

A Cross-Country Life:
A Sport Biography of Canadian Olympian and Cross-Country Skier David Rees

by

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Abstract

This study examines the life of Canadian Olympian Dave Rees. Rees has played a multidimensional role in the practice and promotion of Nordic skiing in Canada. Born in 1943, he is an athlete, teacher, writer, coach, administrator, and curator of the Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing in Canmore, Alberta. This sport biography investigates the life experiences of David L. Rees and his influence on the sport from skiing with his earliest club in North Bay, Ontario to racing in the 1968 Grenoble Winter Games, co-founding the Canadian Masters Cross Country Ski Association in 1980, hosting the 1988 Calgary Winter Games and the 2022 Master's World Cup, and creating a community-driven museum. A supporter of both elite racing and mass participation in Nordic skiing, his work also resulted in the creation of a distinct national sport organization named Cross Country Canada, which separated from the Canadian Ski Association in 1989, and is today known as Nordiq Canada.

David Rees is a geographer, geologist, and amateur sportsman whose lifelong pursuit of Nordic skiing demonstrates athlete specialisation, technological and training changes, and the growth of cross-country skiing from localised to widespread appeal. Based on oral history interviews and archival sources, including private papers and newspapers, this historical study examines Rees' life in Nordic skiing and how his story fits within a larger cultural context of the little-studied history of postwar Nordic skiing in Canada. I argue that Rees embraced both participatory and elite competition ethics, laying athletic, educational, and administrative groundwork to expand Canadian development in cross-country skiing, and conclude that this lifelong athlete and volunteer not only witnessed the transformations of Nordic skiing, he has been one of its collaborative architects and memory keepers for six decades.

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Abbreviations

CCC	Cross Country Canada
CMNS	Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing
CNC	Canmore Nordic Centre
CSHFM	Canadian Skiing Hall of Fame and Museum
CSHoF	Canadian Sports Hall of Fame
CSA	Canadian Ski Association
CSM	Canadian Ski Museum
XC	Cross-Country

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

At 9:00 am, the parking lot was nearly empty. Arriving with my daughter, we headed out on the trackset trails in the bright morning sun feeling like the only cross-country skiers at the Canmore Nordic Centre. Conditions were perfect, a result of the excellent grooming. Skiing through varied terrain and thick pine stands, we saw vistas of the Bow Valley emerge below us. Friendly regulars on skis greeted us occasionally on the more popular trails, and young racers zipped by occasionally in a whirl of carbon-fibre and spandex.

By lunchtime, as we skied back towards the day lodge, the *pop pop* of biathletes shooting at the range became clearer although many were packing up. Fewer slick skiers zipped past us as if pulled along by an invisible force. Instead, groups clad in all manner of clothing took over the trails. There was a woman in a glamorous parka with an impossibly large fox-fur ruff. Others wore the ubiquitous Canadian Tuxedo – jeans and a denim jacket – and some were in massive skidoo suits more suited to arctic extremes. Capable skiers were interspersed with people shuffling along like weary soldiers, or tangled on the ground laughing in heaps and many languages were heard on the trails. Back at the day lodge, the queue for the ski rental shop stretched out with parties spaced out at two-meter intervals, and the parking lot was full. Canadians in large numbers were discovering or rediscovering the perfect winter sport. Cross-country skiing has proven to be a popular antidote for cabin-fever and even more so during the loss of many activities curtailed by pandemic restrictions starting in 2020.

Among these many skiers, only a few would recognize the name David Rees, yet the legacy we were enjoying was built in part on the unsung labours of this cross-country skier, a

Canadian Olympian and amateur sport organizer. Indeed, the very trails we glided and struggled over were designed for the 1988 Winter Olympic competition that was overseen by Rees as Chief of Courses. His work and accomplishments throughout a lifetime devoted to amateur sport contributed to developments and continue to expand opportunities for elite skiers and recreational skiers.

Dave Rees has contributed to cross-country skiing as a competitor, coach, administrator, official, guidebook author, keeper of the historical record, and sport museum curator. He has also been recognized in the sporting records for his achievements as an athlete. In 1989, he helped establish Cross-Country Canada as an autonomous National Sport Organization (NSO) when it broke away from the Canadian Ski Association. Cross-Country Canada – known today as Nordiq Canada – recognized Rees as an outstanding contributor to the sport and honoured him by creating the David Rees Award in 1989.¹ He also wrote a guidebook, *Cross-country Skiing: Touring and Competition*, first published in 1975, which went through three editions and sold over 40,000 copies as a best seller.² Rees conceived of Canada's first museum of Nordic skiing, which opened in 2012 at the Canmore Nordic Centre and the Canmore Visitors Centre, and is now visited by thousands annually. More recently, Rees has been active as a Masters' competitor, participating in world loppets, along with his wife Jean Bristow. The World Masters Championships were initiated in part with his leadership and most recently were held in

¹ The David Rees Award goes to “any man or woman who has made a long-term outstanding commitment to the sport of cross-country skiing in Canada.” Rita Mingo, “Volunteers: The Lifeline for Ski Clubs Across the Country,” October 9, 2020, <https://nordiqcanada.ca/news-item/volunteers-the-lifeline-for-ski-clubs-across-the-country/>.

² “Rees and Scott Recognized by Canadian Ski Hall of Fame,” Ski Trax Magazine, accessed January 27, 2021, <http://skitrax.com/rees-and-scott-recognized-by-canadian-ski-hall-of-fame/>.

Canmore in 2022 with organizer Rees as the Chief of Competition, a reprisal of his role as Chief of Courses at the 1988 Winter Olympics.

Within the sports community, those who contribute to the growth and development of a sport are called builders. Exemplary ones contribute in ways that have far-reaching effects and create a legacy that carries on after them. Such is the case with David L. Rees. Located at the Canmore Nordic Centre, the Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing (CMNS) is an embodiment of Rees' legacy. It highlights the material culture and evolution of Nordic skiing in Canada across his lifetime. It is a representation of ski history that is also symbolic of the curator's life story as a skier and simultaneously a social space of ski culture alive today. The career stories of athletes and builders can reflect the history of not only a single sport or sports in general, but also the values, trends, and milieu of the society and times in which they exist.

The purpose of this history and sport biography is to examine David Rees, his life as an amateur Canadian Nordic skier, and how his story fits within a larger cultural context with a view to document and comprehend the history of Nordic skiing in Canada. Starting in Kirkland Lake, Ontario, Rees' skiing and career took him to Ottawa, back to North Bay, and eventually across both Canada and the world as he followed the snow, and his passion, from 1943 until the present. The history of Nordic skiing has been little studied in a Canadian context and a biographical case study of David Rees can offer insights focused on this amateur world of sport.

Focus of Inquiry and Research Questions

The objective of this study is to investigate David L. Rees as a central figure in the development of cross-country skiing in Canada, to examine the lived experiences of an elite athlete, administrator, and influential builder. It begins with a close reading of his life and times,

leading toward an examination of the CMNS that sheds light on its creator and curator David Rees, and serves as a reminder of both a life in sport and a tangible display of material culture curated by skiers in a public-facing museum located in the CNC, which is also a national training centre for Canada's Olympic Nordic ski team and headquarters of the national sport organization Nordiq Canada.

While exploring the life and contributions of David Rees within the broader context of the history of cross-country skiing in Canada, the Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing in Canmore, Alberta is considered as well. His ongoing contributions in collecting, interpreting, and demonstrating the history of Nordic skiing in Canada are noteworthy. His museum represents the single largest collection of Nordic skiing artefacts on display in this country and is unique in its location and presentation. It is a collection worthy of study. The character of this museum is representative of not only Rees' role developing cross-country skiing in Canada, but also of his character and values, expressed in curatorial strategies for exhibition. The museum itself is an excellent example of a community museum and can be compared with and contrasted to other museum types in its appearance, location, and goals.³

Broadly speaking I am interested in how individuals, societal trends, and culture interact in sport history. This thesis will focus on the following research questions. How did Nordic skiing grow as a popular sport at both the recreational and competitive levels in Canada, and how was David Rees situated in these developments during his lifetime? What factors influenced David Rees to grow up and emerge as a lifelong Nordic skier and sport builder? What conditions existed to incubate and develop a talent like David Rees? How did he, in turn, influence this

³ Murray G. Phillips, *Representing the Sporting Past in Museums and Halls of Fame* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 6.

sport system himself? How did Rees experience the material culture of skiing as social and technological changes and articulate these broader trends in his museum?

This history and sport biography examines Canadian skier David Rees, his life in Nordic skiing, and how this story fits within a larger cultural context with a view to better document and comprehend the history of Nordic skiing in Canada from 1945 to 2022. The life of David Rees can be seen as the lived experience and material culture of an amateur middle-class sportsman and volunteer in Nordic skiing. Over the course of his lifetime, he experienced the growing specialization of athletes, changing technology and equipment, the impact of training protocols and sport science, and the rise of commercialism in sport. Moreover, not only did Rees witness the growth of cross-country skiing across Canada from a localized activity to one with widespread appeal as a form of both participatory fitness and as an elite competition sport, he helped author it in Canada's ascent from a sporting underclass to a country able to hold its own on the world stage of cross-country skiing. I argue that David Rees contributed to the world of Nordic skiing not only as an amateur athlete and Canadian Olympian but also as an active and lifelong volunteer who was a builder, coach, and official, as well as a historian and museum curator of his sport. In this way, he is both an eye witness and a key architect of developments supporting the enjoyment and organization of Nordic ski sport in Canada and internationally.

My thesis explores three main aspects of the story of Dave Rees. Firstly, Rees' life in cross-country skiing spans an era of transition of sport in post-war Canada, and his story serves to illuminate and epitomise the change. Secondly, Rees' role in the maturation and enhancement of elite cross-country skiing warrants documentation. Finally, Rees' own intrinsic inclination to share his sport and educate led to the Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing, which serves as a venue for the record of Nordic skiing in Canada.

Paradigmatic and Ethical Considerations

This thesis explores the lived experience of an insider, David Rees, and his experience of a life in skiing. While advancements may make a ski lighter, or a stride longer, I am interested in exploring the human stories behind these developments and what they mean, and how such changes affected people and their association with Nordic skiing. I have undertaken a qualitative study of the topic framed as a sport history and informed by rich description. Clifford Geertz wrote about the idea of “thick description,” and his theorizing has influenced social scientists in diverse areas. Regarding an interpretive theory of culture, Geertz wrote:

Believing that...man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.⁴

Aligned with anthropological traditions of rich description stemming from Clifford Geertz and others, sociologists Gubrium and Holstein emphasize the nature and paradigmatic considerations of qualitative research:

There’s lots of talk about meaning, especially about what things mean to the people being studied. This is decidedly not talk about predictive models. Lived experience is on stage here. Rich description is the name of the game. There’s little mention of standardised measurement. Instead we hear the trials and tribulations of the ‘entre and engagement,’ ‘access and rapport.’ In contrast to descriptions of social facts and variable relations from an ‘objective’ distance - held at arm’s length so to speak - we hear the admonition to get close to people, be involved. ‘You’ve got to get out there, into the nitty-gritty, real world. Get

⁴ Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 310-323. [Citation should reference the exact page on which this quote appears.]

your hands dirty. See it up close, for yourself.”⁵

The purpose of this thesis is to record and examine the nitty-gritty, and get to know people and their truths. Just as my own beliefs and lived experience have an influence on my research, the beliefs and lived experience of my subject affect his story and how he recalls and articulates it.

My research is centred on one person, and his perceptions and interactions with the world around him, rather than scientific examinations of the natural world or statistics on human performance. In the oral history aspect of this study, I reflect on the insight of an individual who is both an expert and a participant in the subject matter. I sought to know what my source of oral history has to say about his lived experience participating in Nordic skiing in Canada after the Second World War, within the greater context of the sporting culture of Canada. Archival sources are used as evidence to support and further substantiate the various sources I weave together.

The process of oral history is collaborative, with the researcher playing a large role in the conversation. Due to the depth required in a successful oral history approach, it is not possible to hypothesize in advance what topics may come up. The interviewer does not have complete control of what is shared or the direction of conversations. Truth is constructed by individuals, reimagined, and changed even by the very act of sharing it. The researcher plays a role in creating this truth and compiling the data into a full and rich narrative.

When creating the Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing, Rees moves from the role of a collector into that of a curator. The artefacts David Rees has collected show technological advances and are valuable to an understanding of the material culture of the sport as well as its

⁵ Gubrium and Holstein cited in Andrew C. Sparkes, *Qualitative Research Methods in Sport, Exercise and Health*, (2013), 8.

physical practices. Each piece was collected and selected for a reason; moreover many of them are part of the life story of curator David Rees. From a young age, Rees was drawn to the material side of skiing, from making his own waxes to building a set of roller skis at age fifteen to building museum displays in his later years. Historian Catherine Whelan writes about how collectors drive scholarship:

Tethering objects to particular individuals both fires historical imagination and provides a powerful means of embedding them in cogent narratives. Even when not acknowledged as such, a biographical approach is a frequent go-to strategy for material culture scholars aspiring to interpret the imbrications of people and artifacts.⁶

Curatorial strategies represent various changes in the history of the sport, and I am interested in the curator's view of these change, their repercussions, and what they suggest about change at a societal level. Of further interest are the stories behind the artefacts, how they came to be in the collection, and what this information might reveal. The material culture of skiing in Canada is thereby intertwined with the social history of sport as told in the oral history stories of David Rees and a visit to his museum.

In terms of my role as a scholar, conducting in-depth oral history interviews has certain ethical considerations that must be carefully and fully considered. The collection of stories, opinions, and artefacts I wish to access represent more than a passing fancy to my source. They are in many ways a life-record, and represent a large part of one person's intellectual, physical, and emotional energy. They are also a legacy to David Rees' life in service to others. I must at all times remain cognizant and respectful of this work, and how it is treated and represented.

⁶ Ivan Gaskell, Sarah Anne Carter, and Catherine Whelan, "Collecting as Historical Practice and the Conundrum of the Unmoored Object," in *The Oxford Handbook of History and Material Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 613. [Check the page #s]

The words of the source are to have a sort of primacy in the research. The in-depth semi-structured interview style is designed to empower the interviewee. Oral history could be considered within historical methodology as a method with blue-collar roots.⁷ I see myself less as speaking for or about my participant, but being involved in a co-created narrative where I have been privileged to speak with the participant. The subject matter is of great importance to the participant, and so it will be imperative that he is consulted at appropriate times to check for the accuracy of quotes and paraphrases, themes, and meanings that emerge from the research. As this sport biography is based on oral history, there will be a high presentation of the participant's voice. Participant quotations will be plentiful, and this will necessitate diligence to make sure the context and meaning of these quotations are retained from the interviews used for my written work.

As a qualitative sport history, my scholarship aims to document, interpret, and preserve valuable micro-history as well as serve as a lens to societal change on a macro-level. The richness of the information in an oral history makes it ideal for sharing beyond academia, as it can be of interest to varied groups such as recreational skiers and athletes young and old as well as museums and institutions such as the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, the Royal Alberta Museum, the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame, and various ski museums beginning with the Canadian Nordic Ski Museum. These outcomes are aligned both paradigmatically and ethically with the axiomatic purpose of my work as a historical case study.

⁷ Linda Shopes, "Oral History and the Study of Communities: Problems, Paradoxes, and Possibilities," *The Journal of American History* 89, no. 2 (2002): p. 588, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3092177>.

Literature Review

The history of Nordic skiing is intertwined with what has come to be known as Alpine skiing, and therefore some literature crosses both disciplines. Furthermore, the history of the outdoor industry is closely related to the history of skiing in Canada, and is valuable as it reflects both a response to societal trends and cultural shifts, as well as a guiding and shaping force. Various theories of outdoor recreation can shed some light on the development of cross-country skiing and the trends and direction of this development in Canada. Like Andrew Denning's study of alpine skiing, I plan to take a cultural and environmental history approach to my topic focused on Nordic skiing and David Rees.⁸ Cultural history can examine the material culture and what its significance represents over time to various people. Material culture is a frame for seeing the emergence of the sport, from handmade to manufactured, technologically sophisticated brands of gear and skis, and, moreover connects to an environmental history of skiing consumption and sites.

Roland Huntford has written an expansive history of skiing, from prehistoric times to the modern era.⁹ He looks at the origins of skis as tools of survival around the world, from Siberia to Scandinavia. The rise of skiing as a sport, particularly in Norway, forms the start of the modern era,¹⁰ and a chapter of Huntford's book covers the history of skiing since 1945 to the present,

⁸ Andrew Denning, *Skiing into Modernity: A Cultural and Environmental History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015).

⁹ Roland Huntford, *Two Planks and a Passion: The Dramatic History of Skiing* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2008); also see E. John B. Allen, *The Culture and Sport of Skiing: From Antiquity to World War II* (Amherst, MA, USA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007).

¹⁰ Huntford, 45.

which is the same period of study as my thesis. The genesis of skate skiing is discussed, including the changes it brought about, including the mass start and ultimately Olympic inclusion in 1988.¹¹ This period marked a virtual arms race in ski design and advancement, for both classic and skate styles. Huntford notes the shift of ski manufacturing from Scandinavia to the Continent, where scientists and engineers contributed many advances in technology and spelt the end of the wooden ski in competitive cross-country racing.¹² David Rees was actively involved in the sport during this period, from competing in the 1968 Olympics in Grenoble to coaching and administrating through the subsequent decades.¹³ His observations on the rapid developments in the material culture of skiing are significant as he was in the proverbial thick of things, from starting out on pine-tarred wooden skis to studying and applying scientifically formulated waxes to scientifically-designed skis made of space-age materials.

The emergence of Canadian skiing has been described with more emphasis on downhill skiing and alpine resorts than Nordic skiing. There is a sizeable body of work dedicated to downhill ski history in Canada. Associations with mountains, national parks, and sport tourism, especially resort developments, are intertwined with the downhill ski history, especially in the West. Cross-country skiing, while now widely practiced in Canada, has not drawn the same attention of sport historians. Some of the existing work is tied into the history of early mountaineering and exploration in the Rockies and the development of the Alpine Club of

¹¹ Huntford, 381-384.

¹² Huntford, 384.

¹³ Franco Nones of Italy was the first athlete from outside Scandinavia or Russia to win an Olympic Gold when he won the 30 km race in Grenoble, the same race where Rees placed a respectable 58th. Nones raced on wooden Karhu skis, which he waxed himself.

Canada. The club's early forays into ski mountaineering and ski touring are documented in the *Canadian Alpine Journal* and related scholarly work.¹⁴ The issues and controversies surrounding land-use and environmental concerns are also present in the literature on ski hill developments such as Lake Louise and Nakiska.¹⁵ The body of literature about cross-country is not invisible, but it is smaller than its alpine counterpart.

Sport historian Bruce Kidd highlighted the importance of cross-country skiing as a cultural practice in Finnish Workers Associations and the Workers Sports Association of Canada during the interwar years, and, particularly, in northern Ontario.¹⁶ Various popular histories have focused on early skiing, such as Chic Scott's *Powder Pioneers*, which touches on backcountry ski touring in the context of the Canadian Rockies.¹⁷ Early backcountry skiers participated in a

¹⁴ For reference to ski touring, see PearlAnn Reichwein, *Climber's Paradise: Making Canada's Mountain Parks, 1906-1974* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2014), 175-178; PearlAnn Reichwein and Karen Fox, ed., *Alpine Diaries: The Mountain Adventures of Margaret Fleming, 1929-1980* (Calgary: Historical Society of Alberta, 2004); Zac Robinson, "Off the beaten path? Ski mountaineering and the weight of tradition in the Canadian Rockies, 1909–1940," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 24:10 (2007), 1320-1343; for downhill skiing, see Eddie Hunter, *The Spirit of Norquay: A History of Skiing Banff National Park's Mount Norquay* (Banff, AB: Banff Mount Norquay Ski Area, 2000); and Rodney Touche, *Brown Cows and Sacred Cows: A True Story of Lake Louise* (Calgary: Johnson Gorman, 2003).

¹⁵ Qi Chen, "Who Won the Battle of Village Lake Louise?: Park Planning, Tourism Development, and the Downhill Ski Industry in Banff National Park, 1964-1979," MA thesis, University of Alberta, 2015; Herbert G. Kariel, and Patricia E. Kariel, "Tourist Developments in the Kananaskis Valley Area, Alberta, Canada, and the Impact of the 1988 Winter Olympic Games," *Mountain Research and Development* 8, 1 (1988): 1-10; Michelle Murphy, "Alberta Ski Resorts on the Eastern Slopes and Environmental Advocacy: Conservation Politics and Tourism Developments in Kananaskis Country, 1980-2000," PhD diss, University of Alberta, 2018).

¹⁶ Bruce Kidd, *Struggle for Canadian Sport* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017).

¹⁷ Chic Scott, *Powder Pioneers Ski Stories from the Canadian Rockies and Columbia Mountains* (Calgary: Rocky Mountain Books, 2005).

sport that had not yet split between the Alpine and Nordic disciplines. In 1982 the Canadian Masters Cross-Country Ski Association, where Rees was serving as vice-president, produced a booklet of its history.¹⁸ This 28-page booklet includes an essay that describes the details of the organization, the motives of the skiers, and the goals of the organization. It also includes a Who's Who of Masters skiing in Canada at that time. Overall, no comprehensive or definitive work exists on the history of Nordic skiing in Canada and more work has focused on the early years of skiing than the postwar period.

Memoirs and biographies have profiled a few Canadian cross-country skiers. For example, William Ball, Herman "Jackrabbit" Johannsen, Sharon and Shirley Firth, and more recently Bjørger Pettersen are skiers featured in these life stories. From Quebec to the North West Territories, these skiers bracket the growth of twentieth-century cross-country skiing, also calling attention to the lives of others in the sport both renowned and lesser known.

Alice Johannsen wrote a biography of her father Herman Johannsen, who was born in Horten, Norway, in 1875 and died in 1987.¹⁹ Jackrabbit Johannsen is widely credited with bringing skiing to Canada. Although many immigrants brought with them their skiing traditions, it was Johannsen who evangelized and literally blazed the trails for those to follow, including Rees. Johannsen's lifetime spanned nearly the whole history of cross-country skiing in Canada. The book focuses on Jackrabbit as a person, with his skiing exploits and endeavours woven together into an intimate family portrait. Although Jackrabbit continued to ski beyond his one hundredth birthday, his life story is important to this thesis for the light it sheds on the formative

¹⁸ Karl Kinanen, "The History of the Canadian Masters Cross-Country Ski Association," *The History of the Canadian Masters Cross-Country Ski Association*, 1982.

¹⁹ Alice E. Johannsen, *The Legendary Jackrabbit Johannsen* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1993).

period of cross-country skiing in Canada, from before David Rees was born until the 1980s. Moreover, Jackrabbit's purist philosophy of cross-country skiing and simplicity was similar in its roots to the philosophy of skiing later articulated by Rees.

Writer Brian Powell compiled material on Johannsen to release a book to coincide with Jackrabbit's one hundredth birthday.²⁰ Although the collected memoirs in this book form "unique pictorial studies of Jackrabbit's early life through to his one hundredth birthday," the testimonials "tend to become repetitious and often reveal more about the writer's experiences than those of the individual himself" according to reviewer Anne C. Turnbull.²¹ Nevertheless, this festschrift for Johannsen, a supercentenarian who lived to be one hundred and eleven, helps situate the story of Rees and contributes some valuable background to this thesis. It does so by highlighting the individual's experiences and bringing human narratives into the historical record of the early growth and development of cross-country skiing in Canada.

Montreal athlete William Ball wrote a memoir about his early years of skiing in the 1920s and 1930s with a primary focus on the McGill Alpine skiing team. It is significant that Ball gained experience in downhill as well as the disciplines of ski jumping and cross-country skiing, something that he would have in common not only with David Rees but many skiers of an earlier era. Ball Dedicated an entire chapter to Herman "Jackrabbit" Johannsen, who wrote the book's foreword, as an influential figure in the development of cross-country skiing in Canada. Ball's memoirs provide some background and context for the foundational culture into which David Rees would later enter as a postwar skier. Ball traces the early Canadian manufacturers

²⁰ Brian S. Powell and Jackrabbit Johannsen, *Jackrabbit: His First Hundred Years* (Don Mills, ON: Collier, 1975).

²¹ Anne C. Turnbull, "Jackrabbit: His First Hundred Years," *Queens Quarterly* 83 (2) 1976: 310-11.

and importers who were bringing in ski products from Norway.²² Even at this early stage, technological developments in gear were having a major impact on the sport in the interplay between technique and equipment.²³ In the epilogue, we read, “In his exuberant lifetime, Bill Ball saw changes in skiing akin to the advance from the Sopwith Camel to the F-18.”²⁴ Ball makes clear why cross-country skiing rose in popularity in North America.

...from the mid-sixties on, the long tow lines, busy hills, crowded ski areas and expensive, always changing downhill equipment, as well as the renewed interest in health and physical fitness, resulted in an upsurge in interest in cross-country touring. The first Canadian Ski Marathon in 1967, which was led by Jack Rabbit (Herman Johannsen), brought cross-country skiing full circle back to the traditions of the *Langlauf*.²⁵

Along with changes to the form of skiing, rapidly changing equipment also played a role in this saga as recounted in Ball’s memoirs. It was advances in equipment that allowed recreational users widespread access to the sport. Although elite cross-country has been heavily influenced by the race for the latest technology, some recreational skiers can still be seen on wooden skis, three-pin bindings, or other equipment long gone from the racers’ quiver.

Cross-country skier and official Bjørger Pettersen (1942 - 2019) self-published his memoirs more recently. Like Powell’s book on Jackrabbit, it was an effort lead-authored by Pettersen himself with other skiers. He tells the story of his cross-country skiing career from his

²² William Ball, *I Skied the Thirties* (Ottawa: Deneau Publishers and Company Ltd., 1981), 94-95.

²³ Ball, 93-94.

²⁴ Tony German, Epilogue, in William Ball, *I Skied the Thirties* (Ottawa: Deneau Publishers and Company, 1981), 115.

²⁵ Ball, *I Skied the Thirties*, 114.

early immigration to Canada in 1953 from Norway and his rise to administrative success in the international world of skiing. He also includes mention of his lifelong friendship with David Rees. Pettersen first met Rees in 1961 in Jasper at the Canadian Junior Ski Championships where he placed sixth and Rees was the champion. He recalls receiving waxing tips from Rees after the race, who had used a home-cooked wax he made back in North Bay.²⁶ Pettersen focusses primarily on his time building the Territorial Experimental Ski Training (TEST) program for cross-country skiing in Inuvik, which produced some of Canada's best-ever international competitors, notably twins Shirley and Sharon Firth.²⁷ The work contains some problematic language and some insensitive assumptions about Indigenous people, and the paternal tone interferes somewhat with its message. Nevertheless, the memoir covers some key parts of the story of cross-country skiing in Canada after the Second World War and into the early twenty-first century.

²⁶ Bjørger V. Pettersen, *A Cross Country Ski Story* (Okotoks, Alberta: BPA Ltd., 2017): 36-37.

²⁷ A note about the TEST history: "Father Jean Marie Mouchet was an oblate Roman Catholic priest who came to Northern Canada in 1946, from his hometown of Malbuisson, France. He was initially posted in Telegraph Creek, BC, but then was posted to Old Crow, Inuvik, Whitehorse, and Ross River. During World War II, Mouchet served in the ski troops that patrolled the French-Italian border. In Inuvik, Mouchet organized ski outings with kids in the community with used equipment he acquired from the US Air Force in Alaska. Two workshops were held in the mid-1960s, which demonstrated a local interest and aptitude in skiing. This led to the creation of the Territorial Experimental Ski Training (T.E.S.T) program in 1967. The program's aim was to see how the sport of skiing might contribute to the motivation and success of Indigenous youth navigating a rapidly changing world. T.E.S.T caught the attention of the federal government and received funding to continue and grow the program to include many Northern communities, including the home base of the program in Old Crow, Yukon." See "Club History," Inuvik Ski Club, accessed March 3, 2022, <https://www.inuvikskiclub.ca/home/club-history>. For critical analysis, see Christine O'Bonsawin, "Failed Test: Aboriginal Sport Policy and the Olympian Firth Sisters" (MA thesis, University of Western Ontario, 2002).

Olympic cross-country skiers Sharon and Shirley Firth were Canadian National Team members not long after Dave Rees. The Firths share some similarity to Rees, in that they too started at a grassroots level with the support of a local club and later went on to find success at an elite level. Beyond this similarity, however, the story of the TEST program and those who were involved forms an important Northern story that warrants attention in any mention of the history of cross-country skiing in Canada.²⁸ Taken together the stories of individual skiers and the Olympic national team members can work toward the advancement of an overall sport history of cross-country skiing.

Aside from work on skiers themselves, other work has focused on gear such as skis, which like skiers are closely connected with the outdoors. Business historian Rachel Gross writes that the industry that supplies outdoor gear has been present from the infancy of the outdoor recreation movement.²⁹ Although cross-country skiing was a bit of a latecomer to the growth of outdoor gear sales and profits, it is not immune or insulated from the outdoor industry behemoth. Manufacturers realized early that selling back-to-nature adventure was a profitable business, and the resultant growth of the outdoor gear industry has shaped the way North Americans interact with and recreate in nature. The sharp rise in participation through the pandemic of 2020 to 2022 has laid bare the fervor of a market activated and stimulated by external forces. In this regard, I have witnessed impressively kitted-out skiers in Gore-Tex clawing their way up tracks easily

²⁸ Sally Manning, *Guts and Glory: Arctic Skiers Who Challenged the World* (Yellowknife: Outcrop, The Northern Publishers, 2006).

²⁹ Rachel Gross, "From Buckskin to Gore-Tex: Consumption as a Path to Mastery in Twentieth-Century American Wilderness Recreation," *Enterprise and Society* 19, 4 (December 2018): 826-35.

skied by all but the greenest of participants at the Canmore Nordic Centre and other cross-country destinations.

Simultaneous to the technological race that was occurring in the ski world, and the world of sport in general, was the increased support for athletic success as the measure of a nation. This was partly tied into the notion of readiness against the backdrop of the Cold War, but there was more to it. Medal counts were tied to national pride in the minds of many, and along with this was the move towards a fitter and healthier populace. In Canada, Pierre Elliot Trudeau made a promise during his 1968 federal campaign to examine sport in Canada: “Following his election in 1968, Trudeau honoured this promise and created a task force to examine the state of amateur and professional sport and explore the role of government and national and international sport organizations in promoting and developing Canadian Sport.”³⁰

The ultimate outcome of the 1969 Report of the Task Force on Sports for Canadians was an increase in funding and organization for sports, especially after 1971 when Montreal was awarded the 1976 Olympic Games.³¹ Scholars Jean Harvey and Lucie Thibault, in *Sport Policy in Canada*, outline the key dates and events of government efforts to strengthen high-level sport performance programs. The strengthening of National Sport Organizations (NSOs) through government involvement and funding had an impact on high-performance sport, while the 1971 government health initiative labelled ParticipACTION addressed the fitness of the nation’s people. Historian Victoria Lamb Drover outlines the origin story of ParticipACTION, and contrasts the current incarnation of the program and its aims with the original founding goals

³⁰ Jean Harvey and Lucie Thibault, *Sport Policy in Canada* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2013), 14.

³¹ Harvey and Thibault, 14.

during the Cold War.³² These policies and programs reflect important trends to consider, against which the biography of Dave Rees unfolds. Following the 1968 Olympic Games in Grenoble and in a subsequent speaking engagement, Rees commented on both the state of the nation's fitness and the conditions needed to produce competitive athletes.³³ Not only did Rees compete as an Olympian, he also worked to build a national sport organization to achieve results among Canadian elite and recreational cross-country skiers.

Rachel Gross builds on environmental historian William Cronon's perception of wilderness as separate from ourselves, as a place we visit, and appreciate aesthetically.³⁴ At the same time, we can observe the wilderness is now generally incomplete without a visit to the cathedrals of consumption, the outdoor outfitter stores which masquerade as a source of expert knowledge and cachet within an elite community of insiders. The evolution of the material culture of cross-country skiing is tied up in this consumption. Due to the settings the participants perform cross-country skiing in, and the inherent place-attachment of the sport, it is key to note how the cross-country ethos fits within the broader conception of outdoor recreation and the settings where it takes place.

In her article, Gross endeavours to trace the close relationship and co-evolution of the outdoor industry and the gear industry that sprang up alongside of it. Gross notes the departure

³² Victoria Lamb Drover, "ParticiP ACTION, Healthism, and the Crafting of a Social Memory (1971–1999)," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 25, no. 1 (2015): pp. 277-306, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1032805ar>.

³³ David Hall, "North Bay Olympic Competitor Raps Lack of National Support," *North Bay Nugget*, March 13, 1973.

³⁴ William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," *Environmental History* 1:1 (1996): 7-28.

from woodcraft ideals, whereby the self-sufficient outdoorsman prided himself on making his way with an axe and flint, and living from the land. Through advertising, catalogs, and a shift in the ethos of outdoor recreation, gear became as central as the skill of the individual.³⁵ Gross shows how one company, Holubar Manufacturing, was able to capture a non-commercial, family feel while marketing and selling gear. Through the “trusted voice,” retailers were able to sell legitimacy. Participants could associate with the right brands, and thereby set themselves apart.³⁶ Early manufacturers started an important tradition by becoming “experts” on what to wear, use, and buy for the outdoors. To this day, people look to the catalogs and store displays of manufacturers as a consultation of experts. Rees would later provide a counter-point to these “experts,” as he sought to quell confusion about gear and rescue naïve newcomers to cross-country skiing through waxing clinics, his guidebook, and other means of disseminating information.

The ethos of Mountain Equipment Co-op (MEC) can be traced back to Holubar's business repurposing and re-imagining of surplus gear. The non-commercial feel of the outdoor clothing industry, from the marketing and branding, right down to the retail spaces, made it possible for buyers to rationalize their purchasing behaviour. Self-righteous or merely naive enthusiasts could take part in a massive consumer industry, feeling like they were part of something else altogether. Today we see athletic companies claiming to be “by athletes...for athletes” as an attempt to gain some air of legitimacy. Holubars, REI, and MEC were early adopters of this idea of legitimacy through association. One can trace this development in the

³⁵ Gross, “From Buckskin to Gore-Tex,” 828.

³⁶ Gross, “From Buckskin to Gore-Tex,” 832.

material culture of recreational cross-country skiing, from the traditional Nordic sweaters and woolen socks of the early '70s to the racing-inspired slick garments of today.

Because of both his academic area-of-expertise and his craft as a sportsman, Rees has spent a lot of his life in the outdoors. Some of the areas he would later study and give conservation recommendations on were spots he played in as a child. His life has been closely tied to the natural environment. In his exploration of the Woodcraft and “Leave No Trace” outdoor philosophies, historian James Morton Turner notes that the early woodcraft ethos was centred around the rhetoric of antimodernism.³⁷ The gradual movement towards the leave-no-trace idea is ironically rooted in consumer culture and the commodification of outdoor gear. Although this movement was in line with the principles of ecological integrity on the level of the direct interaction with the natural world, it is in direct conflict with some of the principles that helped coalesce the movement in its infancy.

Cross-country skiing in Canada takes place in a variety of settings, from skier-set tracks in remote areas to highly artificial and carefully planned sport venues. Despite this, the trails generally allow skiers to recreate in a setting that may be perceived as natural and pristine. There is a place-attachment inherent in outdoor sports, and participating in cross-country skiing has historically been associated with nature and outdoor spaces. Setting appears to be especially significant for recreational participants. Global warming has led to the rise of indoor ski loops in Europe, on artificial snow, in concrete tunnels. However, in Canada it is still an activity that takes place outdoors. Moreover, aided by the automobile and train industries, wilderness became

³⁷ James Morton Turner, “From Woodcraft to 'Leave No Trace': Wilderness, Consumerism, and Environmentalism in Twentieth-Century America,” *Environmental History*, vol. 7, no. 3 (July 2002): 462-484.

an increasingly important site of recreation in America in the early 20th century.³⁸ The perceived ills of city life drove increased numbers of people to seek the wilderness as a refuge and a place of refreshment.³⁹ The situation in Canada was similar, as immersion in a setting perceived as wild has commonly been regarded as an antidote to the modern, urban world. Altmeyer traces the “back to nature” movement to the turn of the last century. As urbanization increased, nature was no longer seen as a place of dread and disorder, but instead a place where people sought “recreation and restoration in a closer approach to nature than can be found on the busy street...”⁴⁰ This same motivation resurfaces repeatedly in Canada, and played a role in the growth and development of cross-country skiing once technological advancements and the availability of equipment made the sport more accessible.

During the 1970s fitness boom, with the rise of ParticipACTION in Canada, we see another theme reappear. Some seventy years before ParticipACTION, Altmeyer notes that turn-of-the-century thinkers opined the decline of physical health and prescribed a remedy:

Some social critics...looked to nature for more than relief from the anxiety, boredom and general unhealthfulness association with urban living. Taking stock in the overall physical condition of Canadian manhood, they saw in Nature a way of rejuvenating the rapidly degenerating race.⁴¹

This rhetoric was similar in the 1970s. In describing the United States, Fry writes, “...the

³⁸ Turner, 463.

³⁹ Turner, 464.

⁴⁰ George Altmeyer, “Three Ideas of Nature in Canada, 1893-1914,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 11, no. 3 (1976): 23.

⁴¹ Altmeyer, 25.

1970s spawned a surprisingly tough asceticism in a society known for its indulgence of soft, easily achieved pleasure. Guilt about a bad war (Vietnam) and bad politics (Watergate) gave way to guilt about bad diet and bad physical condition.”⁴² In the 1970s in Canada, the question of national fitness came up as well, and spurred many to join the ranks turning to cross-country skiing as an antidote to modernity and a method of self-improvement through fitness. As the author of a quintessential guidebook, David Rees struck a similar chord with a retreat to nature and cross-country skiing in 1975.

The threatened and pristine wild places of Canada are a part of the manufactured Canadian identity. Marie Vander Kloet argues that MEC has succeeded in packaging this and selling it to the consumer, who is made to feel as though they are participating in an act of Canadian identity and of ecological agency through the purchase of goods from the retailer.⁴³ It is valuable to look at the marketing and sale of goods, as the evolution and availability of equipment is tied up in the history of cross-country skiing in Canada. This is especially true in Alberta. Previously hard to procure, gear became readily available in the early 1970s.

MEC has successfully blended a familiar portrayal of the wilderness in Canada as dangerous, sublime, and threatened. By intertwining this familiar picture with its retail goals, Canadians can partake of this sacrament of consuming wilderness and Canadian identity by purchasing at MEC. The position of innocence offered to the eco-consumer allows these consumers to see themselves as distinct from nature, and outside the scope of the problem they

⁴² John Fry, *The Story of Modern Skiing* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2006), 189.

⁴³ Marie Vander Kloet, “A Trip to the Co-Op: The Production, Consumption and Salvation of Canadian Wilderness,” *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, no. 39/40 (March 2009): 231–51. doi:10.7202/040831ar.

protest by claiming membership (literally and figuratively) in the MEC tribe. It is interesting to note the role of wilderness as a central part of Canadian mythology. The portrayal of wilderness as variably dangerous, sublime, and threatened is familiar to Canadians.⁴⁴ Participation in wilderness activities ties one to the nation. Cross-country skiing in Canada is part of this phenomenon.

Sports historian Annette Hofmann documented the rise in indoor skiing events in large cities in both Europe and the USA in the 1920s and 1930s.⁴⁵ This trend was a result of the tendency of societies to create events and spectacles for pleasure and recreation. Alpine and winter recreation were typically urban, and city dwellers left urban areas to draw upon the rejuvenating effects of rural spaces, but the indoor skiing events ironically brought a typically rural activity into the cities. Her article provides an interesting and pertinent commentary on the interwar rise of manufactured sport settings as I examine both rudimentary settings and highly specialized sportscares used for cross-country skiing during the postwar sport career of David Rees.

Gregory Ramshaw makes a case for the outdoor skating rink as a central icon in the formation of identity in Canada but also as a local form of community recreation.⁴⁶ The outdoor rink has become a mythologized and romanticized image, and the nostalgia with which we view the outdoor rink betrays some real aspects of the history of outdoor rinks, their management, and

⁴⁴ Vander Kloet, 235.

⁴⁵ Annette R. Hofmann, "Bringing the Alps to the City': Early Indoor Winter Sports Events in the Modern City of the Twentieth Century" in *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 29:14 (what year?), 2050-2066.

⁴⁶ Gregory Ramshaw, "Remembering the Rink: Hockey, Figure Skating and the Development of Community League Recreation in Edmonton," *Prairie Forum* 35, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 27-42.

their usage by different groups. Similarly, cross-country skiing relied on community efforts to organize winter recreation locally before it rose to claims of national identity and nature/wilderness mythologies as a Canadian sport, as will be seen later in this paper. Much of the mythology of cross-country skiing as a recreational activity centres on the idea of self-sufficiency and the freedom from expensive, planned, and artificial Alpine resorts. In actuality, most recreational skiers today never ski outside of a well-groomed, carefully planned cross-country sportscape such as the Canmore Nordic Centre.

The rise of cross-country skiing in the 1970s in the USA was part of a larger movement whereby people sought membership in a new club.⁴⁷ Fry dubs the movement “the new American Puritanism,” outlines the main reasons for the rise in cross-country skiing popularity, and follows with an account of the rise of resorts and commodification in the sport. He traces the development to the ultimate reversal of the popularity of the sport and connects that to the alienation of those who were attracted by the populist, back-to-nature counter-culture ethos of the sport in the 1970s.⁴⁸

Fry also notes how the technological advancements in gear in the 1970s made the sport more accessible both in terms of price and ease.⁴⁹ While Fry is looking at the U.S. model, many of the same trends have been noted in Canada. The consumer base in the United States allowed for a more extravagant resort system to develop there, but the commodification of cross-country skiing occurred on both sides of the border. Pundits and promoters focus heavily on the ethos of cross-country, with much of the rhetoric sharing similarities with the Nordic *friluftsliv* concept. Fry notes the irony of the

⁴⁷ John Fry, *The Story of Modern Skiing*, Ch. 10: Cross Country.

⁴⁸ Fry, 240.

⁴⁹ Fry, 193.

promotion of racing and the impacts of technology on the sport, as they stand in opposition to the initial drivers of the surge in popularity of cross-country skiing.⁵⁰ As the sport developed, it alienated those who were originally attracted to it and may have precluded others who would have been attracted to its “surprisingly tough asceticism” and held the desire to get close to nature in the way that cross-country skiing in the early ’70s promised.⁵¹

Andrew Denning has explored how middle-class tourism affected alpinism as the notions of travel and tourism ousted movement culture at the centre of skiing.⁵² Alpine and Nordic skiing disciplines come from a common root, but took different directions. Denning’s work serves this thesis as it demonstrates some of these forces. As an indicator of upper-middle-class status, the alpine ski vacation became a reality for millions and ski tourism grew exponentially. The growth of Alpine is due largely to the tourism industry and a culture of consumption.⁵³ Some of the things associated with Alpine skiing (consumption, excess, privilege) were the very things that helped push the cross-country boom in the 1970s, as people sought the freedom and simplicity of the trail.

When comparing the sources for skiing history in Canada, Alpine skiing forms by far the largest portion. This is especially true when looking for sources on Alberta. Nevertheless, some sources about Alberta were needed to round out and complete this survey of the literature. While it contains only passing mention of the CNC, David Mittelstadt’s history of the Calgary Ski Club (CSC), *Calgary Goes Skiing*, nevertheless provides some insight into cultural trends related to skiing. This includes the juxtaposition of Nordic and Alpine disciplines and cultures. Before the

⁵⁰ Fry, 203.

⁵¹ Fry, 189.

⁵² Denning, *Skiing Into Modernity*.

⁵³ Denning, 132.

advent of lifts, ski touring, alpine skiing, and cross-country were more closely related and the early history of the Calgary Ski club reflects this. Chapter 7, *Hard Times*, relates the struggles of the club in the 1990s, but notes the emergence of the CSC as a “major force in Nordic skiing in southern Alberta.”⁵⁴ The rise of track-setting allowed more skiers to take part in cross-country, as the previous club offerings had generally been difficult and technical backcountry trips. The cross-country offerings of the Calgary Nordic Ski club have expanded and contracted over time, influenced by the membership and leadership as much as by external factors.

The common roots of Alpine and Nordic disciplines within skiing mean that their early history in North America is linked. Less obvious is the way that cross-country experienced surges in participation at times as a response to the culture of Alpine skiing. Cross-country skiing has been more closely linked to the fitness movement, especially with the advent of accessible groomed trails, and to the “twigs and berries” image of outdoor pursuits. On an organizational level, differences led to the division of the Canadian Ski Association into five autonomous disciplines in 1989, an administrative divorce in which David Rees played an important role as we will see based on our interviews.

The Canmore Nordic Centre figures large in David Rees’ life and contributions to the history of cross-country skiing in Alberta. The CNC is also significant to my study because it is currently the home of the CMNS and the place where David Rees skis as a master’s level athlete. The records of Alberta Parks contain planning documents and correspondence leading up to the 1988 Olympics, where Rees was Chief of Courses. The planning literature also indicates a desire for an educational component of the purpose of the CNC, and this relate to Rees’ later work on

⁵⁴ David Mittelstadt, *Calgary Goes Skiing: A History of the Calgary Ski Club* (Surrey: Rocky Mountain Books, 2005), 209.

the museum and the Heritage Trail Signage project. The *Canmore Nordic Centre: Master Development Plan*,⁵⁵ produced in 1984, is the first document of relevance. In 1981 the Government of Alberta pledged support to the hosting of the winter Olympics in Calgary. Along with other facilities, there was a need for a cross-country skiing and biathlon venue that met international standards. The site selected was a previously disturbed coal mining site adjacent to the town of Canmore, and was named the Canmore Nordic Centre. Consultants created the Master Development Plan to address the for Olympic-calibre facilities and to create a vision for future competitive and recreational use. This plan set in motion the vision for and creation of the Nordic Centre.

In 2002 Alberta Environment and Parks released the *Bow Valley Protected Areas Management Plan*.⁵⁶ The background of this government document states that the areas in question are public lands to be maintained in “a natural state for use by the public for recreation, education, or other specified purposes.”⁵⁷ The plan outlines zoning and management actions which define the types of activities permissible within the boundaries of the protected areas. Within the Bow Valley Protected Area framework, the document mentions the creation of the Canmore Nordic Centre Provincial Park by an Order in Council in 1998. The purpose of this park was to protect the flora and fauna of the area while also facilitating the use of the area by the large numbers of recreationists. The high demand for year-round activity for both competitive and recreational athletes, and for other recreational pursuits, is noted, as is the

⁵⁵ *Canmore Nordic Centre: Master Development Plan*, Calgary: Carson-McCulloch Associates Ltd., 1984).

⁵⁶ *Bow Valley Protected Areas Management Plan*, (Canmore, AB: Alberta Community Development, Parks & Protected Areas, 2002).

⁵⁷ *Bow Valley Protected Areas Management Plan*, 1.

potential for education. The Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing founded and built by Rees fits in with the original plan, although it would not be realized for some years.

In 2010 the CNC planners released a strategic plan to ensure the continued relevance of the site, considering the creation of rival facilities in British Columbia for the 2010 Vancouver Olympics. Planners and managers had sought to bring the CNC up to international standards and to further enhance its recreational suitability. From 2004 to 2008, the Government of Alberta invested \$25.6 million into refurbishing the CNC, establishing it once again as the premier Nordic venue in Canada. Along with addressing the increase in recreational skier usage, the CNC upgrades met the higher standards necessary to host World Cup skiing and biathlon events. These upgrades made future bids for the Masters' World Cup and other races a possibility. I will examine the Canmore Nordic Centre more closely for any dimensions of planning relevant to a community museum, commemoration, and athlete like David Rees.

Methods

The principle methods of research engaged for this thesis include oral history interviews, archival research, and field research combined with historical study. Each approach is discussed below to describe the methods and process of the research project undertaken for my thesis. Additionally, I offer context to some of my research strategies as an evolving and iterative process that was undertaken during changing pandemic conditions from 2020 to 2022.

The choice of methods was driven both by my question and by a unique opportunity I had to pursue needed research. I have both a loose personal connection and a more formal connection through my advisor to the interviewee, David Rees. Archival and library research explored written sources to support oral history interviews. I also engaged in field work and observations

talking with Rees during an examination of material culture and curation at Canada's only museum dedicated to Nordic skiing and located at an Olympic legacy site in the Canmore Nordic Centre. I also immersed myself as a researcher by skiing the trails and experiencing the CNC first hand.

Oral History

Data collection involved some travel to and from Canmore, Alberta. While I began with an in-person interviewing technique and found it ideal, the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic during most of the period from 2020 to 2022 necessitated online interactions during video calls conducted on Google Meet.

Overall remote oral history interviews were conducted with participants, recorded, and transcribed for analysis. Interviews involved adult participants and were conducted by me. The interview process began with extending an email invitation consisting of the Information Letter. Initially I had planned to expand the roster of interviewees by means of non-random chain-referral and public recruitment, but pandemic-related issues and new information resulted in re-evaluation leading to a focus on the main interviewee as the prime source combined with new archival sources and online work.

After my initial archival work in Calgary and Canmore, and a visit to the CMNS and Canmore Nordic Centre, things changed with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. Not only was I unable to access my office for long stretches, but there were limitations on library access, and in-person research was suspended. Finding myself unable to travel to Canmore to conduct face-to-face interviews and artefact elicitation conversations with Rees, we conducted a series of virtual interviews. While not as natural as in-person interviews, these

became more natural as we became more comfortable with the platform. The nature of the thesis evolved and changed, as everyone adapted to the constraints of the pandemic.



Figure 1. *Tyree McCrackin (author, left) and Dave Rees (right) interacting at the Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing, Canmore Nordic Centre Day Lodge, include the date. Photograph by PearlAnn Reichwein, used with permission.*

I conducted and logged six oral history interviews, audio-recording the main participant between February 2020 and October 2021. Prior to the interview, I explained the interview and consent processes to the participant and obtained signed consent. The method by which I began this oral history consisted of interviews, with some image- and artefact-elicitation. These

methods were further extended by the introduction of valuable memorabilia and private papers provided by the interviewee.

There are some commonalities between the in-depth interview, the oral history interview, and photo-elicitation, but also some differences. Oral history is a particular kind of interview; however, the collaborative process of narrative building does not necessarily set it apart from other interview types.⁵⁸ In-depth interviews, on one hand, have a narrowly focused topic and a rigid or semi-rigid interview guide to follow. Since the goal of oral history, on the other hand, is to gather rich data; it differs in that the interview is relatively unstructured, and “the organization of the topic is far less focused.”⁵⁹ Oral history interviews focus on depth rather than breadth. The goal is not to cover every detail and date, but rather to capture the heart and soul of an individual’s story. I sought to learn about one individual’s career and life in the ski community, his experiences of change and transition, and how he views the process of change in the sport. The processes he observes may be connected to larger phenomena, and may reflect changes felt not only in the individual sporting community but our society in general. I was drawn to oral history as I decided what interview method I wanted to pursue. Depth is more important than breadth when focusing on rich descriptions of an individual’s own life story and how it is told.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy, *The Practice of Qualitative Research* (London: Sage, 2006), 132.

⁵⁹ Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 133.

⁶⁰ In my own career work counseling graduate students, we talk a great deal about networking and conversations with others as part of career management and the increasing opportunities. Some students find it hard to understand how hiring decisions are made or potential jobs discovered. A 2-page resume and a one-hour structured interview, although they certainly are common methods for screening applicants, are vastly inadequate. In my own practice as an HR professional, I have been duped and made poor hiring decisions. If all things are very nearly equal, someone looking for an employee is more likely to hire the individual they have played on a team with, sung in a choir with, or has shared a pint or two at a pub, rather than

As my interview participant, Dave Rees was invited to share stories of cross-country skiing in Canada as a collaborative way to form a narrative. I worked from an interview guide and utilized open-ended questions to act as a road map for these conversations. Because of the pandemic, following one in person interview initially in early 2020, the interviews took place via the Google Meets online platform.

Preliminary data gathering for a previous course project allowed me to test recording methods and transcription software. Transcription (where used) was conducted manually and I typically reviewed audio recordings closely to go over the material multiple times. I triangulated interviews with archival and library sources and research findings to build historical context around individual oral history stories; likewise, I aimed to use the stories to form a rich description and textured biography of David Rees. My study is a form of life story writing by which I focused on recording and commenting on Rees' lived experience of a life in sport with the objective of interpretation as well as documentation for posterity. This task is common to the biographer, who seeks to contribute to the historical record in the way that it "breathes life into dry census data and puts faces on demographic tables."⁶¹ Based on an iterative process of close reading of interviews and close listening to audio recordings, I assessed individual experiences and common themes arising from the interviews as a critical source of information for this life story. My aim was to describe and analyze the embodied experiences of Rees' life in Nordic skiing for my thesis, which is based on interview findings combined with field notes, archival,

looking at who had the higher GPA or a more rigorous academic program. This is often due to the interactions they have had with this person. In my interviewing, I want to get as close as possible to this type of setting.

⁶¹ Lloyd E. Ambrosius and Shirley A. Leckie, "Biography Matters: Why Historians Need Well-Crafted Biographies More Than Ever," in *Writing Biography Historians and Their Craft*, ed. Lloyd Ambrosius (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 1-27.

and library sources. I also laid the ground for future presentations, publications, and shared knowledge mobilization. Future interview analysis is possible given the nature of oral history and the interviews are, in part, intended as documentation for posterity. I plan to deposit the interviews in an appropriate location such as the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies or the Canadian Olympic Sports Hall of Fame and Museum. In this way, the recordings themselves are also a valuable outcome of the project.

A careful plan was essential due to the logistical complexity of gathering interview material and its subsequent analysis. During interviews, I employed primarily non-directive questions. These types of questions allow the interviewee to determine the direction of the conversation towards what they feel is worthy.

The techniques used in eliciting oral histories share the following commonalities: questions are open-ended and person and experience centred, and the questions aim to elicit rich detail on the topic being studied and involve active listening. Opening questions can be extremely general and open-ended, leaving it to the interviewee to direct the interview.⁶²

The interviewee was empowered and shared agency with the interviewer over the direction of the interview. Note taking was important during interviews, to jot down points for consideration, make observations about body language or facial expression, and identify sections of the recording for transcription. Conflicts, contradictions, and the presence of metanarratives were noted during the interview itself but were explored more fully upon secondary review of the recordings. Data management partly included the recording and transcribing of some interviews. Recording interviews allowed me to go back and re-listen and check for missed points,

⁶² Julia Chaitin, "Oral History," in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2008): 584.

unobserved nuances in the conversation, and make note of my own influence on the direction of the conversation. I was cognizant of the need to constantly check my commitment to “understanding meaning from the perspective of those being interviewed.”⁶³

Archival Research

I also made use of the University of Alberta Library collections to search for related books, journals, and documents. Data collection began with pilot archival work in previous directed studies projects led by my supervisor, archival work and some travel to Canmore and Calgary, Alberta, in 2019 and 2020. My preliminary scoping exercises sought to find archival fonds relevant to the topic of Dave Rees and, more generally, cross-country skiing history in Canada. I contacted and accessed the archives of the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame (CSHoF) housed at Canada Olympic Park, Calgary, in January 2020. There were fonds containing materials on the history of cross-country skiing in Alberta. The purpose of the visit was to do a general survey of the finding aids and materials available, and gain some familiarity with both staff and procedures on my first visit to an archive for research. I was able to consult materials and later order some copies as the pandemic closed the opportunity for in-person visits.

The CSHoF fonds cover the growth of Nordic skiing in Alberta from its grassroots to the current era. I sought and read references to David Rees and his role in the 1988 Winter Olympics as Chief-of-Courses in various newsletters and other unpublished material. The newsletters of Cross Country Canada were of particular interest, with their *President's Message* authored by Dave Rees. Some of these same newsletters would be seen again in Dave Rees' personal files.

⁶³ Sharlene Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy, *The Practice of Qualitative Research* (London: Sage, 2006): 143.

The sport organization file containing the Nordic information was useful, and provided some indication of how the CNC fit within the larger picture of Nordic skiing in Canada, especially in terms of the governing body Cross Country Canada. The tone of some of the promotional material provides a look into the attitudes and ideas behind the push for Nordic skiing development. The material here is relevant to this study as Rees served as president for Cross Country Canada, and had a hand in crafting plans for the sport in Canada.

I also visited the City of Calgary Archives with my supervisor in January 2020. The purpose of this visit was to become familiar with the procedures, finding aids, and fonds of the City of Calgary Archives, and to perform a scan of material associated with the Canmore Nordic Centre and the Calgary 1988 Winter Olympics, where Rees was Chief-of-Courses.

The fonds at the City of Calgary are focused almost entirely on the Olympic Games and the lead-up to 1988; the archives themselves were created as an Olympic archive. The City of Calgary archives only developed afterwards, in the space allotted to the Olympic archives. Previously, the Glenbow Archives housed most of Calgary's archival material, which is primarily focused on institutional planning and promotion of the Games. The archives provided broader institutional context for this study of Rees and his role in Calgary, but also underscored my sense of the need for more oral history research with individuals such as Rees who are able to speak to their experience as volunteer organizers of the 1988 Olympics at the Canmore Nordic Centre. Their experience had the potential to complete the picture of the Canmore Nordic Centre as a legacy site, not just in terms of the events that went on there, but for the way in which so many people in the skiing community participated in various capacities.

The emergence of rare private papers loaned to me by David Rees and the opportunity to review them for analysis added to my iterative research plans and enriched my primary sources

with unexpected finds. These private archival materials augmented the interview data, along with other sources, and were contextualized with scholarly works on sport and Canadian history as well as museums. I gained context through Rees' personal files and was able to cross-reference them with other archival material gathered earlier.

Partway through the research process, I shifted my focus from interviews back to written sources. Much of the rare archival material in my thesis study was drawn from the personal papers and files that Rees collected and retained over some sixty-five years. Access to these files, including scrapbooks of newspaper clippings and boxes of memorabilia (e.g. medals), made it possible to cross-reference rare archival sources with unique material derived from oral history interviews and other sources. Combining oral history and archival primary sources also offered more depth and rich description for study.

Field Methods and Observations

The presence of artefacts and historical photographs in the Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing make it worth examining photo- and artefact-elicitation methods in more detail. In photo-elicitation, pictures form a focal point and springboard for further inquiry into a subject whereas in artefact-elicitation, objects serve this same purpose. When analysing data during a photo elicitation project, Mills and Hoebner noted that “initially the interviews were transcribed without a connection to the photographs. However, we found the transcripts lacked context unless we viewed the corresponding photographs at the same time.”⁶⁴ Interviewing Rees, I referenced selected photos and objects in the museum on our first meeting, hoping that the pieces

⁶⁴ Cath Mills and Larena Hoerber, “Using photo-elicitation to examine artefacts in a sport club: Logistical considerations and strategies throughout the research process,” *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 5 (1): 16.

selected would elicit rich responses from the interviewee. The rationale for this approach comes from the practical reality that he has talked about each of these artefacts many times before, and is therefore well practiced in presenting them. The presence of physical objects, in contrast to photographs, brings more of our senses into play, and by involving a greater portion of the human brain, can elicit more detailed and vibrant recollections.⁶⁵ In developing rapport with the interviewee, these artefacts also form valuable “conversation pieces,” which can help speed up the development of a level of comfort felt by the interviewer and interviewee.

In February 2020, I was able to meet David Rees in person at the CNC and at this time he gave me a tour of his museum. We were able to communicate about the items in the displays. To provide context to transcripts, some photographs for reference were included in conjunction with the jotted notes taken during my interview process. Some of these notes are incorporated in my thesis. Shortly after this valuable visit to the museum, pandemic conditions restricted access to the museum inside the Canmore Nordic Centre leading me toward other methods of investigation. Subsequently, I returned to the museum and the CNC for additional field work and observations in 2021 and 2022, revisiting the collection, taking photographs, and observing both the museum and Rees’ work during the Master’s World Cup. These methods helped add rich detail and bring to life the story of Rees’ early life and skiing.

My study brings to light the story of Dave Rees as an athlete who lived and witnessed the changes in cross-country skiing as both a practitioner and architect of the sport in Canada and internationally. It focuses on a rich description and biography of his life in sport based in oral

⁶⁵ Joshua Foer, *Moonwalking with Einstein: The Art and Science of Remembering Everything* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011).

history, archival research, and field work. The goal of biography is an attempt to “interpret the subject’s life so that the personality of that individual is evoked. When that happens, according to Frank E. Vandiver, “a living being walks off the pages.”⁶⁶ The structure of the thesis follows Rees through the trajectory of his lifespan and various roles. Starting with the story of his early life in Chapter Two, the study shifts to discuss his days as a senior competitor and the 1968 Winter Olympics in Grenoble, France in Chapter Three. Chapter Four examines Rees’ entry into coaching and administrative roles as he developed as a sport organizer. Rees’ involvement in the 1988 Winter Olympics is significant, and also foreshadows his commitment to the site and its legacy. Chapter Five chronicles his academic life, as a geologist and educator, and the authoring of his best-selling cross-country ski book. Rees’ involvement in the Masters ski movement and his own competitive and participatory endeavours form Chapter Six, and Chapter Seven is a discussion of the Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing in Canmore. The sport biography of Dave Rees begins with snow and a ski club in Northeastern Ontario, and a three-year-old child taking his first unsteady steps on a pair of skis.

⁶⁶ Ambrosius and Leckie, “Biography Matters,” 3.

CHAPTER TWO

Early Life and Skiing

Just as people are drawn to sports that suit their bodies, the sports themselves shape the physiques of participants. When I met Dave Rees for our first interview, it was clear that he was a cross-country skier. His easy and efficient movements along with the glide and spring of his step gave him away. So too did the almost imperceptible hunch of his shoulders, shaped from a lifetime of skiing in a traditional “Finnish” style, leaned forward and slightly stooped. Although their bodies differ greatly, the faces of cross-country skiers bear a resemblance to those of wrestlers – weathered, rough, and scarred, albeit from frostbite and sun rather than knees, hip bones, and head butts. Dave’s face is that of a skier, but still retains a youthfulness that belies his age. His graceful and easy manner marked him as a person who could be a leader because he exuded quiet calmness and an ability to instill trust. His skiing pedigree and his commitment to service enabled him to become a key figure in the development of cross-country skiing in Canada.

When examining the life and contributions of those who have given their lives to a singular passion, it is interesting to note that the subjects are not always able to articulate the reasons why. Perhaps they don’t know, perhaps the impetus is beyond words, and perhaps they do not wish to delve into pop psychology or simplistic reductions of their motivations. When asked what led to his lifelong passion for Nordic skiing, Rees responded simply, “I don’t know. Perhaps I’m bent.”⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Dave Rees, interview by author, May 5, 2021.

From Kirkland Lake to North Bay

On further reflection, Dave Rees notes that it was the ready opportunity to ski that made a huge difference during his life. Born during World War II to Canadian parents in Barnard Castle, England, the young Rees was soon returned to the bait that would draw him throughout his life: snow. It was on the snow of Kirkland Lake, Ontario, that Rees first stood on skis, just shy of his third birthday.⁶⁸ As his young mind discovered hands, feet, arms and legs, one might imagine him discovering skis already there and assimilating them into his self-image, not as an addition to but as an extension of his body.

Both his father and uncle were skiers, and he was surrounded by transplanted Finns in northern Ontario, with their skis, jumps, and saunas.⁶⁹ His father Gordon Llewellyn Rees had competed in the Dominion Ski Championships in Banff in 1940, prior to going to fight in the Second World War. Rees' father worked in both drilling and surveying at various times, and he did not have time to pursue his passion for skiing as much after WWII. He did continue to ski recreationally when possible, but his days as a racer were gone. Dave had a sister as well, but polio prevented her from skiing.⁷⁰ The opportunity to ski was there as a young boy, and Rees took it.

If one were to create a recipe for a future national team skier, one could scarcely do better than looking at the ingredients in Rees' childhood. When discussing his earliest memories of

⁶⁸ “The Canadian Ski Hall of Fame Le Temple De La Renommée Du ...” Accessed April 14, 2020. [http://skimuseum.ca/bios/Rees_Dave FR.pdf](http://skimuseum.ca/bios/Rees_Dave_FR.pdf). [site inactive]

⁶⁹ Lindström Varpu, *The Finns in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1985).

⁷⁰ Dave Rees, interview by author, May 26, 2021.

skiing, Rees commented, “I was introduced to it in Kirkland Lake, after we came from England. I’ve got a picture of me in my first winter in Canada, and I’m on skis.”⁷¹



Figure 2. *Dave Rees, Kirkland Lake, 1945.* Photograph courtesy of Dave Rees, used from source with permission.⁷²

⁷¹ Dave Rees, interview by author, May 10, 2021.

⁷² Dave Rees, “Skiwear and How It Has Evolved,” Canadian Museum of Nordic Sport, accessed December 17, 2021.
<http://nordicskimuseum.sixmilesourdough.com/equipment/clothing/skiwear-and-how-it-has-evolved/>.

After his family moved to North Bay, Ontario, Rees found the community and club support to help him continue his journey.

When we moved to North Bay, the club there was firmly established. There was a bit of a structure there, in terms of competition, and they had at that time four jumping hills. And I had a group of friends who were also into skiing. We didn't live close by, but we all skied out to the club. There was a trail out from town, and we always used to ski out. That is where we spent our time. It was kind of like hanging out. Instead of hanging out at the pinball machine at the corner store, we hung out at the ski club...it was kind of a social thing.⁷³

Although admittedly not overly aggressive or outwardly competitive, it was ironically the taste of early competition that spurred Rees on in racing. When asked about his introduction to competitive skiing, Rees observed that:

...first of all, when you are that young you start sliding around on your butt and fooling about, but for some reason I got into a competition when I was quite young, maybe six or seven, because the ski club...had little races down through a few flags and that was kind of exciting. It gave me a challenge to do it better than someone else.⁷⁴

Being a skier in North Bay in the 1950s meant you were an all-around skier. Rees explains that the club he grew up in was four-way, meaning that members took part in four different disciplines; slalom, downhill, cross-country, and jumping. They had ski jumps, a rope-tow lift, and cross-country trails: "We all did the four events. Most of my friends weren't too keen on the cross-country. We did the slalom, downhill, jumping, and cross-country. There was a club championship, and they gave our ribbon in each event."⁷⁵

⁷³ Rees, interview, May 10, 2021.

⁷⁴ Dave Rees, interview by author, February 19, 2020.

⁷⁵ Rees, interview, May 10, 2021.

There were several elements present that made the situation in North Bay ideal for producing a high-level athlete, not the least of which was the sense of fun and play. Rees admits that his friendships and self-directed play both centred on skiing, saying “We used to ski as kids, we had five or six close friends. We used to ski jump all the time and cross-country. And downhill, you know. We would create jumps on our alpine skis. We got into trouble a lot. It was a fun environment.”⁷⁶

In 1955, the young Rees took his first road trip as a skier, travelling 125 km to Huntsville to represent the Laurentian Ski Club and compete in cross-country races, followed by a trip north to Kirkland Lake later in the season where he competed in all disciplines.⁷⁷ It was the start of a pattern of travel for competition that continued throughout his life and well into his seventies.

The *North Bay Daily Nugget*'s sports editor Rolly Ethier gave good press to the Laurentian Ski Club skiers, and he frequently recognized Rees as an up-and-comer to watch. After a meet in Collingwood in 1957, he reported on Rees' potential:

[Coach Alex] Stevenson tabs 13-year-old Dave Rees as a youngster who should be a bright light along the skiing horizon for a long time to come. Rees romped off with the over-all Nordic championship, finishing with the highest point-total of any competitor at the meet, despite his spotting nearly all rivals several years in age. He picked up 103.5 out of a possible 110 points to earn the deserving tribute of everyone.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Rees, interview, February 19, 2020.

⁷⁷ Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 2, Ski Clippings 2, 12.

⁷⁸ Rolly Ethier, Sport Static, *North Bay Nugget* (n.d.), in Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 14.

In 1957 Rees and his teammates made a trip to Fort William by train. It was here that Rees would jump over 100 feet for the first time. Unfortunately, he panicked on the landing and fell, resulting in no score.⁷⁹ The same year saw young Rees nearly run afoul of the strict laws of amateurism, which prohibited racing for monetary prizes in athletics. These rules were rooted in the past, whereby organizers attempted to control who could and could not compete in sport in Canada. Men of the middle- and upper-classes had sought to ensure the social rather than athletic aspects of sport.⁸⁰ The hangover from this attitude was the fact that Canadian athletes were not well supported, and that especially apparent in smaller sports like skiing. Most athlete support came from the local clubs who helped fund their prospects' journeys to compete and represent their club or town. Rees travelled to the Temagami Winter Carnival, and won the four-mile senior ski race and appeared in the local newspaper proudly holding the outboard motor given to the winner. One official wondered if this constituted "professionalism." This concern quietly faded, and Rees spent many hours trolling Trout Lake on a homemade boat, powered by his trophy.⁸¹

The National Stage: 1958 Canadian National Championships

Dave's competition at the National stage began that year as a 14-year old. He would go on to win the Canadian Juniors twice and placed second twice. However, it was his first trip to

⁷⁹ Rees, interview, May 5, 2021.

⁸⁰ Don Morrow and Kevin B. Wamsley, *Sport in Canada: A History* (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2013), 68, 72-74.

⁸¹ Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 16; Rees, interview by author, September 19, 2021.

the Canadian Junior championships in 1958 that was perhaps the most memorable, albeit for unfortunate reasons. Dave qualified as a member of the Ontario team to travel across the country to the Nationals in Rossland, British Columbia, which would be his first time skiing in the mountains. The North Bay Collegiate Institute Board voted unanimously in favour of donating a sum of \$50 to support Rees in his trip across the country, which had an overall cost of about \$300.⁸² The journey to Rossland was an ordeal. After loading their gear on a train bound for the West, Dave and his Ontario teammates drove from North Bay down to Toronto. From there, they flew to Windsor. A taxi ride to Detroit was followed by subsequent flights to Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Billings, Montana. They transferred planes again for a flight to Spokane, Washington, where they finally boarded a bus for Rossland, British Columbia.⁸³

The weather in Rossland had been suspect for a week or so, with rain, high daytime temperatures, and ice formation on the slopes overnight. The Ontario team looked at the mountains for the first time and saw that these slopes were not the Ontario hills they were used to. Heavy wet snow made the runs tough to ski. After being reunited with their gear, the team set about getting some training runs in. On his training run, Dave fell; “I knew my leg was broken. I heard it break. I left a trail of toques and gloves and things.”⁸⁴ Despite his teammates’ assessment that he would “be just fine,”⁸⁵ x-rays revealed a broken leg. Dave sat for three days in bed, with the broken bones grinding on one another, while waiting for the swelling to subside so his leg

⁸² Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 15.

⁸³ Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 16; Rees interview, September 19, 2021.

⁸⁴ Rees, interview, May 26, 2021.

⁸⁵ Rees, interview, May 26, 2021.

could be set and casted in plaster. As he sat there, a replacement from Ontario made the journey to take his spot at the Nationals. Don Bethune from the Sudbury Nickel Teen Ski Club was flown in.⁸⁶ When the leg was finally casted and the grating bones set four days later, on his birthday, it was the best present Dave said he had ever received.⁸⁷

Dave got one of only three pairs of crutches in town that day as he left the hospital. This was grossly inadequate as the combination of ice and wet snow on the course left the field with a total of twelve competitors breaking bones, including Dave's replacement.⁸⁸ Another of Dave's teammates was awarded a re-run after a dog ran across the course while he skied. On his re-run, he fell and broke his leg. Out of the six skiers from Ontario, four finished with broken bones and in need of crutches. With only one pair between them, the journey home was almost comical. To cross the tarmac to the plane, one member would go halfway, and the crutches would be shuttled back to the next invalid. This crutch relay continued until all had boarded. The idea that young men, any of whom would need to rely on their bodies to make a living, were willing to risk such injury, leaves many questions. There was no monetary gain possible. Did the ideals of competition and the chance at some fleeting glory among young men play a role? The technology of binding systems with no release feature played a role in the accidents but so did the race organizers. Officials had considered the safety of the course in the days leading up to the

⁸⁶ "Sudbury Skier Replaces Rees," n.d., in Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 24; "N. Bay Skier Injured; Can't Enter Tourney," n.d., in Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 24

⁸⁷ Rees, interview, May 26, 2021.

⁸⁸ Skier Don Bethune, with his leg still encased in plaster, would die that spring by drowning, along with his father and sister who all perished when their boat capsized while fishing on Lake Wahnapiatae, see "Ontario Deaths," *The Ottawa Citizen*, June 9, 1958, 4.

competition, but it was decided that “no matter what the weather is or how the condition of the snow is, the championships will be run off Saturday and Sunday.”⁸⁹

A Community of Support

As the young David Rees grew older and continued competing in downhill, slalom, cross-country, and jumping, supportive adults and members of the Laurentian Ski Club became an important source of support. The manager/coach of the ski club allowed skiers to pay off the necessary purchase of new skis in installments and help locate used gear. He also drove the competitors to races in a station wagon, with up to twenty pairs of skis strapped to the roof.⁹⁰ Alex Stevenson, member of the North Bay Hall of Fame, was involved in the lives of the young skiers in North Bay in a manner that foreshadowed Rees’ own commitment to others. Stevenson was primarily a ski jumper, although suffering six broken legs along the way certainly interfered with his own career. Stevenson inherited his father’s smoke shop in town, and it was here that the young skiers could find the equipment that they needed sold out of the back by Alex. The “Skiers’ Shop” was only part of his commitment to the Club, as Stevenson also helped manage and coach, and regularly drove the skiers to competitions.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Moist Weather Bothers Ski Officials, *Trail Times*, February 25, 1958, 4.

⁹⁰ Rees, interview, February 19, 2020.

⁹¹ North Bay Sports Hall of Fame Inductee. Accessed June 25, 2021.
<http://www.northbaysportshalloffame.ca/Inductee.aspx?ID=243>.



Figure 3. *Original location of Alex Stevenson’s smoke shop in North Bay, where he also sold skis and equipment. Photograph courtesy of Dave Rees.*

The idea of small retail businesses run by and for members of clubs and serving the community was common, persisting until retailers realized the potential to make money. In the late 1960s, equipment was still hard to find for the Calgary Ski Club in Alberta: “In those days, according to Marion and Bob Wooden, two of our long-time members, “the only place one could buy cross-country ski equipment was in the basement of Willie and Bernie Mason’s home or at Paul Hahmo’s machine shop.”⁹²

⁹² Ranier Knopff, “*Foothills Nordic Ski Club: Calgary, Alberta,*” January 1, 2000. <http://www.ccski.com/Membership/Grant-Resources/Club-Stories/Foothills-Nordic-Ski-Club--Calgary,-Alberta.aspx#.XLpPhS8ZNQJ>

Increased popularity brought interest from sports retailers and ski manufacturers, who sought to capitalize on new and emerging markets. This market appears to have been a response to the 1970s boom in cross-country skiing in Canada. Within a few short years, gear was available not only at ski shops, but at sporting goods stores and major department stores. By 1979 Sears had ski shops in nine of its locations in Alberta, and Woodward's advertised itself as "Your One-Stop Cross-Country Ski Place!"⁹³ The boom years brought an end to the DIY ethos for provision exemplified by Alex Stevenson's shop.

After breaking his leg in Rossland, Rees came back with a vengeance. The *North Bay Nugget* sports page reported on his training progress before the snow flew the next season in 1958:

Rees whom coach Alex Stevenson says could be Canada's top junior skier (he's only 15) suffered a double fracture of the leg last season, just as he was getting ready to participate in a big meet... The leg may hamper him this winter, and he hasn't got the final okay from his doctor, but he's hoping to give it the big try, and jolly good luck to him!⁹⁴

Rees went on that season to win both the Junior Jumping and Cross-country titles at the Laurentian Ski Club in North Bay. A strong effort at the Ontario Junior Championships led to his selection for the Northern Ontario Junior Team, which competed in Collingwood at the Canadian Junior Championships from February 13 to 15, 1959. That team won the Canadian Junior Ski Championships that year, with Rees finishing second in cross-country, second in the Nordic, and fourth in the jumping.⁹⁵ He nearly swept all events in the Interscholastic competitions, and the

⁹³ Jack Macki, *A Guide to Alberta Cross-Country Ski Trails* (Edmonton, Alta.: Alberta Division, Canadian Ski Association, 1979): 40 and 96.

⁹⁴ Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 27.

⁹⁵ Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 28-9; 33.

sports page reported that “No junior skier has ever compiled such a record, and all this following a recovery from a broken leg the previous year. North Bay is proud of Dave Rees, a young master of the wooden blades, who has accomplished great things and seems destined to accomplish more.”⁹⁶

Dave Rees continued his winning ways through the 1960 ski season, and Alex Stevenson’s excitement over his prospects continued to soar. Stevenson knew what a talent he had on his team, and the *North Bay Daily Nugget* editorialized prophetically after quoting Stevenson:

“This boy is potential Olympic material,” he [Stevenson] says about the North Bay Youngster. Alex may not just be over-exuberant, either. Dave is big, strong, and willing to work. With two more years of junior action left, he could improve immensely. Folks around these parts will be pulling for Dave to do many big things with the wooden blades before he hangs them up.⁹⁷

The Winter Olympics were an amateur sport pinnacle for Nordic skiers in the 1960s and this understated prophecy came to pass. Not only did Rees go on to compete in the Olympics, he certainly did do “big things,” just as he continues to today, some sixty-odd years on, with no intentions of hanging up “the wooden blades.”

As athletes advance to an elite level, gauging skill against higher-level competitors and being exposed to greater challenges is the path to progression. Stevenson had spoken of getting Rees into some U.S. competitions, and in 1960 he entered the United States National Junior Nordic Ski Championships in Ishpeming, Michigan. Here Rees managed a fourth-place overall

⁹⁶ Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 33.

⁹⁷ Rolly Ethier, Sport Static, *The Daily Nugget*, February 10, 1960, 16, in Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2.

finish.⁹⁸ In his senior year of high school, Rees was crowned the 1961 Canadian junior champion in cross-country and Nordic combined in competitions held in Jasper, Alberta.⁹⁹ After commenting on Rees' work ethic and Alex Stevenson's relentless championing of his protégé, the sports writer Rolly Ethier picked up on Rees' personality, stating that the young man was a "modest and self-critical type."¹⁰⁰ According to newspaper reports, the competition for Rees was always against himself and his previous efforts, rather than an attempt to best the field:

...Dave wasn't completely satisfied with his effort even in victory. He won the cross-country by a 27-second spread over his nearest rival. "I should have made a faster time," explains Dave. "Somehow I misjudged the course as to the right kind of wax for my skis." The Jasper course was over approximately six miles and is probably tougher on a competitor than the three-mile long distance race of the type that Toronto's Bruce Kidd runs.¹⁰¹

Dave Rees was indeed an amateur athlete contemporaneous with long-distance runner Bruce Kidd, both born in the 1940s and Canadian Olympians in the 1960s. Moreover, Rees' reference to waxing points to how athletes were expected to be their own wax technicians in this era. In Rees' story one is constantly reminded of the tangible and sensory elements of his sport. As we will see in Chapter Eight, the CMNS is the manifestation of this storytelling as the museum reveals his biographical past. Waxing and caring for equipment was part of the athlete's knowledge and skill set.

⁹⁸ Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 36.

⁹⁹ Rolly Ethier, "Cross-Country Champ Hasn't Time to Relax," Sport Static, *Daily Nugget*, March 1, 1961, in Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 36.

¹⁰⁰ Ethier, "Cross-Country Champ Hasn't Time to Relax."

¹⁰¹ Ethier, "Cross-Country Champ Hasn't Time to Relax."

By the time he was a senior in high school, Rees had generated interest from several universities, including the prestigious Ivy League school Dartmouth University, which boasted one of the best ski teams in the United States.¹⁰² Soon after winning the Canadian title in Jasper, Rees was preparing to head to the US Junior National Nordic Championships at Lake Placid, New York, in an attempt to improve his finish from the year prior in Ishpeming.¹⁰³ Rees had some decisions to make about where he would study and where he would ski. The way things would unfold, he chose to stay in Canada and begin university in Ottawa. From a childhood in North Bay to a distinguished high school and junior sports career, Rees was climbing the ranks of elite sport toward the national team, varsity success, and the Olympics.

¹⁰² Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 38.

¹⁰³ Ethier, "Cross-Country Champ Hasn't Time to Relax".

CHAPTER THREE

Senior Racer and Olympian

Pursuing higher education, Dave Rees chose to attend Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario. He had interest from recruiters at US schools, such as Dartmouth and St. Lawrence, but the financial burden of being of a foreign student seemed too great to him. Scholarships would take care of tuition, but living expenses made international study unfeasible. Dave commented that he “saved \$900 from three years of summer jobs while in high school, and \$465 went to tuition, etc., on my first day at Carleton. I would not have survived in the US on so little money! I could hitchhike to Carleton and later drive my 1949 Austin A40...gas was cheap and \$2 got me to Ottawa!”¹⁰⁴

He left behind the talent incubator of North Bay and the Laurentian Ski Club, and continued to work. Coach Alex Stevenson admitted in that fall of 1961 that Rees would be missed, but he continued to support the talent he had trained through his early development.¹⁰⁵ There was no doubt that Rees intended to continue to ski after moving to Ottawa. There was no official club at the school, but he could train and compete with the Ottawa Ski Club; furthermore, the region was prime for cross-country skiing and significant snowfall. Prior to the arrival of snow, Dave trained on his own by running laps. He was approached by a cross-country runner, and soon after became a member of the varsity track team. When the snow flew, some of the runners returned the favor and, out of this union, Carleton formed a varsity cross-country ski

¹⁰⁴ Dave Rees, email to author, November 12, 2021.

¹⁰⁵ Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 42.

team, which he described a “pretty rag-tag.”¹⁰⁶ During the 1961-1962 season, Rees appears in the records as skiing primarily for the Ottawa Ski Club. He was still a junior, and he dominated the competition all season in meets around Ontario and Quebec.



Figure 4. *Rees soaring at Whistler Mountain Ski Hill, 1961.* Here, he is competing in the 1961 Canadian Junior Championships in Jasper National Park, Alberta. Photograph courtesy of Dave Rees.

¹⁰⁶ Rees, interview, May 26, 2021; Rees, email, November 12, 2021.

A Cross-Country Specialist

Despite success in all four disciplines, Rees' specialty eventually became cross-country skiing. When asked why this event became his primary focus, Rees points out one of the common reasons many cite for choosing the sport in the first place – accessibility. He said "...it just seemed like I could train in the dark or whatever. And it was a lot easier to maintain that discipline. I was invited to go with the Gatineau Alpine Ski Team as well. But I just didn't have time to do everything... You could ski in the park at night if you had to."¹⁰⁷

Ski jumping was hard to maintain as a discipline as well. Rees describes packing the landing hill for hours and then getting three or four jumps in before darkness hit. It was a whole day's commitment, and so when he went to university in Ottawa, he did not have enough time to practice ski jumping. Nonetheless he still managed to be top three in the country in jumping and won the Canadian Nordic Combined Championship three times. However, the ease of access and lower expenses associated with cross-country won out over the other disciplines.¹⁰⁸ Fewer external factors separated the athlete from his craft, and Rees could control the variables surrounding scheduling and training.

In Ottawa Rees lived a Spartan existence. He described his living arrangement: "Room and board with a family was \$65 per month, and with little food... After my Wednesday night class, I used to buy a brick of ice cream for 35 cents to up my calorie intake. I eventually survived by dealing skis, buying and then selling them for a little more. What a shyster,

¹⁰⁷ Rees, interview, February 19, 2020.

¹⁰⁸ Rees, interview, February 19, 2020.

eh!!(?)”¹⁰⁹ Clearly the act of simplifying his skiing pursuits, paring down his expenses, and selecting the event that he was most suited for were good choices for Rees.

In early 1962, Rees was fêted regularly in the *North Bay Nugget*, despite living in Ottawa. He was the first North Bay athlete to win a Canadian Championship, and since that win in Jasper the previous year, he had been amassing a winning record. The hometown boosters were excited, especially with the Winter Olympics only two years away and Rees a promising contender for the national team and international competition. It seemed like his trajectory was set, with the Olympics and elite competition as a destination.

At the rate he’s been mopping up with the ski glory down Ottawa way, he appears to have an excellent chance of creating history in the near future, 1964 to be exact. That’s the next Olympic year and Rees appears to have all the necessary equipment to be one of Canada’s Nordic and cross-country representatives on the next national ski team.¹¹⁰

The lack of time spent on jumping did not stop Rees from winning the Canadian Junior Nordic Combined title in 1962. He managed a tenth-place finish in jumping and won the cross-country race in Port Arthur to be crowned Canadian Champion for the second time in a row.¹¹¹ At the Senior Nationals the same year at Camp Fortune, Quebec, in the Gatineau Hills near Ottawa, Dave was seventh in the nation. Alex Stevenson, forever a booster of his former protégé, noted that Rees placed better than four of the Senior National Team skiers at the event.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Rees, email, November 12, 2021.

¹¹⁰ Rolly Ethier, “Olympic Prospect is Dave Rees,” *North Bay Nugget*, January 18, 1962, in Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2.

¹¹¹ Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 51.

¹¹² Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 51.

Cross-country skiers must seek out ways to keep up and even improve conditioning in the months without snow. As a fifteen-year-old, Dave had crafted a pair of homemade roller skis for dryland training that he had invented himself and are now on display in the CMNS. He was also an avid cross-country runner, competing for Carleton. This dry-land training would continue for the rest of his life, as he became a marathoner, competing in such races as the Boston Marathon and a race on Baffin Island. In the fall of 2021, Dave was still skiing, training daily on Frozen Thunder before the first snowfall in Canmore.¹¹³ Preparing for the 1962-1963 season, Dave Rees took part in a dry-land training camp at Camp Fortune in Ottawa to prep for ski season. Dave was getting ready for his first season of senior competition by “running, sprinting, taking long walks, chopping wood, etc., as part of a general physical build-up, something similar to the type of preparation undertaken by boxers readying for a championship bout.”¹¹⁴

An Olympic Dream: 1968 Grenoble Olympics

Going to the Olympic Games was always a goal for Rees as he skied his way up the ranks. He recalled walking home from Boy Scouts in about 1956, down a darkened street in downtown North Bay. There was a television set in a store window, which was a novelty itself. The 1956 Olympics were showing on the television, and he thought, “Wow!! That’s cool.” It

¹¹³ “Frozen Thunder is an early season 2km long ski track allowing training on snow for High Performance Athletes as well as public skiing for Frozen Thunder/Fall Season Pass holders. The track is made of stored machine-made snow, to allow biathlon and cross-country skiers to start training in October. Snow made the previous winter is stored for the summer in a protected location covered in sawdust. In the fall the snow is spread onto the trail to create Frozen Thunder.” Source: “Canmore Nordic Centre Provincial Park,” Frozen Thunder - Canmore Nordic Centre Provincial Park | Alberta Parks, accessed April 18, 2022, <https://www.albertaparks.ca/parks/kananaskis/canmore-nordic-centre-pp/activities/cross-country-skiing/frozen-thunder/>.

¹¹⁴ Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 56.

became a goal. Not a “driving goal that I couldn’t live without,” as he put it, but a goal nonetheless.¹¹⁵ The trials in 1964 were in Banff, and there was some hope that Rees would make the Canadian national team. Rees travelled to Banff on a hundred-dollar train ticket to take part in a training camp in preparation for the 1964 Olympic team selection events. He and six other trainees were skiing under the watchful eye of coach Nillo Itkonen.¹¹⁶ Rees was young, and although he came close, he realized he had not yet trained up to the level of the other athletes.

As a full-time student as well as an athlete, Rees found out that it was hard to reach that level of elite performance as a competitive skier. The President of the Canadian Amateur Ski Association asserted that Rees could be the best skier in Canada if he could train full-time like some of the other athletes, and he noted that Dave’s commitment to his academic studies at university limited his practice time for skiing.¹¹⁷ Whether this was subtle pressure or just wishful speculation is hard to know, given the lack of context for these remarks, although it does indicate the CASA president’s priorities. When asked about the comment, Rees said, “I think it was just an observation from Ray Grinnell. I did know him personally but cross-country was not high on the CASA agenda at the time. Not sure of my ‘devotion to academics’ as I spent a lot of time running and skiing in the Gatineau Hills!”¹¹⁸

After missing out on the Olympic Games in 1964, continued efforts and impressive results set him up for a berth on the national team to represent Canada at Grenoble in 1968. His

¹¹⁵ Rees, interview, May 26, 2021.

¹¹⁶ Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 3, 21.

¹¹⁷ Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 3, 24.

¹¹⁸ Rees, email, November 12, 2021.

inclusion was set via his third-place finish at the Canadian Nordic Championships and Olympic Trials in Morin Heights, Quebec.¹¹⁹ Rees had remained a member of the Canadian national team and continued to train and excel in competitions after the 1964 trials and was a perennial medalist at events in Canada. By fall 1968, he had enrolled in graduate school to study geology and was feeling the need to focus on his studies. He continued to train, however, with 20-mile runs on the weekends and shorter workouts in between. The National Championships were in Morin Heights, Quebec, that year, just over the border from Ottawa. “I did pretty well,” Rees said. “I didn’t win or anything but I made the Olympic team. So here I was, suddenly in negotiation with Carleton about taking the rest of the winter off!”

The 1968 Grenoble Olympics were Rees’ first trip to Europe. The three-man cross-country racing team for Canada’s National Ski Team travelled first to Sweden, where they competed in some local races. The skiers went to Sweden without their equipment and initially borrowed what was needed from the Swedish Women’s team. Their coach had an inside track, as he was dating a member of the Swedish Women’s team. They finally got to the ski factory in Sweden as planned and got kitted out for the Grenoble Winter Games of 1968. Rees recalls that there was no budget for skis or other equipment. The racers had to purchase their own. Luckily, the Swedish manufacturer basically gave the Canadians their gear. One of the Edsbyn skis Dave received and used in the Games is on display in the Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing in Canmore. After a few more local races, the team flew to Grenoble, France, for the Winter Games, which opened on February 6 in the French Alps.

In Grenoble Rees skied the 10 km, 15 km, and 50 km cross-country events, as well as the relay. Additionally, it was necessary to borrow a biathlete to make up Canada’s cross-country

¹¹⁹ Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 42.

relay team of four in a pinch. The 50 km race started on ice, which quickly melted into slush. The Canadians did not have proper wax, and Dave's wax was stripped from the birch-based, hickory-edged skis quickly. He ended up skiing on wet wood, saying "It took me just under three hours, which was pretty bad. I had no grip, and no glide... I'm not proud of my results, but I won't say it was a bad experience. The conditions we were doing this under were pretty hopeless."¹²⁰ Rees' results were as follows: 15 km, 61st; 30 km 58th; Mass Start 50 km, 46th; Relay 4x10 km, 14th.¹²¹

When Rees returned home from France, erroneous press indicated that he had dropped out of the 30 km race and he did not finish the 50 km.¹²² Eddie MacCabe, a Hall of Fame sports reporter, wrote about the error and tried to clear it up in the Ottawa press. After reporting Rees' actual placings, he observed, "Since Americans get better publicity, and generally don't do as well as Canadians in ski events, we can only assume that the Canadian Amateur Ski Association has to be a least partly at fault for the lack of communication."¹²³ Things must have looked similar to Rees, and this incident proved to be an ongoing problem and harbinger of things to come, for Rees eventually responded to the lack of attention paid to cross-country skiing by the CSA and engineered a split with Alpine in the 1980s.

Virtually unstoppable on the collegiate circuit and a perennial medalist in National-level competition, Rees did not place highly in Grenoble among international competitors in cross-

¹²⁰ Rees, interview, May 26, 2021.

¹²¹ "David Rees," Team Canada - Official Olympic Team Website, August 23, 2013, <https://olympic.ca/team-canada/david-rees/>.

¹²² Eddie MacCabe, "Odds and Ends 'For the Record'," in Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 44.

¹²³ Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 44.

country skiing. However, he did enter and finish in every event at the 1968 Winter Olympics, and he was the first Canadian to finish the 50 km cross-country ski race since 1956.¹²⁴ His results were substantial, given the deficit in training and support the Canadian athletes faced when compared to the regimes of their European skiing counterparts.

After the Grenoble Olympics, Rees used his platform to become a vocal advocate for Canadian athletes. He took every opportunity to speak out for increased funding and support for skiers and other amateur competitors on the Canadian sporting landscape. He explained to sports writers that it was impossible to compete on an even playing field with athletes who were, by the Canadian interpretation of the word, professionals. He said, “Here in Canada, where one has to maintain a job and train after work, superb conditioning required to win Olympic medals is impossible to attain.”¹²⁵ This advocacy would continue for the rest of his career as Rees continually fought for financial and other support for amateur athletes in Canada. At the time of a nascent national sport system and Cold War sports politics, the federal Task Force on Sport in Canada produced a report in 1969. One of its key recommendations was the creation of an athlete assistance program to assist athletes like Rees and his team mates.

¹²⁴ Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 45.

¹²⁵ Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 45.



Figure 5. *Post-Olympic Rees at the Nor-Am Championships in Sudbury, 1969.* Photograph courtesy of Dave Rees.

Rees remained on the National Ski Team after Grenoble, and continued to place well at senior-level competitions. He later reflected that “I’ve never considered myself to be an athlete, because I never was totally committed to it...in terms of a very strict program, of training, and monitoring and all that stuff. I was the kind of guy that dropped in and said, ‘Well, let’s see what happens.’”¹²⁶ Some athletes are tormented by the notion that they never were able to reach their potential. They live in regret, thinking about the variables that could have been altered and how things could have been different. Sometimes this results in them “living in the past,” like the

¹²⁶ Rees, interview, May 26, 2021.

proverbial high-school quarterback sitting in a local pub endlessly recounting exploits from his glory days. Others continue to compete past their prime, laying waste to their body and expending energy in a quixotic quest to reach some pinnacle that is no longer within reach. Still others become great coaches, their years in the trenches giving them insight and wisdom to share with young athletes who may still have a chance at glory. Rees has continued to race to this day, but he does not appear to be living any of these stereotypes. As a multi-faceted individual with multiple interests and talents, he turned his energies to what was in front of him, whether it be academia, coaching, or using his knowledge in local projects related to hydrogeology and land/water use. As shared in interviews, Rees readily admits that he did not take a fully scientific and planned approach to his own racing and training; nevertheless, he appears to focus on the next task at hand, of which there are many, much as he has moved forward through life.

His desire to push himself did not wane as Rees continued to compete. He continued to race and train as his schedule would allow, and continued to post results. From 1973 onwards, Rees competed in the Canadian Senior Championships, the Canadian and World Masters' Championships, and many club competitions, regularly placing in the medal standings.¹²⁷ The lifelong pursuit of skiing went on beyond his Olympic performance and animated a lifelong sport career.

¹²⁷ Dave Rees, Curriculum Vitae: Skiing, see Appendix 2.

CHAPTER FOUR

Coach and Sport Organizer

While he was racing as an undergraduate student, Dave Rees also started coaching. He skied for the Ottawa Ski Club at Carleton University and also served as a coach from 1962 to 1964. This was the start of his long career in service to the sport of cross-country skiing. He mentored and worked with junior skiers in Ottawa, who were able to take advantage of his experience and expertise.¹²⁸ After his Olympic appearance in 1968 and his return to North Bay in the early 1970s, Rees was writing training programs and working with local skiers there. He tried to get them excited about the sport and progressing in competition.¹²⁹

Rees followed up his period as a competitor with the national cross-country ski team with a prolific career in service, even while continuing to compete at a more recreational level. In 1975 he was a founding member and the first president of the Canadian Association of Nordic Ski Instructors. In 1975 he was a founding member of the North Bay Nordic Ski Club, and he organized events there from 1975 to 1999, including provincial- and national-level races. From 1972 to 1993, he had an almost uninterrupted tenure in service to the Canadian Ski Association and the Cross Country Canada Division.¹³⁰

As a consummate educator and administrator in both his university and sport career, Rees combined these skills with his athletic experience, underpinning and integrating into both his work and sporting pursuits. Rees' ideas about the Canadian sport system were developed through

¹²⁸ Rees, interview by author, June 9, 2021.

¹²⁹ Rees, interview, June 9, 2021.

¹³⁰ Rees, Curriculum Vitae: Skiing, see Appendix 2.

his competitive career and revealed in his public role as an Olympian and subsequently an advocate as he continued to extol the merits of widespread sport participation into the 1970s and 1980s.

Advocacy and the Gospel of Sport

Success as an athlete and Olympian gave Dave Rees a platform from which to speak, and when given the chance he addressed the state of Canada's sporting landscape. In speaking at the Rotary Club Luncheon in North Bay, for example, Rees commented in 1973, "Now that I am semi-retired, I think I can speak for [amateur athletes.] ... Canadians are a nation of non-participants, a nation of spectators. In essence the collective performance of a nation's athletes reflects that nation's collective fitness. And the impression to date is poor."¹³¹ As a Canadian Olympian as well as a ski educator, Rees struck a chord consistent with the times. His message was in line with the agenda of ParticipACTION, the program created in 1971, following the 1969 Task Force on Sport for Canadians to boost physical fitness in Canada and funded by Health Canada.¹³² It was also a suitable message for a Rotary Club audience, which was typically composed of individuals with networks valuable in fundraising and garnering support for sports and initiatives in the community.

In the same address, Rees commented on the commercialization of the Olympic Games, saying, "I am opposed to the idea that so many firms use the Olympics as an advertising

¹³¹ David Hall, "North Bay Olympic Competitor Raps Lack of National Support," *North Bay Nugget*, March 13, 1973.

¹³² "ParticipACTION - The Early Years: TV, Radio and Print Media," ParticipACTION Archive, accessed October 8, 2021, <http://digital.scaa.sk.ca/gallery/participaction/english/motivate/theearlyyears.html>.

gimmick.”¹³³ He was referring specifically to the preparations underway in Montreal for the 1976 Games, which he felt were too big and too costly. However, he did concede that hosting the Games in Canada would allow people to see how difficult it was for Canadian athletes to prepare for elite competition, and what things stood between them and achieving podium finishes.¹³⁴ His insights resonated with the times and sport policy concerns more broadly.

It was announced in 1971 that Montreal would host the 1976 Summer Olympics. The first ever Olympics held in Canada were a boost to the 1969 Task Force on Sport recommendations and to Canadian athletes, as resources and funding to elite sport and competition were augmented. The Canadian Olympic Association oversaw a variety of programs designed to boost the nation’s status in high-performance sport.¹³⁵ Despite these programs, Canada was ultimately the first host nation in modern Olympic history to fail to win a gold medal during the Games.¹³⁶ Nonetheless, it was still a new landmark for athlete development and resources.

In 1984, Rees spoke again to the North Bay Rotary Club again. His rhetoric still echoed the themes of earlier messages, as he indicated that Canadian athletes should strive for excellence, and that winning medals is important. In his opinion, Canada had yet to realize that nations were judged on their athletic prowess. On hearing someone deride the provision of a \$1

¹³³ “N. Bay’s only Olympic athlete deplores commercialism in Games” *North Bay Nugget*, March 14, 1973, in Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 4.

¹³⁴ “N. Bay’s only Olympic athlete deplores commercialism in Games” *North Bay Nugget*, March 14, 1973, in Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 4.

¹³⁵ Harvey and Thibault, *Sport Policy in Canada*, 13.

¹³⁶ Harvey and Thibault, *Sport Policy in Canada*, 14.

million budget for the Canadian women's Field Hockey Team, Rees replied, "That's probably the cost of one wing flap on a CF-18 fighter plane."¹³⁷ An editorial writer summed up the true importance of Rees' message, which also strongly reflected the themes of ParticipACTION and much of the commentary on cross-country skiing over the previous decade. "The spinoffs from Olympic training and competition are general health and welfare of the country, and inspiring people to keep fit. Right you are, Dave Rees. Let's keep Canadian Olympic efforts going strong."¹³⁸ These attitudes were also indicative of how the state positioned sport and fitness in Canada leading up to the 1988 Calgary Winter Games, the second time a Canadian city hosted the IOC Games.

Rees was a strong supporter of both Olympism and the benefits of widespread sport participation. Furthermore, he acknowledged and allowed for the coexistence of both elite level performance and widespread mass participation in sport. Even the title of his book *Cross-Country Skiing: Touring and Competition* reflects his understanding of the sport pyramid, with a wide base and diverse forms of skiing appealing in various ways. Soon Rees would stand out as a leader ready for recruitment to serve the national sport organization for skiing in Canada.

In 1972, although Rees was still competing with the best skiers in the country, he decided to leave the National Ski Team, as other commitments made it impossible for him to devote the time to training at an appropriate level. He was at a transition point. At the time, the Canadian Ski Association governed his sport under a committee for cross-country skiing. In 1974 some discord surfaced in the administrative ranks of the national cross-country program leading

¹³⁷ "Let's keep Canada's Olympic efforts strong," *North Bay Nugget*, May 12, 1984, 16, in Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 4.

¹³⁸ Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 4.

toward a new committee chair. A National Team skier from Prince George, Edward Day recognized in Dave Rees the desired qualities for a new leader. In a personal letter, Day asked Rees to consider becoming the chairman of the Cross-Country Committee of the Canadian Ski Association:

You are acutely aware of the total x-c scene. The needs of a competitive program are known to you. Development of a training program and its ramifications are known to you. A working relationship is conducive to an effective program. You exemplify this. Another factor which is useful, albeit indirectly, is that you have high academic credentials, which some parties within administrative circles regard highly... Dave I ask you to give this serious consideration. I know the NST is 100% behind you in this endeavour.¹³⁹

Day saw clearly how Rees was well-suited to serve sport organizations, and saw the value of both his lived experience as an athlete combined with his strengths in organization and administrative leadership as a well-educated and middle-class professional man.

Although he was already serving in an administrative capacity, retirement from the National Team allowed him to expand his service to the sport organization. Several structural changes resulted in Rees fulfilling a variety of roles:

...I entered the foray of cross-country politics and became a member of the Cross-Country Programme Committee. Cross-country was still a sub-committee of the CSA then. I was the spokesman for the XC Programme that spring ('74) but later became the Chairman. Later yet, the Programme Committee became the Technical Committee so I became the Vice Chairman Technical, and then it finally evolved into the National Ski Team Committee.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 22.

¹⁴⁰ Dave Rees, email to author, December 3, 2021.

As with any person who ends up with too many roles to fulfill, Dave had to cut some of his administrative duties in 1978, after seven years as an elected official with the Canadian Ski Association. He resigned mid-term from his role as Vice-chairman, Technical, Cross-Country with the Canadian Ski Association. In his resignation letter, Rees wrote: “In order to complete various personal projects, to meet very important deadlines with respect to my doctoral studies and to carry out my teaching and planning duties with the university, I must give up some of my part time, voluntary endeavours.”¹⁴¹ Included in the “personal projects” at this time was the construction of a house for his young family in North Bay. His withdrawal was not permanent, however, and by 1982, Rees had already accrued a full decade of experience serving the CSA. That year he was re-elected as chairman of the National Ski Team Committee with the CSA. He had served as technical chairman, program coordinator, and as Olympic coach in 1976.¹⁴²

The 1988 Winter Olympic Games and Canmore, Alberta

Through his roles first as an athlete and then as an administrator and sport official, Rees was present at five Olympic Winter Games. He competed at Grenoble in 1968, and he attended as Team Lead at Innsbruck in 1976, Assistant Coach at Sarajevo in 1984, Chief of Course at Calgary in 1988, and an Assistant Coach again in Albertville (France) in 1992. He was a renowned expert on coaching, trails, events, and officiating cross-country skiing. It was fitting that he was chosen as Chief-of-Courses for the cross-country and Nordic combined events at the

¹⁴¹ Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 22.

¹⁴² “Rees re-elected to post,” *North Bay Nugget*, June 29, 1982.

1988 Winter Olympics, a role he has also assumed for various events since then, including the 2005 Alberta Centennial World Cup Competition and the 2022 Masters World Cup.¹⁴³

Rees was instrumental as the Chief of Course at the new Canmore Nordic Centre during the 1988 Calgary Olympic Games. In 1981, the Government of Alberta pledged support to the hosting the Winter Olympics in Calgary, creating the need for a cross-country skiing and biathlon venue that met international standards. The site selected was a previously disturbed coal mining area adjacent to the town of Canmore, which was named the Canmore Nordic Centre. Addressing the needs of Olympic-calibre facilities and creating a vision for future competitive and recreational use, consultants created the 1984 Master Development Plan for the Canmore Nordic Centre, indicating the importance of integrating the requirements of creating an elite competition site with long-term recreational considerations.¹⁴⁴

It is doubtful that the early planners could have anticipated the changes and growth the site would experience over the ensuing thirty years. However, they did remark on the upward trend in cross-country skiing participation numbers, from an estimate of 50,000 in 1976 to about 350,000 in 1983.¹⁴⁵ Taking note of this trend, they also expressed concerns that the CNC site “will not offer the same aesthetic value as the other ski areas which may be a factor limiting recreational skiing.”¹⁴⁶ They continued to address this issue as they forecasted market demand in

¹⁴³ “David Rees,” Canadian Ski Hall of Fame and Museum, June 17, 2021, <https://skimuseum.ca/honoured-members/david-rees/>; *Program, Masters World Cup 2022*, (Canmore, AB: Masters World Cup), https://www.albertaworldcup.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/MWC_Program_Print_v11-1.pdf

¹⁴⁴ *Canmore Nordic Centre: Master Development Plan* (Calgary, Alta.: Carson-McCulloch Associates Ltd., 1984), B-1.

¹⁴⁵ *Canmore Nordic Centre: Master Development Plan*, B-52.

¹⁴⁶ *Canmore Nordic Centre: Master Development Plan*, B-54.

the early 1980s. The trails were specifically designed with racing and technical skiing in mind, and are not “designed to necessarily take advantage of the recreational opportunities available on site...the other recreation ski areas in the region have attributes which may be more attractive to recreation users....”¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the decision to develop the site at Canmore was a wise one, leading to the development of an ideal site for the 1988 Winter Olympics that has continued to be a well-used and viable location for Nordic skiers.

Although Dave Rees had attended four Olympic Games in various capacities, it was in Canmore where he functioned as a host rather than a guest. He was selected to be Chief-of-Courses for the 1988 Winter Games. He attributes this decision in part to his own experience as an Olympian, remarking,

It gives you a higher profile. It somehow allows you to open doors a lot. For the '88 Games, I was already involved in the organization of the sport, but I was approached to be the Chief-of-Course. There was no application process...being a former Olympian helped because I knew the drill, and having been at several other Olympics as well clearly helped.¹⁴⁸

A writer at *The Canadore*, a student publication of Nipissing University and Canadore College in North Bay, captured the essence of Rees' life in the late 1980s with journalistic agility:

Flying in from a conference somewhere in Europe; teaching a class; off on another jetliner to a conference in Calgary and back home again. This is not the lifestyle of some wealthy jetsetter but of former Olympic athlete and university professor Dr. David Rees. For the 1988 Calgary Olympics Rees is the Chief of Course. This entails designing the cross-country ski trail and ensuring that it is properly planed and maintained throughout

¹⁴⁷ *Canmore Nordic Centre: Master Development Plan*, B-56.

¹⁴⁸ Rees, interview, May 26, 2021.

the Olympics. With a new international standard recently implemented the Calgary Olympics will have the toughest course yet, said Rees. The change in standards is to divide the finishing times of the competitors. This way there will be more than a fraction of a second between each skier.¹⁴⁹

Rees had a role beyond that of Chief of Course as well, being at the helm of Cross Country Canada. It was an exciting time to be involved in the sport in Canada as there was the possibility of some success as well as the chance to host the Games on Canadian snow. In his Chairman's Message to CCC for the 1988 Guide, Rees wrote:

The 1987-88 season and the Winter Olympic Games in Calgary are finally upon us. Athletes, staff and volunteers at Cross Country Canada have worked tirelessly over the past several years to ensure the best possible results at these Games. Their diligence has paid off. Fresh from a gold and several top ten placings in last year's prestigious World Cup season, cross-country skiing is now one of the few sports which has an excellent chance to win medals this February in Calgary. However, the road to a medal is a challenging one and we would welcome and appreciate your support of our athletes and our development and participation programs contained herein. Whether participant, sponsor, or spectator, help us wave the flag for Canada and cross-country skiing this February. Thank you.¹⁵⁰

The sporting context leading up to 1988 was like the situation in the early 1970s as Canada prepared to host the world in 1976. Funding was made available for sporting organizations to prepare for the Games, and a federal sport initiative aimed at eighth place rankings as a "podium finish" for Canadian team athletes supported under Best Ever '88.¹⁵¹ Overall, the Games saw results that "led to increased bureaucratization and professionalization of

¹⁴⁹ Elizabeth Workman-Lynch, "Nip Prof at 1988 Olympics," *The Canadore*, April 27, 1987, 9.

¹⁵⁰ Shelagh de St. Croix, ed., *Cross Country Guide*, 1988, Cross Country Canada, 1. "Sports Governing Body Guide." (Calgary, n.d.).

¹⁵¹ Harvey and Thibault, *Sport Policy in Canada*, 15.

sport organizations as structures, policies, and systems were established and implemented. But while the Games in Calgary were deemed successful, once again Canadians athletes failed to secure a gold medal for the country.”¹⁵² Nonetheless, the 1988 Calgary Olympic Games were a success in many ways for cross-country skiing, as many Canadians were introduced to the competitive aspect of the sport for the first time. Future Torino silver medalist Sara Renner was there, and her story is one that exemplifies the legacy of such events:

“I was only twelve years old. I’d actually never seen a cross-country ski race before,” Renner recalls. “I went up there with my family and I was completely blown away by the whole scene. I decide that was it; that was my dream. I wanted to go to the Olympics. There are definitely a lot of factors that all work together to help form an athlete, but, if Canmore hadn’t had the Olympics, I don’t think we’d see so many people into it.”¹⁵³

While the 1988 Games were an administrative success and planted the seeds for future success in the sport, Rees describe the results as of a “journeyman quality” in his Spring 1988 chairman’s Address to Cross Country Canada.¹⁵⁴ Ever the leader, Rees immediately delved into a “post-mortem” of the Games to look at what went wrong and how things could be improved. He raised several questions about the administration of the national program, the role of the organization in athlete development and readiness, and the coaching development program.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Harvey and Thibault, 5.

¹⁵³ Lynn Martel, “Calgary / Canmore Olympic Legacy,” Experience, accessed December 3, 2021, <http://www.experiencemountainparks.com/calgary-canmore-olympic-legacy/>.

¹⁵⁴ Spring 1988, Chairman’s Message, n.d., in Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2.

¹⁵⁵ Spring 1988, Chairman’s Message, n.d., in Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2.

Rees' goal was to strengthen the program and create conditions for future success on the international stage.

The Dave Rees Award

While serving on the administrative side of the sport, Rees kept a hand in coaching. By the year 2000, he was able to claim over 30 years of experience, at the club, university, provincial, national, and international levels. He helped to coach and manage a number of teams, four Winter Olympic Games, three World Championships, and multiple World Cup events.¹⁵⁶ To honour his years of devotion to the sport, Cross Country Canada created an annual award in his name.¹⁵⁷ It is given to individuals who demonstrate the values Dave embodies: long-term service to the sport in a volunteer or professional capacity.

Every year, Nordiq Canada awards the Dave Rees Distinguished Service Award. The award was first presented to Rees himself in 1989 at CCC's annual meeting in St. Adele, Quebec. The award is awarded to “any man or woman who has made a long-term outstanding commitment to the sport of cross-country skiing in Canada.’ It was created in 1989 and named for Dave Rees, an outstanding contributor to the sport.”¹⁵⁸ Volunteers form the bedrock of amateur club sport and Rees was this bedrock for cross-country skiing in Canada at a crucial stage of development in the sport.

¹⁵⁶ “Laker Profile,” *The Hibou*, February 24, 2000, 7.

¹⁵⁷ “The Canadian Ski Hall of Fame Le Temple De La Renommée Du ...” Accessed April 14, 2020. [http://skimuseum.ca/bios/Rees_Dave FR.pdf](http://skimuseum.ca/bios/Rees_Dave_FR.pdf).

¹⁵⁸ “Volunteers: The Lifeline for Ski Clubs across the Country,” Nordiq Canada, October 9, 2020, <https://nordiqcanada.ca/news-item/volunteers-the-lifeline-for-ski-clubs-across-the-countr/>.

Cross Country Canada: The Break Away to Autonomous Governance

In the post-war era, Alpine skiing was increasingly tied to glamour and wealth, seen as a symbol that one had arrived firmly entrenched as a member of the upper middle class.

Conversely, cross-country skiing became regarded as a way to escape the influences that had crept into other outdoor endeavours; it was seen as a stripped-down, raw way to commune with nature. In the preface to *Cross-Country Skiing*, writer Edward Baldwin remarked in his 1972 guidebook:

Most of us live in a world where we are highly insulated from the natural environment around us, so much that we are barely conscious of it. Even when we try to contact it, we invariably bring the trappings of our “civilized life” along. Camping is done from a trailer, fishing from a power boat, and even hiking, only on a trail, only in an established park.¹⁵⁹

In 1970s Canada, as in the United States, a certain segment of the population was looking for an antidote to the modern world. Similarly, Rees called cross-country skiing the “low-cost route to self-reliance and relaxation,” and an alternative to the noise, crowds, and expense associated with other activities.¹⁶⁰ The excesses of urban lifestyle and a consumption-based economic model left many disillusioned. Canadians' lives were increasingly removed from the natural world, and as more people began seeking “relief from the mechanized world, cross-country skiing is a

¹⁵⁹ Edward Baldwin, *A Beginner's Guide to Cross-Country Skiing: A Step-by-Step Introduction to Cross-Country Skiing in North America* (Don Mills, ON: Greywood Publishing, 1972), 16.

¹⁶⁰ David Rees, “Cross-Country Skiing: Touring and Competition,” in *Cross-Country Skiing: Touring and Competition* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1981), Preface.

refreshing change. It is a sport of varnished wood, waxed leather and figures moving across a white surface in silence.”¹⁶¹

Cross-country skiing did receive attention at times from the Canadian Ski Association. For instance, the Canadian Ski Association laid out a rationale for the promotion of cross-country touring in a 1972 publication. The ParticipACTION movement was in its infancy at the time of publication, and as such is not explicitly named, but there is an acknowledgement of the government push for improved fitness across the populace. Although the authors mention the underlying purpose of producing a pool of skiers capable of competing on the international stage, they also acknowledge that one of the main reasons for promoting cross-country is its alignment with the “purpose of the federal government to encourage better physical activity for all Canadians.”¹⁶² The Canadian Ski Association Cross-Country Ski Touring Development Program goes on to outline how certain factors fall in line with the aims of the program, including that it “has been shown to be one of the most effective sports in producing all-round good health” and that the “vast majority of the Canadian countryside is eminently suitable and available for ski-touring.”¹⁶³ As a National Sport Organization (NSO), the CSA had to tune into federal policy initiatives for mass fitness, especially considering the all-around suitability of terrain for cross-country skiing in most of Canada in contrast to alpine ski hills.

¹⁶¹ Michael Keating, *Michael Keating's Cross-Country Canada: Handbook and Trail Guide for Cross-Country Skiers* (Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1977), xii.

¹⁶² *Tour Canada With Us: A Cross Country Ski Touring Development Programme*, Ottawa (1972): 3.

¹⁶³ *Tour Canada with Us*: 3.

Despite the praise in print, things did not always work out in practice for the cross-country crew. In the mind of many, including Rees, not enough attention was given to cross-country by the Canadian Ski Association. It is important to frame the organizational history of what has now become Nordiq Canada. In establishing a timeline and noting important events, Rees commented in interviews that:

Cross-country existed as a committee of the CASA (Canadian Amateur Ski Association) and the CSA for many years and was led by a Chairman. The committee had many functions which were divided amongst subcommittees, i.e. Touring, Racing, National Team, Events, Instruction etc. Then in 1984 we decided to establish our own constitution and bylaws to become CCC but still only a committee of the CSA. In 1989 we were strong enough to go on our own and I engineered the split and wrote the bylaws for CCC and also for the CSA with help from Malcom Hunter who was our Executive Director at the time. There was a lot of pushback from the CSA executive but surprisingly the CSA Board of Directors agreed that they really did not know anything about cross-country so should not be making final decisions on CCC business...wow!! So it happened. Then Alpine did the same, so essentially the CSA became an umbrella for purpose of communication with the FIS [International Ski Federation] which wanted to talk to only one ski body in each country.¹⁶⁴

After noting the impact of ParticipACTION and the fitness craze of the 1970s, Rees reflected on the administrative fallout of the division:

...the administrative and the governance side, there was definitely a big rift there, because Alpine...was glitzy, glamorous, and obviously got all the money. Even in the Canadian Ski Association, they got all the money. Cross-country was always viewed as nuts and berries...gradually, we slowly separated in '89. I was one of the architects of that.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Rees, email, November 12, 2021.

¹⁶⁵ Rees, interview, February 19, 2020.

Cross-country skiing was long overshadowed by Alpine skiing within the Canadian Ski Association. Dave Rees' own departure from Alpine skiing decades earlier foreshadowed an administrative division of sport governance that he eventually engineered in 1989. From that year forward, the governance of Nordic and Alpine disciplines in Canada was separate. Rees championed Cross Country Canada as the autonomous governing body for cross-country skiing, with its own constitution, rather than a sub-group within the Canadian Ski Association. According to Rees, cross-country and alpine skiing had grown further and further apart over time, with the specialization of equipment and growth of alpine ski resorts with lifts.¹⁶⁶ This rift began to develop years before the ultimate divorce at an organizational level.

There was a push after Grenoble around the time Dave left the National team (1972), to support athletes more fully.

There may have been some government thinking towards the 76 Games but most of it concerned the summer sports understandably. However, 72 and 76 saw full xc teams and then things tightened up for 80 and 84. I guess we (Canada) started to look at our international image and demanded more stringent qualification (mentioned earlier about the top 16 fiasco). Tightening so drastically does not encourage youngsters when they look ahead to see that there are few or no spots available no matter how hard they try.¹⁶⁷

Rees was aware of young athletes and sensitive to their development from his perspective as a coach and instructor. As an administrator, he was also aware of internal political dynamics within the NSO responsible for all styles of skiing – the Canadian Ski Association. Starting in 1984 Rees was involved in talks about by-laws and a constitution for a possible cross-country governing body. It was clear to Rees and others that there was no effective way to administer all

¹⁶⁶ Rees, interview, February 19, 2020.

¹⁶⁷ Rees, email, November 12, 2021.

skiing events out of one office. In his Chairman's Message of 1988, after the organizationally successful Olympic Games, Rees addressed the future of the administrative structure of cross-country skiing in Canada. In this address, he wrote about the following questions: "Is the present structure adequate to handle the needs and more successfully move the programs of CCC ahead? [...] Should we seriously re-evaluate our relationship with the Canadian Ski Association (CSA)? Does our constitution fulfill our needs?"¹⁶⁸

One of the incidents that pushed this issue to the forefront was the apparent lack of bargaining power cross-country skiing had in negotiation with the Canadian Olympic Committee. In 1984 cross-country certainly seemed to get the proverbial short end of the stick, and a stronger organization may have prevented this. Whether it would have made a difference or not, the "fiasco" in 1984 was symptomatic of the position Cross Country Canada had found itself in on numerous occasions:

The '84 fiasco was due to the COA [Canadian Olympic Association] setting super stringent qualifications. Had to be in the top 16 in the [World Cup] three times the year before! I worked out the number of countries in the world of cross-country skiing that could fulfil the criteria and there were very few... like maybe 3 in the men and two in the women. I am not sure what role the CSA played in this but Canada may have had a quota overall and cross-country was expendable. Marty Hall (our head coach) and I went to Montreal and took on the Technical Director, Jack Lynch, of the COA but he would not budge even with the fact that many other countries could not fulfill the criteria!

So, we ended up with one man...Pierre Harvey, and the twins from the North...Shirley and Sharon Firth. At the last minute, Angela Schmidt-Foster was held in the wings and with a week to go was allowed to compete.... I attended for waxing and general admin help. We did not do super well....¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Spring 1988, Chairman's Message, n.d., in Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2.

¹⁶⁹ Dave Rees, email to author, November 18, 2021.

According to Rees, the decisions made at the top were often made by individuals with a limited understanding of cross-country skiing, and so there was a mutual decision to divide the Canadian Ski Association. The result was the formation of Cross Country Canada in 1989 as an autonomous group, which has since been rebranded as Nordiq Canada. The fledgling website for the Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing has a summary that helps frame a timeline for the development of Cross Country Canada, as Rees saw it:

At the beginning of the 80's the sport was still a discipline of the Canadians Ski Association (CSA), and functioned somewhat under their direction and overall control, which tended to be more Alpine oriented. A key step in the early part of the decade was separating from the CSA, to become Cross Country Canada (CCC), an autonomous, financially independent Association, that still was affiliated with the CSA for FIS representation and a few other governance related functions.

Dave Rees, a former National Team member and long-time CCC volunteer in many capacities was the prime impetus in making this happen. This allowed the sport to focus directly on the needs of cross-country skiers with their activities and control their own destiny.

A second major influence on the direction of the sport in the decade was the awarding of the Winter Olympics to Calgary. This resulted in a strong Government and Canadian Olympic Association orientation towards "Best Ever" performances on home soil. Benefits to the sport included greater funding, but also the creation of the brand-new Canmore Nordic Centre, and a legacy program after the Games administered by the Calgary Olympic Development Association (CODA), now WinSport. CODA helped develop the Bill Warren Training Centre and the Haig Glacier training facility as well as providing funding that helped ensure the sport's national level survival after drastic government cutbacks.

With the focus on "Best Ever" results, Sport Canada also required sports to undertake extensive planning exercises, that included another National planning conference for CCC in the early 80's. Many initiatives were developed here that have become mainstays of the sports, such as the Canada Points List, a National Race series, at that time the Canada Cup, National Coaches seminars and the International Coaches Experience Program (ICE, now HPCE).¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ "A Short History of Cross Country Canada," Canadian Museum of Nordic Sport, June 1, 2021, <http://nordicskimuseum.sixmilesourdough.com/evolution/ski-sport-organizations/nordiq-canada-formerly-cross-country-canada/a-short-history-of-cross-country-canada/>.

From 1987 to 1990, Dave Rees served as the president of the organization, first as part of The Canadian Ski Association and then for Cross Country Canada. In 1988 he was responsible for rewriting the organization's constitution and by-laws.¹⁷¹ He then moved into a new role with the then-faltering national team for cross-country skiing, served as Chair of Events in 2001 and 2002, and was president again from 2006 to 2008.¹⁷²

As an experienced university administrator, Rees was able to lead structural changes through diplomatic and procedural processes, even in the face of resistance from the CSA executive. His varied areas of involvement in volunteer sport management also indicate an ability to see gaps in a sporting organization or in a broader sports community and take the necessary steps to meet the needs of both elite and recreational participants.

¹⁷¹ “The Canadian Ski Hall of Fame Le Temple De La Renommée Du ...” Accessed April 14, 2020. [http://skimuseum.ca/bios/Rees_Dave FR.pdf](http://skimuseum.ca/bios/Rees_Dave_FR.pdf).

¹⁷² Rees, email, November 12, 2021.

CHAPTER FIVE

Geologist and Educator

It would be easy to focus solely on Dave Rees' accomplishments in the realm of sports and sport administration, but that picture would be incomplete and overlook its integration with his professional and personal life. Currently a professor emeritus of Nipissing University in North Bay, Rees taught geology for over thirty years. Describing his work life, Dave noted that "the academic life was the job. The other stuff was exciting."¹⁷³ Despite this tongue-in-cheek description, his life in academia was busy and productive. While instructing and publishing, he also committed to a variety of service activities that mirrored his devotion to his life in sport.

During Grade 13 in Ontario, Rees had enjoyed his study of physics, and thought it would make a good choice in post-secondary. However, once he started university undergraduate study, the subject area unnerved him. He enrolled in a geology course and found that he enjoyed it. Growing up hunting, fishing, hiking, and, of course, skiing, Dave's interests aligned well with both the subject material and the field work required. He felt at home surveying and mapping, as well as working in the classroom. As we will see, these aptitudes and skills also came into his sport leadership for cross-country skiing.

When Rees graduated with his bachelors' degree, he had ample opportunity to work. Job offers were plentiful, and his geology degree set him up well for employment. Much of that work was demanding and remote, requiring outdoor skills and hardiness: "Armed with a geology degree from Carleton University," wrote a colleague upon his retirement, "he headed out into his beloved outdoors, doing geological reconnaissance for mining companies. During a five-month

¹⁷³ Dave Rees, interview by author, August 9, 2021.

period in Newfoundland in 1964, while working for New Jersey Zinc, the team worked in isolation, living in tents and receiving supplies by helicopter.”¹⁷⁴

Over the course of two summers, Dave and his first wife Gail had completed Bachelor of Education degrees that enabled them to gain employment as high school teachers upon completion of university. It seemed a logical choice for Rees, as he commented that he was always drawn to the role of spreading information.¹⁷⁵ In reality, he did not enjoy teaching secondary school in Sunridge, Ontario, as the demands were high and the teaching load was heavy. Unwilling to continue in secondary education, Rees enrolled in a master’s program in geomorphology at Carleton University. Field work opportunities existed for Dave throughout his master’s program, and he was able to spend time putting his classroom learning into practice as he honed his skills in mapping and surveying.

As soon as he completed the Master of Arts in Geomorphology in 1970, Rees found a teaching position at the fledgling Nipissing University in North Bay. Due to a clerical error, he did not convocate until 1971, but he began teaching prior to having the parchment in his hand. The University was so new that Rees found himself instructing in geology and geography, as well as building the department from the ground up. That first year, Nipissing was operating out of a home for the aged. Conditions were vastly different from today, and he recalls delivering lectures in one space where he was forced to “bend over to see the students under the ceiling pipes.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Marjie Smith, “Dr. Dave Rees Retires, Leaving,” *Nipissing University Review* 7, no. 1 (2001): 12.

¹⁷⁵ Rees, interview, August 9, 2021.

¹⁷⁶ Smith, “Dr. Dave Rees Retires, Leaving,” 13.

While serving the academy as a professor, Rees completed forty-nine research reports and evaluations for a variety of stakeholders. In addition to his service to his area of expertise, Rees served the academy by serving on and chairing many university-wide committees. He was the chair of the Science and Geography Division for two years, and Nipissing's Director of Research for three years.

Rees' knowledge, academic expertise, and professional skills enabled him to contribute in a unique way to trail design as well. The design of the trails at the North Bay Nordic Ski Club was a result of Rees' research of the local geography in conjunction with his ability to work with local landowners and government. Later in life this pattern also continued elsewhere to the benefit of trails and skiers.

Just as Alex Stevenson's influence contributed to Rees' success in skiing, his academic life was enhanced by well-placed mentors and influences. One of note was his Carleton professor Patrick Arthur Hill.¹⁷⁷ Hill expected a lot from his students and assigned field work to them. Dave was responsible for large surveying projects, and these exercises certainly helped mould the type of instructor he would later become. These survey skills were later applied to snow caching for Frozen Thunder at the Canmore Nordic Centre in Alberta during retirement.

¹⁷⁷ "Patrick Hill OBITUARY (1998) - the Globe and Mail." Legacy.com. Legacy, December 4, 1998. "Professor of geology, merchant seaman, actor, miner, rebel, iconoclast, died peacefully at his home in Ottawa, aged 76, on December 3rd, 1998. Patrick was born in Calcutta, India, son of tea planter Frederick Arthur Hill and Nora Lovett. Educated at Mayfield College, Sussex. During World War II served in the Battle of Atlantic, then worked in coal mines while continuing his education at night at Leeds and Nottingham Universities. Graduated from Imperial College. Received PhD from Columbia. Founded the Carleton University Department of Geology. Conquered a stammer to become an inspirational teacher to thousands of students, wrote over 70 publications ranging from the origins of Stonehenge to environmental geology. He will be remembered as an innovative academic, a deep anti-authoritarian and a lover of life."

Following the model of his instructor Patrick Hill, Rees made certain that his students gained real-world experience by having them conduct field exercises and utilize the rich natural classroom of Northeast Ontario. One such exercise involved a fish survey of six river systems. Dave oversaw the research and data collection as twenty-two students gathered data to examine the effects of urbanization on the waterways of the area.¹⁷⁸

Rees also began some work outside of teaching at that time as well. He “saw it as experience in the real world that I brought back into the classroom.”¹⁷⁹ While carrying out teaching duties, he furthered his own studies over the course of eight years by completing a doctorate in Fluvial Geomorphology and Hydrology at the University of Ottawa in 1982. His doctoral thesis took time to complete, as Rees had several other projects on the go, including writing a Canadian guidebook for cross-country skiers. When he met with his supervisor D.A. St. Onge to ask for time off to go to the 1976 Olympic Games as a wax technician for the Canadian Team, he also handed him a brand-new copy of the guidebook he had been writing alongside his doctoral thesis.¹⁸⁰

Both universities – Ottawa and Nipissing – were ideally situated for skiing, with a long winter ideal to his pursuits as an athlete as well as a geologist. Rees became an Associate Professor at Nipissing University after completing his doctorate, where he remained until his retirement and appointment as Adjunct Professor in 2001. The following year he was named Professor Emeritus. Rees brought together talents as a scientist, educator, and author,

¹⁷⁸ “Student Crews at Work on Environmental Projects,” *The North Bay Nugget*, June 18, 1974.

¹⁷⁹ Rees, interview, August 9, 2021.

¹⁸⁰ David L. Rees, “Streamwater Solute Variations in a Partially Urbanized Watershed at North Bay, Ontario” (PhD diss., University of Ottawa, 1981).

intertwining his academic work and sporting pursuits as illustrated in his first book and later varsity coaching.

The Cross-Country Skiing Guide Book and the Boom in the 1970s

Cross-Country Skiing: Touring and Competition was written by David Rees and published by Copp Clark Pitman in 1975. It articulated both the ski philosophy and well-rounded approach of the author. It was focused on touring and competitive skiers, filling a need for information and instruction. Dubbed “the most thorough, all-encompassing book yet published on cross-country skiing,” it was the culmination of four years of work and research.¹⁸¹

At the time I started on the book idea I was in Ottawa and at Graduate School... I was bored with the whole thesis effort so decided to write the book. I had given several teaching sessions as a member of the Ottawa Ski Club and thought ... a Canadian instructional type book would be a good idea. I did the drawings as a distraction with the thesis thingie and then wrote the book when in North Bay starting at Nip U. Wrote it on foolscap and had it typed by a friend (no computers in those days!!!) ... hand written a page at a time. It was rather an easy write as I had been in skiing quite a while at that point.¹⁸²

Rees conceived of the book in 1969, but no Canadian publisher was interested. At least one US book had been released on the sport and was successful, however, so the Canadian publishers came around in due time. Rees wrote *Cross-Country Skiing: Touring and Competition* in 1973, and it was picked up by a Canadian publisher in 1975. Rees commented:

Copp Clark publishers agreed to do it as they were in technical publications primarily ... i.e. business and commercial books, etc. I finished it all in late ‘73 but it did not get published till ‘75 by which time there was at least one other book out there ... American.

¹⁸¹ Britt Jessup, “Book by Dave Rees hailed as great contribution to skiing,” *The Daily Nugget*, n.d. in Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2, 1.

¹⁸² Dave Rees, email to author, November 26, 2021.

The publishing process was okay once Copp Clark came on but there was some back and forth of course and they had their own timetable which I felt did not jibe with the skiing season and so on. So, it took two years to get it into bookstores. The marketing was done in the traditional way ... i.e. their market and failed to send it to ski sport shops even when I gave them an extensive list for Canada. Anyway, it finally got out there and CCC endorsed it as well.¹⁸³

The endorsement by a national sport organization reflected the quality of Rees' work and his experience instructing skiers in the fundamentals of the sport. By 1977 he was revising it for a second edition, and in 1979 he was working on the third edition of the book.¹⁸⁴ The changes and additions were focused primarily on educating those who knew little about the sport, but sought to get out on the trails. *The Daily Nugget* put it this way:

...a thorn in his side are the technological "advancements" being made in the ski industry. He classes most of them as gimmicks, which facilitate the "taking to the cleaners" of inexperienced ski purchasers. Mr. Rees urges the soon-to-be skier to remember that this is a very simple sport, with relatively simple equipment...¹⁸⁵

Cross-Country Skiing: Touring and Competition is divided into two sections of equal length. Part one is "Skiing for Fun," and part two is "Cross-Country Competition." In the first section, Rees defined the sport, and its roots in Scandinavia. He went on to outline its history in North America and the shared roots of alpine and cross-country. He covered the physical benefits of cross-

¹⁸³ Rees, email, November 26, 2021.

¹⁸⁴ "'If You Can Walk, You Can Ski,' North Bay Man Says." *The Daily Nugget*, December 5, 1979, in Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 4, 1.

¹⁸⁵ "'If You Can Walk, You Can Ski,' North Bay Man Says." *The Daily Nugget*, December 5, 1979, in Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 4, 1.

country and introduced the topics to follow. Rees provided his rationale for the value of cross-country skiing as follows:

...cross-country skiing provides a relatively inexpensive and wholesome pursuit, which is particularly amenable to our North American climate. From near obscurity it has developed into a form of winter recreation that allows maximum interaction between man and his natural environment. It provided a means of healthy exercise in natural surroundings at a pace anyone can enjoy. In the future it will likely continue to grow as more and more people seek refuge from automobile exhaust and urban madness.¹⁸⁶

After making a convincing case for the “What and Why?” of cross-country skiing, Rees introduced readers to the “How?” While cross-country equipment is relatively simple, the market was expanding and Rees’ book could aid a newcomer in sifting through the intricacies of purchasing decisions or equipment upgrades. As indicated further on in this section, Rees wanted to help newcomers avoid the mistake of purchasing the wrong type of gear.

While the person of average athletic ability can quickly learn to shuffle along on skis, Rees demonstrated the beauty and efficiency of the diagonal stride, with clear explanations, photos, and drawings. Further to that, he helped clarify the science and alchemy of ski wax – what wax to use, when to use it, and how to apply it. The overall tone that emerges from these chapters is that of an author who wanted all participants to enjoy their experience of skiing, whether they be touring, bundling along with a group of kids, or preparing to race.

The second section of the book was devoted to competition. Training and physiology were examined in detail, and the sport science focus betrayed the depth of knowledge Rees had due to his involvement with ski racing at an elite level. An aspiring racer could glean many tips and

¹⁸⁶ David Rees, *Cross-Country Skiing: Touring and Competition* (Vancouver: Coop Clark Pub., 1975), 9.

Rees shared his insider's knowledge of the ins-and-outs of competing well. Always the organizer, Rees outlined in the final chapter the running of a successful event, including sections on course layout and track preparation, enabling more ski race organizers.

It would be simple to associate the impetus for the writing of the book directly with the 1970s rise in fitness culture, which included a rise in the numbers of people interested in cross-country skiing. But although the book was timely, Rees wrote it for other reasons: "ParticipACTION helped of course but it was not the catalyst for the book... lack of instructional materials was mainly the reason once I decided to go for it... especially in the competitive end of the sport."¹⁸⁷ Rees was a quintessential educator in his roles as writer, athlete, and coach as well as a club volunteer. He brought a teacher's insights to expanding and popularizing knowledge of the sport of cross-country skiing among recreationists and racers. The timing was good in relation to the trending fitness awareness, but Rees saw a gap in the existing offerings and filled it with his book. Here he displayed the academic's propensity to educate and inform where there is a need.

Nevertheless, the writing and release of the book corresponded with a remarkable era in the history of physical education and sport policy in Canada, and at the centre of it all was the government-led campaign. Don Bailey, a self-described "token jockstrap" on ParticipACTION's national board, discussed the Canadian fitness environment prior to the 1970s in a recorded interview in 2004.¹⁸⁸ He noted that physical education was primarily focused on sports and

¹⁸⁷ Rees, email, November 26, 2021.

¹⁸⁸ "Don Bailey Discusses the State of Canada's Fitness at the Beginning of ParticipAction," accessed November 22, 2021, <http://digital.scaa.sk.ca/gallery/participaction/english/impact/index.html>;
Victoria Lamb Drover, "ParticipACTION, Healthism, and the Crafting of a Social Memory." "Don Bailey Lecture Series," Don Bailey Lecture Series - College of Kinesiology -

games. Furthermore, it was regarded as the realm of children, and beyond that much of our population saw physical activity as frivolous.¹⁸⁹ Activity was “almost a frill,” as people’s lives were work-focused. “I don’t think... there was much consideration to the health aspect,” Bailey says. “We were very sport oriented.”¹⁹⁰ With ParticipACTION, the focus began to change =. Health became a goal, not a space reserved only for children in schools and elite athletes. With a well-timed book, Rees’ publication placed him in front of recreationists as well as serious aficionados. In 2004 public health educator Francois Lagarde spoke about the results of the early ParticipACTION campaigns, which used humour and popular media to motivate Canadians to stop being a nation of spectators.¹⁹¹

University of Saskatchewan, accessed November 22, 2021,

<https://kinesiology.usask.ca/students/undergraduate-students/donbaileylecture.php>.

“Don was an early proponent of the importance of health promotion and in the early 70’s joined the boards of ParticipACTION and ParticipACTION Saskatoon. ParticipACTION, was a Canadian government public initiative to increase public awareness of the need for daily physical activity and healthy lifestyle choices. Don was a board member for the whole of its existence first working with Keith McKerracher (President 1972-1978) and then with Russ Kisby (President 1978-2000) a lifelong friend of Don’s and a graduate of the University of Saskatchewan.”

¹⁸⁹ “Don Bailey Discusses the State of Canada’s Fitness...”

¹⁹⁰ “Don Bailey Discusses the State of Canada’s Fitness...”

¹⁹¹ “François Lagarde - Ca.linkedin.com,” accessed November 22, 2021, <https://ca.linkedin.com/in/fran%C3%A7ois-lagarde-24a45412/en>. Since serving as Vice-President of ParticipACTION in the 1980s, he has acted from 1991 to 2012 as a specialized consultant in social marketing and communications for more than 170 community, public and philanthropic organizations at every level. Through his work, he has contributed to the design, implementation and evaluation of many social and behavioural change initiatives. The Foundation has called on his expertise on several occasions since 2005. François Lagarde is also an adjunct professor in the School of Public Health at the University of Montreal, where he teaches social marketing in the health administration and public health graduate

Dave Rees admitted that he took exception to ParticipACTION's memorable "60 year-old Swede" television spot, which sought to poke fun at Canadian men in a lighthearted way and stimulate national pride as well as greater fitness levels.¹⁹² Although he was clearly on the side of increased participation in fitness activities at all levels of Canadian society, Rees remarked that the Swede "was touted to be fitter than most Canadians but having spent time in Sweden just before the book I witnessed many ciggie smoking and overweight Swedes!!"¹⁹³ He was not duped by the false assertions of the marketing campaign that played on stereotypes of masculinity and northern nations but lacked a solid base of empirical evidence, nor was he awed by allusions to exotic Swedes. Although the Swede ad was misconstrued and prodded somewhat playfully the collective Canadian ego, it proved to be a success when measured by the imprint it left on the collective memory of a generation of Canadians.

Canadians were beginning to be interested in becoming more active, but they wanted to know how and where.¹⁹⁴ As one who had always loved teaching and disseminating information, Dave Rees was poised to spread the gospel of cross-country skiing to a hungry public, many of

programs. "Francois Lagarde Discusses Leverage in Terms of Various Programs," ParticipAction Archive, accessed November 22, 2021.

¹⁹² Although this spot made an impact and is still remembered by many today, it was somewhat controversial as the ad was based on incomplete data, "Drawing on a book still under peer review by Dr. Roy Shephard at the University of Toronto that suggested among other comparative international findings that "**some** [emphasis original] Swedish men at age sixty had the same fitness level as **some** [emphasis original] Canadian men at age thirty." See Victoria Lamb Drover, "ParticipACTION, Healthism, and the Crafting of a Social Memory," 288.

¹⁹³ Rees, email, November 26, 2021.

¹⁹⁴ Rees, email, November 26, 2021.

whom would come to see the activity as an ideal outdoor recreation for Canadian winters.

In the preface to the third edition of his book, Rees wrote:

Herein lies the purpose of this third edition – to expose the simplicity and fullness of a reviving sport as well as to instruct converts and those returning to the sport in up-to-date equipment, technique, and waxing. For those both young and old who find challenge in competition, the second part of the book explains the elements of physiology, conditioning, and ski racing.¹⁹⁵

The focus on both elite and participatory readers is clear, and Rees included a nod to those both young and old who wished to compete, which was fitting as he was involved with the early development of the Masters Ski Association in Canada at the time of publication of this edition in 1981.

In a 1975 news article addressing the thirst for knowledge about cross-country equipment, an *Ottawa Citizen* writer wrote about the problem of uniformed sales people and buyers ignorant of their own needs. He consulted Rees, who said, “The tremendous boom in the sport has left thousands of people with little technical knowledge...the people are at the mercy of the salespeople when it comes to buying equipment.”¹⁹⁶ Rees’ book sought to fill this gap:

Dave had written his book partly as a result of the experience he had gained through his racing career, but also because he recognized a need for a comprehensive book on his chosen sport which would be a useful resource to beginning and proficient skiers alike...many individuals have expressed their gratitude to Dave for this book and many have credited him with giving them the inspiration, after reading the book, to adopt the

¹⁹⁵ David Rees, “Cross-Country Skiing: Touring and Competition,” in *Cross-Country Skiing: Touring and Competition* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1981), Preface.

¹⁹⁶ Martin Cleary, “Novice Skiers Given Advice,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 1975. n.d., in Dave Rees Private Collection, Ski Clippings, Box 4.

sport and make it a lifelong habit.¹⁹⁷

The boom in participation had brought with it some burdens, and one of those was providing education for those who did not grow up skiing. An outdoor recreation consulting firm, contracted by the Cross-Country Committee of the Southern Ontario Division, was tasked with creating a booklet for this purpose in 1974. They in turn asked Rees to contribute a section on the basic techniques of skiing, with a promise to acknowledge his book in the pamphlet.¹⁹⁸

Rees was a founding member and first president of the Canadian Association of Nordic Ski Instructors (CANSI) in 1974, meeting a need that had arisen in Canada:

In the late 1960s there was a popular renaissance of cross-country skiing and a demand for specialized cross-country instruction was met by the Cross-Country Committee of the Canadian Ski Association (CSA). However, Cross Country-CSA could not meet the demand and the CSIA began teaching as well. As the popular demand for specialized cross-country skiing instruction grew, a new association was formed with the cooperation and support of the CSIA and the CSA. This new organization was named the Canadian Association of Nordic Ski Instructors (CANSI) and it was founded in 1976. In May of that year, representatives from the Canadian Ski Association (Cross Country-CSA), the CSIA and Ski Quebec met in Banff, Alberta to design one cross-country certification body and standard courses for Canada. As well the format for the new organization was also agreed upon. By the end of the meeting, on 6th May, 1976, the organization had been set up with by-laws and the first slate of officers...¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ “Rees and Scott Recognized by Canadian Ski Hall of Fame,” *Ski Trax*, accessed November 25, 2021, <http://skitrax.com/rees-and-scott-recognized-by-canadian-ski-hall-of-fame/>.

¹⁹⁸ Letter from The Wes-Boom Team, n.d. in Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2.

¹⁹⁹ “Formation of CANSI,” Canadian Museum of Nordic Sport, October 6, 2020, <http://nordicskimuseum.sixmilesourdough.com/evolution/coaching/cansi-canadian-association-of-nordic-ski-instructors/cansi/>.

By 1979, Rees had written the cross-country Level 1 manual for the National Coaching certification Program.²⁰⁰ He coached again in later years at Nipissing University.

Dave Rees served the Nipissing Lakers as the coach for the cross-country team from 1992 to 2000. His most memorable moment as coach was in 1993 when, he said, “NU won the Ontario University Women’s Championship – it was a true team win because it came down to the last event where our weakest skier had to ski the race of her life.”²⁰¹ This encapsulates Rees’ attitude toward competition: it was a chance to push oneself, go all out, and see what is possible, as opposed to merely a chance to best another competitor or receive accolades. Going full circle, Rees also returned to coach varsity athletes in the sport that he had pursued as a university student. In the same interview, Rees indicated he would perhaps like to “continue on and maybe train and race myself once more.”²⁰² This certainly came to pass when Rees embarked on a career as a Masters skier in his retirement from the university.

Rees’ PhD took him full-circle in a way. His research was hydrology-focused, and he conducted flood and storm research on Chippewa Creek. This was the same creek that Rees had explored as a boy some years earlier when he and his friends “used to ride the ice flows (sic) in the spring.” Rees’ work has been used repeatedly by consultants and the data he collected on Chippewa Creek has been beneficial to the region. It also led to his involvement in the conservation authority of the area.²⁰³ For example, The Experience ’75 Program of the North

²⁰⁰ David Rees, *National Coaching Certification Program Cross-Country Skiing* (Ottawa: Canadian Ski Association, 1979).

²⁰¹ “Laker Profile,” *The Hibou*, February 24, 2000, 7.

²⁰² “Laker Profile,” 7.

²⁰³ Smith, “Dr. Dave Rees Retires, Leaving,” 12.

Bay Conservation Authority looked at the problems caused by pollution in Chippewa Creek. The levels of sediment and pollutants were threatening the health of the creek as well as its ability to handle heavy spring run-off or storm surges. Rees and his team made recommendations for the clean-up and restoration of the creek.²⁰⁴

In David Rees' career list of professional publications and reports, many titles relate to North Bay and northern Ontario. His knowledge contributed to understanding the region where he had skied and grown up. He knew snow and water as a skier and fisherman. As a geologist, he knew the ground and trails, the geography and settlement patterns, the natural and historical resources, and particularly the watersheds and the environment. Knowing them as a skier as well brought together his sporting pursuits, nature philosophy, and community interest in different ways, including the planning and creation of trails for the North Bay Nordic Ski Club.

In addition to volunteer ski coaching, Rees' academic curriculum vitae indicates over twenty-seven years of service to the North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority. This exceptionally long and impactful service record parallels his commitment to sports leadership. He was viewed as a leader and functioned as such in complex goal-driven organizations involving multiparty stakeholders and institutions. This aptitude served him in sport, in academe, and in vocational life.

When asked what he may have done had he not gone into academia, Dave Rees indicated that surveying may have been a possibility. Dave had done some surveying work between Chapleau and Timmins, and enjoyed being in the field. He had an interest in surveying, and ended up teaching the subject, using these skills subsequently to survey snow caches for Frozen

²⁰⁴ Guy Gallardi, "Foresee Big Problems with Chippewa Creek Unless Clean-up Starts," *North Bay Nugget*, July 18, 1975, 9.

Thunder at CNC during his retirement years.²⁰⁵ His passion for teaching and the land intersected through his vocational and avocational work as an academic and skier.

²⁰⁵ “Frozen Thunder is an early season 2 km long ski track allowing training on snow for High Performance Athletes as well as public skiing for Frozen Thunder/Fall Season Pass holders. The track is made of stored machine-made snow, to allow biathlon and cross-country skiers to start training in October. Snow made the previous winter is stored for the summer in a protected location covered in sawdust. In the fall the snow is spread onto the trail to create Frozen Thunder.” “Canmore Nordic Centre Provincial Park,” Frozen Thunder - Canmore Nordic Centre Provincial Park | Alberta Parks, accessed February 23, 2022. <https://albertaparks.ca/parks/kananaskis/canmore-nordic-centre-pp/activities/cross-country-skiing/frozen-thunder/>.

CHAPTER SIX

Masters Athlete and Canadian Ski Legend

Dave Rees saw success at the Masters level and continues to race.²⁰⁶ He and Jean Bristow, his wife, travel extensively from their base in Canmore to attend Loppetts and Masters' races around the world. In 2007 Rees returned to Rossland, not as a wide-eyed youth from northern Ontario, but as a trail-blazing master of sport. A reporter observed that the athletes, "regardless of age, still have the competitive fire in them as evident by the drive for the finish line."²⁰⁷ As journalists portray Rees, he has become a "Canadian ski legend" in his own time. However, his work and approach to advancing ski racing for older adults is not well known. This chapter explores Rees and his role in the Masters movement for older adults in cross-country skiing as well as the Masters World Cup. What led Rees and others to found a new organization for cross-country skiers over the age of thirty?

²⁰⁶ Skiers are considered Masters after their thirtieth birthday.

²⁰⁷ Guy Bertand, "Masterful Moments," *Trail Daily Times*, February 8, 2007.



Figure 6. Bertrand, Guy. *Masterful Moments: Canadian ski legend and Olympian Dave Rees leads the pack in the men's 10km classic.* February 8, 2007. Photograph. *Trail Daily Times*, February 2007.

The Masters Skiing Movement in Canada

Dave Rees was one of the founding members of the Canadian Masters Cross Country Ski Association in September, 1980.²⁰⁸ Dave Rees and Bill Gairdner realized the need for a Masters ski association, separate from Cross Country Canada.

Up till 1980 the older skiers who wished to race were entered into [one of] 2 classes ... 35 to 45 yrs. and 45 yrs. plus. So rather unfair for many ... so we looked at the research at the time and it seemed that performance criteria dropped in roughly 5-year intervals so that was the basis for the 5 yr. age categories. We started at 30 yrs. as that was deemed the time of life at which people had families and work commitments and less time to train seriously. I thought that 30 was a bit young but lost that one. Bill and I started the Canadian Masters association because the CSA (Cross country) was not interested in having all the categories in the National Championships. Bill was the first President and I ... Vice Pres. So, the Can Masters proceeded to put on three races of National Calibre ... an Eastern and Western Canadians and a National Championships each year. Ski Clubs sponsored the events with entry fees paying the bulk of costs.

The FIS was not interested in an xc masters although they had alpine ski masters events. So, Bill suggested that we form an international group ... the World Masters Cross Country Ski Association. Bill had the wherewithal to travel and consult with other nations and soon it happened. FIS refused to recognize a world championship for xc masters but agreed to a Masters World Cup.²⁰⁹

Gairdner and Rees created a constitution and set up the structure for the group, which was officially named the Canadian Masters Cross Country Ski Association (MCC).²¹⁰ The inaugural Canadian Masters Championship was held at Dagmar Ski Resort near Ashburn, Ontario, on

²⁰⁸ “Our First Two Years.” *The Canadian Masters Cross Country Ski Association*, Newsletter 11, September 1982.

²⁰⁹ Dave Rees, email to author, December 8, 2021.

²¹⁰ “Canadian Masters Cross Country Ski Association.” Accessed September 8, 2021. <http://cnadian-masters-xc-ski.ca/>. “As per the constitution, our purposes are to: Promote Masters cross-country skiing throughout Canada; Organize a National competition once a year; establish rules and regulations for MCC activities; represent MCC at meetings of the WMA.”

January 24 to 25 in 1982, with 125 competitors racing.²¹¹ Next Morin-Heights, Quebec, hosted the first World Masters Championship, but the FIS stepped in and refused to sanction the event. The friction with the international governing body, and their refusal to allow such an event to be called a “World Championship,” led to no event being held in 1981. The following year Upsalla, Sweden, hosted, this time with sanctioning from the FIS.

The MCC has an annual membership ranging from 500 to 800 members.²¹² See figure 7 for a timeline of the history of the Masters World Cup, as featured by the Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing and curated by Rees and Jean Bristow.

Masters World Cups

- February 1980: The first World Masters Cross Country Ski Championships held in Morin Heights, Quebec. 104 masters skiers took part.
- 1981 – no World Masters XC Championship held as FIS, the International Ski Federation, had not sanctioned such an event.
- Summer 1981 – Bill Gairdner of Unionville, Ontario founded the Canadian Masters Cross Country Ski Association. Bill was elected President, and Dave Rees, then of North Bay, Ontario, was Vice President.
- February 1982 – second World Masters XC Ski Championships held in Uppsala, Sweden, with 350 participants. During the week of competitions, Bill Gairdner proposed the founding of a worldwide masters association. This idea was enthusiastically received by all participants.
- June 13, 1982 – 14 ski nations met in Zurich, Switzerland to formalize the World Masters Cross Country Ski Association, with Bill Gairdner elected as the first President and Jan Hansen of Morin Heights, Quebec as Vice President. Member nations are represented by the President of their National Masters Cross Country Ski Association
- February 1983 – the event was renamed Masters World Cup and 520 participants from 20 skiing nations took part in the week-long competition at Telemark, Wisconsin, USA.
- The event has been held annually ever since, and today’s total entry is usually about 1,200 participants.

Figure 7. *Timeline of the Masters World Cup.* Source: “MWC History,” Canadian Museum of Nordic Sport, November 7, 2020, <http://nordicskimuseum.sixmilesourdough.com/event/masters-world-cups-2/mwc-history/>.

²¹¹ “Our First Two Years,” *The Canadian Masters Cross Country Ski Association*, Newsletter 11, September 1982.

²¹² Canadian Masters Cross Country Ski Association, accessed September 14, 2021. <http://canadian-masters-xc-ski.ca/about/>.

More recently, the Masters World Cup made its way to Canmore, Alberta, with the support of ongoing advocacy and work among ski boosters and organizers. In 2007 Rees and a committee made a bid to host the 2011 Masters World Cup in Canmore. Ultimately the Canadian Masters Association decided to back the bid by a group from Sovereign Lake, British Columbia, and this group was successful in winning the rights to host. After the unsuccessful bid for the Masters' World Cup, Rees and some others tried again. With the backing of the Alberta World Cup Society, who saw an opportunity to raise funds from the event, they presented to the World Masters' Association and the bid was successful.²¹³

The World Cup meet was scheduled for 2021, but, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, postponed to 2022. Despite a fourth wave of pandemic sweeping Alberta and the world, along with the Russian invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, the event was held March 3 to 11, 2022. Dave Rees kept his eye on target, busy preparing and undeterred, getting ready to host the 2022 World Masters' Championship in Canmore. The event was held as scheduled and featured more than 700 skiers hailing from eighteen different nations.²¹⁴

There are two sides of the organizing committee, the organizing committee and the competition committee. Dave served the competition committee as Chief of Competition. This group is responsible for "anything on snow, or anything to do with the competition itself." Dave was not involved in the planning of banquets, social events, or the like, but organized the

²¹³ Dave Rees, interview by author, June 29, 2021.

²¹⁴ "Masters World Cup Comes to Canmore Nordic Centre," RMOToday.com, accessed March 25, 2022, <https://www.rmotoday.com/local-sports/masters-world-cup-comes-to-canmore-nordic-centre-5105759>.

volunteers associated with the stadium, the course, timing, the race office, the start, and grooming of the racecourse.²¹⁵

The week of competition saw Dave Rees in the proverbial trenches. He was at the starting line long before opening races at 09:00h on race days, and was seen striding between timer stations, the finish line, and the starting line, his stride betraying no hint of the exhaustion he admitted to feeling. When Jean Bristow crossed the finish line after the 15 km classic event, Dave was there to congratulate and support his wife.

The Future of the Masters Movement

Who is a Masters Skier today? A weekday morning ski at the Canmore Nordic Centre puts one in contact with two distinct groups of regulars. There are elite athletes training for junior and senior level competition in biathlon and cross-country. While it is not surprising to see these speedsters fly past, it is also common to see grey-haired athletes pulling into the passing lane. The day lodge reveals more of these Masters-aged skiers, chatting around steaming cups of coffee after a ski. It could be any rural coffee shop, except that those conversing are dressed in form fitting ski pants instead of Wrangler jeans, and most have noticeably fitter physiques. These are the regulars at the CNC, and many are part of ski clubs and groups preparing for loppetts and competitions. While some skiers may hang up the skis and turn away from the sport upon retiring from senior level competition, many continue to pursue competitive opportunities. Still, Rees notes that “most of the Masters are people who have taken it up at an older age.”²¹⁶

²¹⁵ Dave Rees, interview by author, May 9, 2021.

²¹⁶ Rees, interview, May 9, 2021.

Dave Rees was involved with the Canmore Nordic Centre from a very early stage and returned as a Masters skier. Regardless of where he was living, he was frequently in Canmore and so it was no surprise that he and his wife Jean Bristow finally settled on Canmore as home, living close to the trails in the athlete's village and following his lifelong quest for snow:

Spray Village ...it all began in the 2010 Olympic Year... I was to go to volunteer at the Paralympic events but got pneumonia after the World Masters in Sweden on the way home so had to drop the Para experience. We were in Thunder Bay at the time but had spent the last two winters in Canmore with World Cups and trials, etc. I was here in Canmore after the Worlds and had lunch with Mike Norton who is the manager of the Spray Village and he said, "Why don't you rent in Canmore? Rent one of our houses." At that time athletes could rent downtown for reasonable amounts and of course they would need a car to live in the Spray Village so he had some difficulty to find tenants. Since we were not "bona fide" high end racers I checked it with Mike's boss whom I had worked with in the 88 Games and all was ok ...so after 11 years we are still in the Village.... and our cheques don't bounce!!!!²¹⁷

It is telling that despite their advanced years, Rees and Bristow are still regarded as suitable candidates for the "Athletes Housing." Here they have joined a unique community of cross-country skiers as they aged.

There are many different reasons for people to pursue sport as they age. The benefits are well documented, but there is a difference between skiing for fitness and deciding to register, train, and compete as a Masters athlete.²¹⁸ One competitor in particular has captured the ethos of the Masters movement. Skiing on the same course as some athletes less than half his age, some of whom were still fresh off international elite-level competition, Exshaw's Bill Hamilton was

²¹⁷ Rees, email, December 8, 2021.

²¹⁸ See D. Taylor, "Physical Activity is Medicine for Older Adults," *Postgraduate Medical Journal* 2013; 90:26-32.; and Claire R. Jenkin et al., "Sport and Ageing: A Systematic Review of the Determinants and Trends of Participation in Sport for Older Adults," *BMC Public Health* 17, no. 1 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-017-4970-8>.

there to compete nonetheless. Hamilton was still in recovery from a broken back, but was on the course racing as hard as possible:

At 86 years old with a bad back, sore hip, and less than ideal preparation time, the long-time cross-country skier had every excuse to throw in the towel and simply watch the event for skiers aged 30 and up from the sidelines. But for the lover of frozen trails, Hamilton wouldn't have been content with that alternate reality of not racing his brains out. On March 11, Hamilton showed up at the Canmore Nordic Centre, with a walking cane in hand, determined to race. "This was a big challenge for me," said Hamilton. "This is the first time I've gone that distance since 2011, and it's a race."²¹⁹

It was clear that skiing was a way of life for Bill Hamilton, and he was committed to push himself.

For Rees too, skiing is a way of life, and it has shaped every aspect of his life. Dave and his wife Jean have made Canmore their home primarily for the access to snow. They reside in the athletes' village within walking distance of the Canmore Nordic Centre, among National Team athletes aspiring to high level success in biathlon and cross-country skiing. Inclusion in this community reflects respect for Rees as a "Canadian ski legend" and his lifelong devotion to the sport as an Olympian and leader as well as an elder and a wellspring of knowledge. They are unusual neighbours: the community elders in the village, and still-competitive athletes. Both remain serious in their devotion to their craft, skiing daily in the winter, running, cycling, and mountain biking in the summer, and until recently, roller-ski training as well. Time spent training is punctuated with races and events around the world. When asked why he still wants to

²¹⁹ "'Determined' 86-Year-Old Exshaw Skier Recovering from Broken Back Competes at Masters World Cup in Canmore," RMOToday.com, accessed March 25, 2022, <https://www.rmotoday.com/local-sports/determined-86-year-old-exshaw-skier-recovering-from-broken-back-competes-at-masters-world-cup-in-canmore-5158773>.

compete, Rees said that for him it is the “intrinsic desire to go as hard as you can go.”²²⁰ His wife, according to Dave, is motivated by the camaraderie associated with competition. He explicitly notes the “sisterhood” that he observes among the female competitors who see one another at Loppetts and races around the world. Bristow reflected on this camaraderie during a 2014 trip to ski and compete in Europe:

The World Masters is a unique experience – multiple languages are spoken, old friends from opposite sides of the world greet one another, and there is an international feeling or camaraderie as everyone prepares to “put it all out there” on the start line. We enjoy watching all the age classes (skiers attain Masters status on their 30th birthday), but find it particularly inspiring to watch men and women in their sixties, seventies and eighties racing as hard as they can. I, Jean, look at my own fellow-competitors, in the F8 category which is women aged 65 to 69, and I see a group of kindred spirits, many of us grandmothers, out there having fun, pushing ourselves to the limit, and then celebrating a good race as we cross the finish line with hugs, smiles and congratulations in many languages!²²¹

It is easy to see how the kinship is a draw for the skiing athletes who spend so many hours toiling solo on far-flung trails.

²²⁰ Rees, interview, June 9, 2021.

²²¹ Jean Bristow, “Masters Skiing in Europe: January 2014,” Canadian Museum of Nordic Sport, July 5, 2019, <http://nordicskimuseum.sixmilesourdough.com/tales-from-the-trail/competitions/masters-skiing-in-europe-january-2014/>.



Figure 8. John Gibson, “Jean Bristow, Masters World Cup 2022: Day 6 Long Distance Classic.” Facebook photo, March 15, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/albertaworldcup/photos/pcb.5048113208544792/5048108135211966>

What is the future of the Masters Movement? Participant numbers are good, but Dave has noted that the average age of skiers is climbing.²²² This indicates that fewer younger skiers are entering the ranks of Masters. Anecdotally, Dave finds that fewer high-level racers are continuing to the Masters level as well. This does not bode well for the future of Masters skiing. Furthermore, he notes that there is not a great deal of philanthropy among Masters cross-country skiers. They will devote some time and do some volunteering, but Dave notes they are generally a conservative group and do not tend to financially contribute to the growth of the Masters movement.²²³

While the Masters' movement is comparatively young, Rees has noted that the average competitor is not. "They are getting older," he said, seriously and without irony.²²⁴ It seems that younger skiers are not joining those who want to be part of an organization and compete or participate in events. Former competitive skiers in Canada are not continuing to race the way their European counterparts are, according to Rees.²²⁵ He speculates that the wide array of activity choices may play a major role in this:

The Masters groups are getting older and the younger skiers are not so interested... a dilemma. I think that there are many more options these days for outdoor activity dragging people away. I think that a reduction of the race distances in the Masters official races might help too as working folks don't have time to train for 30 plus kms.²²⁶

²²² Rees, interview, June 29, 2021.

²²³ Rees, interview, June 29, 2021.

²²⁴ Rees, interview, June 29, 2021.

²²⁵ Rees, interview, June 29, 2021.

²²⁶ Rees, email, December 8, 2021.

The continued high participation numbers in less-competitive loppett events like the Canadian Birkebeiner, which allow weekend warriors to test their mettle against other hobbyists, supports this assertion.²²⁷

With time, an athlete sees a decline in physical performance. This can be fast and brutal in some sports like gridiron football, rugby, or hockey. In sports such as cross-country skiing the decline is slower, and slightly gentler, but it occurs nonetheless. Dave Rees eventually left the national team as a competitor due to his career and family obligations, but continued to ski and run. Perhaps his motivation to push himself, and constantly improve on what he is capable of in light of circumstances, was a factor in allowing him to continue.

Age and time affect all people. Although Dave continues to ski and run, he has noted that he has more falls, slower recovery times, and a diminished pace. This leads to some frustration for Rees, who is still looking to improve while battling hard against physical decline. Nevertheless, he embodies the message of ParticipACTION and sport for health and recreation by staying extremely active. Indeed, his weekly regime would lay waste to most sedentary Canadians, despite approaching 80 years of age.

I am not skiing much now ... too busy with organization and actually not eligible for the MWC as I will be on the Jury in my Chief of Competition role. Saves a lot of training. But I hope to compete again and next year the MWC is in Seefeld, Austria ...I have been there before at the '76 OWGs and more recently to ski so it would be fun to return to race again.²²⁸

²²⁷ “Frontpage - Event Info,” Canadian Birkebeiner Society, March 14, 2022, <https://canadianbirkie.com/>.

²²⁸ Rees, email, December 8, 2021.

Catriona LeMay Doan, one of Canada's most successful and recognizable Olympians, recently remarked in an interview on CBC sports on her own career that "I started out grassroots, and you go back to grassroots. I play old lady hockey at the community level. It doesn't matter what level you get to in between, you always go back to grassroots."²²⁹ While this certainly does not apply to every Olympian, it does to Dave Rees. His level of involvement as he nears eighty embodies sport transitions and active living across the lifespan. As the resident elders of the Athlete Village in Canmore, both Dave and Jean are experienced role models not only for their own age group but for the next generation of skiers young and old alike.

Rees and the Ski Hall of Fame

The North Bay Sports Hall of Fame inducted Rees in 1982. While he was automatically inducted due to his two National Championship wins early in his career, Rees was described more descriptively as a "skier, teacher, and author." The *North Bay Nugget* summed up his skiing medal haul:

He won his first National Junior Medals at age 15 and at 39 last winter was third in the Ontario Masters Cross Country. As a junior Rees had a 3rd and fourth in the U.S. Nationals; he won four gold, three silver, and a bronze in the Canadian Championships.... He took 20 gold, six silver and four bronze in Ontario-Quebec championships. As a senior he had nine gold, six silver and two bronze medals in Ontario-Quebec events; added three gold, five silver, and seven bronze in the Canadian Championships;....²³⁰

²²⁹ *Catriona LeMay-Doan Chats About Being a Mentor and the Power of Sport*, CBCnews (CBC/Radio Canada), accessed February 17, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/sports/olympics/rbcspotlight/#catriona-le-may-doan-chats-about-being-a-mentor-and-the-power-of-sport>.

²³⁰ "Skier Rees named to Hall," *North Bay Nugget*, Sept. 15, 1982, 16, in Dave Rees Private Collection, Box 1, Ski Clippings 2.

In 2003 Dave Rees was inducted into the Canadian Ski Hall of Fame. The induction category is Nordic, Cross Country, Official, Coach.²³¹

²³¹ “David Rees,” Canadian Ski Hall of Fame and Museum, June 17, 2021, <https://skimuseum.ca/honoured-members/david-rees/>.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Museum Curator and Collector

David Rees is a collector of historical ski gear. As it filled his garage and storage, the idea of a ski museum emerged. At some point his role changed and he became the curator of Canada's first and only Nordic ski museum. From his own collection and selected pieces from others' collections, Rees curated artefacts into displays which he managed and administered, formalized as the Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing in Canmore, Alberta. This unique museum warrants closer attention not only for its material culture artifacts as tangible assets but also for its curation and exhibition values as a community museum designed by cross-country skiers and housed within an Olympic legacy facility.

The Origins of the Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing

In September 2011, Dave Rees created a proposal for the museum, which he presented to the Canmore Nordic Centre administrators. Ottawa was already the home of the Canadian Ski Hall of Fame and Museum, but the rationale for the Nordic museum set it apart. Rees identified the need to celebrate Nordic skiing in Canada. The CSHFM had primarily an alpine focus, with only a few items related to Nordic skiing. The collection closed to the public in 2011, and Rees further recognized the need for a repository to collect, catalogue, and care for historical items that formed the material culture of Nordic skiing in Canada.²³² Rees noted the lack of an integrated national perspective on both the cultural and sporting history of Nordic skiing in

²³² "Proposal for A Nordic Ski Museum," September 2011, in Dave Rees Private Collection, Computer Folder 1.

Canada.²³³ The Canmore Nordic Centre, a legacy site of the 1988 Winter Olympics, was an ideal location, and would become the eventual home of the ski museum dedicated to Nordic skiing. The purpose of a museum dictates how its collections and exhibitions are displayed, where it is located, and how people interact with it. The CMNS is located within a sportscape, a tourist destination, and a recreation site. The museum is a product of Rees' career as an educator and academic, and his lifelong immersion in skiing. The collection formalizes his role as a "keeper of the record," and the stated purpose of the CMNS was described as follows:

- To catalogue and display the history and evolution of Nordic skiing in Canada – highlighting equipment, technologies, events, personalities, NSO organization, etc.
- To celebrate the 1988 Olympic Winter Games Nordic skiing events venue – its construction, evolution and ultimate uses – also a celebration of its enduring legacy and the several sports that enjoy consistent use of the venue.
- The museum would be instructional and educational in nature. Exhibits would have descriptions explaining their use and history to essentially bring "life" to inanimate artifacts. These objectives might be accomplished by use of physical and/or virtual means, as described in the following sections.²³⁴

Rees summed up the rationale in 2013 while speaking to a local newspaper:

"I've been skiing all my life, Nordic skiing in particular, and I've got a basement full of stuff," said Rees. "I thought it's just about time we started recording the history of the Nordic sport in Canada, because it's been over 100 years. A lot of people are entering the sport and they have no idea where it came from. We need to know the roots of our sport."²³⁵

²³³ "Proposal for A Nordic Ski Museum," September 2011, in Dave Rees Private Collection, Computer Folder 1.

²³⁴ "Proposal for A Nordic Ski Museum," September 2011, in Dave Rees Private Collection, Computer Folder 1.

²³⁵ Justin Parsons, "Skiing History on Display in Canmore," *Canmore Leader*, January 9, 2013, 9.

Academics are trained to observe gaps in research or knowledge. Dave Rees demonstrated this propensity when he saw the need for the museum and systematically went about transforming his collection and donations from others into a cohesive, curated display of sport history. As such, Dave Rees and Jean Bristow began to plan for their museum in 2011. One of the activities they undertook in 2011 was a tour of several small museums in the Kootenays, which had a skiing focus. During this trip they were able to familiarize themselves with museum practices, as they observed the methods of display and labelling used.

Rees and Bristow were able to pitch the idea in 2011 to the advisory committee at the Canmore Nordic Centre and generate interest from Andrew Nickerson of Canmore Business and Tourism. Nickerson suggested a second location, perhaps in downtown Canmore.²³⁶ This resulted in a small display at the Canmore Visitors Centre, which was in place until 2015. Given Rees' interest in the material history of Nordic skiing, it is not surprising that the museum proposal was for a physical museum, with collections and displays for viewing. In contrast, the Canadian Ski Hall of Fame and Museum has gone completely virtual. Most geological collections, which Rees would certainly be familiar with, have rock specimens and objects on display, and often these can be handled without fear of damage. Other parts of a collection are observable behind glass, but still allow for users to regard the actual object. The Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing follows this physical model. From its outset, Rees indicated that a "central theme of such a museum would be a display centred around artifacts from the '88 Olympic Ski Events held at the CNC."²³⁷ At the same time, Rees wanted to use the items on

²³⁶ Jean Bristow and Dave Rees Private Papers, "A Short History of the Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing," unpublished notes, 2020.

²³⁷ Bristow and Rees, 1.

display to tell the story of Nordic skiing in Canada, including the formation and evolution of the governing bodies and sport organizations.

Rees also proposed the inclusion of a Canadian Cross-Country Ski Hall of Fame within the museum.

Presently there is a Hall of Fame attached to the Canadian Ski Museum which accepts nominations from all ski and snow board disciplines. However, there is a need to recognize more people from the Nordic side of skiing – people who are deserving but may not have a national profile across all of skiing to be recognized in the Hall of Fame above. The Hall of Fame could recognize Nordic skiing personalities, sport builders, athletes, coaches, major and long-term funders, etc.²³⁸

Currently, sixteen individuals associated with cross-country skiing are represented in the Canadian Ski Hall of Fame. They are also represented at the CMNS.

The question of how to house the museum was broached in the initial proposal. The importance of location cannot be understated. Today's museum draws a lot of its character from its setting in the Canmore Nordic Centre, in the Day Lodge where people can interact with it in a casual way. Rees has said that the Canmore Nordic Centre is the premiere location of cross-country skiing in the country, and that as Canmore is known around the world, it is the ideal location for the museum.²³⁹ To turn around and see the actual place where the 1988 Games were contested, and to be afforded the chance to participate by skiing or walking on the trails make the experience far more immersive than a computer simulation or virtual exhibit. The grandeur of

²³⁸ Bristow and Rees, 2.

²³⁹ Justin Parsons, "Skiing History on Display in Canmore," *Canmore Leader*, January 9, 2013, 9.

the setting can intensify the experience as well, as the museum is nestled in a place of unrivalled beauty.

There were three options for the museum, each with advantages and drawbacks to be considered. The first option was a dispersed museum, set throughout the day lodge. The second option was to house the museum in an addition built on to a current building, and the third option was to house the collection in a stand-alone building. Rees noted that the latter two options would lend credibility to the museum if in future there was a push for it to be branded as a national museum, rather than a regional one.²⁴⁰ With his own collection and some items borrowed from Olympic gold medallists Chandra Crawford and Beckie Scott, Rees was given a small corner to display items. Even this was met with some pushback initially, as the chosen area was a ledge which was commonly used by skiers to set their boots on! From this start, the museum display evolved into what it is today.

Classifying the Museum

In his introduction to *Representing the Sporting Past in Museums and Halls of Fame*, Murray Phillips presents a typology for classifying sport museums. He divides these museums into four types: Academic, Corporate, Community, and Vernacular. The Canadian Museum of Nordic skiing would be classified as a community sport museum according to Phillips' typology, in contrast to academic, corporate, and vernacular museum types.²⁴¹ These museums are

²⁴⁰ Parsons, 9.

²⁴¹ According to Phillips typology, there are different purposes for these museum category types: Academic museums mediate among diverse viewpoints. Corporate museums are centred on image creation, branding, marketing. Community museums celebrate sport and community connections. Finally, Vernacular museums employ sport history and memorabilia

generally small, and often contained within club buildings or facilities associated with a single sport. The Webb Ellis Rugby Football Museum in Rugby, England, which is housed in a cobbler's workshop where Gilbert rugby balls were formerly made, is a good example. Similarly, Rees' museum is housed primarily in the Canmore Nordic Centre, a place of pilgrimage to many who were involved in the 1988 Olympics or in cross-country skiing in general.

Typically, these community sports museums are based on the collection of a single individual, an insider in the sport on display. Phillips observes, "Knowledge created in community museums may be derived from scholarly sources, but more commonly it is supplied through oral traditions or by those who have direct experience with the sport's past."²⁴² Rees approached the creation of the CMNS in the manner of an academic, but brought with him the experience of a life in the sport.

Rees' collection at the Canmore Nordic Centre, which spans many decades, is a representation of the material culture of cross-country skiing. Visitors are drawn to his display of skis as they evolved from wooden objects to customized and highly-scientific items made from space-age materials such as ultra-high molecular weight polyethylene. The display of bindings, which visitors can touch and fiddle with, shows how the application of physics and minute adjustments on weight transfer can pay big dividends on the podium. The craft of waxing is not overlooked, and the role it has played in racing outcomes is on display. Visitors can look at the clothing of volunteers and racers, as well as photos of memorable events. These photos, examples of visual culture, are used to directly support the material culture on display as well as

conducive to selling goods and services. See Murray G. Phillips, *Representing the Sporting Past in Museums and Halls of Fame* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 6.

²⁴² Phillips, *Representing the Sporting Past*, 15.

impart social relationships and stories. A rich sampling of the history of sport can be told by this material culture. Dave's mindset, inclined towards teaching, spreading information, and shaped by academia, led him to retain certain things, with the thought that they formed part of a rich story.

It is important to categorize this material culture and form some conventional language to use when discussing it to allow for the academic rigour historians need when studying sources that differ from traditional archival and written sources. Those sources, having long been the realm of historians, have a typology and conventions. Hardy, Loy, and Booth have proposed a typology of material culture, focusing on six categories that help historians frame a focus on collections. "No classification scheme can completely capture the vast material world of sport but we offer the following typology" as they write and further outline:

- Playing Equipment** (e.g. balls, clubs, racquets).
- Venues** (e.g. arenas, courts, fields, pools, rings, rinks, tracks).
- Training Equipment and Sport Medicine Technology** (e.g. treadmills, weight-lifting machines, heart rate monitors).
- Sportswear** (worn by players, coaches, band members, cheerleaders, fans).
- Prizes** (e.g. certificates, medals, ribbons, trophies).
- Symbolic Artifacts** (e.g. colors, flags, mascots, pennants).
- Performance Measurement Technology** (e.g. stop watches, laser beams).
- Ephemera and Detritus** (e.g. discarded ticket stubs, betting slips).
- Memorabilia** (collections of any of the above).²⁴³

Although the use of a typology can have some limitations, it is a useful starting point for considering the range of artefacts in the CMNS.

²⁴³ Stephen Hardy, John Loy, and Douglas Booth, "The Material Culture of Sport: Toward a Typology," *Journal of Sport History* 36, no.1 (2009): 132.

Rees' collection is that of an insider. There is value in that, as the historian can look at what was deemed important by an individual immersed in the sporting culture. Rees' museum contains items that fit in all the above categories (apart from Ephemera and Detritus), but he appears to be particularly focused on equipment. His displays of bindings, skis, and waxes are especially detailed and tell a story of the development of the sportcraft that is tightly intertwined with the development of cross-country skiing. The equipment displays form the most interactive and sensory parts of his museum. A visitor can toy with the various bindings, feel the wood of the skis of an earlier time, and catch the aroma of pine tar emanating from the glass display case when warmed by the afternoon sun. This reflects Rees' own interests, as he is fascinated with the minutiae of the sport, and with things that may not be noticed by an outsider. A newcomer or casual skier who has only skied on no-wax skis may never have the same association with the scent of pine-tar and wax, until recently a ritualistic aspect of skiing. Rees keeps a chunk of pine tar on his desk, which no doubt serves as a genie's bottle of memories as it wafts out the smells associated with a life on skis. Moreover, his experience as an elite athlete demanded a close and ongoing interplay engrained with skills as his own wax technician.

The skis, boots, and bindings chronologically record some of the most important advances in ski technology, from the finely crafted Nova Scotia "Blue Nose" skis of the 1920s to today's high-tech marvels. Many of the advancements are ones that Rees can recall in his lifetime. For instance, the skis of the 1950s era that broke his leg at Rossland, British Columbia, were wooden and lacked flexibility on ice and a quick release binding system to spare many a bone-breaking accident.²⁴⁴ The ski rack displayed on exhibit shows similar wooden cross-country skis and various technological changes that also align with his life experiences and serve

²⁴⁴ See Chapter 2.

as a tangible expression of his own biographical stories. For example, the skis that Rees picked up from the factory in Sweden and raced on in the 1968 Grenoble Winter Olympic Games are on display, in a chronologically arranged line-up of sample skis.



Figure 9. *Rees and author in front of ski wall at Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing. Photograph by PearlAnn Reichwein, used with permission.*



Figure 10. Race ski from the 1968 Winter Olympics. Photograph by author.

The 1958 roller-skis that Rees built at the age of 15 are also on display in the museum. They are heavily built with repurposed parts, clumsy-looking in comparison to today's streamlined rollerskis, but showing a sophistication of design that belies their 15-yr old creator.



Figure 11. Roller ski built by 15-yr old Dave Rees in 1958. Photograph. Source: “Roller Skis: A Visual History,” Canadian Museum of Nordic Sport, July 23, 2021, <http://nordicskimuseum.sixmilesourdough.com/equipment/skis/roller-skis-2/roller-skis/>.

Those rollerskis are representative of several important tropes in the history of cross-country skiing in Canada. One of these is the grassroots, do-it-yourself ethic of cross-country skiing. A young Dave Rees wanted a way to train during the summer, when there was no snow, so he created a way to do that. He did not rely on others to provide him with the means to better himself. In the preface to his book *Cross Country Skiing*, Rees described cross-country as a “low-cost route to self-reliance,”²⁴⁵ and he had held this belief from an early age. From making

²⁴⁵ Rees, *Cross-Country Skiing: Touring and Competition*, Preface.

tracks in a local park, to packing the landing ramp of a ski jump, to making one's own waxes, and building rollerskis, Rees demonstrates the do-it-yourself (DIY) ethos. This celebration of material culture in the museum exhibition tells the story of cross-country skiing in Canada in a rich and textured way. Visitors can respond to the objects and tangible gear; they make their own storylines as co-producers of knowledge.



Figure 12. *Items from Dave Rees' athletes kit, Olympic Games, 1968. Kit includes cologne, Gillette shaving kit, and Gitannes Filtrés cigarettes. Photograph by author.*

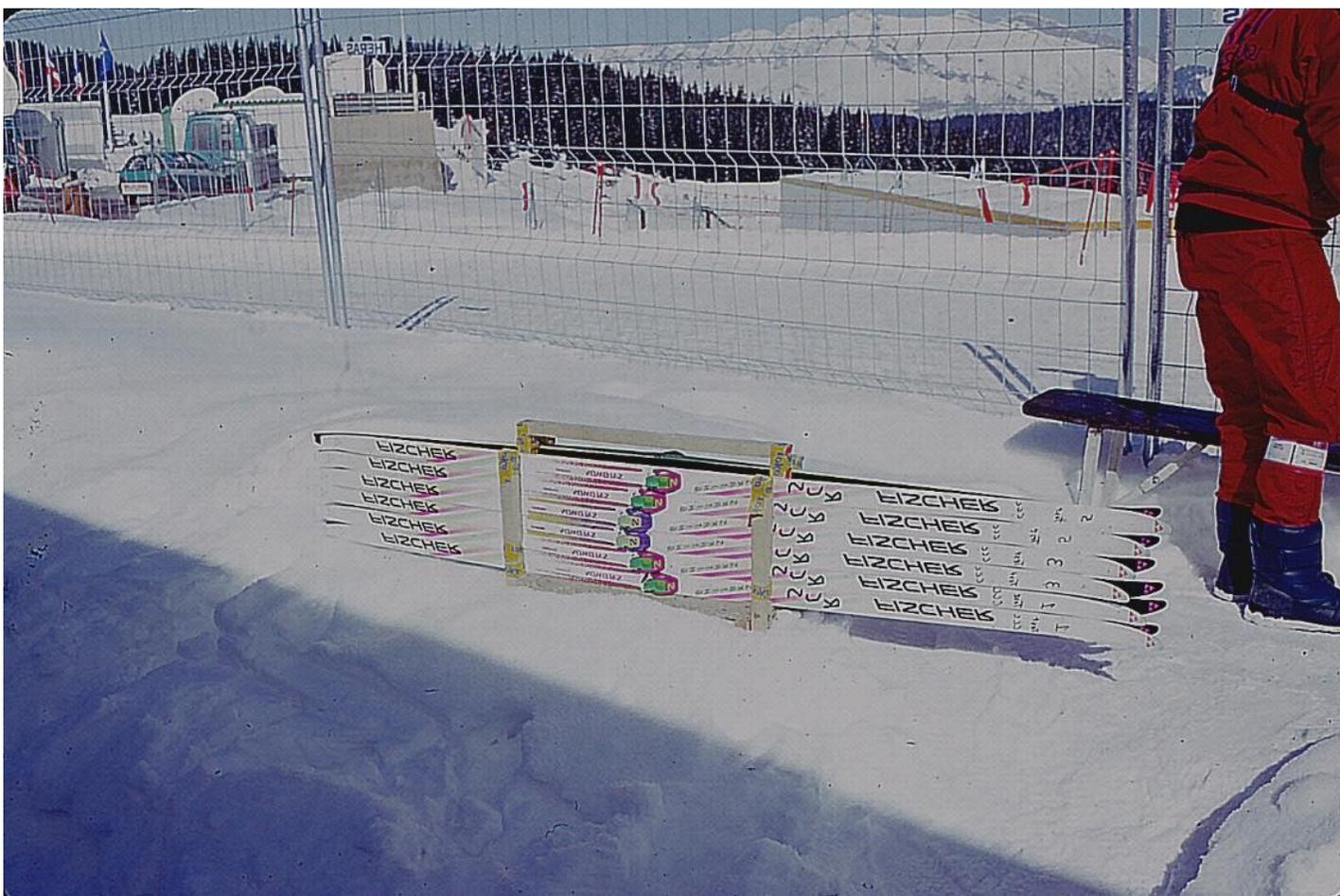


Figure 13. Rees' DIY ethic and problem-solving nature on display at the 1992 Albertville Winter Olympics in France. Photograph by Dave Rees, used with permission.

CANADA WAS FIRST!!!

At the 1992 Olympics in Albertville and at the cross-country venue at Les Saïses, the wax test area was not very close to the wax cabins and transporting 15 or so pairs of skis back and forth became tedious. Wax the skis; put on the ski ties; load the bags and take them to the test area; undo the ski ties; test and then redo the ties; re-load the bags; transport to the wax cabin and unload the bags and undo the ski ties once again!

So a device was designed by Dave Rees (glide wax helper to Dave Wood) to shortcut all of the fiddle. Made from scavenged wood and nails (hard to find around the wax cabin milieu), Toko ski tape and a borrowed saw (we had a hammer), the ski holder worked a charm. It drew a lot of interesting looks as well and low (sic) and behold the next year on the circuit more professional models began to appear. The holders are still used to this day.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁶ Dave Rees Private Collection, Computer Folder 1.

Rees displays an interest in the technological advancements in skiing and the ways in which skis function. At first glance a ski is a relatively modest piece of sports equipment – a long flat board strapped to the feet. Through trial and error over more than a thousand years, the ski has become a high-tech implement. Minute differences in weight distribution due to binding placement or base material configuration at the molecular level can result in wins or losses measured by hundredths of a second. The craft of the ski is fascinating in the way that craft and tradition coexist and intermingle with modern scientific advancements. For example, Rees spoke about the groove that runs lengthwise along the bottom of skis:

That groove on the bottom? Nobody knows why there should be a groove on the bottom. Intuitively it is like a keel, because the snow gets up in the groove and keeps you going straight, but in fact most of the tracks now, the snow doesn't get up in the groove. So why is the groove still there?²⁴⁷

Rees goes on to describe an experimental ski he tried without the groove, and admits, “it didn't work a darn.”²⁴⁸ The shape of skis has not varied much. Some attempts at a javelin tip ski were unsuccessful, and so the narrow waist of skis persists. After commenting that “the skis themselves haven't changed a lot in three thousand years,” Rees went on later to talk about sintering plastics and molecular configurations of base material. The side-by-side existence of traditional craft and modern technology is fascinating, and is communicated by Rees' museum.

The story of wax is another example. We briefly discussed the use of “dope,” or wax formulations, in the races held on long, fast, skis in California and Nevada during the gold rush

²⁴⁷ Rees, interview, February 19, 2020.

²⁴⁸ Rees, interview, February 19, 2020.

era. Miners began to make and race exceptionally long skis and winning prize money made the craft of waxing increasingly important.

During the longboard racing era, victory often relied on the dope (the equivalent of modern waxes) that skiers applied to the bottom of their boards. Dope could consist of ingredients such as whale spermaceti (a fatty substance derived from the Sperm whale and first used in candle making), pine pitch, oils from trees like cedar, hemlock and sugar pine, as well as rosin and balsam. Secret mixtures were cooked and then allowed to cool before being hand-rubbed into the base of the skis. Dope-makers were so important that champions split their winnings 50-50 with their wax man.²⁴⁹

Rees' museum includes various waxes, ranging from homemade formulations to renowned waxes seen as key in big international or Olympic wins. This insider knowledge is key to Rees' museum and its representation of the material culture of cross-country skiing. The importance of something as apparently mundane as ski wax and base preparation to the development of sport, and the coexistence of craft and modern technology might not be obvious to an outside observer. The insider serves as a guide to the historian and the museum visitor.

²⁴⁹ Mark McLaughlin, "The History of Longboard Ski Racing in the Sierra," *Tahoe Weekly*, February 3, 2019, <https://thetahoweekly.com/2016/03/longboard-ski-racing/>.

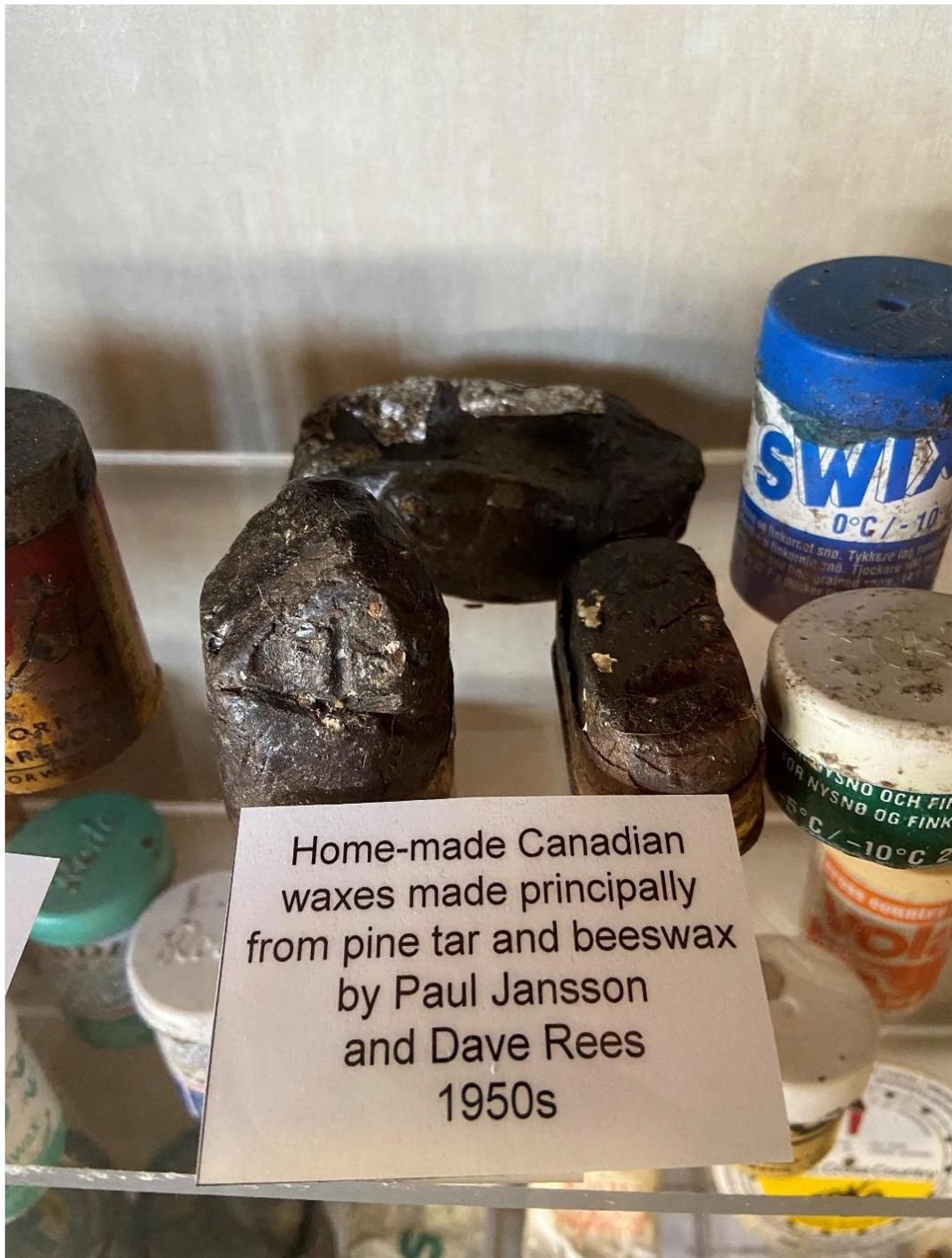


Figure 14. *Homemade ski wax.* Photograph by author.

Preserving the Story of Cross-Country in Canada

Rees began as a collector, but he moved from a collector to a curator as he selected which items to display and acquired pieces from other people's collections. Vamplew notes that "(m)any of the smaller museums are, in fact, one-person affairs, the result of a lifetime's devotion to a particular sport and the hoarding of associated memorabilia."²⁵⁰ Reilly has noted that successful exhibitions with sporting themes rely on a partnership between those who have curated the collection and the individuals who hold sports history knowledge.²⁵¹ In the case of the Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing, Rees is both a curator and one who holds knowledge about the history of cross-country skiing.

He has a board of directors, but the energy and direction for the museum come primarily from Rees and Bristow. Unlike many large museums, which are dependent on external funding and sponsorship, the museum is not built upon a basis of or supported by marketing or branding. The situation is such that the museum does not have to "pay its own way" to survive. The museum is not saddled with the responsibility of attracting people to the Canmore Nordic Centre. Its agenda is to preserve and communicate the history of Nordic skiing in Canada, and to celebrate the Olympic legacy of the Canmore Nordic Centre. Its purpose is to preserve the history of cross-country skiing, which has value to many, regardless of any greater commentary on society. The signage at the museum explains to visitors what the items are, or the significance of the inclusion of certain individuals in commemoration. Any further interpretation is left up to

²⁵⁰ Wray Vamplew, "Facts and Artefacts: Sports Historians and Sports Museums," *Journal of Sport History* 25:2 (1998): 271.

²⁵¹ Justine Reilly, "The Development of Sport in Museums." *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 32:15 (2015): 1780.

the viewer. Sport historians may balk at the lack of critical analysis, but at the same time Rees' collection does not communicate the sentimentality common in a vernacular museum. The nature and quality of his artefacts seen at close range, however, lend a human and tangible quality.

While some may categorize the museum as vernacular due to its location in the day lodge at the Canmore Nordic Centre, certain characteristics set it apart. Vernacular museums are described by Phillips as those that are situated in other businesses, like bars or restaurants, and are closely tied to the selling of goods or services. By creating emotional responses and sentimental feelings, vernacular museums attempt to generate business through the selling of associated goods.²⁵² Certainly, in Canada it is not uncommon to see hockey jerseys, sticks, pucks, or autographed posters in sports bars, taverns, or restaurants. These shrines to hockey heroes are employed as décor, and they capitalize on local affinities to establish rapport with customers. They identify the establishment as one belonging to the same family as the customer, with the underlying goal of increasing sales of food, drink, haircuts, or whatever the custom of the establishment may be.

Some authors are critical of sporting museums that lack a critical focus in the analysis of a sport. Vamplew writes, "A major complaint voiced by sport historians is that museums are too uncritical in their approach to sport. Many sports museums, even at the elite level, eschew the controversial: they are reluctant to give the whole picture and deliberately omit things from history."²⁵³ Rees' museum does not delve into controversy. It is a representation of the sporting past of cross-country in Canada and is intended to bring this history into the lives of those who

²⁵² Phillips, *Representing the Sporting Past*, 17.

²⁵³ Vamplew, "Facts and Artefacts," 274.

use and visit the Canmore Nordic Centre. Its goal is straightforward: to represent the material culture and history of Nordic skiing in Canada and to bring this history to everyone.

Rees' museum is a community museum with value to the sport historian. The primacy of written and archival sources in historical research has meant that such collections have sometimes been overlooked, but their ability to provide textured and rich historical information and communicate history in a real and visceral way to a wider audience is invaluable. Each object or artefact of material culture provides a wellspring for interpretation, analysis, and experience. Part of the value of these sources lies in the fact that they were not intended to serve the academy or a corporate interest. They stand as pieces of history on their own, to be discovered, analyzed, interpreted, and experienced, free from alteration through the lens of critical interpretation. The caution is that Rees had to decide what to keep, and why, and how to display it.

The influence of the curator and his or her own personal point of view must be acknowledged and considered, but one must acknowledge the value in history presented by a citizen-insider as it is accessible, with the preservation of history as the goal. This collection stands on its own, and viewers can interpret things how they will, but the artefacts still stand there on their own. Historians can find so much value here when it is presented without pretense. There is an agenda, but it is simply to bring the history of the sport to the public. The collection is an expression of freedom from schools of thought and critical points of view, theories, and one can view a piece of history through fewer lenses, refractions, and formulations.

A visitor can experience the museum without supervision or guidance, which is a characteristic of many community museums.²⁵⁴

Small museums are often criticized for representing the viewpoint of the sporting bodies with which they are associated. Vamplew writes, “Several curators felt unable to challenge the conservative views of the trustees, sporting bodies, or clubs that employed them and who often saw sport solely in terms of competitive, adult, male dominated activity.”²⁵⁵ The collection at the Canmore Nordic Centre is certainly not male-dominated, as heroes such as National Team skiers Sharon and Shirley Firth as well as Olympic gold medalists Beckie Scott and Chandra Crawford are featured prominently, and the focus on competitive aspects of the sport form only a portion of the displays. Cross-country skiing in Canada as a sport and activity seems comparatively free from the machismo and in-your-face attitude of major sporting pastimes with corresponding professional ranks. Builders, volunteers, and participants figure largely in the museum, as their contributions to the sport are acknowledged and celebrated. Rees’ involvement at so many levels of the sport and in so many roles may have given him a diversified point-of-view on its history in Canada. He is not tied solely to one club or to one location. The relative size of cross-country as a sport in Canada, especially when compared to powerful organizations like the NHL or the NBA, also plays a role in the character of the museum at the Canmore Nordic Centre.

The location of the CMNS within a provincially-funded building as opposed to a headquarters of a large professional organization is another factor to consider. There is no impetus for branding or money-making. The museum exists to preserve and represent the history

²⁵⁴ Phillips, *Representing the Sporting Past*, 15; for Alberta examples see, Lianne McTavish, *Voluntary Detours: Small Town and Rural Museums in Alberta* (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2021).

²⁵⁵ Vamplew, “Facts and Artefacts,” 272.

of cross-country in Canada. The collection is notable partly for the lack of evangelizing rhetoric and proselytizing that comes when museums have an externally dictated mandate or agenda, beholden to funders or sponsors. Although Vamplew states that “commercialism and modern museums are bedfellows,”²⁵⁶ curator Rees and his collection have managed to exist without reliance on profit or corporate sponsorship. This has enabled the collection to remain free of any external agenda which could influence or even dictate the content and presentation of the museum. When modern museums rely on the combination of entertainment and education, they can become the source of narratives that reinforce organizational agendas.²⁵⁷ Through a unique combination of factors, the collection in Canmore appears to be free from the pressure to meet outcomes dictated by corporate interests or by agendas created by Nordiq Canada, the national organizing body for the sport.

Celebrating the Legacy of the 1988 Winter Olympics

Part of the goal of the museum and exhibitions was to see the legacy of the '88 Games preserved. When asked about how he decided what to display, Rees said, “We started with the Olympic thing because it was the anniversary of the '88 Olympics. I think that’s kind of what got this place hooked into giving us this space.”²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ Vamplew, 273.

²⁵⁷ Gregory Ramshaw, “Living Heritage and the Sports Museum: Athletes, Legacy and the Olympic Hall of Fame and Museum, Canada Olympic Park,” *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 15:1,46, doi: 10.1080/14775081003770983

²⁵⁸ Rees, interview, February 19, 2020.

In line with its purpose and location, the CMNS, has a section devoted to commemorating and celebrating 1988 Winter Olympics. This is logical as the Nordic Centre was a purpose-built host venue for the games, and the games have provided an anchor to cross-country skiing in Canada. This seminal event was of such significance that it warrants a large amount of space and prominence. While this does serve to cater to the tourist or fan of the Olympics, the Olympic section of the museum does not overshadow the other exhibits. Vamplew claims that one of the reasons sports historians have rejected many sports museums as sources in the past is because “sports museums cater to the nostalgia market and have, almost without exception, institutionalized the concept of a “golden age” in virtually every sport.”²⁵⁹ Even while celebrating the '88 Games and some of the past successes in the sport, the location of the museum prevents the visitor from hearkening back to a “golden age.” Turning 180 degrees from the cabinets and displays, a visitor is greeted with the grandeur of Mount Rundle and the sight of skiers on the trails. The large windows and well-framed start/finish stadium area can make visitors feel as though what they are seeing in that moment *is* the golden age, as they recreate in setting that is a legacy of the Olympics but also of the moment. Animation is sensory and kinesthetic as the exhibitions interplay with the environment of the venue as a historic site.

²⁵⁹ Vamplew, “Facts and Artefacts,” 270.



Figure 15. *Rees (left) discussing the Calgary '88 Volunteer exhibit with author.* Photograph by PearlAnn Reichwein, used with permission.

The museum does not focus on the cult of Olympism or fetishize the Olympic movement. It commemorates the specific events that took place in 1988 at the Canmore Nordic Centre, however it features an often unsung group – the volunteers – alongside the Olympic athletes and top skiers. Dave Rees has a unique point of view on these Games, having been the chief-of-courses for the cross-country and Nordic combined events. The volunteers and massive community effort that resulted in the success of Calgary '88 is prominent. Reflecting on the Games, where he was chief-of-courses, Rees marvels at the number of people involved. The

uniforms of volunteers are on display beside the medals and the athletes' uniforms, and form an important part of the picture.

When Rees came back to Canmore after 1988 he saw something missing. On looking around, he realized there was not even a sign at Canmore Nordic Centre stating that it was an Olympic venue. Rees felt the venue was undersold:

There wasn't even a sign here that it was an Olympic venue. I thought, "This is nuts!" Because I spent a lot of time here during '88. I was the chief-of-courses. I thought, "Wow, there were a lot of people involved." You saw the pictures of the volunteers. There was just nothing. Why not promote this?²⁶⁰

He felt the need to celebrate the Games and promote their legacy, which was the Canmore Nordic Centre and community volunteers. Although there have been struggles at times to maintain standards needed to meet World Cup standards, the Canmore Nordic Centre is in many ways a model of a successful Olympic Legacy site. Describing the Centre, Rees states, "This is a super legacy. This is one of the very few in the world that has actually been able to capitalize on that Olympic legacy."²⁶¹

Interaction

The immersive nature of the CMNS allows a visitor to feel like they are part of the story. An employee of the Webb Ellis Rugby Football Museum remarked, "Our museum makes you nod, and recognize and feel a part of this game called rugby."²⁶² At the Canadian Museum of

²⁶⁰ Rees, interview, February 19, 2020.

²⁶¹ Rees, interview, February 19, 2020.

²⁶² Phillips, *Representing the Sporting Past*, 15.

Nordic Skiing, it is easy to feel the same. A visitor might peruse the cabinets and displays before or after gliding on the world-renowned trails of the Canmore Nordic Centre. Looking out the windows after looking at the artifacts and memorabilia reveals the splendid panorama of Mount Rundle, and at its feet skiers zip in and out of view in what resembles a great winter game of Chutes and Ladders. One might see high-level competitors putting in the graft to prepare for a race in some far-flung place, as well as first-timers unsteadily shuffling by on a pair of rented skis.

The people visiting and using the Canmore Nordic Centre take an interest in the museum because they are immersed in a sportscape. Here they can observe the process of evolution which led to the boots on their feet and the high-tech skis sitting on the rack outside. Older skiers can look at sports artefacts and remember their own journey in cross-country skiing, before heading out to take part in the same activity represented in the collection. The placement of the museum within the venue where that activity is central allows the observer to participate in a way that video simulations and facsimiles of sporting activities can never reproduce because no simulation can meet the grandeur and beauty of the setting itself.

Ramshaw has noted the shift in the heritage museums that have moved from a traditional approach with barriers between the display and observer, to one that is more interactive.²⁶³ This shift from “temple to forum” is accomplished at the Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing, not through technologically advanced displays or slick simulation, but through a combination of location and content.²⁶⁴ I was fortunate enough to watch as a lad of about seven or eight explained Rees’ roller skis to a younger boy. Pointing to the roller skis, and then to a photo of a

²⁶³ Ramshaw, “Living Heritage and the Sports Museum,” 46.

²⁶⁴ J.D. Harrison quoted in Ramshaw, “Living Heritage and the Sports Museum,” 48.

biathlete in a race, he explained, “This game is like that one, only it is in summertime.” His friend nodded in complete understanding. Here I was able to observe a display of the notion of museum as forum. People can sit with a coffee and a poutine right next to the display, and discuss the items casually. The nature of the space encourages discussion, and as the observers are primarily skiers or others who use the facility which houses the collection, they are immersed in the activity not as worshippers but as participants.

The Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing embodies the museum as forum. Ramshaw writes, “Much of the shift in museological focus stems from the contention that museums are ‘not so much places of dissemination, but spaces which facilitate communication, discussion, exchange and interaction’.” Rather than overtly trying, as Ramshaw suggests, to “amuse bored schoolchildren and weary tourists,”²⁶⁵ Rees’ displays are unassuming, conspicuously low-tech, yet still draw attention. In the setting of the Canmore Nordic Centre, any attempt at either simulation or showiness would be easily overshadowed by the majesty of the mountains, and the stateliness of the peaks visible out of the windows. The austerity of the displays allows an observer to feel less separate from what is on display, and this intimacy creates what modern museums seek – a place to discuss, learn, communicate, and interact. It has a common appeal that invites everyone into heritage as a living moment rooted in place.

The Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing in Canmore Alberta, housed within the Canmore Nordic Centre, exhibits the characteristics of a community museum, being primarily a result of the efforts of Dave Rees. While sharing characteristics with modern museums, it also

²⁶⁵ Harrison, quoted in Ramshaw, 48.

reflects postmodern museum characteristics in its capacity for creating interaction with both the museum and the setting. The material culture represented forms a valuable source for the sport historian and a point of interest for the casual observer. The setting of the museum within the sportscape of the Canmore Nordic Centre and the surrounding natural beauty serve to communicate the history of Nordic skiing in Canada, and stimulate conversations in ways that match the personality of the curator himself and the roots of cross-country skiing in Canada.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion: A Cross-Country Lifetime

Dave Rees was coming to visit the city of Beaumont with his wife Jean in 2022. He mentioned that he would be bringing me some old clippings and “bumf.” What he shared with me as a graduate student of sport history was a valuable addition to my source material. The collected letters, newspaper clippings, speaking notes, and awards contained inside a couple of old ski boot boxes became central to my thesis and informed my project significantly thanks to his penchant for collecting and retaining rare papers as a ski archive. I was able to cross-reference Rees’ personal anecdotes and stories from oral history interviews with newspaper articles, scrapbooks, and other sources to provide a more developed picture of the central story of the thesis. Talking with Rees and reading his personal papers became a reflexive process of conversation that co-produced knowledge we came to know each other. This interaction between archival sources and oral history animated the story of Rees and enriched my biography in terms of cohesion and substance. It allowed the subject of the biography, Dave Rees, to walk off the page in full colour.²⁶⁶

While researching and writing this thesis, I realized that Rees influenced the development of skiing in post-war Canada in more ways than I had previously envisioned. The research brought a fuller picture both the depth and breadth of his career. I had aimed to investigate the history of cross-country skiing in Canada in relation to societal trends, with Dave Rees and the Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing as key entry points and sources of inside knowledge. It became clear after initial investigation that Rees was a more important figure in this history than

²⁶⁶ Ambrosius and Leckie, “Biography Matters,” 3.

I was aware of, and that there was no cohesive record telling the full story of his contributions without documenting his own outlook on his experiences. The thesis then shifted from oral history to a full sport biography of the life of Dave Rees and his defining influence on the growth and development of cross-country skiing, at both the elite and participatory levels, in postwar Canada.

Further findings indicated that Rees was influential in a great number of areas, and that his commitment to service extended well beyond coaching and event organization. His academic career dovetailed with his involvement in his sport, from his connection to the places he studied and skied in to writing a best-selling ski guide, from his role as a keeper of the record to that of an elder transmitting valuable knowledge through his sharing of life stories and insights.

I have documented the life of Dave Rees and placed it in the postwar history of cross-country skiing in Canada. His life's work in service to the sport warrants recognition. During my research it became clear that Rees' contributions were vast and spanned not only decades, but also various areas of his sport across competition, coaching, and administration from local clubs to the national and international level of sport institutions. Now in his late seventies, he also continues to enjoy skiing and racing. This is a record worthy of documentation. My next section overviews three themes for interpretation and analysis based on earlier chapters.

Dave Rees and Sport in Post-War Canada

The examination of Rees' youth and his involvement with skiing is valuable in that it exemplifies the transition of sport in postwar Canada. Rees began participating in the sport during a time when Nordic skiing was low-tech, localised, and provincial. He was involved as

cross-country developed and grew, becoming an international competitor in the late 1960s. Rees was a contemporary among other Canadian Olympians, such as Bruce Kidd, but, except among other cross-country skiers, he was much less known.²⁶⁷ A similar phenomenon occurred in many other sports as technology, Olympism, and government involvement combined to bring sport to the forefront of public consciousness and participation in physical activity became a normal part of Canadian society.

Dave Rees began skiing in a unique time and place. The winter incubator of North Eastern Ontario, with its combination of opportunity, tradition, and support, served to develop his talent. Skiers skied, whether that be on the slalom course, the downhill, the cross-country trail, or the precarious and intimidating jumping scaffolds erected on the tops of rocky hills. Rees began to compete in a time when even the most elite Canadian skiers were part-timers, tracks were skier set, and one competed with whatever gear was available to strap on your feet. Canada was a nation in transition, and sports were regarded as something for schoolchildren. In Northeastern Ontario there was work to be done; mining, surveying, scouting, and so forth, but those who adopted the traditions of the Finns skied and formed clubs.²⁶⁸ The idea of recreation beyond childhood may not have taken hold with everyone, but there were some who stayed involved with sport beyond childhood, and this model must have imprinted itself onto the young Rees. He had skied through the evolution and development of elite competition, the growth of the Olympic movement in Canada, and the fitness boom of the 1970s. He has seen skiers go from a borrowed pair of used skis, or making payments on a set sold from the back of a smoke

²⁶⁷ Kidd, *A Runner's Journey*.

²⁶⁸ For cross-country skiing in interwar northern Ontario Finnish Worker's Sports Associations and the Worker's Sport Association of Canada, see Kidd, *Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 146-83.

shop in North Bay, Ontario, to managing the waxing and selection of a quiver full of possibilities for a single race overseas. Cross-country skiing went from a localized activity centred around areas with a significant Scandinavian influence, to a fitness craze, and finally to a solidly-entrenched Canadian pastime. From his first flirtations with skis as a toddler in Kirkland Lake to racing in or planning the Masters' World Cup, Rees has participated in, administered, coached, and guided at all levels of the sport.

Rees and the Development of Elite Skiing in Canada

Dave Rees has had a life in sport that reflects not only trends in skiing, but in Canadian sport more generally: the way we view recreation, the development of high-level training and the administration of athletic programs for international competition, and the larger Canadian cultural context in which sports and recreation are situated. As an academic, Rees developed the organizational skills and diplomatic capabilities to allow him to function as an effective sport administrator. He also exhibited the diplomacy and tact required to achieve organizational change in sport institutions. Rees' career in academia meshed well with his work as a volunteer sport administrator. He was able to use his skills in organizational leadership and planning to serve at the helm of multiple organizations. Reflecting, perhaps, a bit of the anti-authoritarian bent of his academic mentor, Patrick Arthur Hill, Rees was also able to orchestrate a split with Alpine at a time when Cross Country Canada needed autonomy from the Alpine juggernaut.

Dave Rees demonstrated an ability to help lay the foundation for several successful organizations, and this skill may be due in equal parts to personal aptitude and his career as an academic. Rees was the catalyst and planner behind the establishment of Cross Country Canada as an autonomous organization, and drafted up the by-laws and constitution for the organization.

He was a founding member for the Canadian Association of Nordic Ski Instructors. As a founding member of the North Bay Nordic Ski Club, Rees used his organizational knowledge, his understanding of ski trail construction, and his geological knowledge to not only build a successful organization but also an excellent trail network suitable for racing, training, and recreational skiing in his home town. The Masters ski movement in Canada would not be where it is today without the initial input and ongoing contribution of Rees, who served as the first vice-president of the Canadian Masters Ski Association in 1980. He has repeatedly displayed an ability to plan, develop, and support successful organizations.

Out of necessity, elite athletes often become self-centred and inwardly focussed. They do not have the energy or time to spend thinking of others as they pursue their goals. Dave Rees was able to balance his elite pursuits with service to others. Rees began coaching others while still a competitive athlete, and his record of giving back to the sport also began early. He displayed a love of information and the sharing knowledge. This may have been, in part, a result of the sparse technical coaching he received as an emerging athlete. While some support was there, Rees has indicated that any technical knowledge came through observation and trial-and-error. The motivation to improve appears to have been self-induced. The nature of this type of learning may have led to his inclination to help others who sought to learn about the intricacies and subtleties of weight transfer, a diagonal stride, or the alchemy of waxing.

The Man and the Museum: Rees as a Keeper of the Record

His personal inclination to keep records and his academic skills have enabled Rees to function as a storyteller and keeper of the history of cross-country skiing in Canada after the Second World War, and the culmination of this lies in the Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing.

Over the decades Rees had amassed a large personal collection of skiing memorabilia and artefacts. The need for room in his basement, the recognition of a need for a dedicated Nordic ski museum, and his own organizational skills brought about the birth of the CMNS. As Rees decided what to include and what to omit, he moved from being a collector to a curator. The material culture in the museum is the vehicle through which Rees tells the story of Nordic skiing in Canada.

Along with telling this story, the Museum helps preserve the legacy of the 1988 Winter Olympic Games. With a permanent location in the Day Lodge at the Canmore Nordic Centre, site of the 1988 cross-country and biathlon events, the museum is a reminder to all guests of the lasting impact of the Games. Not unlike Norway's Ski Museum at the famed Hollmenkollen site overlooking Oslo, it rivets visitors on a sport heritage site that is also a renowned world class facility.

The CMNS does not use visual effects, computer simulations, or intricate technological displays to achieve its goals. The setting is enough. Visitors are immersed in a world-class sportscape, surrounded by natural beauty which would eclipse any attempts to vie for attention. In Canmore at the Nordic Centre, the Canadian Museum of Nordic Skiing sits like an altar in the chapel of the Rockies, at the foot of Mount Rundle, Ha Ling Peak, and the Three Sisters.

As I examine the constraints and limitations on this study and situate it within the diminutive canon of works about cross-country ski history in Canada, several points come to mind. One person's story inevitably connects to others and more research is needed to fully describe the interplay of cross-country skiing across Canada's many regions. Likewise, this is one story about Dave Rees as a cross-country skier and many other stories remain to be explored.

Access to additional sources such as archives can alter and augment interpretation and understanding as an ongoing facet of historical work. Nonetheless documenting and interpreting Dave Rees' life story, experiences, and defining contributions adds to a more complete understanding of the sport and its practitioners. Others have mythologized the legends of Norwegian cross-country ski pioneers in Canada such as Herman "Jackrabbit" Smith-Johannsen, who is often credited with bringing the sport to Canada, and Bjørger Pettersen who compiled his own memoirs detailing his coaching career. On the other hand, Rees dedicated a lifetime of quiet effort into making racing, sport communities, and his museum a space for intergenerational transmission of ski culture in Canada. He saw what cross-country skiing was in Europe as an athlete at the Grenoble 1968 Olympics, and what it could be come in Canada. His vision led him to wrest institutions from Cross Country Canada as a break away from the Canadian Ski Association in 1989. Building institutions of sport and ski racing was also implicit in his desire to create a vernacular museum for the commemoration of Nordic skiing in Canada, starting with an Olympic legacy as his curatorial framework yet positioned amid the daily life of skiers at the Canmore Nordic Centre day lodge. As I conclude my study, Dave Rees has successfully wrapped up another major event as an organizer of the 2022 Masters World Cup.

I opened this thesis with a descriptive passage about skiing at the Canmore Nordic Centre. Although I was able to spend a few days on the trails in Canmore during personal visits, the interim period was marked by a pandemic and the cessation of in-person research activities. Closing out my research, I was able to attend the final day of the Masters' World Cup in Canmore, where Dave Rees was the Chief of Competition. This massive event welcomed over 800 athletes, along with coaches and supporters, from around the world to the Nordic Centre.

The parking lot had multiple high-end camper van units, mostly with U.S. plates. Plates from various Canadian provinces told me that others had driven in for the event from across Canada. Flags of other nations adorned the toques and tights of participants from across Europe. There were shuttles from downtown running athletes to and from the venue. At the racecourse, amidst the cowbells, cheers rang out in multiple languages, and racers ranged from thirty-something powerhouses just out of international competition to eighty-something athletes still showing their prowess and fighting spirit, going all-in on grueling distances. They were the personification of the spirit Dave described, when discussing his motives, where he spoke of an “intrinsic desire to go as hard as you can go.”²⁶⁹

The event appeared to run like clockwork, with racers in different categories lining up and starting at exact intervals. Skiers in multiple-lap races came past the starting area, picking up refreshments from race volunteers. The ski-corrals held those who were readying for the start of their races, metres away from exhausted competitors crossing the finish line to mark the end of their World Cup. There were timers, starters, marshals, and all manner of volunteers who worked in cheerful certainty. At the heart of the hustle, was Dave Rees. He moved from place to place, and like a real leader, was supporting the volunteers and making sure that everyone had what they needed to complete their assigned jobs, ensuring the smooth execution of running a world class race.

The tracks were groomed to perfection, and the course carefully laid out. Racers in tight, aerodynamic suits waxed and re-waxed skis for the changing conditions. They carried impossibly light, brightly coloured skis and carbon fibre poles with tiny racing baskets, wore streamlined boots and futuristic sunglasses; most had multiple pairs of skis to choose from in

²⁶⁹ See p.100.

their quiver. Yet less than two hundred metres from the starting line, in a display case inside the Canmore Nordic Centre, stood the Edsbyns-birch-based skis with hickory edges that had carried Dave Rees through every cross-country event in the 1968 Olympics in Grenoble. Throughout that change, Rees has been there, at the forefront of progress, while keeping track of the past. Some thirty-four years after presiding over the competition site of 1988 Winter Olympics, Rees is still an invaluable source of knowledge and leadership with intimate knowledge of place and community at the Canmore Nordic Centre.

Dave Rees has embraced both participatory and elite competition ethics, laying the athletic, educational, and administrative groundwork to expand Canadian development in cross-country skiing. This lifelong athlete and volunteer has not only witnessed the transformations of Nordic skiing, he has been one of its collaborative architects and memory keepers, defining his sport across six decades.



Figure 16.

Dave Rees and author at Masters World Cup in Canmore, March 11, 2022. Photograph by PearlAnn Reichweinn, used with permission.

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Dave Rees Private Collection consists of two boxes (Box 1 and 2). Box 1 contains four scrapbooks (Ski Clippings 1, 2, 3 and 4), and Box 2 contains various loose material, clippings, and memorabilia.

Dave Rees Private Collection, Computer Folder 1, in author's possession.

Dave Rees Private Collection, Computer Folder 2, in author's possession.

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APPENDIX 1

CURRICULUM VITAE: ACADEMIC

DAVID L. REES

PERSONAL INFORMATION**A. ACADEMIC BACKGROUND**

B.Sc. (Geology)	1965	Carleton University
M.A. (Geomorphology)	1971	Carleton University
Ph.D. (Fluvial Geomorphology and Hydrology) ²⁷⁰	1982	University of Ottawa

Teaching Experience

1969-1970	Carleton University, Ottawa	Lab Instructor
1970-1982	Nipissing University, North Bay	Assistant Professor
1982-2000	Nipissing University, North Bay	Associate Professor
2001 -	Retired – Nipissing University	Adjunct Professor
2002	Nipissing University	Professor Emeritus

Other Related Work Experience

1964	New Jersey Zinc Exploration, Ottawa	Field Geologist
1965-1966	Geological Survey of Canada, Ottawa	Technical Officer, Geology

B. RESEARCH AND REPORTS

1. Brozowski, R. S., Topps, K. H. and Rees, D. L., "Agricultural Settlements" in A Vast and Magnificent Land: An Illustrated History of Northern Ontario, ed. by M. Bray and E. Epp, published by Lakehead and Laurentian Universities with Ministry of Northern Affairs, Ontario, 1984.
2. Brozowski, R. S., Rees, D. L., and Topps, K. H., Environmental Economic Atlas of North Bay and Area, 1978.
3. Rees, D. L., Topps, K. H., and Brozowski, R. S., Bibliographic Guide to North Bay and Area, 1978.

²⁷⁰ David L. Rees, "Streamwater Solute Variations" (PhD diss., University of Ottawa, 1981).

4. Topps, K. H., Brozowski, R. S., and Rees, D. L., Early Settlement Patterns in Selected Townships in the North Bay Area, 1980.
5. Topps, K. H., Brozowski, R. S. and Rees, D. L., Historical Landmarks of North Bay, 1982.
6. "Trends in Chlorine use in Water Supply Treatment, North Bay, Ontario."
7. "Phosphorus Loading Patterns in Trout Lake, North Bay."
8. "Sewage Lagoon Effluent Phosphorus Attenuation by a Natural Wetland near Callander, Ontario."
9. "Effectiveness of Silt Dams during Riverine Construction Program"
10. "Storm Water Quality from Urban Storm Sewersheds, North Bay, Ontario"
11. "The Trout Lake Reservoir: A Water Balance Study", Nipissing University, 1973.
12. "A Computer Method for Constructing Geological Cross-Sections," Nipissing University, 1974.
13. "Proposed Azilda to Hanmer (Valley East) Pipeline: Environmental Analysis," for Northern and Central Gas, July 1982, (with R. Delarosbel and J. MacLachlan).
14. "Proposed Twinning of Timmins Lateral: Environmental Assessment", for Northern and Central Gas Corp., Sept. 1980, (with R. Delarosbel and J. MacLachlan).
15. "Proposed Pipeline Deviation Azilda to Chelmsford: Environmental Analysis", for Northern and Central Gas Corp., Jan. 1981, (with R. Delarosbel and J. MacLachlan).
16. "Environmental Analysis of Proposed Hagar to Markstay Looping," for Northern and Central Gas Corp., July 1981, (with R. Delarosbel and J. MacLachlan).
17. "Highway 11 Corridor: Feasibility and Environmental Study", 1975 (submitted hydrological data for this report): Proctor & Redfern, 1975.
18. "Environmental Analysis of Mattawa Feeder Line" for Northern and Central Gas", 1982, (with R. Delarosbel).
19. "Chippewa Creek Preliminary Engineering Study on Flood and Erosion Control". M. M. Dillon Engineering, 1977 (submitted hydrological and water control research data for hydrologic modelling in this report).
20. "Chippewa Creek Flood and Erosion Control Phase II," Northland Engineering Ltd., 1978 (submitted research data on Chippewa to consultant for hydrologic modelling).
21. "Environmental Assessment of North Bay Airport Expansion", Environment Canada, 1979 (submitted hydrological and water quality research data on the upper Chippewa Watershed, to federal and provincial environmental agencies).
22. "Energy Consumption and Conservation Patterns in North Bay", Nipissing University (Atlas of 39 maps) (with R. Brozowski and K. Topps).
23. "The Effects on Water Quality of the Pipeline Crossing at the Mattawa Narrows", for Trans-Canada Pipelines, 1982.
24. "Sand Search for Pipe Bedding", for Trans-Canada Pipelines, 1982.
25. "Environmental Analysis of Proposed Gas Line Extension, Thunder Bay, Ontario", for Northern & Central Gas Corp. (with R. Delarosbel), 1983.
26. "Environmental Analysis of Proposed Gas Line Extension, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario", for Northern & Central Gas Corp., 1983.
27. "Environmental Analysis of Proposed Gas Line Extension, Timmins, Ontario", for Northern & Central Gas Corp., 1983.
28. "Environmental Documentation for the Proposed Ramp Sites at North Bay and Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario", for Transport Canada, 1983 (with R. Delarosbel).

29. "Evaluation of a Slope Failure on the Veuve River", for Northern & Central Gas Corp., 1983.
30. "Environmental Implications of Dewatering a Mine Shaft", for Haultain Resources Ltd., 1984.
31. "Preliminary Environmental Assessment of a Tailings Pond Site, Crocan Lake Kyanite Deposit", for R. Blais Engineering Ltd., 1984.
32. Biophysical Terrain Evaluation for a Lakefront Subdivision, Four Mile Bay, Trout Lake", for Environorth Ltd., 1985.
33. "Evaluation of Well Water Loss due to Pipeline Construction, Hagar, Ontario", for Northern & Central Gas Corp., 1985.
34. "Effects of Pipeline Blasting on Water Wells, Callander, Ontario", for Northern & Central Gas Corp., 1985.
35. "Environmental Evaluation of Road Realignment of the College Education Centre, North Bay", for The City of North Bay, 1986.
36. "Evaluation of Erosion Problems along the Gasline Right-of-way, Sault Ste. Marie", for Inter-City Gas Corp., 1986.
37. "Phosphorus Modelling of Callander Bay, Ontario", for Proctor & Redfern Engineering, 1987.
38. "Potential Fish Spawning Loss at a Bridge Construction Site in Hearst, Ontario", for Proctor & Redfern Engineering, 1990.
39. "Environmental Assessment of Iron Island, Lake Nipissing, Ontario, for Cottage Development", for B. H. Martin Consultants, 1990.
40. "Possible Impact on Fisheries in the Little Sturgeon River at the Proposed Merrick Twp. Landfill Site", for Proctor & Redfern Engineering, 1990.
41. "Environmental Inventory and Water Quality Study, High Lake, N.W.T.", for Covello, Bryan and Associates, 1993.
42. "Environmental Assessment and Mitigation of Beach Pollution Problems, Marathon Beach, North Bay, Ontario" (contributed expertise on the use of wetlands in waste water management), for Baird and Associates, 1993.
43. "Hydrologic Evaluation of the Starling Pond", for Trans Canada Pipelines, 1996.
44. "Groundwater Supply and Waste Disposal Evaluation of Proposed Development in Oro Twp", for Johnson Construction, 1996.
45. "An Evaluation of the Risk Assessment prepared for The Mark Creek Watershed Development Plan", for Friends of the Mark Creek Watershed, Kimberley, BC, 2001.
46. "An Evaluation of the Water Balance of Bednorski Lake and its Watershed", for Friends of Ha Ha Ck, Mayook, BC, 2001.
47. "Bull River Trout/Char Side Channel Feasibility Study", for Canadian Columbia River Inter-tribal Fisheries Commission (2002)
48. "Cranbrook Deep Well Evaluation", for St Mary Indian Band, Cranbrook, BC (2003)
49. "Evaluation of the Hydrogeological and Geochemical Model of the Tech-Cominco Mine Workings in Kimberley, BC" for St.Mary Indian Band, Cranbrook, BC (2004)

C. UNIVERSITY CONTRIBUTIONS

1. Taught University for 30 + yrs.
 1. Chairperson, Science and Geography Division (2 years)
 2. Director of Research - Nipissing University (3 years)
2. Chairperson and member of many university-wide committees
3. Have prepared and taught the following courses on cycled basis:
 1. GEOG 1010 Introductory Geography
 2. GEOG 1017 Introductory Physical Geography
 3. GEOG 2015 Cartography
 4. GEOG 2105 Geomorphology
 5. GEOG 2025 Statistics
 6. GEOG 3131 Air Photo Interpretation
 7. GEOG 3032 Remote Sensing of the Environment
 8. GEOG 3495 Northern Development
 9. GEOG 3975 Watershed Studies for Environmental Planning
 10. GEOL 1005 General Geology
 11. GEOL 1020 Understanding the Earth
 12. GEOG 4106 Applied Geomorphology
 13. GEOG 4126 Applied Hydrology for Environmental Planning
 14. GEOG 4127 Lakes and Wetlands
 15. GEOG 4985 Directed Studies
 16. GEOG 4995 Senior Seminar and Thesis
4. Advisor on several extra-university graduate theses

D. COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS RELEVANT TO SPECIALIZATION

Boards:

1. North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority, Board Member (provincial appointee by Order-in-Council for six years, and North Bay municipal representative for nine years)
2. North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority: Water Control Advisory Board (twenty-three years – nine as Vice-Chairman, five as Chairman)
3. North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority: Finance and Administration Committee (six years)
4. North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority: Trout Lake Watershed Planning Technical Committee (two years)
5. North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority: Lake Nosbonsing Watershed Planning Technical Committee (Chairman for three years)

6. North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority: Chippewa Creek Watershed Management Planning Technical Committee (two years)
7. North Bay-Mattawa conservation Authority: Parks Creek Watershed Management Planning Technical Committee (two years)
8. Fisheries Advisory Board of Ministry of Natural Resources (one year)
9. Technical Committee on the North Bay Escarpment Planning Process – Chairman 1998-99
10. Technical Advisory Committee, Mark Creek Recovery Project, Kimberley, BC 2001-2002
11. Columbia Basin Trust, BC - Environmental Committee - 2001-2003
12. Environmental Assessment Review Committee, Town of Canmore, Canmore, AB 2004-05

Community Consultations and Reviews:

Have assisted in the review of many documents prepared by various agencies within the City of North Bay and the Province of Ontario, including:

1. McConnell Lakes Land Use Plan (M.N.R.)
2. North Bay District Land Use Plan (M.N.R.)
3. North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority Watershed Plan (N.B.M.C.A.)
4. Proposed plan for the expansion of the North Bay Airport (M.O.E. and M.T.C.)
5. Lakefront development proposals for North Bay
6. Many engineering studies concerning hydrological aspects of environmental planning, for example:
7. Chippewa Creek Watershed Erosion and Water Control Studies, Phase I and Phase II
8. West Ferris Watershed Management Study
9. LaVase River Study
10. Mattawa River Flood Plain Management Study
11. Trout Lake Watershed Management Plan
12. Wasi Watershed Management Plan
13. Various regional management plans for the District Ministry of Natural Resources
14. North Bay Landfill Environmental Reports

In 1995-1996, worked in Yellowknife, N.W.T. with the Department of Indian and Northern Development (DIAND) as an advisor on setting up the terms of reference and a Study Office for the West Kitikmeot/Slave Study - a five-year study on collecting baseline environmental information to aid mining development and to lessen future impacts of development.

APPENDIX 2

CURRICULUM VITAE: SKIING

DAVID L. REES

The following is a summary of the highlights

International Experience

(i) Olympic Games

- 1964 – qualified as spare competitor in cross country skiing for the Canadian Olympic Team, Innsbruck, Austria
- 1968 – qualified as team member for the Canadian Olympic Team in cross country skiing, Grenoble, France. Competed in 30 km, 15 km, 4 x 10 km relay and 50 km events.
- 1976 – selected as Team Leader for the Canadian Olympic Team (cross country skiing), Innsbruck, Austria. Duties included attendance at all Team Captains' meetings, meetings with Canadian Olympic Association delegation, assisting with waxing team skis for all events, giving split times during each event and providing on-track support to team members.
- 1984 – selected as an Assistant Coach for Canadian Olympic Team (cross country skiing), Sarajevo, Yugoslavia. Duties included assisting with waxing team skis for all events, calculating split times during each event, and providing on-track support to team members.
- 1988 – selected as Chief of Course for Cross Country and Nordic Combined competitions at Calgary Olympics. Duties included ensuring all competition trails were prepared, groomed and track-set to Olympic standards, and serving on the Jury for all races (cross country and nordic combined). In this capacity - organized and managed 130 plus volunteers.
- 1992 – selected as an Assistant Coach for Canadian Olympic Team (cross country skiing), Albertville, France. Specialized in waxing and preparing all team skis throughout the Games.

(ii) Other International High Performance Event Experience

Coached or assisted with coaching for Canadian Teams at following international championships:

- 1975 – U.S. National Junior Championships (Head Coach)

- 1975-1978 – Telemark International Games (World Cup Events) U.S.A.
- 1976 – World Junior Championships, Czechoslovakia (Head Coach and Team Leader)
- 1978 – World Cups, Canada
- 1983 – Pre-Olympic Winter Games and World Cup, Yugoslavia
- 1984 – World Cup, Sweden
- 1987 – World Cups and Pre-Olympics, Canada
- 1989 – World Championships, Finland
- 1991 – World Championships, Italy

1960s to 2006 – competed in various international events as a National Ski Team member and/or Master Skier (see below).

2005 – Chief of Stadium for Canada Cup/NorAms, Canmore, AB

2005 – Chief of Stadium for FIS World Cup Events, Canmore, AB

2008 – Assistant Chief of Stadium for FIS World Cup Events

2010 – Chief of Course for FIS World Cup Events

2012 – Chief of Team Compound for FIS World Cup Events

2016 – Chief of Team Compound for FIS World Cup Events

2021-2022 – Chief of Competition for the 2022 Masters World Cup – Canmore, AB

Volunteer at several other ski events since 2005 as well.

(iii) International Official Observer Experience

1987-2005 – accredited observer at World Cups - Lahti, Finland; Falun, Sweden; Holmenkollen, Norway and at the World Nordic Ski Championships at Oberstdorf, Germany (2005).

2006 – non-accredited spectator - Torino Olympic Winter Games

(iv) International Administrative Experience

1983-1993 – Represented Cross Country Canada at several International Ski Federation (FIS) World Cup and other FIS committee meetings - including meetings for the organization of the 1995 World Championships in Thunder Bay

1984-1990 – Cross Country Canada representative to the Canadian Olympic Association

1984-1985 – Canadian representative on FIS Overseas Nations Committee

1988-1995 – Canadian representative on FIS Popular Ski Committee

National Experience (Canada)

(i) Administration

1972-2008 – served as President of Cross Country Canada (6 years) and from 1972-2008 served in a wide variety of other volunteer positions with the Canadian Ski Association and Cross Country Canada, including:

1. Northern Ontario Chairman (2 years)
2. National Ski Team Chairman (12 years)
3. National Ski Team Committee member (3 years)
4. Events Committee Chairman (1 year)
5. Events Committee (5 years)
6. Programme Committee Chairman, Cross Country Canada (2 years)
7. Technical Committee Chairman (4 years)
8. Technical Services Committee (2 years)
9. Coaching Certification Committee (4 years)
10. Executive and Board Member, Canadian Ski Association (3 years)

In addition:

1974-1975 – Founding member and 1st President, Canadian Association of Nordic Ski Instructors (CANSI)

1975 – Founding member, North Bay Nordic Ski Club - Board member for several years

1980-1982 – Founding member and Vice-President, Canadian Masters Cross Country Ski Association

1985-1987 – President, North Bay Nordic Ski Club

(ii) Officiating (certified as International Technical Delegate)

1973-2005 – Technical Delegate at many local and regional events including:

1974 – Canadian Junior, Championships, Morin Heights, QC

1975 – Canadian Junior, Championships, Midland, ON

1990 – World Junior Trials, Thunder Bay, ON

1998 – Arctic Winter Games, Yellowknife, NWT

2000 – Continental Cup, Silver Star Mountain, Vernon, BC

2002 – Canadian National (Senior and Junior) Championships, Canmore, AB

2003 – Continental Cup, Silver Star Mountain, Vernon, BC

2001 – BC Championships, 100 Mile House, BC

to – Sharkfest/ Alberta Cup, Canmore, AB

– World Junior Trials, Kelowna, BC

2005 – Canadian National (Senior and Junior) Championships, Prince George, BC

200? – Gatineau Loppet, QC

(iii) Local and Regional Race Organization

- 1975-1999 – Organized many events at the North Bay Nordic Ski Club, including several Northern Ontario Championships, Ontario Provincial Championships, Canadian Masters and Ontario University Association Championships.
- 1978 and 1989 – Chief of Race, Ontario Winter Games (included the design of the tracks and chalet and the running of all cross-country ski events)
- 1996 – Chief of Race, Arctic Winter Games trials, Yellowknife, NWT

(iv) Local and Regional Coaching

- 1960s – Club coach, Ottawa Ski Club, Ottawa, ON
- 1970-1990 – Occasional club coach, North Bay Ski Racers, North Bay Nordic Ski Club and Northern Ontario Ski Division
- 1992-2000 – Nipissing University Nordic Ski Team coach, North Bay, ON
- 2000-2003 – Club coach, Kimberley Nordic Ski Club, BC

Athletic Experience

A brief summary of racing career is outlined below:

- 1950-2006 – Competed in all levels of competition (junior, senior and masters) at the club, provincial, national and international levels. Won over 70 medals, including 37 gold. Competed in 1968 Olympic Winter Games, Grenoble, France.
- 1950-1962 – As a junior class skier (18 yrs and younger) competed in 4 types of skiing events: cross-country, downhill, slalom, jumping and nordic combined. Won first medals in National Championships at age 15 (silver in Cross Country and silver in Nordic Combined).
- 1958-1961 – Won 4 gold and three silver in Cross Country and Nordic Combined, as well as a bronze in Jumping, at the Canadian Junior Championships and 1 bronze, a 4th and 5th at the U.S. Nationals.
- 1962-1972 – Member of the Canadian National Ski Team, specializing in cross country skiing only. Over senior career won 3 gold, 5 silver and 7 bronze at Canadian National Senior Championships and 1 gold, 1 silver and 3 fourths in North American Championships.
- 1962-1963 – University competition: won all races entered.
- 1962-1972 – As a National Team Member competed for Canada several times in USA, Sweden and Norway, as well as at the Grenoble Olympics.

- 1973-2006 – Competed in Canadian Senior Championships, Canadian and World Masters Championships and many club and provincial championships. Frequently placed in top three in individual and relay competition. World Masters events were in Norway, Germany, Sweden and Italy.
- 2009-2018 – Completed 10 World Loppets (France, Switzerland, Estonia, Czech Republic, Germany, Austria, Canada, USA, Iceland, Poland) to become a gold Loppet Master.
- 1984-2019 – Competed in 15 Master World Cups.

Other

(i) Ski Publications

Author of the book Cross-Country Skiing: Touring and Competition, published by Copp Clark Publishers, Toronto. This book sold over 40,000 copies and went to three editions (1975-1982).

Wrote articles for several ski publications, including *Ski Canada Journal*.

Wrote a syndicated column on cross country skiing for the *Toronto Sun* newspaper.

Organized the coaching certification manuals and programs for Ski Canada (cross-country) in the early stages of the certification programme. Wrote the first Level 1 Coaching Manual.

Authored a section of the Trails Manual published by the Ontario Ski Council.

(ii) Presentations and Advisory Roles

Delivered over 25 seminars on waxing and skiing to clubs and organizations in Ontario and N.W.T.

Presented discussion on role of the TD to several officials and TD clinics over the years - most recently at a BC TD clinic in 100 Mile House, one in Prince George, BC and another in Canmore, AB.

Keynote speaker on equipment at the First International Cross-Country Ski Symposium, Ottawa (1975).

Technical advisor to Fischer Ski Company (Canada, 1979-81).

Ski Canada advisor to ski-testing programmes for Sears Canada (2 years).

(iii) Personal Awards/Honours in Skiing

- 1962 – Outstanding Amateur Athlete of the Year for Skiing, City of Ottawa
- 1963 – Athlete of the Year, Carleton University
- 1983 – Selected to North Bay Sports Hall of Fame
- 1984 – School racing series in North Bay named “Dave Rees Ski League”
- 1989 – First recipient of Dave Rees Award, presented annually by Cross Country Canada to volunteer who has given outstanding volunteer service to the organization.
- 1991 – Finalist for the Air Canada National Level Sport Executive of the Year Award
- 2000 – Named as one of the overall Top Ten Male Athletes for North Bay since the city was incorporated in 1925.
- 2004 – Inducted into the Canadian Ski Hall of Fame
- 2010 – One of the Skiing Olympic Torch Bearers for the 2010 Olympics