

1973-2023 Wostawea Time Capsule Story

“How the Lone Pine Café Got Its Name”

Story shared by Don Wright

For the longest time, loppet organizers used the prosaic term “drink station.” Located at different places in Killarney Lake Park, it was where skiers could grab some Gatorade and a cookie.

When Nick Russon and I agreed to organize the loppet in 2016, we put the drink station at the end of Stumpy and we asked Robert Morimanno and Felix Schwarz to run it. Taking a battery-powered boom box with them, they called it “The Distant Disco.”

(Robert could turn anything into a dance party. And we should have known that Felix was a closet fan of Eurodisco!)

In 2017, Nick and I moved the drink station to the intersection of the 4 and the 6, a more central location. I jokingly called it The Lonely Pines Bar & Grill, after one of my favourite watering holes in northern Ontario, now long gone. Felix Schwarz and John Ball were the loppet baristas that year, serving refreshments and offering encouragement.

The name kind of stuck. But two years later, John and I felt that it wasn't very family friendly. Besides, it was neither a bar nor a grill. And so, we quietly changed it to The Lonely Pines Café, although John – always the English professor – sometimes called it The Lone Pine Café, after a Canadian publisher of nature books, Lone Pine Publishing. He thought it sounded more poetic.

Meanwhile, Michel Poirier decided that it needed to be properly marked. But he also knew that there was nothing lonely about the intersection of the 4 and the 6. In fact, it's a very social place. Making it official, he formally christened it The Lone Pine Café by installing the now instantly recognizable and much-loved sign. And in an effort to make it a convenient place to kick back, greet skiers-by, and enjoy a packed lunch and a thermos of coffee, he conveniently forgot to remove – which is to say, he deliberately left – the picnic table that the city had dropped off for the 2019 loppet. Clearly the city didn't care, because it later replaced the temporary wooden table with a permanent concrete table.

In 2020, Barb Ramsay and I launched The Lone Pine Café Selfie. We thought we might get a picture or two. Boy, were we wrong! Today, it's the most popular feature of the newsletter, a fan favourite, really.

See you at The Lone Pine Café!

Donald “Sven” Wright