

Friday, August 4, 2023

To: Whom It May Concern,

I am a former member of the Nanaimo Canoe and Kayak Club. I started at the club in 2004, when I was 14 years old. I came down to Long Lake on the suggestion of a family friend, and remember being awestruck watching strong women paddle their canoes and kayaks - I wanted to be like them. NCKC opened up a world of opportunities for me - competitive sport all the way up to the international level, leadership development, and employment opportunities helping to run summer camps. I paddled competitively for over a decade all over the country and the world, the highlight being a 2009 Senior World Championship title in the Women's C1 500m event.

During my career I also trained at the Rideau Canoe Club (RCC) in Ottawa, Ontario. Rideau has a big, beautiful club facility - boat bays on a lower level to store canoes and kayaks, a main level with change rooms (and showers!) a kitchen, an office, and a multipurpose room, and an upper level with a full weight room. The clubhouse at RCC was a place I felt at home - I practiced there 10-14 times a week for 4 years, and loved every minute. I could show up early to practice and stay late to stretch, and not have to be at the mercy of the weather. The boathouse also provided important shelter in inclement weather (thunderstorms happen frequently in Ontario). Having the weight room in the boathouse meant that I could do almost all of my training in one place, which saves time and money (no additional gym fees).

A facility like the boathouse at RCC facilitates community building on all levels. For individual athletes, it's great because there are always groups of kids and adults hanging out on the deck or the dock. A facility the size of RCC can also run many different kinds of paddle sports - i.e. flatwater canoe/kayak, dragon boat, sea kayaking, programs for people with disabilities. This wide variety of programming means that participants are exposed to different kinds of sports and different kinds of people. When I was at RCC, outside my own training I coached dragon boat, worked for the club, and volunteered for Paddle All (program for people with disabilities).

Finally, a suitable boathouse allows clubs to host higher caliber of competitions, bringing athletes, parents, and volunteers together and tourism income into a community. Higher-level competitions are also important for local athlete development - it is very inspiring to watch elite athletes compete!

The heart of NCKC will always be the dedicated and passionate people involved - coaches, athletes, administrators, board members, etc. I believe these people deserve the infrastructure support that is needed to continue to grow paddling sports in Nanaimo, and I strongly support the Long Lake Rowing and Paddling Centre project.

Sincerely,

Nicole Haywood