

First Thursday tour, January 13

Report from Derek Wills

With the paucity of snow on Laurentian ski networks, we may well have to accept the fact that global warming is forcing Vikings to ski further south!!

Some 20 desperate, but enthusiastic, Vikings showed up when invited at the West Island's Parc-Nature du Bois-de-Liesse for an attempt at a first Viking Thursday tour.

Perhaps not as challenging as the Laurentian x-c venues, we nevertheless enjoyed the chance to work off some holiday calories by going around the 9 km Bunnyrabbit circuit trail, mostly through sun lit woodlands, and concluding for social refreshments at the well appointed main chalet- Accueil des Champs.

Curiously, the creation of this park has Viking family connections, inasmuch it was due to the efforts of a Sylvia Oljemark (mother of much involved Viking - Karen Oljemark) who through the formation of a citizens group - The Green Coalition- managed to convince local, provincial and federal governments to purchase it from then housing estate developer/owner Grilli, and make it into a park for year round public recreation.

As if trading houses for trees were not enough, the horror show of extending de Blvd. de Salaberry Road to cut through this park to join up with Autoroute 13 was also subverted!

During our Thursday ski tour, we passed by the second chalet - Accueil Pitfield - and were advised by the friendly Austrian attendant Alain that evening ski tours could be organized for groups of 12 or more and the \$6 fee would include head lamps, and hot chocolate...and indeed any other "refreshments" that a private party might wish to supplement! Certainly, if we have a bit more snow coverage, for "safer" night skiing, there seems to be shared enthusiasm to perhaps organize such an evening in the near future, a mid-week Wednesday night was most preferred. So, I will keep you posted when a suitable date is set for these nocturnal adventures, notwithstanding that we share this territory with a family of 6 coyotes!!

Finally, for a quick snap shot appraisal of x-c trail conditions/status at the various area centers, go to www.skinet.spds.ca and click on cross-country, then compare the lean pickings of what's open at "Laurentians" and "Montreal" regions. Thanks to Celia for this cyber tip!

