

# Kawartha Nordic Strategic Plan 2020-2025

October 18, 2019 (v2.6)

## Land Acknowledgement

Kawartha Nordic respectfully acknowledges that our facility and trails are located on the Treaty 20 Michi Saagiig territory and in the traditional territory of the Michi Saagiig and Chippewa Nations, collectively known as the Williams Treaties First Nations, which include: Curve Lake, Hiawatha, Alderville, Scugog Island, Rama, Beausoleil, and Georgina Island First Nations.

Kawartha Nordic respectfully acknowledges that the Williams Treaties First Nations are the stewards and caretakers of these lands and waters in perpetuity, and that they continue to maintain this responsibility to ensure their health and integrity for generations to come.

## Introduction

Our strategic plan was developed by Kawartha Nordic (KN) in a process championed by the Board of Directors and a sub-committee throughout 2018 and 2019. A strategic directions survey was sent to all members in April/May 2018 asking for feedback on capital improvements, snowmaking and membership in Cross Country Canada. Tara McDonough was then engaged as the external consultant to facilitate us through the development process starting in Fall 2018. The process included five facilitated sessions, including the current Board, staff and some past Board members and volunteers. In December 2018 all members were invited to a brainstorming session on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Two additional consultation opportunities with all members were held February 2019 (draft Vision, Mission, and Values) and October 2019 (full draft plan).

The strategic direction provides a roadmap for organizational planning and sets the priorities for the 2020-2025 time horizon. A number of potential initiatives for infrastructure improvement, staffing growth and climate change mitigation require significant investment of club resources in the form of money and volunteer time. The strategic plan priorities are rooted in the core values and principles that were created in the first stage in plan development.

This is a living document and will be updated and modified as the club grows and identifies new initiatives.

## History

Founded in 1976 by a group of avid cross-country skiers from Peterborough, Ontario, KN was originally focussed on the annual Kawartha Ski Tour event. The Kawartha Ski Tour was an annual loppet event that attracted skiers from across Ontario. The loppet ran from Apsley to Buckhorn, a distance of 40 kilometres. In 1989, an 18-acre property was purchased by the club to secure access to the ski trails that were developed around the ski tour and to allow the building of the Cossar Cabin as a day chalet. The tour was cancelled in the early 1990s due in part to inconsistent snow conditions.

Youth programs have been an important part of the club since 1988 when the first Jackrabbit program was started at the Maitland farm. In 2002, we had a children's learn-to-ski program at the Cossar Cabin which then re-launched in January 2004 as a formal Jackrabbits program at the new WOODfine Chalet. Youth programs have grown tremendously since then to offer fun, instructional programs for children 4-12 years old. Starting in 2008, the racing team (Athlete Development Program) for youth 12-18 years old now competes across the province.

With support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, KN opened skating trails for the 2002-2003 season and membership has grown steadily since. The club was rapidly outgrowing its facilities and so in 2004, supported by a significant fundraising campaign and volunteer effort, the Nordic Legacy campaign was initiated to purchase 350 acres of land and build a new chalet. The Cossar Cabin and surrounding 18 acres of land were sold in 2005 to help fund the property purchase and new chalet. Construction of the new chalet continued through the winter of 2005-2006 and by December 2006, the club opened the WOODfine square log chalet on the new Nordic legacy property, immediately south of the old property. Also that year, 10 kilometres of snowshoe trails were opened. The next major expansion (again with funding from the Trillium Foundation) came in 2008 with the purchase of a Pisten Bulley groomer which greatly improved the quality of grooming and overall skiing experience. For the 2010-2011 ski season, hydro was installed at the club and a ski shop was opened in temporary trailers in the parking lot, offering rentals, lessons, and day passes. A third Trillium grant was received in 2011 for the purchase of a newer Pisten Bulley groomer.

In 2014, a fourth Trillium grant was received to expand youth programs and facilities. Lighting for night skiing was installed on 2.5 km of trails surrounding the Woodfine Chalet. A well and septic were installed for washrooms, to be located in a separate washroom building adjacent to the main chalet. Four staff positions were hired for the 2014-2015 season for a day lodge attendant, groomer, head coach and youth program coordinator. Funding was also received through the Healthy Kids Community Challenge to purchase skis for school-based programs. Returning to our roots, the club has hosted the 'Kawartha Enduro' ski race for several years and significantly hosted the Ontario Youth Championships in 2016 and 2017.

Today, KN offers over 40 kilometres of both classic and skate trails, as well as 10 km of snowshoe trails through scenic, Canadian Shield wilderness. KN is a not-for-profit organization, governed by a volunteer board of directors, and operated by numerous volunteers and several seasonal staff.

## Membership

Kawartha Nordic has a proven capacity to grow. We are now the second largest ski club in Ontario. Over the last 15 years, the number of KN members has increased by 50% reaching a record of 1004 members in 2018. Membership is cyclical related to weather and youth programs. When the preceding year was a poor snow year, membership numbers often fall. Memberships tend to increase when youth program numbers increase. Our weekend children and youth programs are very popular and often have a waiting list (150-180 children and youth). KN continues to attract new members each year with approximately 20% of the membership being new each year.

In the last 5 years, membership, program activities and visitors have continued to expand with adult lessons, youth programs, school groups and group bus visits from clubs across southern and central Ontario.

**Table 1: Membership Data**

| Year | Memberships | Members | Skate | Classic | Total Youth |
|------|-------------|---------|-------|---------|-------------|
| 2019 | 407         | 816     | 53%   | 82%     | 142         |
| 2018 | 471         | 1004    | 49%   | 85%     | 177         |
| 2017 | 427         | 918     | 51%   | 82%     | 182         |
| 2016 | 405         | 858     | 51%   | 84%     | 185         |
| 2015 | 410         | 835     | 51%   | 82%     | 154         |
| 2014 | 376         | 777     | 45%   | 86%     | 139         |
| 2013 | 360         | 766     | 42%   | 84%     | 135         |
| 2012 | 389         | 780     | 39%   | 84%     | 129         |
| 2011 | 406         | 832     | 37%   | 87%     | 130         |
| 2010 | 385         | 790     | 36%   | 89%     | 103         |
| 2009 | 362         | 787     | 37%   | 91%     | 90          |
| 2008 | 292         | 685     | 34%   | 91%     | 64          |
| 2007 | 244         | 605     | 31%   | 93%     | 52          |
| 2006 | 271         | 628     | 26%   | 90%     | 50          |
| 2006 | 271         | 628     | 26%   | 90%     | 50          |
| 2005 | 224         | 539     | 34%   | 83%     |             |
| 2004 | 208         |         |       |         |             |
| 2003 | 180         |         |       |         |             |
| 2002 | 155         |         |       |         |             |
| 2001 | 163         |         |       |         |             |
| 2000 | 134         |         |       |         |             |
| 1999 | 155         |         |       |         |             |
| 1998 | 134         |         |       |         |             |
| 1997 | 147         |         |       |         |             |

## Mission Vision Values

### VISION

A thriving, inclusive community, inspiring a love of cross-country skiing and being active outdoors.

### MISSION

Kawartha Nordic is a community whose mission is to provide high-quality trails, facilities and programming to support and develop cross-country skiers of all ages and abilities, as they experience the joy of winter in the Kawarthas.

### VALUES

**Wellness** – a commitment to inspiring the pursuit of health and happiness

**Respect** – a collective belief in the sustainable stewardship of our environment, people and facilities

**Teaching, Learning and Coaching** – support for education for all ages and in many forms, specific to the needs of the individual

**Excellence** – a commitment to uphold and exemplify leadership and excellence by providing safe, high-quality services, events, programs, and competitions

**Volunteerism** – a belief that our shared passion and dedication can build a strong community

## Environmental Scan

Trends external to Kawartha Nordic can significantly influence the club's operations and success. Trends considered in the development of this plan include demographics, growth in cross-country skiing, climate change, and Kawartha Highlands Signature Site.

### Demographic Trends

The majority of Kawartha Nordic's membership and visitors live in Peterborough City and County. The City and County of Peterborough are in the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and are growing in population at an average rate of 1.3% per year. The increase in population will contribute to more people being in the catchment area for members and day visitors.

The Facts and Stats document of the Canadian Ski Council identifies that 45% of cross-country skiers live in households with children under the age of 18 and 53% of skiers are female. 81% have annual household incomes greater than \$50,000 and 85% own where they live. While people of all ages ski, the highest number of skiers comes from the 55-64 age group and numbers are the smallest in the 65+ age group. Challenges with age such as mobility and ability to drive affect participation in Nordic skiing. 22% of Peterborough's population is over 65, so addressing the needs of both families and older skiers is important for Kawartha Nordic.

### Growth in Cross-Country Skiing

While Ontario data on rates of skiing and trends in leisure are difficult to find, data from the United States indicates strong growth of about 13% per year. (source: Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report, Outdoor Foundation, 2015) The City of Peterborough completed a major study of recreation and culture to create Vision 2025, the 10-year plan for recreation and culture. Trail-oriented sports and being outdoors in nature came out as the top two interests of Peterborough residents during the extensive public consultation, which is a good indication that the potential for Nordic skiing is high locally.

### Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park

With the creation and development of Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park, the largest provincial park south of Algonquin Park, growth in regional outdoor oriented tourism is taking place. The closest formal access point is at Long Lake, a 10-minute drive from the Club. There is a synergy between the park and KN in attracting people to the area who have an interest in outdoor activities. The park is now setting its sights on developing winter activities that could complement activities offered at KN.

## Climate Change<sup>1</sup>

Notably, the increase in cross country skiing participation is happening against a backdrop of less snowy winters. Snowfall and snow cover are influenced by changes in both temperature and precipitation. Ontario's climate is changing, affecting annual and seasonal temperature and precipitation and influencing extreme events.

The most significant local data is:

- Annual average temperature in Peterborough County is expected to continue its observed warming trend and is projected to be about 5°C warmer by the 2080s than that of the 1990s
- Seasonally, warming is expected to be greatest in winter in the region, with average winter temperature change projected to range from 2 - 3.5°C by 2050, compared to average summer temperature change projected to range from 1.5 - 3°C.
- Over the past 30 years, there has been a significant decreasing trend of ~-9mm or -6.4% per decade in maximum SWE (snow water equivalent) for the province. In general, watersheds in southern Ontario accumulate snow more gradually in autumn, have less SWE, and melt snow faster in spring.
- It is expected that snow cover duration and SWE will decline due to increases in air temperature. A reduction of 5-10% per decade in seasonal snow accumulation is projected through to 2050 for much of southern Canada under a business-as-usual emissions scenario.

In summary, the snow season in the region is likely to become substantially compressed in response to warming. Generally, in response to declining ice cover on the Great Lakes and enhanced wind speed, lake evaporation will increase in the Great Lakes Basin during October to May. While this is expected to increase total lake-effect precipitation, there will be a higher frequency of mid-winter rain events due to the warming temperatures. Annual precipitation is projected to increase between 10-15% with dramatic increases in rainfall and decreases in snowfall. Modelling shows annual mean snowfall will decline across the region, particularly in early winter, leading to a delay in the mean onset of the snow season.

In addition to the science behind climate change, there is a strong sense of social responsibility developing that is beginning to guide decision-making throughout many sectors. The psycho-social impact is also significant with a real need to address climate change issues for the emotional health of the younger generation.

## Ski Season Length

Kawartha Nordic's ski season has been about 97 days long over the past 10 seasons. Our season length tracks somewhat with El Nino/La Nina. The 2018-19 season was the longest KN season in the past 20 years. We know that by opening earlier we gain memberships by converting day users to members. Our current fee structure is set up so that it encourages people who ski more than 7-8

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<sup>1</sup> This summary of the climate change projections for this area based on a number of sources available in the Ontario Climate Change Portal including: Zhu and Deng, 2018. *Downscaling RCP8.5 daily temperatures and precipitation in Ontario*; Ontario and Metcalfe et al. 2019. *Variability and trends in seasonal snow cover in Ontario from 1980-2010 detected using remote sensing*; OMNRF. *Climate Change Research Report 50*.

times a season save by becoming a member. Because membership is paid upfront it encourages people to ski as often as they can.

**Table 2: Length of Ski Season 2009 - 2019**

| <i>Ski Season</i> | <i>ENSO<sup>2</sup></i>      | <i>Start Date</i> | <i>End Date</i>  | <i>Length in Days*</i> |
|-------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| 2009-2010         | <i>El Nino (moderate)</i>    | <i>11-Dec-09</i>  | <i>11-Mar-10</i> | <i>90</i>              |
| 2010-2011         | <i>La Nina (strong)</i>      | <i>14-Dec-10</i>  | <i>18-Mar-11</i> | <i>94</i>              |
| 2011-2012         | <i>La Nina (moderate)</i>    | <i>31-Dec-11</i>  | <i>14-Mar-12</i> | <i>74</i>              |
| 2012-2013         |                              | <i>23-Dec-12</i>  | <i>29-Mar-13</i> | <i>96</i>              |
| 2013-2014         |                              | <i>15-Dec-13</i>  | <i>10-Apr-14</i> | <i>116</i>             |
| 2014-2015         | <i>El Nino(weak)</i>         | <i>7-Jan-15</i>   | <i>1-Apr-15</i>  | <i>84</i>              |
| 2015-2016         | <i>El Nino( very strong)</i> | <i>30-Dec-15</i>  | <i>10-Mar-16</i> | <i>71</i>              |
| 2016-2017         | <i>La Nina(weak)</i>         | <i>13-Dec-16</i>  | <i>25-Mar-17</i> | <i>102</i>             |
| 2017-2018         | <i>La Nina (weak)</i>        | <i>16-Dec-17</i>  | <i>27-Mar-18</i> | <i>101</i>             |
| 2018-2019         | <i>El Nino(weak)</i>         | <i>17-Nov-18</i>  | <i>8-Apr-19</i>  | <i>142</i>             |
|                   |                              |                   | <i>Average</i>   | <i>97</i>              |

\* Not excluding days closed mid-season

## SWOT

The analysis of Kawartha Nordic’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats was developed at a Strategic Planning Session held on Dec 3, 2018 with 22 members in attendance.

The club's most notable strengths relate to its location and ability to enjoy and capitalize on the natural beauty available. It has an abundance of space, numerous trails and feeling of wilderness. Also noted were the facilities already in place, assets and trail maintenance expertise.

Weaknesses that were pointed out include lack of covered and indoor space necessary to hold people for programs, rentals and ticket sales. There are not enough volunteers for the amount for work that needs to be done, including help with communications, running programs and facility maintenance.

Analysis of the club’s opportunities pointed to areas of expansion such as, lengthening the ski season with snowmaking, service expansion and off season use of property and facilities.

The club's largest threat is dealing with climate change. This critical issue has the potential to affect the length of the ski season and the amount of snow each year. In turn, it has potential to threaten engagement, revenue and financial health.

## OVERARCHING GOAL

By 2025, grow engagement by 20% and invest in creating high quality experiences for our community.

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<sup>2</sup> El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO)

Engagement<sup>3</sup> will be measured as all forms of participation with Kawartha Nordic. This includes members and day user skiing and snowshoeing, school groups, youth programs, adult lessons, group tours, volunteering, and other forms of participation, engagement and contact with Kawartha Nordic.

## Strategic Pillars



1. **High-value Experiences** – Continue to maintain and improve our high-quality trails, programs, services and events.
2. **Sustainable Revenue** – Develop and increase consistent revenue streams.
3. **Optimal Operational Capacity** – Ensure that our operating model, facilities and human resources are optimized to effectively deliver our core services.
4. **Loyal and Engaged Community** – Provide opportunities and experiences that will attract, mobilize and retain our members, staff, volunteers and the community.

## Strategies

### High-value Experiences

1. Improve the consistency of trail quality and maximize the season length.
2. Optimize our facilities and service offerings to enhance user experience and remove obstacles to participation.
3. Adopt land management practices that protect significant natural features, habitats, forest cover and people's connection with nature.

### Sustainable Revenue

1. Develop and implement a fundraising strategy.
2. Maximize our ability to secure grants by improving the reliability and validity of data collection processes.

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 1 for an explanation of engagement as it relates to the Overarching Goal.

3. Identify and grow user groups and event opportunities.

### Optimal Operational Capacity

1. Evolve the Board's role to focus more on governance and grow staff and volunteers to manage club operations.
2. Grow infrastructure and service capacity to maximize daily use and capitalize on opportunities.

### Loyal and Engaged Community

1. Develop and implement a volunteer strategy that encourages, balances and honours sustainable contribution.
2. Establish a communications plan that promotes engagement.

## Strategies and Tactics

**Note:** Order of tactic does not imply priority

### High-value Experiences

1. Improve the consistency of trail quality and maximize the season length.
  - a) Ensure priority trails are conducive to low snow grooming. (This could include levelling and improving drainage.)
  - b) Implement snow management in key areas. (This could include snow fencing, opening the canopy and grooming optimization).
  - c) Investigate snowmaking capability to fill weather gaps.
2. Optimize our facilities and service offerings to enhance user experience and remove obstacles to participation.
  - a) Invest in improving the walk-up experience for all guests. (This could include improving the entranceway to the trails with signage and landscaping to create a visual screen from equipment storage areas, etc.)
  - b) Improve directional signage along the trails.
  - c) Ensure user experience is consistent with the high level and standards of service that the club wishes to provide. (This could include consistency across signage, web presence, site aesthetics and cleanliness.)
  - d) Develop sustainable transportation options.
3. Adopt land management practices that protect significant natural features, habitats, forest cover and people's connection with nature.
  - a) Review and update the forest management plan for our property.
  - b) Conduct a natural heritage inventory of the property.
  - c) Develop a land stewardship plan based on the inventory to ensure protection of significant natural features, balance forest cover and activity needs, etc.
  - d) Explore opportunities for natural and cultural heritage education programs.

### Sustainable Revenue

1. Develop and implement a fundraising strategy
  - a) Investigate opportunities for offering charitable receipts.

2. Maximize our ability to secure grants by improving the reliability and validity of data collection processes.
  - a) Develop annual survey and day user data collection plan to improve data reliability and validity.
3. Identify and grow user groups and event opportunities.
  - a) Explore opportunities to support and improve youth and school programs.

### Optimal Operational Capacity

1. Evolve the Board's role to focus more on governance and grow staff and volunteers to manage club operations.
  - a) Hire a general manager.
  - b) Support the professional development and training of staff and volunteers
  - c) Develop a Risk Management Plan
  - d) Develop an Operations Manual
2. Grow infrastructure and service capacity to maximize daily use and capitalize on opportunities.
  - a) Be open to developing and leveraging partnerships.
  - b) Build new building to support rental shop, growth and programs. (This would include a site plan, building plans and supporting infrastructure.)
  - c) Improve the accessibility and capacity of the entrance facility and rental shop. (This could include improving the accessibility of the rental trailer and expanding the service area with a deck that can be repurposed in the future.)

### Loyal and Engaged Community

1. Develop and implement a volunteer strategy that encourages, balances and honours sustainable contribution.
  - a) Dedicate resources to focus on volunteer and visitor engagement.
2. Establish a communications plan that promotes engagement.
  - a) Recruit a communications resource to establish a communications plan.

### Implementation

This document outlines the mission for Kawartha Nordic and sets out our strategic direction for the next 5 years. Our decisions are guided and informed by the organizational values.

Implementation of this plan will be done through detailed action plans that prioritize and expand on the tactics included in this plan. Each year, the Board of Directors will review and prepare the action plan for the next 2 years. Priorities in the first action plan to be developed under this Strategic Plan will focus on improving trail conditions for low snow grooming, initiating a capital fundraising campaign, optimizing our governance and operations, and expanding our marketing and communications.

## Appendix 1. Engagement Model

The level of Engagement at Kawartha Nordic is referenced in the Overarching Goal. The following is a description of data gathering to support development of a quantitative metric to measure engagement. This is important to measure the success of our strategic plan in achieving our goal of increasing engagement at Kawartha Nordic.

Why is this important? It provides an easy way to quantify changes and “success” of new programs. It will also be an effective tool to monitor changes year over year; it may be important to future funding, sponsorship, or donations; grant applications are very results oriented therefore this data will support any future applications.

Data gathering at KNSC Who, When, Where, Whv?

| Information                                  | Sources   |
|--|---|
| Who uses KNSC?                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership data - age, address,</li> <li>• Day use numbers</li> <li>• KPR school groups registration</li> <li>• KNSC school programs registration</li> </ul> |
| When? (and for how long?)                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey responses</li> <li>• Youth's program</li> <li>• School group</li> </ul>   |
| Where? What trails, facilities, do they use? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Conversations</li> </ul>  |
| Why do people come to KNSC?                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Conversations</li> </ul>  |

How do we best measure "use"?

We propose an "Engagement" metric. This equation is an attempt to measure engagement of users at Kawartha Nordic. It uses participant hours as a metric. Each type of use is weighted to as accurately as possible account for each user’s level of participation. Membership is divided into 6 categories to match the survey (2019)

Youth programs are weighted based on approximated hours of participation

Here are the proposed inputs:

- Membership (grouped by usage in days per season)
- Daily ski visitors
- Other groups
- Group day visitors (bus tours etc.)
- Youth in programs / program registration
- School visits / groups (KPRDSB)
- School visits / groups (KNSC)
- Lessons
- Internal groups
- # racers High School and Club
- Snowshoers
- Volunteer hours