

# **History of the Prairie Nordic Ski Club (formerly Charleswood Ski Club)**

This Introduction is from a 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary speech presented by an Executive member.

## ***The early years - 1976-1985***

*Gord Tumilson, Supervisor of Athletics at the City of Winnipeg Parks and Recreation, organized cross-country ski lessons for the residents of the Charleswood area at the Eric Coy arena. Gord thought that the people who completed the lessons might be interested in forming a recreational cross-country ski club. Gord then advertised the lessons and the ski club idea in the Parks and Recreation bulletin distributed in Charleswood. An organizational meeting was held on November 8, 1976. The first official ski club meeting with the new executive and members was held on December 9, 1976, at the Charleswood Collegiate.*

*During the early years members met at the Eric Coy Arena before heading to the ski trails. Local city skiing and day trips were organized. Club membership was initially only 35, but what was lacking in size was made up for in enthusiasm under the direction of the club's first president, Norm McKibben. In December 1977, Parks and Recreation provided a permanent club house at 6140 Roblin Blvd (an old house at Berkley & Roblin). An early Open House at the Chalet (as the clubhouse was called) attracted 98 people interested in cross-country skiing. When the Chalet was set for demolition, the Club's centre of operation became the Pembina Trail Recreation Centre.*

*A committee consisting of Gordie Tumilson, John Dykes and Don Fidelak wrote a constitution for the new club. The first club logo and button (sky blue with white stitching) were designed by Don Fidelak.*

*The biggest boost to club membership occurred when weekend trips were added to the already successful city and day trip program. Enjoyable trips to such places as Hecla Island, West Hawk Lake, Riding Mountain, Spruce Woods, Rushing River and Maplegap provided members with a variety of accommodation and ski trails. The first mountain trip which was organized in 1981 to Jasper proved to be so successful that the mountain trip had become a club tradition. Subsequent trips have been to the Banff area with excellent skiing in Kananaskis Country.*

*A survey of the club membership indicated a desire to participate in summer activities. The successful summer program consisting of hiking, cycling, and canoeing and was run by Wally Flattery for three years when in 1985 it officially became the Summer Program.*

*Social events have been an integral part of club activities from the beginning. The executive initially took the responsibility for organizing socials but as the club grew, a social committee became necessary.*

*The telephone committee had the important responsibility over the years of canvassing members to encourage participation in various club events. The monthly newsletter also allowed members to keep up to date with club activities.*

*The success of the Charleswood Ski Club has depended upon the many people who have volunteered their time and abilities to make it the kind of organization that the members enjoy today.*

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## **1976/77 Founding Members:**

Back, Roy and Sheila	Glesener, Mr. and Mrs.
Black, Pam	Gluting, Eileen, Lloyd, Rod and Hazel
Brown, William	Hobday, Robert
Cassie, V.	Holmes, Russ and Donna
Crocker, Ruth	Johnson, Cathie
Dent, Ruth	Linnell, Diane
Duckworth, Trevor, Irene and Susan	Luke, Marg
Dykes, H. and John	McKibbon, Norm
Fidelak, Donna	McTavish, Dorothy
Fidelak, Don, Pauline and Daryl	Ruczak, Carol
Franklin, Gord	Stickle, Dean, Karen and Jamie
French, James and Valerie	Tumilson, Gordie

## **TIMELINE:**

### **1976**

- The City of Winnipeg's Parks and Recreation Department offered 5 cross country ski lessons for \$12.
- The first CSC Executive meeting was held December 9 with Minutes officially recorded.
- The first Open House was held December 19 at the Eric Coy Arena featuring an idea booth; where to ski; toning up; waxing, equipment, food and clothing.
- The CSC organization was founded in 1976 to "encourage and develop cross-country skiing. Downhill skiing will also be encouraged as the need arises. The purpose was to learn to ski, to improve ski techniques and to meet people. We offer members lessons and excursions. We shall be organizing special events which offer winter fun for our members from the first permanent snow until April
- The club met in the foyer of the Eric Coy Arena at trip start times, arranged carpools, and headed out to the trails as a group.

### **1977**

- At the January 4 meeting it was motioned to open a club account at the Toronto Dominion Bank on Roblin Blvd and Dale. Membership fees were set at: family \$10; couple \$7.50; and single \$5. Lessons were offered to club members at \$5 for three lessons at a cost to the club of \$35 for the head instructor (Craig Campbell) and \$25 for other instructor(s).
- The first General Meeting was held January 11 with 28 members attending.
- Local stores that sold cross-country ski equipment at the time were: Fresh Air Experience, Odyssey, Overland, Earthways, Happy Outdoorsman and A.B.C.

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- At the February 3 meeting it was decided that a phone list be made and distributed amongst club members with the intent that "Club members could arrange with fellow members to ski together and phone prior to arranged club meets to see who would be present, and perhaps arrange to travel together."
- The club ran its first display at the Varsity View Winter Carnival February 19&20
- The first "Charleswood Ski Club" newsletter on file is dated February 12 and was two typed pages with no graphics.
- In March, the City of Winnipeg donated a Chalet for a clubhouse at 6140 Roblin Blvd. Coffee and hot chocolate were sold for 10 cents and rental skis were made available at no charge. However, the life of the clubhouse was short lived, by December 1978 the City announced the foundation was caving in and was no longer safe to occupy.
- Nine members attended the first Wine & Cheese house party in Charleswood on March 12. Admission was \$1 pre-paid plus bring your own wine.

### **1978**

- The first CSC constitution was formalized at the March 17 Annual General Meeting (held at a member's home).

### **1979**

- In January, Charter Member Don Fidelak designed a Club crest design, and the crest was sold to membership for \$1.00.
- October saw the newsletter typed and duplicated by Miss Galler's Office Practice class at Oak Park High school as part of their practical experience.
- The Phoning Committee started to develop
- The first Skill Review was held on December 1, 1979, at Assiniboine Park.

### **1980**

- The Club's first participation in the Pumpkin Creek Mystery tour at Roseisle.
- In October and November ski club buttons and club t-shirts were developed.

### **1981**

- To accommodate so many teachers in the club, the first trip to the mountains was scheduled for spring-break. Nine members signed up to ski in Jasper March 28-April 4.

### **1982**

- On January 16, a 5 km trail opened in Beaudry Park.
- March 27-April 3 saw the second spring-break trip to the mountains, now an annual event. This time, members stayed in Canmore either at the Rocky Mountain Chalet or the Akai. Not able to refuse a great

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rate, in 1990 the club began to stay exclusively at the Akai Motel where they stayed for the next 18 years. Due to old and deteriorating motel conditions, 2008 saw the club move to the more upper scale Canmore Inn & Suites. In late 2010, the hotel's name was changed to the Ramada.

- Wally Flattery introduced the summer program, with it becoming an official event in 1985.
- In December, Windsor Park Golf Course opened with a lit trail for evening skiing.

### **1983**

- To qualify for CCSAM insurance coverage, the CSC incorporated October 28 for \$60.

### **1986**

- October saw the first Thanksgiving Day Weekend with camping/hiking in the Whiteshell c/w with a barbequed turkey on Sunday prepared by Jack Scriven. Jack and Jean ran this weekend for 6 years and then Gord and Shirley Froehlich carried it on at Stephenfield in 1992.

### **1987**

- A bus trip to Spruce Woods proved so successful monies collected surpassed the bus costs. Exceeding their break-even point, Don and Pauline Fidelak decided to spend the 'profits' on wine and munchies for members to enjoy on the trip home. These 'bus treats' became a tradition which evolved into the potluck munchies that still circulate on the trip home today. To date, Susan Mitchell has raised the bar the highest with the hot perogies and sour cream she served on the Grand Beach bus (Susan heated them up on the warming hut stove prior to departure)!

### **1994**

- For the first time, the February bus trip saw both female and male members ski the 19 km into Jackfish cabin. Raquel Anore gained title to the first female club member to accomplish this destination with a time of 1¾ hours, followed 15 minutes later by Joyce Janier. Also making it to the cabin were Brian McClory, George Kaoukis, Albert Janier and Dan Malmas. However, all were first passed by the elite team of Eric Smith, Bill Penny and Jeff Russell. The ski was aided by ideal snow conditions, good tracking, and a great glide. Since then, the cabin has become a regular destination.

### **1995**

- For the first time two Canmore trips were scheduled: March 4-11 and March 25-April 1. This continued for the next 12 years until it reverted back to a single offering in 2008.

### **1996**

- In February the "Charleswood Ski Club" newsletter was renamed the "Track and Trail".

### **1998**

- On March 11, 9 Canmore participants: John Gray, Brian Wagg, Brad Carey, George Kaoukis, Peter & Carry Lam, John Gray, and Joyce & Albert Janier experienced a challenging, backcountry day ski en route to Skoki Lodge, one of the earliest ski lodges in the Rockies. After a slow but steady 3 km uphill ski from the Fish Creek parking lot to the Temple Lodge area, it was then an 11 km ski into the rustic lodge, via Boulder and Deception passes, with the weather cooperating on the return Ptarmigan Lake crossing. Visibility remained clear all day, there was no threat of an avalanche, and some of the long climbs along the way gave time to pause and catch one's breath while contemplating the beauty and grandeur of the surrounding

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mountains.

## 2001

- Wendy Joannis booked the Great Hay & Sleigh Experience held in East Selkirk for two days at the end of June to host the Charleswood Ski Club's 25th Anniversary party. It was held on the banks of the Red River north of Selkirk. Everyone was given a compass with the club crest on it as they arrived. Afternoon games were created by Laura and Dave Duncan. One memorable game was played with a collection of old skis. Ski teams consisting of three people per team were organized. Each team were strapped onto one pair of skis for a mad race across the grass! Other games included a horseshoe tournament and ski pole race. The group was entertained with skits performed by CSC members. Who could forget the daily routine of the two seniors in a nursing home. With the crowd in such high spirits, all enjoyed an early evening pig roast. Entertainment then followed with a Square-Dancing demonstration and lessons. In the evening a music man kept some members dancing in the hall. The outdoor type of folks winded down around a humungous bonfire complete with guitar music and sing-along. Free camping on site was available to members. Former club members and executive were invited with about 80 - 100 members in attendance.

## 2005

- November saw the development of the club website: [www.charleswoodskiclub.ca](http://www.charleswoodskiclub.ca). *"The web domain officially started in late August and in just a few short weeks, received over 250 hits from across the world. Our new domain has allowed the CSC to serve our membership more effectively. Because we are much easier to find, we think more people will look for us for skiing information, trip updates, and related news. We have more storage space that can be used for club photos and issues of Track and Trail."* - Rob Bailey, Webmaster

## 2007

- The April Newsletter honoured June Thomson, Helene Wilson, and Linwood DeLong into the Giant's Ridge Decade Club. Each attended all 10 consecutive bus trips to Giant's Ridge in Virginia, Minnesota. June led all the trips, starting in 1998, with Greyhound's Bruce Jennings serving as her trusty driver for 8 of those years. For her hard work June was handsomely rewarded on the bus with a beautiful faux tiara which she boldly wore into the border crossing office while she officiated in some club business.
- December saw a "no more waxing" option - Olympia Cycle and Ski offers Grip tape and cleaner.

## 2009

- On February 13-16 John Gray led the inaugural bus trip to Duck Mountain. Fifty members joined him in the 4½ hour bus ride en route to Duck Mountain Lodge.

## 2010

- The Bittersweet Day Lodge opened in December.

## 2011

- Shirley and Gord Froehlich joined the club in 1979/80 and hold the longest standing and consecutive club membership. Gord served as Vice-President in 1980/81 and President in 1982/83. Shirley was the Treasurer from 1988-1991 and the President in 1995/96. Other than missing three years from 1984-1987 when they

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belonged to the Halton Cross Country Ski Club when they lived in Mississauga, Ontario, they have both been with the club ever since.

### **2012**

- For two nights prior to Canmore week, although not a sanctioned CSC event, 12 club members plus two non-members braved weather, snow conditions and distance to ski into historic Skoki Lodge (last summer's hideaway for Will and Kate). Participants: June Thomson, Don Wilson, Sharron Bettess, Nicole Riese, Lorne Midford, Norm Johanson, Inga Skundberg, Patrice Wilken, Jean-Anne Watkins, Frank Kriz, John Gray, Cam Stacey, Don and Doris Orchyk.

Vehicles were left at the Lake Louise main lodge and the gondola was taken to the top of Ptarmigan lift where it downloaded at Temple Lodge, elev. 6600 feet. Here the uphill trip began through the trees and across an open meadow, stopping for a brief lunch break at Halfway Hut, elev. 7100 feet, then continuing to Boulder Pass at 7600 feet and Deception Pass at 8150 feet. From this bare, windswept pass, began the downhill descent through stunted Alpine larch, spruce, and fir forest to the Skoki hut. A few mishaps on the way saw Inga and Jean-Anne riding on their backs on their skis, Sharron tipping off the edge of the packed run into the deep snow and Nicole vanishing briefly into the snow and trees!

However, their mid-afternoon arrival was rewarded with a warm and friendly reception by Leo and Katie, managers of the lodge for 14 years. Back country gourmet awaited them – freshly made chili, soups, baking, coffee, tea, cheese and crackers! The group took up the bedrooms in the main lodge – a varied assortment of bunks, single and double rooms. Downstairs consisted of a well-equipped kitchen, a large dining room and an adjacent, comfortable lounge area, each warmed with a stove. Bathroom facilities were outside, just up a snowy walkway!

Day 2 at the lodge for some was spent relaxing around the wood stove. Others did a short ski down to the Merlin Lake Campground and the nearby snow-covered lake. A few did a more ambitious ski to the back side of Fossil Mountain. And of course, there was plenty of food to eat.

A thrill for John Gray was to find where his parents had signed themselves and their young son (John) into the guest book in August 1941!

Of course, homage was made to where Will and Kate had laid their heads in July 2011 and to hear the interesting stories of their short overnight visit - particularly the challenges of providing a 'royal bathroom and flush toilet', of which, unfortunately, neither remained.

Day 3 was brutal as the group headed out in limited visibility, with howling wind gusts of 60 k/hr and driving snow and ice pellets stinging their face and eyes. All of this while they were trying to locate the next marker pole to stay on course across the whiteness of Ptarmigan Lake. They did attempt to stay together, or at least in tight groups, and made it out safely, with the truly authentic back country skiing experience now off June's bucket list!

- Pumpkin Creek Ski Club hits a record low for days of skiing with only one week of skiing on groomed trails!

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- A lot of bicycle riding and some hiking took place on Shannondale trails this winter. Snow was not present until February 26 and March 11 saw a meltdown of snow.
- This was the shortest season on record for the Windsor Park Nordic Centre and revenue was down. CCSAM is negotiating with the city for a 1-year extension of its contract for Windsor Park Golf Course. There is some optimism of City Council support for future use of the facility.
- For the 2012/2013 ski season, an on-line registration system (Zone 4) was used to collect registration information for the club. This allowed members to pay using Master Card or Visa as well as the usual cheque or cash. The registration system was accessed via the updated CSC web site.

### **2013**

- The club facilitated Member to Member communications by starting a Google listserv group.
- At Canmore, members Lesley Andrews, Yves Brunel, Frank Kriz, Dennis LeNeveu, Kevin Miller, Kris Pabianek, Floyd Reichel, Inga Skundberg, Cam Stacey, and Jean-Anne Watkins participated in the Annual Lake Louise Loppet on March 3. The rolling 20 km course started and ended on the lake in front of the Chateau Lake Louise. For several of the participants, this was their second Lake Louise Loppet.

Special mention goes to medal winners Floyd, Dennis, and Jean-Anne for placing in their age categories and bringing home the medals! Several of our skiers also just missed medalling by placing fourth in their categories.

### **2014**

- The club web site was changed to modernize the look of the site. For the first time the importance of volunteers to the club page was added.

### **2015**

- For the first time poor snow conditions caused the cancellation of the Canmore ski trip.

### **2016**

- 2016 saw the end of the annual bus trip to Duck Mountain on the Louis Riel weekend. The trip had been one of the most popular weekend trips since 2009, however due to low registration, the bus was discontinued. 9 members drove out for a long weekend of skiing.

### **2017**

- 29 members travelled by club-chartered bus for a week-long stay at Stokely the week of February 25. Stokely is located near Sault Ste Marie and was a popular destination for several years, providing an all-inclusive ski week experience.
- Weekend trips went to Red Lake and Spruce Woods and the traditional Canmore trip continued.

### **2018-2019**

- Meetup was implemented for scheduling and publicizing Day and Half Day Trips.
- 35 members travelled to Canmore and 17 members travelled to Stokely for a week of skiing.

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## **2019-2020**

- The club registration process for weekend and Canmore trips was changed. With the new process, the club VP reserved a block of rooms at the hotel for a pre-set price and members contacted the hotel directly to book and pay for their rooms. This new registration process significantly reduced the Zone4 overhead costs and greatly reduced the workload for the registrar and treasurer. Previously the club had booked and paid the hotel directly and members pre-paid and registered for the trip in Zone4.
- **March 2020 – Covid-19 pandemic restrictions** started after Canmore. There was no Spring AGM, and the annual club executive reports were circulated by email to the membership.

## **2020-2021 – Covid-19 Pandemic**

- Covid-19 greatly impacted club operations and forced the cancellation of almost the entire season. All events were cancelled with only a few day trips permitted starting February 21, 2021. Group gatherings of more than 1 or 2 persons were not permitted for most of the year and travel was not allowed between provinces or to northern Manitoba.
- The club developed a “Covid Protocols Document” based on the CCSAM Covid-19 guidelines and required all members to provide Proof of Vaccination when registering. All members were required to be fully immunized for COVID-19 and guests were asked to show proof of immunization. The Proof of Vaccination restriction was implemented from the 2020/2021 season to the end of the 2022/2023 season.
- The Executive met via Zoom throughout the year and the Spring AGM was also held electronically via Zoom. AGM reports were sent out via email and the voted on electronically using Google Forms.

## **2021-2022 – Covid-19 Restrictions Eased**

- Covid-19 restrictions eased, and the club was able to provide a full slate of events except for bus trips.
- The traditional Day Trip Schedule was discontinued. Trips were scheduled in Meetup throughout the ski season rather than all scheduled at the start of the year.
- Canmore was moved to the week of February 5 from the traditional first week of March. The weather was mild (+2C to +10C) and there was plenty of snow. 27 members attended. The end of an era: former CSC haunt the Akai Motel in Canmore was demolished.
- The Louis Riel weekend trip to Duck Mountain had to be rescheduled to March 18-21 due to a snowstorm that made driving impossible. There were 2 cabins and 3 condos booked. The spring conditions were challenging with icy trails in the morning and slush in the afternoon.
- The ski season extended late into April as three Colorado lows in 3 consecutive weeks brought record snow fall amounts to southern Manitoba. Winnipeg typically averages 127 cm of snow over the course of a winter, but by April 17 of 2022, we had been hit with 212 cm snow, making it the sixth snowiest on record. Winnipeg set a record for precipitation in 2022 with it's wettest year on record, taking in the combination of rain and snow it reached an unprecedented 739.9 mm as of Oct. 24.



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### 2022-2023

- Bus trips returned and Falcon Lake and Spruce Woods sold out as members were eager to return to pre-Covid events.
- Canmore returned to the traditional first week of March. The weather and snow conditions were very good and over 25 members attended. Several members participated in the Lake Louise Loppet which sported new race course routes.
- The ski season extended into the first week of April due to good snow conditions and cool temperatures.

### 2024-2025 – New club name. Charleswood Ski Club becomes Prairie Nordic Ski Club

- The club's name was changed from the Charleswood Ski Club to the Prairie Nordic Ski Club effective October 2024. The new name was chosen after a lengthy consultation with club members who were polled to determine the most popular name choice. The new name was approved at the November 2023 General Meeting.

### Membership History:

1977/78 – 45	1978/79 - 94	1979/80 - 75	1980/81 - 77	1981/82 - 133	1982/83 - 113
1986/87 - 162	1991/92 - 226	1992/93 - 255	1993/94 - 298	1994/95 - 284	1995/96 - <b>367</b>
1996/97 - 253	1997/98 - 229	1998/99 - 216	1999/00 - 232	2000/01 - 270	2001/02 - 206
2002/03 - 228	2003/04 - 190	2004/05 - 227	2005/06 - 231	2006/07 - 201	2007/08 - 221
2008/09 - 217	2009/10 - 219	2010/11 - 171	2011/12 - 194	2012/13 - 185	2013/14 - 218
2014/15 - 218	2015/16 - 162	2016/17 - 169	2017/18 - 172	2018/19 - 153	2019/20 - 141
*2020/21 - 107	2021/22 - 156	2022/23 - 155	2023/24 - 156	2024/25 - 163	

\* Covid

### Membership Statistics including New Members

Year	New Members	Total
2024/25	36	163
2023/24	24	156
2022/23	39	155
2021/22	54	156
2020/21	16	107
2019/20	22	141
2018/19	28	153
2017/18	12	172
2016/17	49	169
2015/16	32	162

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2014/15	67	218
2013/14	72	218
2012/13	42	185

### **History of Canmore attendance:**

2006 - 64 Akai (27% of membership)

2007 - 70 Akai (35% of membership)

2008 - 79 (first time at Canmore Inn and Suites) (35% of membership)

2009 - 62 Canmore Inn and Suites (28% of membership)

2010 - 59 Canmore Inn and Suites (27% of membership)

2011 - 40 Ramada (name change from Canmore Inn and Suites) (23% of membership)

2012 - 44 Ramada (22% of membership)

2013 - 33 Ramada (18% of membership)

2014 - 37 Ramada (17% of membership)

2015 - Cancelled-poor snow conditions (planned for Ramada 17 registered) (8% of membership)

### **Acknowledgements:**

Compiled by Joyce Janier - April 27, 2012

Updated by JCB/JJ – September 2014 & 2015

Updated by KP – 2016 to October 2025