



4 May 2022

Dear Nordiq Canada Awards Committee,

This letter is to nominate – without reservation and in the strongest possible terms – Eric Luiker for a Distinguished Volunteer Award.

Eric has worn many hats in local, provincial, and regional cross-country skiing. Forever positive and always willing to roll up his sleeves to get the job done, he has been an extraordinary presence in the sport since 2001, when he and his young family moved to Fredericton from St. John's and joined the Wostawea Cross-Country Ski Club. As Jackrabbit coordinator, long-standing executive member, founding coach of the Ski Team, and visionary leader of ambitious infrastructure projects, Eric has contributed enormously to the spectacular growth in popularity of cross-country skiing in Fredericton. Although our city's population is just 60,000, Wostawea is now one of the largest clubs in Canada, with close to 1100 members. Eric has played a central role in that success and in fostering the amazing club spirit among skiers of all levels.

Soon after joining Wostawea (at the time a club of 300 or so), Eric breathed new life into its Jackrabbit and Track Attack programs: he recruited new coaches (including the two of us) and led a highly successful first season as coordinator in 2003, building the program and professionalizing its volunteer coaches through provision of training opportunities through CCC (as it was then).

Nine years later, Eric recognized a problem: kids who finished the Jackrabbit and Track Attack programs no longer had a ski community to motivate them and structure their activities. In 2012, he filled that gap by starting the Wostawea Racing Team, now the Wostawea Ski Team. It was, and still is, a ton of work: coaching athletes and recruiting assistant coaches, team managers, waxers, and parent volunteers. Through Eric's leadership the Ski Team has become a flagship program and phenomenal success. Indeed, over 70 youth from 10-18 (and several adults) have participated in the program in its first 10 seasons, and many of them have literally grown up in it, attending Eric's high-energy dryland or on-snow sessions three or four times a week from early October to late March over multiple seasons. They have skied in NB Cup races. They have qualified for Joliette and the Easterns. They have competed at Nationals and the Canada Winter Games. They have become role models for our younger members. And they have had fun and formed lasting bonds with other skiers and coaches. Meanwhile, each year, Eric encouraged adults to race at the Master's level and did so himself on many occasions.

In addition to club-level coaching, Eric has organized numerous training camps for the New Brunswick provincial team and has been a leading voice on the provincial high-performance committee. Always wanting to improve his own skills as a coach, Eric has taken several courses and attended numerous workshops, including on the mental and emotional components of coaching, and on how to work with athletes to set goals, manage expectations, and roll with the punches of competitive skiing. He has trained up to the T2T level and is also qualified to teach the Community Coaching course. An experienced coach at previous Easterns and Nationals, Eric will be the New Brunswick team's assistant coach at the 2023 Canada Winter Games.

Eric is by far the longest-serving member of the Wostawea executive committee, initially as Jackrabbit coordinator, then as Ski Team lead, and currently as vice-president. For many years he wrote our weekly newsletter, and in the past decade, he has spearheaded numerous crucial club initiatives, most notably our partnership with the City of Fredericton to turn Killarney Lake Park into a cross-country ski destination. Indeed, he was a core member of the small team that raised over \$300,000 from three levels of government and club members for new trail design and construction at Killarney, and in 2016-17 he single-handedly raised an additional \$50,000 from local businesses to leverage City funds toward the purchase of a PistenBully groomer. Since that year, Killarney has become one of the top two ski centres in New Brunswick, with 25 km of groomed trails and a unique ski terrain park for the Jackrabbits, Track Attackers, and Ski Team athletes (which Eric also raised money for and made happen). More recently, Eric has turned his attention to advocating for a new facility at Killarney to accommodate the club's growth and future plans, and he is also spearheading a drive for a full-time paid coach.

Through all the positive changes of the past two decades, Eric has slowly and patiently worked with City officials, executive members, and local stakeholders to realize his vision for Killarney Lake Park. In the coming year, we will apply for homologation status for our racing trails so we can host national events. When we do, Eric will be leading the way!

In sum, Eric is a visionary leader and tireless worker whose passion for cross-country skiing has inspired and benefitted thousands of skiers throughout our region. We are thrilled to nominate him for a Distinguished Volunteer Award.

Yours sincerely,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in blue ink. The first signature on the left is a stylized 'DW' for Donald Wright. The second signature on the right is 'John C. Ball' written in a cursive script.

Donald Wright (President) & John Ball (Past President)
Wostawea Cross-Country Ski Club

P.S. Below, we have added short testimonials from six current Ski Team members, all of high-school age, and one from a parent.

Eric Luiker has been my racing team coach for over a decade. From helping me shuffle along a 200m course to giving me advice in my races at Nationals, he's been there for me my entire ski career. Not once during that time have I seen him without a smile, a loud and happy voice, and a plan. Eric Luiker is the definition of an inclusive coach and has grown our race team significantly in the time he has been our leader.

Jack Toner
Ski Team Member

Eric is such a great coach for many reasons. He is constantly learning new things to help his athletes with and is willing to adjust to meet the needs of an evolving ski team. He is approachable and friendly, but always knows when it is time to get down to business. He has supported the ski team since the start, and is great at teaching ski techniques, devising training plans, and inspiring his athletes on the racecourse. He is especially amazing with new and/or young skiers, making them feel welcome on the team. I myself was new to the team just a few years ago, and a mixture of Eric's great coaching and the wonderful team atmosphere really drew me in. I can't put enough emphasis on Eric's friendliness: it really puts him above and beyond as a coach, and he is such a great person!

Jamie Heard
Ski Team Member

Eric is such an amazing coach. He does so much for the club and you can tell how much he cares about the club and us as athletes. He works tirelessly to support the team and to plan events and we appreciate him so much!!

Maja Mooers
Ski Team Member

Eric is always supporting his team wherever he can. In this past season, when I was part of the Wostawea Ski Team as an exchange student from Germany, Eric helped me out with equipment, drives and waxing whenever help was needed. He is a great person to be around and an awesome coach. He really deserves an award!

Jana Reiter
Ski Team Member

Personally, I'm a multi-sport athlete and to me Eric stands out. He's an amazingly hard-working and dedicated coach and I could easily say that he's the best coach I've had. Eric also does not take it easy on us at times but if you're a guy like me who likes working hard then Eric's your guy for that. Again, Eric is one of my favorite coaches but he's also just like a friend because when it comes to having fun Eric is right there by your side laughing with you. I've been a member of the ski group for 8 years now and Eric has played a big role in why I still show up to practice and still have that motivation to keep on working hard.

Will Bower
Ski Team Member

Eric is one of many coaches who dedicate so much to this team, but here are a few reasons why he stands out and deserves this award. Eric has been with this club for two decades, he has coached, volunteered, and organized many events which have all been awesome. He always wants what's best for the team, and all the coaches who help our team become better skiers and people every day. Eric is one of the most caring, helpful, cheerful, and fun coaches I've ever had. One of the reasons I love skiing so much is the fact that I have the most amazing coaches, especially Eric who has been with me since I started skiing. I feel that Eric deserves this award not just for being such a wonderful coach, but for being there for the team outside of practices. He is always at the races helping us mentally prepare ourselves, making sure that we have the right wax and are ready. Eric is always found on the racecourse either volunteering, managing, or cheering us on. He also always finds a way to bring the team together, on fun trips, events, or fun end-of-year parties. Eric is one of many coaches who deserve this award, but I feel that he is one that stands out the most.

Katie Bower
Ski Team Member

I am very happy to provide this note of support for the nomination of Eric Luiker for the Nordiq Canada Distinguished Volunteer Award.

I have known Eric through my involvement in the Wostawea ski club as a member, volunteer, and parent of an athlete on the team that Eric was instrumental in creating over 10 years ago. My daughter joined the ski team after coming up through the Jackrabbit program and was warmly welcomed into the amazing team culture Eric has created and continued.

Eric's patience and perseverance, be it with weather, young athletes' attention span, schedule changes, or pandemics, continues to be a large part of the continuing success and growth of not just the ski team, but the club as a whole.

His passion and commitment to the sport go from the ground all the way up. He continues to contribute not just at the local level but also at the provincial level as a member of various committees and as one of the coaches for the 2023 Canada Winter Games team.

This brief overview is a small bit of what Eric has contributed to the sport and I am pleased to see and support this nomination.

Andrew McNair
Ski Team Parent and Wax Technician