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The Valley VOICE

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Big grant announced for Summit Lake Ski and Snowboard Area

by Jan McMurray

The Summit Lake Ski and Snowboard Area's excellent 2022 season just got even better. On March 31, the Province announced a Rural Development grant of \$699,150 for improvements at the local hill.

"What a great surprise!" said Mike Webster, board member of the Nakusp Ski Club, the non-profit society that manages the hill. "We applied for the grant in October 2020 and were initially turned down. We've just found out that we got the grant, so we have a lot of planning yet to do - but we hope to get started this construction season."

Webster said the project will include building a new shed for the groomer, an operator's booth for the handle tow lift, and a new addition for the day lodge.

"We want to have a facility that is attractive for other groups to rent out throughout the year," Webster said. "Lots of other hills encourage cycling, and that's a natural fit for us. The opportunity is there to enhance year-round recreational opportunities at Summit Lake."

Webster said the groomer shed and handle tow operator's booth would likely be built this season, but the day lodge addition will probably have to wait until next year.

"The day lodge is something we've been wanting to do for years," said Club President Eric Waterfield. "But with today's prices and building code standards, we'll have to re-visit the design and the budget, and we'll have to go after more funding."

About 10 years ago, the club was able to start building the new day lodge with funding from Columbia Basin Trust and Kootenay Savings Community Foundation. They built a new rental shop, washrooms and ski

patrol office. Now, they hope to finish off the new building by replacing the old eating area and kitchen with the new addition.

Every year, the hill hosts the school program, the Nancy Greene program, the high school ski and board team, the Club Races, Friday night skiing, and the grand finale - the Spring Carnival.

The school program sees students from all School District 10 (Arrow Lakes) schools take lessons at the hill as part of their phys ed program. The high school ski and board team members practice at the hill on Saturdays, and the Nancy Greene racing program for children aged 5-12 happens on Sundays. Interfor sponsors one Friday ski night every season, with free skiing and hot chocolate for all. The Club Races were held February 13 this year and had about 90 participants of all ages, with trophies going to Kate Watt, Emily Hembling and Alanna Minchen.

"We have an incredible group of volunteers who come together to pull off the Club Races. It's always a really fun day," said Aidan McLaren-Caux, chair of the Nancy Greene program.

This year, Claire Jackson ran the school program and was one of the coaches for the high school ski team and for the Nancy Greene skiers. "She did an incredible job!" said McLaren-Caux.

Other high school team coaches include Adam McQuair, Carly Thorpe, Noel Ballard and Sydney Bone; and Nancy Greene coaches were Aidan McLaren-Caux, Dease Hembling, Cory Peglar and Forest Humphries.

"My kids have been in the Nancy Green program for four or five years and it has grown quite a bit," McLaren-Caux said. "There were nine kids when they started, and this year, there were 34. Like most things around here, a lot of

parents and other volunteers have kept it going, so I hope we can keep building the program because it's such a great activity for the kids."

The season started out strong with a new cable on the T-bar lift and a very well running groomer - a Rosebery resident rebuilt the groomer last summer. And the fact that it was a good snow year was a big help, too. The hill opened December 26 and ran right through to March 26 for the Spring Carnival with its hilarious Slush Cup and Dummy Race.

"The hill is really important for our kids and everyone to get outside and be active in the winter," said Waterfield. "We stayed open for the last two years during COVID, even though we couldn't run the kitchen and people couldn't linger in the lodge - they could only come in to get their pass and equipment and use the washroom. The community is so supportive, and the schools, too."



Fisher Vibe-Coleman braves competing in the Slush Cup at the Summit Lake Ski and Snowboard Area's Spring Carnival, March 26.



C.J. Wright competes in the Slush Cup, one of the signature events at Summit Lake's year-end carnival.

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