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UNBC, Caledonia club create full-tuition scholarship

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FEBRUARY 6, 2014

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One year ahead of the 2015 Canada Winter Games, the groundwork is in place for an educational legacy for nordic ski racers wanting to combine school with their sport.

Starting in the fall of 2015, one student chosen for the UNBC Otway Nordic Legacy Scholarship Fund will receive free tuition at UNBC for four years, the first full-tuition award for athletics in the university's 24-year history.

Private donations from Caledonia Nordic Ski Club members have already built the endowment fund to \$56,000, with the goal of reaching \$150,000 by next February. UNBC will provide matching funds for each donation of \$1,000 or more. The scholarship winner will receive up to \$5,000 per year to cover tuition costs for a maximum of four years.

Caledonia club president Kevin Pettersen says Prince George provides an ideal setup for nordic student-athletes, with UNBC and the College of New Caledonia only about a 20-minute drive away from Otway Nordic Centre.

The quality of the trails and how they are maintained and the length of the city's ski season make Otway one of the country's top nordic ski destinations. The Caledonia club, which operates the facility, is pushing for Otway to become a regional training centre for cross-country skiing and biathlon.

"This scholarship will allow us to draw in top athletes both academically and athletically, who will attract other top athletes to come and be part of it," said Pettersen.

"We've got some unique situations here which we don't recognize in our community - how uncommon it is to have a world-class facility like ours so close to the city, the university and the college."

Pettersen also would like UNBC to bring back its nordic ski teams to compete on B.C. Cup circuits, as it did several years ago.

Details of how the scholarship will be awarded and when the application process will begin have yet to be worked out by the six-member committee overseeing the fund.

"To have a community partner champion this cause, and help us develop such a creative fundraising initiative is testament to the passion of the Caledonia Nordic Ski Club members and UNBC's willingness to engage with the community in areas of common interest," said Katherine Scouten, UNBC's development manager.

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