



### Revelstoke Ski Club

The Revelstoke Ski Club is said to be the oldest continually operating ski club in Canada, with records dating from 1891. Local entrepreneur, F. B. Wells, was the first to sell skis in the area and also was one of the original founders of the club. The oldest record of this club is a photograph dated 1891 with "Revelstoke Ski Club" written on the back. The club was made "official" on December 12, 1914. It was reorganized by Sigurd Halverson and Nels Nelson the same year Mount Revelstoke National Park was established.

By 1914, the club had hosted many competitions that attracted crowds of over 2000 arriving by special ski trains from across British Columbia. By 1915, the club had had grown substantially, and was nicknamed the "Capital of Canada's Alps". By the 1920s membership was at 300.

Ski jumping was a popular focus in many ski clubs during the 1920s. Revelstoke Ski Club was no exception. The ski jump at Mount Revelstoke National Park was, at 600 metres, the largest natural ski jump in Canada with many records of that time broken there. Little alteration of the mountain's existing slope was necessary. Nor was there a need for the construction of the usual jumper's tower for the approach or alteration of the run out slope that followed a natural contour. The sheer size of the facility attracted the best ski jumpers and spectators alike and it is the only ski jump in Canada where world ski jumping records were set. Annual ski jumping competitions were held on Mount Revelstoke from the turn of the century until the late 1960s.



Foremost among the region's many talented ski jumpers was Nels Nelson, a Norwegian immigrant, who not only reorganized the ski club in 1914 but also established most of the hill's early records. In 1926, he set a new world record of 186 feet. He held the record for Canada until 1932, breaking his own record five times and setting world marks at Revelstoke again in 1921 and 1925. His wish to attend the 1928 Olympic Winter Games in St. Moritz, Switzerland, as a member of the Canadian team was denied because his planned transportation was passage on a freighter, a mode seen to be unbecoming of a gentleman.

His skiing career ended in 1932 after he lost a hand in a hunting accident. Nelson would go on to become President of the Western Canada Amateur Ski Association and a member of the Canadian Ski Hall of Fame.

Bob Lymburne also set the world record in 1933 with a 88 metre (287 foot) jump. He was involved in "The Great Fiasco", an episode that deemed the "Big Hill" as too dangerous for the ski jumpers at the 1931 Dominion Championships, a curious conclusion after the hill had been used safely by the Revelstoke Ski Club for many years. Vancouver and Ottawa officials were not used to a jump of this size, their decision influenced by some of the visiting competitors who were frightened to use it. Lymburne, defying the judges' decision to use a smaller jump, made four perfect flights, each over 70 metres from the big jump, quickly becoming the hero of the event. He would attend the 1932 Olympics at Lake Placid, but later suffered a brain injury on a bad landing that ended his career.

Isabel (Pat) Coursier set an unofficial women's world record of 26 metres on the Revelstoke jump in 1923 and was the only woman that year to compete unassisted. At that time, "glider girls," as they were known, went off the jump holding hands with a male partner. Coursier would compete across North America, inspiring other women to enter into women's competitive sport. She retired from ski jumping in 1929, her records remaining uncontested.

By the 1930s, alpine skiing had surpassed Nordic activities in popularity but jumping continued at Revelstoke as a spectator sport. The Revelstoke Ski Club and National Park continued to make improvements to the jumping facilities up to the 1960s including the construction of a ski judges' tower that still remains. The last jumping competition was held in the 1970s, ending a half-century of competition.



Large, man-made jumps in close proximity to urban centres made natural jumps in remote sites, such as Mount Revelstoke, unnecessary. Further, it was also difficult to retain enough volunteers to maintain the jump.

Since then, the club has developed an alpine ski racing program, producing Canadian National Team members Greg Humphrey, Danny Moar, Denise Fitchett and Kendra Kobelka who skied on the World Cup circuit in the 1980s.

To learn more, visit: [www.revelstokeskiclub.info](http://www.revelstokeskiclub.info)