

The cross country ski community is profoundly saddened by the passing away of Reijo Puiras, founder of Lappe Nordic Ski Centre and a legend in the Thunder Bay ski community. Reijo's commitment to cross country skiing began as an athlete. As a member of the Canadian National Team from 1974 to 1977, Reijo competed in the 1976 Olympics and the 1974 Falun World Championships. Winner of 9 National medals, Reijo also dominated locally skiing locally in Thunder Bay winning 10 consecutive City Championships. Reijo was inducted into the NWO Sports Hall of Fame in 1993 as a builder.

In 1975, Reijo began cutting trails on his property in Lappe, just west of Thunder Bay. He shared his trails with training partners and for 38 years, the entire ski community. Eventually they outgrew the original 3 km and in 1979, Reijo founded the Lappe Nordic Ski Centre. The trail system has grown to over 14 km with 7km lit for night skiing. In 1986, the present day chalet complete with saunas, showers and kitchen was added.



Photo Credit: Martin Kaiser

As well as providing sporting opportunities for thousands of area skiers, both recreationally and for competitions, Lappe Ski Centre and the Lappe Ski Club has hosted local, provincial and national

events and most recently was the site of the 2015 Ski Nationals and the 2013 World Junior/U23 Trials. In 1995, Lappe Nordic Ski Centre hosted a 'citizen race' during the World Nordic Ski Championships with many athletes from national teams competing for the prize money.



Photo credit: Martin Kaiser

Reijo's touch has extended far beyond the Thunder Bay area. Reijo has provided the entire Canadian ski community a world class facility for our enjoyment. Racing was always his passion, and the Ski Centre has had multiple improvements over the years to enhance the race facility. He has mentored race organizers and officials in the Thunder Bay area. His commitment to excellence is evident in his attention to detail during a race. During the ski season, the grooming at Lappe is second to none. Reijo played a leadership role in each and every major race hosted at the Ski Centre and is the grandfather of the 'Lappe Standard'.

As the Lappe Ski Centre celebrated its 38th year of operation this past season, many have been touched by the generosity of Reijo and his family. The local and national ski community has been so very fortunate to have a man of such passion and generosity.

Our heartfelt condolences to Tuija, Timo, Susannah and the extended Puiras family on your loss.



Reijo is Chief 'of course'.

Funeral services will be held on Friday, August 11 at 11am at Hilldale Lutheran Church, 321 Hilldale Rd, Thunder Bay, ON. Online condolences at www.sargentandson.com.