

clubs

by Lisa Evans

Sovereign Lake Nordic Club

Mild winter temperatures and 23 feet of annual snowfall have made Sovereign Lake a world-renowned ski destination. Popular for its early-season skiing (typically starting in early November) and stunning views of the surrounding Vernon Valley and Monashee Mountains from the upper trails, Sovereign Lake Nordic Club has emerged as one of the largest ski clubs in British Columbia. Since partnering with neighbouring Silver Star Mountain Resort, Sovereign Lake's 1,600 members can now enjoy 105 kilometres of manicured ski trails and 14 kilometres of snowshoe trails.

With a seven-month-long season, Sovereign Lake sees many skiers from Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver who flock to early snow in November and ski as late as mid-May when most other ski destinations are closed. "We get that nice, super-sunny skiing that you can experience in your T-shirt [in May]," says Communications Manager Julie Melanson. Trails remain well-maintained in the summer months, reducing the amount of work volunteers need to do in the autumn to prepare for the first snowfalls.



While Sovereign Lake has produced competitive athletes, the focus is on recreational skiing and having fun.

While Sovereign Lake's well-groomed trails are impressive, Melanson says it's the club members who are responsible for their success. Members donate more than 10,000 volunteer hours a year for trail maintenance, teaching weekend programs, chopping wood for the club house's wood stove and working to produce races such as the Masters World Cup event in 2011 and the NorAm races that Sovereign Lake hosts annually. "Some of our volunteers have been with us for 10 years or more," says Melanson.

Sovereign Lake's terrain offers ski options for all levels and ages. "We've had a number of kids on skis at the age of one, including head coach Darren Derochie's daughter, Julie-Anne," says Melanson. The oldest club member was Fred Taylor, who skied until he was 97 years

ALFRED PARSONS
Involved in Sports in Labrador West since 1969

World Master of Cross Country Skiing
Excellence in Free Technique

- 2003 Quebec City, QC - Silver
- 2006 Brusson, Italy - 6th
- 2008 Autrans, France - Bronze
- 2012 Canadian Masters Golden, BC - 4 Gold
- 2011 Masters World Cup Sovereign Lake, Vernon, BC - Gold
- 2012 30k East Germany - 4th
- 2013 Labrador Winter Games - 5 Gold
- 2013 Asiago, Italy - Top 10

"There are two pains, the pain of discipline and the pain of regret. Your choice!"

Join the Excitement! **Menihiek** Nordic Ski Club **2014 CANADIAN MASTERS** MARCH 23-29

GREAT LABRADOR LOPPET 10, 28 & 50 K MARCH 22, 2014

The most amazing xc ski gear I own

"I call it miracle fabric, and my friends thought I was crazy.....until they tried them for themselves. Thanks SportHill!!!!" L. Bailey

Shed the Layers... Keep the Warmth

3SP fabric's unique fiber structure is windproof to 35 mph, yet still breathes, wicks, and stretches, keeping you warm and dry. Exclusively SportHill.

3SP Tights, pants, tops and gloves for Men and Women

sporthill.com/3SP
800-622-8444

SPORTHILL®



Photos: Sovereign Lake Nordic Club

old and spent countless hours clearing trails as a volunteer.

The stadium serves as an ideal teaching location for beginners, while black trails (such as the Masters Worlds 15-kilometre loop that goes to the top of Silver Star Mountain) are suitable for advanced skiers seeking a challenge. Melanson says getting to the lookout at an elevation of 1,890 metres can leave even the most experienced skiers breathless.

Sovereign Lake has produced some competitive athletes, including Matt Wylie (the grandson of club founder Carl Wylie), who was named the 2012/2013 Male Athlete of the Year by Cross Country BC, and Heather Mehain, (who took home a silver medal at World Junior Trials in 2010.) Mehain was coached by Derochie, an Olympic cross-

country skier who competed at the 1992 Winter Games in Albertville, France. "Darren is a fantastic coach, and [because of the quality of coaching our skiers receive] I think we're going to see a lot more people who choose to go on and compete," says Melanson.

While the club supports the endeavours of members who opt to become involved in the sport at a Professional level, Melanson says its focus is on recreational skiing and just having fun in the snow. Every year, the club puts on a lantern ski event in conjunction with the winter carnival in Vernon. "We put up wick oil-burning lanterns along the trails to create a romantic, idyllic setting for people to ski at night," says Melanson.

To support its growing membership, Sovereign Lake continues to find ways to assist members in improving their ski skills. In addition to regular snow-season programming, Sovereign Lake offers Supercamp, two-and-a-half-day and five-day camps in November and early December. "Starting the season early with learning from coaches who teach the most up-to-date ski techniques allows [skiers] to start their season right, setting good practices in their technique," says Melanson. Included in the five-day camps are keynote speakers, wax workshops and massage and stretch classes. Dryland rollerski camps are also held in September to build an aerobic base and improve skiers' strength, ensuring they're ready to hit the trails as soon as the snow covers the ground.

The cost of membership is \$190 for adults, with discounts for seniors (\$125), youths aged 13-18 (\$115) and juniors (\$90). While Sovereign Lake gives members access to 58 kilometres of trails, a dual-area pass with Silver Star Resort costs \$310 and provides access to the 105 kilometres of combined trails.

MO' INFO

www.sovereignlake.com

Get
Mountain
Fit

AWARD WINNING COACHES

5 CAMPS IN NOV/DEC

2 CAMPS IN JAN/FEB

Hosted by:
Silver Star Mountain Resort &
Sovereign Lake Nordic Centre



- unrivaled early snow • exceptional grooming • award winning coaching staff
- ideal terrain • village dining • ski to your door convenience



2013/14 cross country

SUPERCAMP

www.xcsupercamp.com