

Whitehorse Nordic Ski Society

2025-26 Season Highlights

Welcome everyone to our 2025-26 annual general meeting and thank you for coming.

This year, in the name of efficiency, we have combined the president, manager and operations manager report into a single document called Season Highlights.

I'll start with some operational highlights:

Pass Sales

Despite a brutal early season cold snap, we had another successful season, with 2154 season passes sold. Although this number is about 250 lower than the 2024-25 season, which had an exceptionally early mid-October start, pass sales this year were squarely within our post-COVID average. Thanks to improving weather and ski conditions as the season went on, our pass sales were able to catch up.

We also sold over 5000 day passes this year and almost 1400 ski rental packages, in addition to 160 rental packages for those in our youth and adult programs.

As you might know, ski pass sales and rentals make up the bulk of our revenues so the number of passes we sell is very important to our success. A big thank you goes out to everyone who bought season, spring or day passes this year.

Activities and Events

Our goal at the Whitehorse Nordic Centre is to make everyone feel welcome by offering activities and events that appeal to the broadest possible cross-section of the Whitehorse population. Activities this year ranged from hosting a new competitive race series called the Boreal Cup, which saw 152 skiers participate, while also offering social and recreational events and activities for a broad cross-section of our membership. These events included a live music series in the ski huts, the family-oriented EDI Hut to Hut event, Easy Like Sundays, our famous DJ party, live music concerts in the huts and Art on the Trails.

Of course, one of our major accomplishments last year was hosting the cross-country ski events for the Arctic Winter Games. A highlight for these Games was the qualification of several skiers from Whitehorse Nordic Centre's Junior Development Program, including Charlotte Billingsley, Lucy Aasman, Ewan and Malcom Murchison. A big congratulations to them and to their dedicated volunteer coaches as well as to participants from the CCY Squad program. And

obviously a huge thank you goes out to all those who volunteered their time supporting this major international event.

Hosting the Arctic Winter Games helped to prepare us to meet our strategic goal to host a major competitive event in the near future. With this in mind, we are working with the sport governing body, Cross Country Yukon, to train and qualify officials needed to support such major events.

Our foray into sport tourism appears to be showing early signs of success - our concerted efforts to market the Yukon Ski Marathon as a destination event paid off, with a record number of skiers (53) coming from outside the Yukon to participate. This is almost double the number of Outside participants compared to last year and represents almost 25% of the 264 participants overall. This total number of skiers was also a record number for us.

Programs:

- The Whitehorse Nordic Centre's ski programs remained very popular again this year, with almost 300 skiers in our child and youth programs, another 300 skiers in our adult programs and 54 registrations in our Christmas and Spring break ski camps.
- In addition, 697 students from a total of eight Whitehorse schools and one class from Haines Junction took part in our Ski'S'Cool program.

Sponsorships

In terms of sponsorships, we continued to increase our reach by partnering with local businesses, for close to \$30,000 in cash contributions and \$42,050 in-kind. This \$72,000 of sponsorship represents about 7% of our operating revenues and is very important to our continued success. So a big thank you to our many dedicated sponsors.

Trails and Facilities

A few highlights on the trails and facilities side of things:

- There were a few more days than average where grooming was limited by extreme cold;
- Significant improvements were made to Skyline and Fraser loop. As well, a number of trails on the Sarah Steele network were widened to improve skier safety and experience while also allowing for safer and more consistent grooming;
- A new Descent trail is under construction so watch for a new ski destination as early as this winter.

The City's renovation of our space in the Mt McIntyre Recreation Centre continued over the late spring and summer - prepare to see a new and refreshed space when this season begins!

Moving on to the strategic initiatives led by our board members and board committees

Land Tenure

In June of 2025, the Yukon government announced the creation of McIntyre Creek Park and the future relinquishment of mining claims on part of the land under the ski trail network by Gladiator Metals and the Coyne brothers. The relinquishment was planned for this summer, but was deferred by Gladiator. We expect this to happen in the next few months. We will continue to advocate for returning the park boundary to one that includes all our trails, as originally intended. We will also continue to press for the relinquishment of all mining claims within the park.

Reconciliation, Equity, Accessibility, Diversity and Inclusion (READI)

With the support of the READI committee, the WNC Operational team has been incorporating the READI (Reconciliation, Equity, Access, Diversity and Inclusion) principles in programs, events, initiatives and facilities. Staff and volunteers ensure programming is welcoming for all. A few highlights are the Adult Programs where so many have learned to ski and embrace winter, the slate of children and youth programs from Bunnyrabbit to JDP, our events like Hut to Hut which has extended the reach of hut hosts, Music in the Hut, races that encourages all skiers to put on a bib, and of course the ever popular Easy Like Sunday. In our facilities our staff worked with the City of Whitehorse in the Chalet redesign to create a welcoming space for all. WNC also created a lottery system to ensure equal access for lockers as well as our new day use lockers.

WNSS is proud of and committed to continue the work of READI to ensure the trails and facility is a true community space.

Functional Planning

Our functional plan is a plan developed by the board to address current and future infrastructure needs, including a larger stadium, a better connection between our stadium and our Chalet, potentially a new Chalet and new or improved storage and operations buildings. At the moment, we are in critical need of a new operations building to store and maintain our grooming equipment. This year, the federal CanNor program expressed interest in providing funding but our efforts were hampered by the reduction in available funding from Lotteries Yukon and by the City's inability to identify a land parcel or a land parcel expansion. As a result, planning and design work for the operations building did not occur this year as hoped. We continue to lobby the municipal, federal and Yukon governments for funding and to develop partnerships toward ensuring our facilities meet current and future needs. A feasibility study on expanding the existing PB shed will proceed in 2026/27 with a small amount of funding from the Yukon government.

Organizational Design

As our organization grows, we need staff to help us meet skier needs and our strategic objectives. We retained an organizational design consultant, Cheryl Van Blaricom, this year to help us develop a staffing plan. As a result, the board has decided to move toward a General Manager model, where a single position oversees the operation of the whole organization. This will occur gradually, as revenue permits. We will continue to operate as usual for this year with our “multi-manager” model, with the addition of a new project coordinator, Jon Weller, to support Ben in his functions as our front-line services manager. Juliette Romain will remain with us this year in a new position as the manager of marketing and events.

Meetings with Elected Officials

Since it was a territorial election year, the Board and its committee members spent a considerable amount of time meeting with elected and senior government officials, especially at the territorial level. In our meetings, we emphasized the importance of our services to the mental and physical well-being of several thousand Yukoners, including youth and seniors, the role we play as a tool for recruitment and retention of Yukoners in various occupations, and we discussed ways for the government to better support our organization.

Climate Action Plan

The board of directors adopted a climate action plan this year, which was based on a consolidation of the input the Climate Change Committee received over the course of the past several years. A big thank you to board member Moya Painter for pulling this together.

Finally on behalf of the board, I would like to extend a huge thank you to our dedicated staff, who continue to amaze us with their hard work, problem-solving ability, dedication and creativity, year after year. I would also like to thank all the volunteers without whom many of our activities and events would simply not happen. And finally, a big thank you to our departing board member Moya Painter and all the other board members who put in so much of themselves to make the organization hum.