

## **SOBC Snow Sports Festival returning to Kelowna**

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After providing great racing and development opportunities in its inaugural year, the Special Olympics BC (SOBC) Snow Sports Festival is set to return to West Kelowna in February 2014. First held in March 2013, the competitive event will bring together Special Olympics athletes from all over the province to race in alpine skiing events at Crystal Mountain Resort and cross-country skiing and snowshoeing events at Telemark Nordic Club.

Set to be held February 7 to 9, 2014, the SOBC Snow Sports Festival will also serve as a Regional Qualifier for athletes seeking to advance to the 2015 SOBC Winter Games in Kamloops.

Athletes must compete in Regional Qualifiers to earn the opportunity to compete in the Provincial Games, so the Snow Sports Festival races in Kelowna will have the added excitement of serving as a vital first stepping stone on the path toward the 2015 SOBC Winter Games, the 2016 Special Olympics Canada Winter Games in Newfoundland, and ultimately the 2017 Special World Winter Games in Austria.

"The athletes train extremely hard in their weekly programs, and competitions are where they can put everything they've learned into motion and celebrate their successes from training," said Cari Henri, SOBC Manager, Sport. "The excitement of the athletes when they attend qualifiers is overwhelming. It re-emphasizes why they work so hard and why events like these matter so much."

After attracting 145 SOBC athletes from across the province in its inaugural year, the festival should prove to be full of great racing and great educational opportunities again in 2014. Roughly 58 alpine skiers, 45 cross-country skiers, and 70 snowshoeing athletes are expected to compete in the events in Kelowna.

In addition to the competitive action, the Snow Sports Festival will also give athletes and coaches the chance to take part in educational opportunities and functional testing that helps establish baseline data from which to track the athletes' improvements and achievements. SOBC is hoping to include sessions on mental training, nutrition, and strength and conditioning, as well as time with experts facilitating sport-specific sessions.

The West Kelowna venues of Crystal Mountain Resort (alpine skiing) and Telemark Nordic Club (cross-country skiing and snowshoeing) will again be the sites for the Snow Sports Festival action. In addition to hosting the inaugural SOBC Snow Sports Festival, they also served as excellent venues for the 2007 SOBC Winter Games and 2011 SOBC Snow Sport Championships.

"Telemark and Crystal Mountain were amazing hosts again last year, and we were so grateful for the enthusiastic support we received from local volunteers," Henri said. "We saw a wonderful response from local volunteers interested in helping with the events, with more than 50 people quickly jumping on board to assist. We hope volunteers will again be interested in getting involved, because it's a lot of fun and very rewarding to interact with the athletes."

Approximately 50 to 60 volunteers will be welcomed to help stage the races and educational opportunities. Those with alpine or cross-country skiing backgrounds would be warmly welcomed, but experience is not a requirement. Please contact Cari Henri to find out how you can get involved: Call 1.888.854.2276 toll-free or e-mail [chenri@specialolympics.bc.ca](mailto:chenri@specialolympics.bc.ca).

**About Special Olympics BC**

Special Olympics BC is dedicated to providing individuals with intellectual disabilities opportunities to enrich their lives and celebrate personal achievement through positive sport experiences. In 55 communities around the province, we provide year-round training and competitive opportunities in 18 different sports to more than 4,200 athletes of all ages and abilities, thanks to the dedicated efforts of over 3,200 volunteers. For more information, please visit [www.specialolympics.bc.ca](http://www.specialolympics.bc.ca). Find us on Facebook and Twitter: [www.facebook.com/specialolympicsbc](https://www.facebook.com/specialolympicsbc) | @sobcsociety.

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