFLD. Wostawea is hosting in September.
 - Thanks and appreciation were given to Anna for her leadership and contributions.
- **Masters Group Report – Fran Robinson**
 - Nathalie congratulated Fran on receiving awards at the 2024 Canadian Masters held in NFLD.
 - Fran reported 21 participants signed up for the Masters group this year, with sessions held on Thursday afternoons.
 - The group had fun and showed good dedication. Several participants were new skiers.
 - Fran had hoped for more participation at events but had limited success. She plans to run the group again next year.
- **Racing Events Report – Kristie Heard**
 - Maritime Cup: Attempts were made to host the event locally, but it was moved to Charlo. Kristie and Rob discussed about having a fallback location in the future for low snow conditions.
 - Sprints: Kristie expressed thanks to the snow shovelers who made the sprints possible. Numbers were low (20 skiers), but participants had fun. The event was considered the best of the year and allowed for good interaction between the Ski Team, racers and the MCAF group.
 - Event Planning:
 - Lise expressed concern about the date of the Maritime Cup. Nathalie replied that all clubs are competing for later dates due to poor snow conditions across the province.
 - Donat expressed the need to prepare for snowless winters.
 - Nathalie commented a conversation is needed with CCNB about different event options (i.e. fewer, shorter, different). Toon suggested having backup dates for all events.
 - Anna suggested the Sprints should be hosted at Crabbe as they can make snow.

- Nathalie stressed the need for flexible race distances and courses, which CCNB has not provided. She plans to address this at the AGM on May 26.

- **Youth Programs Report – Pierre Boucher**

- Pierre reported that 6 out of 8 planned weeks were held this year.
- Ideas for next season:
 - Develop dryland activities for days without snow.
 - Schedule Fun Day for the 7th lesson (second to last) to avoid March Break (lower attendance and often less snow).
- Coach Recruitment: Continues to be a challenge. No parents helped this year.
 - Kristie noted that other Canadian clubs make it a requirement for parents to help at events. This could be added to registration. If possible, free membership would be good incentive.
 - John commented that broad communications are easy to ignore. Pierre noted he tried one-on-one conversations but had no luck. The time commitment (every weekend for 8 weeks) is a hard sell.
 - Donat suggested collaborating with UNB for internships or support.
- Shelley suggested organizing alternative events (e.g. hike & hot chocolate) instead of cancelling in poor conditions. This will help parents (particularly of younger kids) become more familiar with the park. Pierre agreed but noted icy conditions like last year could pose a challenge.
- Pierre acknowledged all the volunteer coaches for their time and dedication.
- Brigitte highlighted the awesome new hot chocolate cart.
- Nathalie thanked Pierre for all his work and applause was given.

- **Adult Programs Report**

- Floriane reported that adult lessons went well with 36 participants. She finds it immensely rewarding to see participants become comfortable on their skis so quickly. Suggested improvement: faster movement between groups based on abilities. Overall feedback has been positive.
- Ernie and Susan Gavin attended training with Stephen Novosad to train adults. Now two club members are trained, which may be required next year.

- **Outreach Programs Report – Mary Murdoch**

- Mary reported that it was a very successful year for outreach. Many people stepped up with new outreach initiatives. She expressed appreciation for strong leadership and the volunteers who continually show up, including Toon, Kristie, Shelley and many others.
- Nathalie shared that CBC's coverage of the MCAF program was sent to Nordiq Canada.
- **Vulnerable Sector Checks & Coaching Certification Database Report** – Ron Smith
 - Ron encouraged everyone to review his report and explained that the overall goal is to ensure the club has well trained, certified coaches and is doing its due diligence. Applause was given to Ron.
- **Trails Report** – David Cameron
 - Woodlot:
 - Grooming was good once snow arrived. Good preparation is key, especially in low snow conditions.
 - Access remains limited to two approved entry points, both with constraints. Discussions with UNB about getting access with parking and storage are ongoing, but sensitive.
 - Planned trail improvements on Lian were delayed due to contractor issues.
 - Killarney:
 - City used its own equipment for trail maintenance and upgrades this fall, but work was completed late when conditions were very wet, which led to poor grooming. Canopy cover also contributed to poor conditions (further trails with less canopy were better).
 - Homologation design is supposed to start soon. If done according to standards, it will remove canopy cover and create a reliable 2.5 km loop.
 - Due to low snow conditions, the City provided a load of snow from a field to help with trail usability.
 - ATVs and Safety Concerns:
 - Anna shared that ATVs disrupted a training session, spreading out across the trail and passing dangerously close to skiers while also damaging the trail. Something must be done about this. David replied that the City has been informed and plans to install a new gate and add a mound of snow when possible to help keep ATVs out. The incident was also reported to the police.

- The ATVers claimed there is no signage indicating they are not allowed. David has communicated this to the City and will remind them again on Friday.
 - Toon mentioned he spoke to his City Councillors about this issue, suggesting a “Friends of Killarney” group should be formed.
 - Signage and Trail Maintenance:
 - It was asked whether the Club was consulted on the new Killarney trail signs. Wostawea was consulted years ago, but it was minimal. David received recent drafts with only one day’s notice, and they were unclear/confusing.
 - Most signs will remain the same year-round with only the entrance signs changing in the summer and winter.
 - John asked if any graveling or flattening is planned for the trails that have not been done yet. David provided the City a deficiency list 7 years ago but issues remain unresolved (particularly trails 3 & 5).
 - David P. commented that grooming was better than in previous years. David C. agreed, though further trail preparation would make things even better.
 - Applause was given to David C. for being the first recipient of the Dave Moore award (CCNB award recognizing exceptional contributions to x-country skiing in the province).

- **Communications Report** – Barb Ramsay

- Barb thanked Nathalie for preparing the report by committee, and the committee that took care of communications this season. Carolyn oversaw the newsletters, which remain a vital part of the Club’s communications approach. John served an important role as CBC liaison (John commented that Lars (CBC) was a huge help), Thierry oversaw Facebook and Barb remained involved with the website and Gmail account.
- Recommendations:
 - Increase Facebook engagement
 - Enlist volunteer to respond to Gmail in timely way
 - Enhance earned media profile
 - Update and enhance website – coaches’ corner page with resources and information has been drafted. Also want to profile Anna and her crew of leaders, coaches and athletes. Barb is open to other content suggestions.
 - Instagram & TikTok: Mikaya Hoyt-Hogan recruited to help
- Next season: Barb will step back into a Lead role sitting on the executive. The committee has all agreed to continue next year.
- Thanks and applause were given to Barb and the rest of the team.

- **Member Engagement Report** – Lise Bleau
 - Frosted Bites: Four were planned, three took place, with the same skiers attending consistently.
 - Purpose of Member Engagement: To create a sense of belonging for members, especially those not involved in other structured programs (the majority). Activities should be expanded to bring in more people (Frosted Bites had repeat attendees).
 - Next year: Plan to host two Frosted Bites and restart Lunar Skis. If anyone has additional ideas, please let Lise know.
 - Suggestions from Members:
 - Michel suggested scheduling Lunar Skis on full moon evenings and asking the City permission to have a fire pit at the Lone Pine Café. Pierre noted barrels were used for fires at past Loppets so this should not be an issue. Lise commented that scheduling will be somewhat last minute due to reliance on the forecast.
 - Anna proposed a candlelight ski event, with candles along the loop and a fire put at the start/finish area.
 - Barb asked whether member engagement serves to engage current members or skiers who use the trails but are not yet members. Lise noted that some skiers saw the Frosted Bites signs and quickly left—likely non-members—but it is unclear whether this led any of them to purchase a membership.

- **Membership Report** – Ian Burgess
 - Membership numbers dropped significantly this year (across the province, not just Wostawea), likely due to the lack of snow. As it snowed, Ian saw small increases in registration. It is unclear if the membership rate increases also had an impact – this will be better known next year.
 - Lise noted that some people during Frosted Bites mentioned they do not pay the membership fee because they only ski once or twice a year. She replied that even paying for one individual membership for the whole family would be helpful.

- **Finances Report** – Ian Burgess
 - Ian shared that the Club’s biggest revenue source is lessons. Others include donations and grants. Surprisingly little of total income comes from membership fees.
 - The Club is at a deficit this year. A fundraiser is needed to support the Head Coach position moving forward.
 - It was asked if the budget needs to be approved at the AGM. Nathalie indicated it has not been in recent years, but she will double check the constitution.

- Financial Review:
 - David P. commented on the fantastic job being done by Ian. He added that it is a lot for one person to take on, and a budget review from time to time would help give Ian peace of mind.
 - It was discussed how much an annual audit would cost and determined an unaudited financial review would be sufficient (and less expensive).
 - ***Donat proposed moving to an annual unaudited review of the Club's finances. David Palmer seconded. Majority in favour. Motion carried.***
- ***David P. moved to approve the financial statements for this year. Seconded by Fran. All in favour. Motion carried.***

Nathalie thanked everyone for their work on the reports.

4. 2023-25 Strategic Plan – Nathalie Comeau

- Nathalie explained that the strategic plan is due for review in 2025. She then distributed a short survey to those present to gather input and feedback.

5. Membership Fees – General Discussion

- Jean-Claud remarked that using the inflation rate for fee adjustments is acceptable, but a 22% increase is too high.
- Ian emphasized the need for more income, noting that members have enjoyed low fees for years. Compared to other activities, Club activity costs are very low.
- Cost of living is significant. It was suggested a discounted or by-donation fee rate be offered for seniors or long-term members.
- David P. raised the challenge of getting people to join when there is free access to the trail system. He suggested experimenting with lowering prices to potentially increase membership.
- Michel noted that membership revenues largely support trail maintenance, but fees do not cover costs for snowmobiles and gas. It was pointed out that many people top up their membership fees with donations.
- It was remarked that membership fees should be voted on at the AGM, not just by the executive.
- Communication:
 - Liz proposed annual communication about the efforts and costs involved in grooming the trails.
 - Lise pointed out that membership fees primarily fund grooming, not other programs. Focusing on this messaging might help convince those who use the trails but do not participate in programs to become members.

- Pierre mentioned the Nordic Pulse fee of \$1,150 – this would be good to highlight for member recruitment.
- Toon suggested using word of mouth and personal interactions to encourage membership. Donat recommended using a multi-pronged approach for communication (media, website, Facebook, word of mouth, etc.)
- It was remarked that, until Wostawea gets exclusive access to trails, there will be skiers who do not become members. Everything the Club does for visibility will pay dividends – there are other ways to get the word out there.
- Floriane asked if lesson costs could be raised instead of membership fees. It was noted that they were already increased last season.
- Nathalie thanked everyone for their feedback and said that fees would be revisited during financial planning.

6. Other Business

- **Amendments to the Constitution:** Nathalie proposed two immediate amendments to the constitution which reflect changes that have already been in place for years (no impact on current Club activities).
 - Addition of Outreach Lead:
 - Role performed by Mary for 6 years, not currently included.
 - Correction to proposed wording around equity deserving groups: “to introduce skiing to groups such as but not limited to.... and other equity deserving groups.”
 - ***David P. moved to add Outreach Lead position to the constitution. Seconded by Michel. All in favour. Motion carried.***
 - Change to Coaching Lead:
 - Constitution currently mentions Coaching Lead, which is outdated. Safe Sports and Volunteer Lead is more appropriate/needed.
 - ***John moved to change Coaching Lead to Safe Sports and Volunteer Lead in the constitution. Seconded by Floriane. All in favour. Motion carried.***
- **Silverwood Trail Update**
 - David Palmer gave a brief overview of the Silverwood project, which aims to provide Wostawea with a permanent home.
 - David P., Rob H. and Eric H. identified a property in Silverwood (old downhill ski property), owned by the McMurrises (lead: Peter). No formal agreement has been made yet; the family is open to possibilities but want control.

- The property meets several criteria: close to town, adequate land, good terrain, facilities (old lodge is run down, but family may fix it up for potential users), access road and parking.
- Some work was done this year (bridge building, mapping, trail work). A Sunday Ski Tour was planned to showcase the land to members, but it was cancelled due to poor conditions.
- Challenges: Finding a good route to the plateau and dealing with gravel pits (normally close second week of December but this year got a late season order).
- It was asked if there are any plans yet to develop new trails. The Club was able to open existing old trails and roads this year, but long-term trail development is still unknown.
- It was asked if use of Silverwood would impact grooming in the Woodlot – no decisions have been made yet.
- David noted that if the lodge is renovated, it would likely be under an annual rental agreement.
- Next Steps/Future Direction:
 - Lise inquired about next steps, suggesting some trails could be reopened to test and explore options for classic skiing and establish a relationship with the landowners. A special project could also help develop a long-term trail plan for both classic and skate skiing.
 - Nathalie emphasized that discussions are still preliminary as it is unclear how the family wants to handle the land. Eventually, they will likely seek Wostawea's input.
 - Liz noted it could be a good partnership, as Peter seems open to collaboration.
 - Jean-Claude pointed out the need for a long-term agreement rather than investing heavily in a short-term agreement.
 - Rob mapped out potential trails in the fields and open areas for possible outings next year.
 - Anna suggested engaging River Valley Cycling, as they may be interested in mountain bike trails and would have expertise.
 - David P. mentioned trail grooming this year was mostly handled by two individuals using three machines, with one machine sitting idle. Rob may relocate one machine to Silverwood.
- Thanks were given to David for his efforts and exploring.

- **Upcoming Events:**

- May 26: CCNB AGM in Miramichi. Open to everyone.
- April 18: Volunteer Appreciation Night at The Landing. 5-7 pm. Food, drink, entertainment, door prizes, Nancy Hamilton award and fun!

7. Election of New and Returning Executive Members – John Ball

- Nominated for new two-year or one-year terms:
 - President: Nathalie Comeau (one-year term)
 - Secretary: Nicki Violette
 - Youth Programs Lead:
 - Competitive Program Lead: Kristie Heard
 - Safe Sports & Volunteer Lead: Ron Smith
 - Outreach Lead: Toon Pronk

- Continuing in 2023-24 (serving the second year of a two-year term):
 - Vice-President: Eric Luiker
 - Treasurer and Registrar: Ian Burgess
 - Communications Lead: Barb Ramsay
 - Member Engagement Lead: Lise Bleau
 - Trails Lead: David Cameron

[Note: Don Wright will continue on the executive as Past President serving the first year of a two-year term]

- **Nathalie Comeau** agreed to let her name stand and was acclaimed as President for a one-year term.
- **Nicki Violette** agreed to let her name stand and was acclaimed as Secretary for a two-year term.
- There were no nominations or volunteers for Youth Program Lead.
- **Kristie Heard** was nominated and acclaimed as Competitive Program Lead for a two-year term.
- **Ron Smith** agreed to let his name stand and was acclaimed as Safe Sports & Volunteer Lead for a two-year term.
- **Toon Pronk** was nominated and acclaimed as Outreach Lead for a two-year term.

8. Closing Remarks – Nathalie Comeau

- Nathalie thanked everyone for attending.