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NEWS Briefs

Election candidates set

Thirteen people are running for the four seats in the Fort Providence Hamlet Council election.

Phoebe Parent said it's the highest number of candidates she's seen run for four seats in her six years as returning officer. The nominees include Rosemary Bonnetrouge, Peter Canadien, Victor Constant, Alphonsine Gargan, Tina Gargan, Irene Lafferty, Jonas Landry, Rudolph Landry, Joyce McLeod, Betty Ann Minoza, Rosemary Minoza, Hilda Sabourin and Matthew Sabourin.

Last year only 73 people out of approximately 367 eligible voters cast their ballots in the hamlet election. Parent said she hopes to see a bigger turnout this year.

The advance poll will be held on Nov. 30, and the election on Dec. 14.

Fort Liard nomination period extended

The nomination period for councillors in the Fort Liard hamlet election has been extended.

Only four people submitted their names for the six seats by the original Nov. 9 closing date. The nomination period for councillors will now close on Nov. 16.

Nominations for mayor and the District Education Authority (DEA) have closed. Julie Capot-Blanc is challenging incumbent Wayne Newbury for the position of mayor.

Candidates for the DEA include Gilbert Capot-Blanc, Hillary Deneron, Marilyn Marcellais, Karen McLeod, Jennifer Newbury, Robert Firth, Melanie Louie and Jonathan Yeo.

An advance poll takes place on Dec. 7, and the election on Dec. 14.

Sexual assault conviction

A Fort Liard resident has been found guilty of sexual assault.

During a Supreme Court trial in Fort Simpson on Nov. 4 Judge Donald M. Cooper found Dennis Sassie, 39, guilty of one count of sexual assault. The charge stems from an incident in November 2008 when Sassie assaulted a woman in her home in Fort Liard.

Sassie will remain in jail until his sentencing, which is scheduled to be held in Yellowknife on Dec. 8.

Arena ice in progress

Work is underway in the Fort Simpson arena to create the ice surface for a range of winter sports.

The arena was flooded for the first time on Nov. 4. Warmer temperatures on Nov. 5 and 7 delayed the process.

By Sunday a fraction of an inch of ice had been formed, said recreation director Nathan McPherson. Two inches of ice are needed. McPherson said the ice could be ready in one to two weeks.

"We'd like to push for a week," he said.



photo courtesy of Shawn Alli

Trent Cui, left, and Joey Moses stand with a selection of boards at the top of the Pehdzeh Ki Snowboarding Resort that was built this fall by the recreation co-ordinator and youth in Wrigley.

Snowboard project takes off

Recreation co-ordinator and youth develop snowboard hill

by Roxanna Thompson
Northern News Services
Pehdzeh Ki/Wrigley

What started as a casual suggestion has led to Wrigley becoming home to the first dedicated snowboard hill in the Deh Cho.

The Pehdzeh Ki Snowboard Resort is the result of two-and-a-half months of manual labour by the recreation co-ordinator and youth of Wrigley. It all started when Shawn Alli got a snowboard.

Alli, who's originally from Toronto, first came to Wrigley as a Beaver volunteer in 2007-08. He returned last February to take up the position of recreation co-ordinator.

In March, Alli got his first snowboard and started learning the sport on hills around the community. When some of the youth also became interested in snowboarding, Alli threw out the idea of building a bigger hill for the next season.

"It was worth investing to build," he said.

The work began in August. Alli and youths chose a portion of the hill that drops from the community down to the banks of the Mackenzie River for their snowboarding site. The challenge was to clear the trees and underbrush off of approximately 60 meters of the hill's slope.

The job required "massive amounts of labour," said Alli.

Alli worked on the hill for four hours, six days a week, sometimes by himself and sometimes with more than 10 youths. The majority of the community's youth, approxi-

mately 18 people, helped clear the hill, said Alli.

Almost all of the work was done by hand, including chopping down trees with axes and ripping out root systems that were on the surface.

Finished product

The finished product is an advanced hill that runs down the slope and continues on a pre-existing gravel road that curves twice before reaching the riverbank. An adjoining portion of the hill that has been used for sliding in the past was cleared again and tied in to act as the beginner section. A jump made from plywood sheets placed over fuel barrels was added to each hill.

The site also includes two metal poles at the top of the hill with knotted ropes attached to assist in climbing back up the slope and a wooden sign for the facility that the youth designed in school.

Alli's plans went beyond the hill and extended to the equipment the youth would use on it. Alli did some internet research and launched a letter-writing campaign inviting snowboard companies from across North America to support the project.

As a result of the campaign Alli estimates that approximately \$17,000 worth of gear has been donated to the youth of Wrigley. The biggest corporate response came from Quiksilver Canada, based in British Columbia, who gave enough snowboards and boots to outfit 10 youths.

The Quiksilver Foundation pro-

vides support to charitable organizations and projects that match its initiative of supporting snowboarders across the globe, Shawna Olsten, marketing manager for Quiksilver Canada, said in an e-mail.

"Shawn Alli and the Pehdzeh Ki First Nation took it upon themselves to build their own snowboard hill for the local youth," said Olsten.

"We made a product donation from our DC Shoes brand in the hopes of inspiring a strong community of snowboarders in the future."

Other sponsors included York University in Toronto, which donated hoodies, and Transworld Snowboarding of California, which provided sets of snowboarding jackets and ski pants, goggles and helmets. From the NWT, the Sport North Federation gave \$300 each for 17 youth, which was used to purchase them snowboards with bindings.

"I think it's really admirable," D'Arcy J. Moses, Pehdzeh Ki band manager, said of Alli's work.

For one person to raise approximately \$17,000 of top-line gear without the help of government departments is incredible, said Moses.

"Each kid is wearing one thousand dollars of gear," he said.

With snow on the ground and their new gear in hand, youth in Wrigley are out snowboarding almost every day. Until the Pehdzeh Ki First Nation secures insurance for the resort hills, the youth are using other hills around the community, said Alli. Insurance is expected to be in place by the end of the week.

The youth are learning to snowboard through trial and error.

"A few are falling down. A few of them are fearless, they just fly," said Alli.

Snowboarding is helping young people stay active in the winter, when normally there's not much else to do except snowmobile, Alli said.

Inspiration

Savannah Baton, 13, said it was watching Alli snowboard that got her interested in the sport.

"It looked like fun," she said.

Baton said she came about twice a week during the construction period to work on the hill, cutting down trees and slashing brush. The end result looks good, she said.

Baton, who is using one of the donated boards, said she enjoys the speed of snowboarding but isn't ready to take the jumps yet.

Joey Moses, 14, said he was ready to help when Alli came up with the idea of making a hill.

"I thought it was awesome and going to be a lot of fun," said Moses.

Clearing the hill involved a lot of hard labour but it was worth it to get the end product, he said. Snowboarding on the other hills around Wrigley involves having to dodge trees.

Moses, who's using donated goggles, gloves and a helmet, said the companies who came forward to support the project impressed him.

"I think that was really generous," he said.